

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

## Jesus the Christ – His Cross and Mine

### Jesus as a child:

Matthew 1:20-23 NKJV But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her **is of the Holy Spirit**. 21 And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for **He will save His people from their sins**.” 22 So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: 23 “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “**God with us**.”

Luke 2:41-49 NKJV His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. 42 And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast. 43 When they had finished the days, ... they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. 47 And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. ... 49 And He said to them, “Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” (a)

### Jesus the healer:

Genesis 3:14 NKJV So the LORD God said to the serpent: 15 “I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.” (b)

Matthew 4:23-24 NKJV And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. 24 Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them.

Matthew 8:16-17 NKJV They brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, 17 that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: “He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses.”

### Jesus the passover Lamb:

Matthew 26:18-28 NKJV “My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with My disciples.” ... 26 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.” 27 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. 28 For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the **remission**(c) of sins.

Matthew 16:15-16 KJV He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? (16) And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. Christos; *anointed*, that is, the *Messiah*, Christ. *Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries*

(a) At the age of 12, Jesus made His first visit to the Temple in Jerusalem. As He watched the Passover ceremonies and discussed its meaning with the teachers, the Father opened to His mind the mission of suffering and death that lay ahead of Him.

(b) Jesus, the promised Seed of the woman, would be bruised on the heel of His foot. As Jesus walked this earth, there was no where His feet could take Him that He did not ache for the sorrow and grief, the hurt and pain that sin had brought upon mankind. He was drawn to those who had fallen victim to the reign of sin. The awareness that this was the cost of freedom was constantly present with Him. To all who were reaching out, He stopped to heal them.

Matthew 9:36 NKJV When He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.

(c) Aphesis *af-es-is*; *freedom*; (figuratively)  *pardon*: - deliverance, forgiveness, liberty, remission.

*Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries*

We have discussed how the sacrificial system given by God to Adam and Eve was to represent what God would do in sending His Son, born of a woman, to free man from the results of sin. And we pointed out how quickly the ceremony was twisted by those who did not know God into a means to appease an angry God. Satan has been persistent and largely successful in bringing this same picture of God into Christianity.

I had a friend once that worked with me in the factory, and I was explaining to him the plan of salvation. He was anything but Christian, as he would readily admit. But I will never forget the lesson that he taught me that day. I thought I had a pretty good handle on the matter until he challenged me. “You are saying that Jesus who was a perfect man died in the place of a man guilty of murder, to satisfy the justice of God? How does THAT satisfy justice? There is not a court anywhere in the world that would accept the death of an innocent man to let the murderer go free. THAT IS NOT JUSTICE!” I was quite proud to have the answer to that: “Justice is what we deserve but God has chosen to give us mercy instead. Since He could not overlook justice, the death that we deserved was satisfied in the death of Jesus.” He was not very impressed, saying, “I could accept that God gives mercy in place of justice. But this justice thing is sick, there’s something wrong with that.” I struggled for a long time to make sense of it after that.

This has been the challenge of thinking people to Christianity since the reformation, and historically Christians have struggled to explain it. Why **did** Christ have to die? One thing that makes it difficult is the failure to understand what forgiveness is and how it works differently with God than it does with us.

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

## Jesus the Christ – His Cross and Mine

### What is forgiveness?

Forgiveness is a sin word. Before the entrance of sin into God's creation, words like justice and mercy were never heard of; they had no meaning outside of the context of sin. Sin is when someone uses his or her freedom to violate the rights of someone else. That is, he or she transgresses the law of love. (a)

- You have two parties, the violated and the violator. The violated has suffered loss at the hand of the violator.
- Justice demands that the violator be responsible to restore the damage done or compensate for the loss incurred, that the innocent party should not suffer. Mercy is a disposition in which the injured person desires to be gracious toward the offender. But forgiveness goes much farther. Both justice and forgiveness have to deal with the loss.
- Forgiveness releases the violator from all responsibility in the matter. He goes free, owing nothing.
  - Now who has the loss? – The violated. What happened to justice?
  - This is where the traditional teaching of the atonement has gotten tripped up. We have thought that since God needed to see justice measured out, and since He desired mercy toward us, that the Godhead agreed that Jesus would come down and fulfill God's need for justice on the cross. This has caused much confusion as Christians have tried to hold this point of view without placing the Father and His Son against each other; as if the merciful Jesus was pleading with the stern Father to forgive us. (b)
- In order to understand forgiveness we need to divide it up into its varying aspects. First we must understand that forgiveness works differently in an isolated case between two individuals than it does in a society.
  - If there was no one in all the universe except for God and me, and I had offended God, and He chose to forgive me, who would suffer the loss? – He would. So He takes it upon Himself to restore the damage I caused, assures me of His love toward me, and our relationship continues in the joy of loving and being loved. But, then God says wait, justice must be met, I must find someone to suffer for this. Sound absurd? – That's what my friend at the factory thought.
  - In the case of my offenses toward God, there is no need for a third party to be involved. He has no need that justice should be satisfied on His account. This is just between God and me; there is no one else to object.
  - What we see at the Cross is not Jesus satisfying God's need for justice. It is the Godhead together bearing the cost of forgiveness.
    - Forgiveness bears the loss; it takes the damage done upon itself. The Cross is not God's act so that He **can** forgive us; **it is the very act of forgiveness itself.**
    - How could God have forgiven us from Heaven? Forgiveness is not something that you say; it is something that you do. You bear the loss. It is one thing to be told that you have been forgiven, but to see it being played out before your eyes is another. (c)

