

The Problem with Evil and God's Plan to End It – Part IV

God Provides – The First Sacrifices

- In the last study we left off with God having confronted Adam and Eve about their partaking of the tree which He had warned them about. He informed them of what the consequences would be for each one who had been responsible for the affair. They indeed had used their freedom to make decisions which had changed the way in which they were seeing their relationship to God, His creation, and each other. As always, the way we see a situation determines how we think about it, which then determines how we feel about it, which subsequently determines how we behave in that situation.

The problem:

Genesis 3:7 KJV And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

- Speaking of our own efforts to justify our mistakes, Isaiah said: “For the bed is shorter than one can stretch himself on, and the cover is narrower than one can wrap himself in.” *Isaiah 28:20 MKJV* Such are all our efforts to make ourselves to appear righteous.

Isaiah 64:6-7 KJV But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. (7) And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast [not in the original] hid thy face from us, and hast consumed [melted, dissolved, faint] us, because of our iniquities.

The Bible in Basic English version of verse 7:

Isaiah 64:7 BBE And there is no one who makes prayer to your name, or who is moved to keep true to you: for your face is veiled from us, and you have given us into the power of our sins. (a)

God provides:

Genesis 3:21-22 MKJV And for Adam and his wife Jehovah God made coats of skins, and clothed them. (22) And Jehovah God said, Behold, the man has become as one of Us, to know good and evil. (b)

- This was the first time that a physical death had ever occurred in God's kingdom. It was a drastic measure that God had taken to require the death of one of His creatures to cover for Adam and Eve. It was commissioned by God Himself, thus beginning the practice of the sacrificial system. Several reasons should be considered:

- It was not simply eating the fruit of the tree itself that would require such a sacrifice. Rather, it was the acceptance of the lies proclaimed by the Deceiver at the tree. Sin, the outcome of seeing the world from a self-centered point of view, would result in a high cost to mankind--death. Man needed a reminder of what that cost would be. (c)
- Adam and Eve had a real need to be covered. Their sense of guilt and shame had made such a change in their thinking that they could no longer bear to be in the presence of God. (d) Nothing they could do could make them feel acceptable to God. Adam and Eve could not bear up to the responsibility for what they had done. Having opened their minds to doubt and fear of God, their tendency to act independently of His counsels passed on to their offspring. The results were quickly realized. Their sense of guilt kept them from their only true source of help.
- Long before sin, the Godhead had counted the cost and determined that if man should fall, They, the Godhead, would bear full responsibility for the damage caused by sin. (e) Keep in mind that God never intended that any of His creatures should sin. Sin was not a predisposition that was designed into them at creation. However, it was an inherent possibility of freedom, which is necessary for love to be realized. It was decided that Christ would come to Earth as a man and bear the cost of man's forgiveness. Every animal that was slain in the sacrificial ceremonies was a representation of Christ bearing upon Himself the cost of sin which is death. (f)
- God Himself would provide the remedy to man's lost and helpless condition. He could not allow sin to remain a barrier between man and God. (g) God would provide reasons why man should not be held accountable for his sin. Man's responsibility in the ceremony was to bring and slay the lamb as an acknowledgment of his guilt and of the goodness of God to cover him.

(a) “The knowledge of good and evil in a state of disobedience makes us afraid of God, and must have a divine work and righteousness to cover it. ...” John Nelson Darby (1800 - 1882)

(b) God made them coats of skins: large, and strong, and durable, and fit for them. Such is the righteousness of Christ.

Romans 13:14 KJV But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

- We are to put on the righteousness of Christ. We are not capable of turning our mistakes around. With every effort we make, we sink deeper in despair. Knowing this, God desires to cover for us, taking upon Him the responsibility to restore the damage we have caused to ourselves and to others.

(c) Romans 6:23 KJV For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Hebrews 9:22 KJV And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

(d) Genesis 3:10 NKJV So he said, I heard your voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.

(e) Revelation 13:8 KJV And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

(f) John 1:29 NKJV The next day John saw Jesus coming unto him, and said, Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.

(g) 2 Corinthians 5:18-21 NKJV Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ... 19 that is, God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them ... 20 Now then, ... we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. 21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

- Colossians 1:20-22 KJV And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. (21) And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled (22) In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight:

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- God has exempted all men from the responsibility of sin; however, forgiveness from God is not the criteria for eternal life. Only those who believe and accept His forgiveness, allowing Him to re-establish the relationship and heal them of the damage sin has caused, can be made fit for eternity. Only those who will behold God's love until they see themselves as God does, will be restored to His original design. For He has no desire to condemn but only to teach us and make us successful in the ways that lead to life eternal. (a)

Restoration:

- A common mistake is to think that if we make our selves acceptable to God then He will love us. But He died for us when we were yet sinners that we might not be afraid to come unto Him.

