

Lesson 8: Understanding the Cross (Part 1)

Intro

Through the fall of Adam and Eve, Satan was trying to force God into a dilemma. Satan's accusation was that God is neither fair nor loving. If God destroys the sinner, how could He be love? On the other hand, if God overlooks their sin, how can He be just? The Bible is undeniably clear that God loves the sinner, but hates sin. How can He save the sinner and at the same time condemn sin? God's answer to this dilemma is the Cross.



Genesis 3:15

Adam and Eve's sin could not be left consequence. Thus, they had to leave paradise. But God did not send them into their harsh new reality without hope. In the middle of His judgment sentence against the serpent, God made a promise to mankind. Can you find the promise in this verse?

God said to Satan that He would put enmity between the serpent (Satan) and mankind. The fall changed the nature of man. We became naturally sinful and could no longer endure God's presence nor love His character. Sadly, mankind started loving that which pleased the devil. God prophesied that He would destroy this new alliance, allowing mankind to reestablish a relationship with Him. He would accomplish this through a descendant of the woman (Christ) who would crush the head of the serpent (Satan). However, there was a cost; Satan would wound Christ. This is an allusion to the cross on which Jesus would gain the victory for mankind once and for all, and at the same receive a deadly wound from Satan.



Genesis 3:21

To hide their shame, Adam and Eve made clothes out of fig leaves. What a fitting symbol for every human attempt to solve the sin problem. Unfortunately, the problem is too big for us to be able to solve under our own strength. What does God do about Adam and Eve's meager attempt to cover themselves?

In order to make clothing for Adam and Eve, two animals had to die. For the first time Adam and Eve saw that their sin was at the expense of an innocent life, a foreshadow of Jesus Christ who sacrificed his sinless life to pay the penalty for our sins. This clothing that God gave to Adam and Eve is a symbol of our salvation (see Isaiah 61:10). Only through Christ can we be free from the sin that holds us down.



When was the plan of salvation for mankind conceived?

Ephesians 1:4: _____

1. Peter 1:20: _____

Quote #1

“The fall of man filled all heaven with sorrow. The world that God had made was blighted with the curse of sin and inhabited by beings doomed to misery and death. There appeared no escape for those who had transgressed the law. Angels ceased their songs of praise. Throughout the heavenly courts there was mourning for the ruin that sin had wrought.

The Son of God, heaven’s glorious Commander, was touched with pity for the fallen race. His heart was moved with infinite compassion as the woes of the lost world rose up before Him. But divine love had conceived a plan whereby man might be redeemed. The broken law of God demanded the life of the sinner. In all the universe there was but one who could, in behalf of man, satisfy its claims. Since the divine law is as sacred as God Himself, only one equal with God could make atonement for its transgression. None but Christ could redeem fallen man from the curse of the law and bring him again into harmony with Heaven. Christ would take upon Himself the guilt and shame of sin—sin so offensive to a holy God that it must separate the Father and His Son.

Christ would reach to the depths of misery to rescue the ruined race. Before the Father He pleaded in the sinner’s behalf, while the host of heaven awaited the result with an intensity of interest that words cannot express. Long continued was that mysterious communing—‘the counsel of peace’ (Zechariah 6:13) for the fallen sons of men. The plan of salvation had been laid before the creation of the earth; for Christ is “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8); yet it was a struggle, even with the King of the universe, to yield up His Son to die for the guilty race. But “God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16. Oh, the mystery of redemption! The love of God for a world that did not love Him! Who can know the depths of that love which ‘passeth knowledge’? Through endless ages immortal minds, seeking to comprehend the mystery of that incomprehensible love, will wonder and adore.” (*Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 63-64*)

Quote #2

“The plan by which alone man’s salvation could be secured, involved all heaven in its infinite sacrifice. The angels could not rejoice as Christ opened before them the plan of redemption, for they saw that man’s salvation must cost their loved Commander unutterable woe. In grief and wonder they listened to His words as He told them how He must descend from heaven’s purity and peace, its joy and glory and immortal life, and come in contact with the degradation of earth, to endure its sorrow, shame, and death. He was to stand between the sinner and the penalty of sin; yet few would receive Him as the Son of God. He would leave His high position as the Majesty of heaven, appear upon earth and humble Himself as a man, and by His own experience become acquainted with the sorrows and temptations which man would have to endure. All this would be necessary in order that He might be able to succor them that should be tempted. Hebrews 2:18. When His mission as a teacher should be ended, He must be delivered into the hands of wicked men and be subjected to every insult and torture that Satan could inspire them to inflict. He must die the cruelest of deaths, lifted up between the heavens and the earth as a

guilty sinner. He must pass long hours of agony so terrible that angels could not look upon it, but would veil their faces from the sight. He must endure anguish of soul, the hiding of His Father's face, while the guilt of transgression—the weight of the sins of the whole world—should be upon Him. The angels prostrated themselves at the feet of their Commander and offered to become a sacrifice for man. But an angel's life could not pay the debt; only He who created man had power to redeem him. " (*Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 64-65*)

It Is Finished! As Jesus was dying on the cross he cried out: "It is finished!" This moment was a climax in world history, in which the destiny of this world was decided. We now want to consider seven things that Jesus finished on the cross, seven victories that He accomplished.