### What about justice? (d)

We have looked at how forgiveness works in the case of my offenses toward God. Now we must consider how it works in the case of man's inhumanity to man.

- For God to lay aside justice to forgive offenses committed against Him is acceptable. This is forgiveness.
- But for God to lay aside justice and forgive someone who has committed offenses against me is a different story. So even if God takes it upon Himself to restore my loss, and He sets the offender free, am I satisfied that justice has been accomplished? I am not comfortable to have the offender free. It was against my will, and now I **feel** that I have been double violated. (e)
- There is a tension within freedom that calls for justice. Freedom has boundaries. When one uses his freedom to remove the freedom of another, there is the call for justice. Can justice be simply set aside and ignored? – No, But God desires to see it superseded by something greater – forgiveness.

(a) Romans 13:10 MKJV Love works no ill to its neighbor, therefore love is the fulfilling of the Law.

(b) John 16:27 MKJV for the **Father Himself loves you**, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came out from God.

- John 14:9-10 MKJV Jesus said to him, Have I been with you such a long time and yet you have not known Me, Philip? **He who has seen Me has seen the Father.** And how do you say, Show us the Father? (10) Do you not believe that **I am in the Father and the Father in Me?** The Words that I speak to you I do not speak of Myself, but the Father who dwells in Me, He does the works.

- 2 Corinthians 5:19 KJV God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.

(c) Hebrews 9:11-15 MKJV But when Christ had become a high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building (12) nor by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered once for all into the Holies, having obtained eternal redemption for us. (13) For if the blood of bulls and of goats and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean sanctifies to the purifying of the flesh, (14) **how much more shall the blood of Christ** (who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God) **purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?** (15) And for this cause He is the Mediator of the new covenant, so that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, those who are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

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

(d) Psalms 89:14 MKJV Justice and judgment are the foundation of Your throne; mercy and truth shall go before Your face.

(e) Jeremiah 12:1-4 MKJV Righteous are You, O Jehovah, that I might contend with You; yet let me speak with You about Your judgments. Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why are all those happy who deal treacherously? (2) You have planted them; yea, they take root. They grow, yea, they make fruit. You are near in their mouth and far from their reins. (3) But You, O Jehovah, know me. You have seen me and tried my heart toward You. Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and devote them for the day of slaughter. (4) How long shall the land mourn, and the grass of every field wither from the evil of those who dwell in it? The beasts and the birds have been destroyed, because they said, He shall not see our last end.

- Psalms 94:3-22 NKJV LORD, How long will the wicked triumph? ... 21 They gather together against the life of the righteous, And condemn innocent blood. 22 But the LORD has been my defense, And my God the rock of my refuge.

- Revelation 6:10 KJV And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

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

## Jesus the Christ – His Cross and Mine

- What right would a third party have to step into the situation and stand in for the offender? Only if the offending person had been in the care of the third party. As in the case of the Father of a young child who has caused an offense. Or the owner of a slave in olden times. If your dog bites the neighbor, who will be held responsible? Did you in any way desire or design that your neighbor gets bit? No – but because you own the dog you are responsible for its presence in the neighbor's yard.
- God has stepped in and taken responsibility because He is the Owner/Creator of man. He is the One who counted the cost that would be required for the effects of sin to be realized by all His creatures. Only then could freedom reign throughout eternity without sin ever recurring. He has delayed justice to give space for sin to find its end. He has taken upon Himself the cost to accomplish justice in perfect righteousness. **We see Jesus bearing on the cross the cost of freedom, not just for us but also for the entire universe and all of eternity.** (a)
- God longs to supersede justice with forgiveness for all mankind. He has stepped in for each sinner, extending to them forgiveness that they might have an extended chance to accept God's friendship and find life. Yet in our self-focused state of mind we have trouble with this delay in justice.
  - Romans 2:1-5 NKJV Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge... for you who judge practice the same things. ... 3 And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God? (b) 4 Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? (c) 5 But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, (d)
  - Romans 3:23-26 NKJV all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, (e) 25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, (f) to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, (g) 26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, (h) that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (i)

