

Your road to Emmaus.

Many cults and false teachers today present a Jesus very different to the one written about in the bible. It is only the Jesus of the bible who can bring you to salvation and make you right with God. Jesus said "If you do not believe I am who I say I am you will die in your sin" (John chapter 8 v 24), so let us look at who the Jesus of the bible is, and then you will be able to recognise a false one.

In order to do this it is good to look back to the book of Genesis, just like Jesus did when He walked and talked with His disciples after His resurrection (Luke chapter 24 v 25 - 27). This will show you the only Jesus acceptable to God and why we believe Jesus had to have a virgin birth and a physical resurrection.

Genesis chapter 3 tells of the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden simply because they committed one sin, eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The devil, described here as a serpent, tempted Eve by telling her to doubt God's word, and believe that if she and Adam ate of this fruit they would become like God Himself. (Genesis chapter 3 verses 1 - 6).

This is almost an exact copy of what the devil himself had done, in heaven, trying to become like God Himself. Later when God came looking for Adam and Eve, in order to fellowship with them, they ran away and hid. Through the questions He put to them God gave Adam and Eve at least three opportunities to confess and repent of their sin, but instead of doing this, they tried to blame everybody else except themselves.

Judgement therefore, had to be pronounced upon them. God expelled them from the Garden Of Eden because they had eaten of the fruit of the tree He had forbidden them to. In verse 22 of Genesis chapter 3 God thinks " If I do not banish them from this garden, they might eat of the tree of life and live forever."

God was not worried about mankind living forever, since He created them for this purpose, and to fellowship with Him, but He banished them from the garden lest they should eat of the fruit of the tree of life and live forever in their sin, irredeemable.

This being the case, God sums up His plan of redemption to Adam and Eve (verse 15), that through one born of a woman (enmity between her seed and yours), will come the one who will crush the serpent's head - in other words, completely crush him under His feet. Have you ever heard it said of someone "He's like his father you know?" meaning that he is displaying some of the characteristics of his father.

If your father had a weakness, let's say for women, if you do not take great care, you will display the same weakness in your life also. This is very clearly seen from the stories of Abraham and Sarah, their son Isaac, and his wife Rebecca, the two situations are almost identical. In Genesis chapter 20 Abraham lies about Sarah being his sister because he is afraid they might kill him and take Sarah because she was so beautiful, and in chapter 26 Isaac his son, does the same thing with regard to Rebecca.

Abraham's weakness and fear is showing up in Isaac also. Because sin has now entered the life of Adam, had the father of Jesus been an earthly father, a man, the weakness for sin would certainly have been inherited. Therefore, since the punishment for sin is banishment from the presence of God, the only possible redeemer could be one who does not have a sin nature in Himself.

The father of our redeemer had to be God, or he would inherit a sin nature and would therefore be unacceptable to God even to redeem himself. If you look at the leaders of any of the cults (those who started the organisation) you will find that they all had earthly fathers, therefore it is impossible for salvation to come through them or their organisation.

Since anyone with a sin nature is unacceptable to God, whatever they do will not make them acceptable, because they would still have their sin nature, so even as early as Genesis chapter 3 it is established that we cannot make ourselves right with God, and we therefore need someone who is without sin to do it for us.

This comes out so clearly in Genesis chapter 4 verses 1 - 5, it is the story of Cain and Abel. Abel was the keeper of sheep, Cain was a tiller of the soil (gardener or farmer). Cain presented a gift to God, something from his garden or farm, of which he was very proud.

His brother Abel however, presented God with a lamb, he had simply put a ram and a sheep in the same field and let nature take its course. Cain's offering, basically the work of his own hands was not acceptable to God, though He was pleased with Abel's gift. It is interesting to note that St John referred to Jesus as "The lamb of God". Was it really a lamb through which God would redeem mankind?

What happened to Abraham in Genesis chapter 22 verses 1 - 14 is very important to our study. In this story God tells Abraham to sacrifice that which is most precious to Him, his only son which God had promised him by himself and Sarah. Abraham obeyed God up to the point of sacrifice.

He put Isaac on the wood as the burnt offering sacrifice and was about to strike the deathblow when the Angel of the Lord cried out to him. Before Abraham put Isaac on the top of the wood, for the sacrifice, Isaac asked a very obvious, but very important question. "Where is the lamb for the sacrifice?" (verse 7). I doubt if Abraham realised the importance of what he said in reply.

"God Himself will supply the lamb for the sacrifice." As you will see, what God provided is very like the offering Abraham so nearly made. Abraham was prepared to offer the most precious thing he could give, his only promised son, Isaac, and later God was to offer His only Son, Jesus, for the redemption of all mankind.

The angel of God cried out to Abraham before he killed Isaac. So often when we genuinely offer to God that which we consider most precious, He gives it back to us, as well as an abundance of blessing besides. In all these and other ways God continued to unfold His plan of salvation for mankind.

In Egypt where God had promised to set a huge number of people free from slavery and the terrible way they were being treated, God chose a man through whom He would bring these people out of that land to a place where they could be free, the man chosen was Moses.

When Moses brought this huge number of people out of slavery in Egypt, God called him, and he alone to meet with Him on the mountain, where Moses stayed for a total of eighty days and nights. There God showed him many heavenly things, including His throne of mercy, the place where the blood of the sacrifice for sin would be poured out in atonement.

As instructed, Moses set this up on earth. The area where these things rested was known as the tent of meeting. Then God ordered the people into tribes and gave them their positions round that tent of meeting, wherein dwelt the presence of God. Right in front of the entrance to the tent of meeting He placed the tribe of Judah. This showed that if anyone, particularly the promised Saviour, were to come from the presence of God, they would have to literally come through the tribe of Judah (Numbers chapter 2)..