1st Victory **Jesus was an atonement for our guilt.**

Atonement means that Jesus took our guilt upon Himself thus freeing us from it. Where do we find this thought in the following verses from Paul's letters?



Colossians 2:14: _____

Hebrews 9:26-27: _____

Quote #3 "He planted the cross between heaven and earth, and when the Father beheld the sacrifice of His Son, He bowed before it in recognition of its perfection. 'It is enough,' He said. 'The atonement is complete.'" (*The Review and Herald, September 24, 1901*)

2nd Victory **Jesus died in our place.**

As sinners, we deserve eternal death. God cannot give a smaller punishment for sin. The only way to save us from eternal death was for Jesus to go through it for us. Check out this thought in the following texts!



Isaiah 53:4-6,8,10-12: _____

Romans 5:6,8: _____

1 Peter 1:18,19: _____

Hebrews 2:9: _____

Quote #4 “Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. ‘With His stripes we are healed.’ (*Desire of Ages*, p. 25)

Quote #5 “The spotless Son of God hung upon the cross, His flesh lacerated with stripes; those hands so often reached out in blessing, nailed to the wooden bars; those feet so tireless on ministries of love, spiked to the tree; that royal head pierced by the crown of thorns; those quivering lips shaped to the cry of woe. And all that He endured—the blood drops that flowed from His head, His hands, His feet, the agony that racked His frame, and the unutterable anguish that filled His soul at the hiding of His Father’s face—speaks to each child of humanity, declaring, It is for thee that the Son of God consents to bear this burden of guilt; for thee He spoils the domain of death, and opens the gates of Paradise. He who stilled the angry waves and walked the foam-capped billows, who made devils tremble and disease flee, who opened blind eyes and called forth the dead to life—offers Himself upon the cross as a sacrifice, and this from love to thee. He, the Sin Bearer, endures the wrath of divine justice, and for thy sake becomes sin itself.” (*Desire of Ages*, p. 755-756)

3rd Victory **Jesus reconciled the World with God.**

Sin cannot exist in the presence of a holy God. God loves the sinner but hates sin. Sin brought separation between God and man, it alienated man from God. But through the cross the relationship between God and man is made possible again. The Bible talks about how God reconciled Himself with the world. It is important to remember that it was not the cross that led God to love us. It was God’s love that led to the cross. His love toward us was always there. That’s why He took the first step towards reconciliation with us and He invites us now to accept His offer.



Discover God’s reconciliation in the following texts!

Romans 5:10: _____

2 Corinthians 5:19-21: _____

Colossians 1:19-23: _____

1 John 2:2: _____

4th Victory **Jesus opened the the way to the Father.**

Reconciliation always leads to relationship. Because of sin, the way to God was closed; however, through Christ it is open again. Through Christ we can approach God and be accepted as His children. Christ, as our intercessor in Heaven, actively works to help us discover and experience God every day as our loving, heavenly Father.



The following texts state the truth that through Jesus' death we have access to the Father again. Write down the parts that are most important to you.

Ephesians 2:13-17: _____

Hebrews 10:19-22: _____

Quote #6 "But through Christ, earth is again linked with heaven. With His own merits, Christ has bridged the gulf which sin had made, so that the ministering angels can hold communion with man. Christ connects fallen man in his weakness and helplessness with the Source of infinite power." (*Steps to Christ, p. 20*)

5th Victory **Jesus conquered Satan and death.**

While Satan was rebelling against God, he accused God of unfair methods and horrible character traits. Satan did so in such a subtle manner that it affected all the angels of heaven. As a result, a third of them chose to side with Satan. Through His death on the cross, Christ conquered Satan and death once and for all. The New Testament, especially Revelation, clearly proclaims this truth. Through this victory we have life.



How do the following verses describe Jesus' death on the cross as victorious over Satan and death?