Romans 5:8-11 KJV But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, **while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.** (9) Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. (10) For if, **when we were enemies, we were reconciled** to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, **we shall be saved by his life.** (11) And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

Ephesians 3:8-21 MKJV This grace is given to me (who am less than the least of all saints) to preach the gospel of the unsearchable riches of Christ among the nations, (9) and to bring to light what is the **fellowship of the mystery** (b) which from eternity has been hidden in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ; (10) so that now to the rulers and powers in heavenly places might be made known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, (11) according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord; (12) **in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through His faith.** (c) ... (16) that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; (17) that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, (18) may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, (19) and to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God. (20) Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, (21) to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, forever. Amen.

This garment of His provision is referred to throughout scripture.

Isaiah 61:10 KJV I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, **he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness,** as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels. (d)

Zechariah 3:1-4 KJV And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. (2) And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan (e) ... is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? (3) Now **Joshua was clothed with filthy garments,** and stood before the angel. (4) And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, **Take away the filthy garments from him.** And unto him he said, **Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.** (f)

What about today?

Revelation 3:14-18 KJV And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; ... (17) Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and **knowest not that thou art** wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and **naked:** (18) I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. (g)

(a) Mark 16:16 MKJV He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned.

- John 10:9 MKJV I am the door. If anyone enters in by Me, he shall be saved and shall go in and out and find pasture.

- Acts 2:21 MKJV And it shall be that everyone who shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

(b) Genesis 3:22 KJV And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: - God's plan for dealing with evil, when it arose, was set in place before He created individuals with free will.

- Man had separated himself from God by experimenting with evil and his perceptions of God had become distorted. God would not leave man to grapple alone in confusion. He would meet us in our misunderstanding, seeking to restore fellowship. He would get involved with us (who have experienced the knowledge of evil) that we might bring to light before the Universe both the results of evil and what God's love would do to restore the vision of other-centered love.

(c) Strange that it is my faith in His faith that makes the difference. Throughout the life of Jesus, He had explicit faith in His Father's plan. His plan is that by the revelation of how sin destroys and how His love restores, eternity would be both free and secure. It is His promise to restore. It is my faith in what He will do for me in spite of myself that gives me courage to go on. In this case, it is not what I do for Him or how I manage my behavior that will make a real difference; it is what He will do for me.

- Philippians 3:9-10 KJV And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: (10) That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection.

(d) God not only wants to cover our guilt, He desires to lift us up, making us look most attractive.

(e) Here again is Satan making accusation against God and His people. God, as always, takes our side and covers for us.

(f) The garment or robe represents character. God not only takes away our guilty character. It is His very nature to lift us up, changing us into a new person as we accept what He wants to do for us.

(g) This was spoken to the church of the Laodiceans, thought by many commentators to coincide with the period of time just before the end of sin.

- Interesting that Adam and Eve who had known the glories of God's love, could not be at ease with their own attempts to hide their shame, but the church of today is declared to be naked and not know it. What God says we need is eye salve that we might see ourselves in the light of His love.

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Revelation 16:15 KJV Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that **watcheth**, and **keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.**

The sacrificial system

Commentaries are divided on whether it was God or Adam who killed the first animal to provide skins of which He made their garments. But it is obvious that by the time of the conflict between Cain and Abel, God had instructed them in the ceremonial offering of a lamb as a reminder that God would one day send His son to bear the cost of their sin.

“To Adam, the offering of the first sacrifice was a most painful ceremony. His hand must be raised to take life, which only God could give. It was the first time he had ever witnessed death, and he knew that had he been obedient to God, there would have been no death of man or beast. As he slew the innocent victim, he trembled at the thought that his sin must shed the blood of the spotless Lamb of God. This scene gave him a deeper and more vivid sense of the greatness of his transgression, which nothing but the death of God's dear Son could expiate (a). And he marveled at the infinite goodness that would give such a ransom to save the guilty. A star of hope illumined the dark and terrible future and relieved it of its utter desolation.” {PP 68.1}

(a) expiate – [obsolete: to put an end to: to extinguish the guilt incurred by : to make amends for.] *Merriam-Webster*

God has ordained that we hold the freedom under which He has created us responsibly. Therefore it is necessary that we be held accountable for the damage caused by our sin. However, it is not within our ability to undo what we have caused. God has taken upon Himself the responsibility for the suffering of the innocent. In forgiving us He takes on the debt which we cannot pay. Yet in order that our own hearts might be changed and fellowship with our Creator might be re-established, man was to acknowledge both his guilt and his acceptance of God's remedy by bringing the innocent lamb and taking its life for the offering.