Having done all this, Moses then gave the law of animal sacrifices to cleanse a whole community from sin. Many different animals were required, depending on the purpose of the sacrifice, but so often it had to be two he-goats and a lamb without blemish, or they would not be acceptable as a sacrifice by God (Leviticus chapter 16 v 10 Exodus 12 v 5 and Numbers chapter 12 v 46 refer to these).

There were many times of festivities and feasts that required sacrifices, we shall turn our attention to two main times of sacrifice, the first is the feast of the Passover, when the Angel of God killed all the first-born sons and animals of the Egyptians, but because of their obedience to His instructions, none of the Hebrew people was harmed.

At this time they were told to sacrifice a lamb without blemish, roast it and put some of its blood which had to be drained out before cooking, on the door posts and the lintel. When the Angel of Death visited that place, everyone in the houses which had the blood of the lamb on the door posts would be completely unharmed.

Death however would come to all the people who did not have this sign on the entrance to their homes. Those who did were instructed to eat the lamb in a hurry, and to leave nothing until the following day. This indicated that the work of the Messiah at the end of His life would be accomplished quickly (Exodus chapter 12 v 21 - 46).

Before the festival and the atonement sacrifices could begin, it had to be established what the priest and high priest would wear and do. One of the things that had to be worn was a

long white garment, symbolising purity, tied at the waist with a long girdle. At the bottom of this garment, all around the hem were bells.

If the sacrifice offered by the priest or high priest was in any way blemished, that priest or high priest would be struck dead. The people outside would know that something had been wrong, when they could no longer hear the bells jingling as the priest moved around in the tent of meeting, they would then grab hold of the girdle which was long enough to reach outside the tent of meeting and pull the priest out dead.

If the priest or high priest came out of the tent alive and well, they would immediately know that the sacrifice had been accepted by God and their sin atoned for. The Day of Atonement - which was to cleanse the whole community, purify them and make them right in the sight of God, required the sacrifice of two goats.

One to be sacrificed In the first section of the tent of meeting, the other to be sent out into the wilderness after the appointed High Priest had laid his hands on its head and confessed the sins of the whole community over it, symbolically transferring their sin to the goat which would then be sent out into the wilderness, thus taking away sin from the camp (Leviticus chapter 16 v 1 - 10).

The sacrifice of a bull, ram or lamb - for the sins of the community would be offered inside the tent of meeting, and its blood sprinkled on the sides of the altar and on the mercy seat. God promised that if this were done correctly, when He looked down on the community He would see the blood of the unblemished sacrifice on the mercy seat and this would atone for the sins of the community.

This however, had to be repeated once every year as the people continued to sin. It was commanded that these sacrifices had to be offered "between the two evenings". According to the division of the Jewish day, which began at 6 am between the two evenings means approximately the ninth hour (Exodus chapter 12) not 9 am or nine pm but at the ninth hour, which would be 3 pm by our measure of daytime. All these things were effective in the short term, but were signs of things to come that would be effective forever.

Now its time to look at how many of these requirement Jesus met in order to redeem us. Firstly, it is clearly stated that the child born of Mary was conceived by The Holy Spirit, God Himself. It was the seed of Eve (the woman) who nurtured and gave birth to Him. Matthew chapter 1 v 16 gives the ancestry of Jesus through Joseph, the man chosen to be like a father to Jesus on earth, and Luke chapter 3 v 13 - 28 gives the ancestry of Jesus on Mary's side.

Both agree that the ancestry of Jesus goes back to the tribe of Judah. Having said all this, we must go forward now to see how Jesus acted as our High Priest, sacrificial lamb and scapegoat so that we could escape the wrath of God. Before ministering as High Priest of the whole community, the High Priest was instructed to bathe and put on linen clothing. Through reading what Jesus did with His disciples on the night of His last supper with

them, we can clearly see that Jesus did bathe and put on linen clothing (John chapter 15 v 1 - 15).

Later Jesus was brought before Pilate on false charges, and led out of the city to be crucified. Like the scapegoat He had to be led outside the camp, and Jesus was taken outside the city wall (John chapter 19 verses 17). Then He had rammed on His head a crown of thorns and would have without doubt been confessing the sin of Israel and the sin of the whole community and indeed the whole world (Matthew chapter 27 v 27 and John chapter 19 verses 22 - 24).

Since it was an outrage to leave a body on a cross over the Sabbath and to make sure that He was really dead at this time, they broke the legs of the two criminals being crucified with Jesus and when they came to Jesus they found Him already dead, so there was no need to break His legs (John chapter 19 v 31).

Moments before three o'clock in the afternoon, the Jewish ninth hour, between the two evenings, Jesus cried out from the cross "It is finished" (John chapter 19 v 30). He said this because at that time He had accomplished everything on earth necessary for the salvation of all mankind, throughout the ages.

To make sure He was dead, a Roman soldier pierced Jesus side and out came blood and water. Jesus was presenting His life, Himself and His blood as a substitute before God so that we could be forgiven (John chapter 19 v 31 - 37). The Sunday following, was the day He rose from the dead.

Not for our salvation, He had already accomplished that for us, but just as the people of the community of Israel knew the sacrifice for their sin had been accepted when the High Priest came out alive from the presence of God, so Jesus rose from the dead that day to prove to us that God had accepted His sacrifice, and our sins were now atoned for if only we believe and trust in Him.

This way we are made members of the community. Now the community is much bigger than the community of the Israelites, its the community of all believers who will ever live. This sacrifice was so precious to God, the forgiveness and redemption it secured is not just for one year, but for all eternity. Thanks be to God.