John 12:31-32: _____

Colossians 2:15: _____

2 Timothy 1:10: _____

Hebrews 2:14-15: _____

Quote #7

“At the cross of Calvary, love and selfishness stood face to face. Here was their crowning manifestation. Christ had lived only to comfort and bless, and in putting Him to death, Satan manifested the malignity of his hatred against God. He made it evident that the real purpose of his rebellion was to dethrone God, and to destroy Him through whom the love of God was shown.” (*Desire of Ages*, p. 57)

6th Victory

Jesus vindicated God and revealed His character.

Satan accused God of being selfish, loveless, and unjust. On the cross, Jesus showed the entire Universe, for all eternity, that God is love, just, and willing to do all for His creatures. The evidence of the cross is so overwhelming that sin can never rise up again.



Discover the thoughts of God’s righteousness in the following texts!

Romans 3:25-26: _____

Revelation 5:11-14: _____

Quote #8

“But this great sacrifice was not made in order to create in the Father’s heart a love for man, not to make Him willing to save. No, no! ‘God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son.’ John 3:16. The Father loves us, not because of the great propitiations, but He provided the propitiation because He loves us. Christ was the medium through which He could pour out His infinite love upon a fallen world. God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.’ 2 Corinthians 5:19. God suffered

with His Son. In the agony of Gethsemane, the death of Calvary, the heart of Infinite Love paid the price of our redemption." (*Steps to Christ, p. 13-14*)

Quote #9 "The more we study the divine character in the light of the cross, the more we see mercy, tenderness, and forgiveness blended with equity and justice, and the more clearly we discern innumerable evidences of a love that is infinite and tender pity surpassing a mother's yearning sympathy for her wayward child." (*Steps to Christ, p. 15*)

Quote #10 "The heart of God yearns over His earthly children with a love stronger than death. In giving up His Son, he has poured out to us all heaven in one gift." (*Steps to Christ, p. 21*)

Quote #11 "But the plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might regard the law of God as it should be regarded; but it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe. To this result of His great sacrifice—its influence upon the intelligences of other worlds, as well as upon man—the Saviour looked forward when just before His crucifixion He said: 'Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto Me.' John 12:31,32. The act of Christ in dying for the salvation of man would not only make heaven accessible to men, but before all the universe it would justify God and His Son in their dealing with the rebellion of Satan. It would establish the perpetuity of the law of God and would reveal the nature and the results of sin." (*Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 68,69*)

Quote #12 "And as Christ in His expiring agony upon the cross cried out, 'It is finished' (John 19:30), a shout of triumph rang through every world and through heaven itself. The great contest that had been so long in progress in this world was now decided, and Christ was conqueror. His death had answered the question whether the Father and the Son had sufficient love for man to exercise self-denial and a spirit of sacrifice. Satan had revealed his true character as a liar and a murderer. It was seen that the very same spirit with which he had ruled the children of men who were under his power, he would have manifested if permitted to control the intelligences of heaven. With one voice the loyal universe united in extolling the divine administration." (*Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 69,70*)

7th Victory **Jesus proved that God's Law is immutable.**

Points six and seven are interrelated. God's Law is an expression of His character. Satan accused God's Law of being unjust and withholding freedom from His created beings so they could not reach their maximum potential. In short, Satan cast false light upon God's character. Christ came to show mankind that God's Law is good and just and the best foundation for the entire Universe.



What did Jesus take on Himself for us?

Galatians 3:13

Jesus took the curse of the Law, that is the wages of sin, on Himself. According to Romans 6:23, the wages of sin is death—the Law demanded it. The fact that Jesus took upon Himself this punishment that the law demanded proves beyond a shadow of doubt that God’s Law cannot be changed.



What did Jesus condemn? What should be held righteous?

Romans 8,3.4

Jesus condemned sin through his sinless life and death on the cross, so that the righteous requirement of the Law would stand.

Quote #13

“If the law could be changed, man might have been saved without the sacrifice of Christ; but the fact that it was necessary for Christ to give His life for the fallen race, proves that the law of God will not release the sinner from its claims upon him. It is demonstrated that the wages of sin is death. When Christ died, the destruction of Satan was made certain. But if the law was abolished at the cross, as many claim, then the agony and death of God’s dear Son were endured only to give to Satan just what he asked; then the prince of evil triumphed, his charges against the divine government were sustained. The very fact that Christ bore the penalty of man’s transgression is a mighty argument to all created intelligences that the law is changeless; that God is righteous, merciful, and self-denying; and that infinite justice and mercy unite in the administration of His government.” (*Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 70*)



Contemplate all that Christ accomplished on the cross. How should contemplating about the meaning of the cross transform us?

John 12:32-33