“Adam, in his innocence, had enjoyed open communion with his Maker; but sin brought separation between God and man, and the atonement of Christ alone could span the abyss and make possible the communication of blessing or salvation from heaven to earth. Man was still cut off from direct approach to his Creator, but God would communicate with him through Christ and angels.” {PP 67.2}

“He [Satan] set himself to intercept this communion. He misrepresented God, and misinterpreted the rites that pointed to the Saviour. Men were led to fear God as one who delighted in their destruction. The sacrifices that should have revealed His love were offered only to appease His wrath.” {DA 115.1}

“Thus the sacrifices and the ordinances designed of Heaven to reveal divine love have been perverted to serve as means whereby sinners have vainly hoped to propitiate, with gifts and good works, the wrath of an offended God.” {PK 685.1,2}

“The heathen systems of sacrifice were a perversion of the system that God had appointed; and many a sincere observer of heathen rites learned from the Hebrews the meaning of the service divinely ordained, and in faith grasped the promise of a Redeemer.” {DA 28.3}

“The sacrificial offerings were ordained by God to be to man a perpetual reminder and a penitential acknowledgment of his sin and a confession of his faith in the promised Redeemer. They were intended to impress upon the fallen race the solemn truth that it was sin that caused death.” {PP 68.1}

Cain and Abel

Genesis 4:1-8 NKJV Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, “I have acquired a man from the LORD.” 2 Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. 3 And in the process of time (b) it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. 4 Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, 5 but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. 6 So the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? 7 If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.” (c) 8 Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

(b) “in the process of time” – the Hebrew and other versions have “in the end of days” which seems to indicate that it was the Sabbath. It may be that this ceremony was to be carried out each Sabbath.

(c) “if you do well” The language implies that previous instructions had been given as to the mode of worship. Hebrews 11:4 KJV By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous.

- Cain was thankful for God's blessings and willing to bring an offering, but he was not willing to follow God's instructions for the sacrificial ceremony. His pride and desire for independence would not allow him to admit his need of any righteousness outside of his own. Instead of repentance, he became angry when his own efforts were not accepted. God warned him that such attitudes would bring his ruin and encouraged him to rise above them, but Cain persisted in hardening his own heart.

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Noah

Genesis 8:15-20 NKJV Then God spoke to Noah, saying, 16 “Go out of the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons’ wives with you. ... 18 So Noah went out, ... 20 Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. 21 And the LORD smelled a soothing aroma. (a) Then the LORD said in His heart, “I will never again curse the ground for man’s sake, although the imagination of man’s heart *is* evil from his youth;

Abraham

Genesis 12:1-7 KJV Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: (2) And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and **thou shalt be a blessing**: (3) And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and **in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.** (b)

Genesis 13:4 KJV Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD.

Genesis 13:18 KJV Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the LORD.

Genesis 22:1-13 KJV And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt [prove] Abraham, ... (2) And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. (3) And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. ... (7) And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: ... Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? (8) And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: ... (9) And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. (10) And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. (11) And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. (12) And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. (13) And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. (c)

Passover

Exodus 12:1-13 KJV And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, ... take ... every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: ... (6) And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. (7) And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. (8) And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. ... (11) And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD'S passover. (12) For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. (13) And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. (d)

(a) “soothing aroma” The Hebrew indicates the “savor of rest”

- God was pleased with the offering not because burning flesh smells good but because Noah fully recognized and appreciated both the cost of sin and the value of God's offer to forgive man, taking upon Himself the cost of sin, which is death.

- 1 Samuel 15:22 KJV And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. - Hosea 6:6 KJV For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.

(b) God had not called Abraham nor has He called His church to be the ones to be saved and the rest be damned. Rather, He called them to be an example of God's salvation to the world, that the rest of the world might also be restored.

- Wherever Abraham went, he built an altar of sacrifice declaring to all who would see that God would be the one to bear the cost of sin upon Himself.

(c) God's promise that He would send the seed of the woman to bring an end to the hostility of Satan and redeem man from the grip of sin, was passed down from Adam through the line of God's faithful followers.

They knew the sacrificial lamb was only a symbol of this “soon-to-come” Son. Abraham must have supposed that Isaac was the promised One. He had been told that his children would inherit the promised land and that all families of Earth would be blessed through him. He had already been tested concerning the promise of his own son, and now he was fully willing to accept God's plan for the salvation of man--even at the expense of Isaac, who had been an obvious miracle of God. What a privilege this was for Abraham to feel the heart of God in this situation of offering up his dearly loved son.

(d) These Israelites were no less sinful than any other people of their day. After 400 years in Egypt, God was ready to fulfill His promise to Abraham that his descendants would become a great nation. Their deliverance came in such a way as to impress upon them that it was the work of God to provide for their every need. God was about to bring the land of Egypt into the light of His judgment, and He had made provision that all who would trust in His efforts to redeem man's affections, should continue to have their sins passed over. Again a decision was to be made. If they put their trust in the God of Israel, they were to put the blood of the Passover Lamb upon the doorposts of their houses. - It was at the age of twelve when Jesus visited the temple at Passover that He began to fully realize His mission. Luke 2:41-50

- It was at the time of the Passover that Jesus gave His life as the true Passover Lamb. They were to eat of the Passover Lamb indicating that the principles of God's provision were to permeate every thought and attitude. - Romans 3:25-26 KJV Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation [expiate, cover, atone] through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission [passing over, disregarding] of sins that are past, through the forbearance [tolerance] of God; (26) To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.