### Two sides to forgiveness:

There are two more aspects to forgiveness that we need to consider. **Forgiveness is what is sought when the relationship is more important than the loss incurred.** Sometimes when we use the word forgiveness, we are talking about the attitude of the offended party. This is a one-sided affair. Then sometimes we use the same word to refer to the whole and completed work of forgiveness in which the forgiveness has been accepted, and the relationship has been restored. When we read the Bible and consider the character of God, it is important to distinguish which is being talked about.

- Does God's attitude change toward us when we sin?
  - Yes. Because sin blinds our own heart and distorts our understanding of Him, He sets out with increased efforts to win us back and restore our confidence in His willingness and ability to lead us in ways of eternal success. (j)
  - He always sees us through forgiving eyes. So why do we pray as if we need to change His mind toward us? Is our vision distorted by the idea that Jesus is pleading with the Father to forgive us, and we too need to plead?
- Is God surprised by our failures, or disgusted with our condition?
  - He knows that we are dysfunctional apart from Him. He knows that we are wounded and sore, naked and cold. He fully accepts our condition pleading for us to come to Him for healing. **We need not to plead but to see and believe. To look and live.** (k)
- Which comes first, God's goodness or our faith?
  - Romans 2:4 ... not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?
  - John 3:16 NKJV For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.
  - Colossians 2:13 MKJV And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,

(a) John 12:31-33 MKJV Now is the judgment of this world. Now shall the prince of this world be cast out. (32) And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw **all** to Myself. (33) But He said this, signifying what kind of death He was about to die.

(b) Anxious to see others come to justice, we little consider that we are just as sinful.

(c) We despise that God has been slow to bring others to justice, forgetting that it was His goodness to us that won our hearts to Him.

(d) Our hard hearts will find us in the very hopeless condition that we desired for them.

(e) **All** have been justified, that is, a reason found why they should not be held accountable – forgiven.

(f) Propitiation here means to cover or appease for a wrong done. It is realized through our faith in Jesus taking the cost of sin upon Himself. We are the ones being appeased--not God, as many have thought.

(g) Why do we need to be appeased? - Because God has passed over sins that have been committed against us.

(h) That we should be satisfied before we see the final end, having seen His righteousness set forth in His death on the Cross.

(i) That He might prove Himself just in forgiving those who have wronged us.

(j) Jeremiah 29:11 NKJV For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.

(k) Numbers 21:9 MKJV And Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole. And it happened that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he looked upon the serpent of brass, he lived.

- John 3:14 MKJV But even as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,

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

## Jesus the Christ – His Cross and Mine

- Ephesians 4:32 MKJV And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.
- In God's goodness He has forgiven all, not holding them accountable for the loss incurred. He has already accepted the loss upon Himself. We need not plead with God as if to change His mind about forgiving us. We need only to accept it, and allow Him to cleanse us.
- Then what about the texts that indicate otherwise?
  - Psalms 86:5 MKJV For You, Lord, are good and ready to forgive, and rich in mercy to all those who call on You.
  - 1 John 1:9 KJV If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
  - Isaiah 55:7 KJV Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.
  - These texts are referring to the complete work of forgiveness accepted into our hearts that changes us by His restored friendship. **Whether we are acceptable for eternity is not dependent on whether God has forgiven us but on whether His forgiveness has accomplished its work in our hearts, restoring us in the friendship of His love.** (a)

### Gethsemane: (b)

Matthew 26:36-45 MKJV Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane. And He said to the disciples, Sit here while I go and pray there. (37) And He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee with Him, and **He began to be sorrowful and very heavy.** (38) Then He said to them, **My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death.** Wait here and watch with Me. (39) And He went a little further and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, **O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.** Yet not as I will, but as You will. (40) And He came to the disciples and found them asleep. And He said to Peter, What! Could you not watch with Me one hour? (41) Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation. **The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.** ... (44) And He left them and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same word. (45) Then He came to His disciples and said to them, Sleep on now and take your rest. Behold, the hour is at hand, and the **Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.**

Luke 22:43-44 MKJV And an angel appeared to Him from Heaven, strengthening Him. (44) And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly. And His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

### Calvary: (c)

Luke 23:33-35 MKJV And when they came to the place which is called Calvary, they crucified Him and the criminals there, one on the right, and one on the left. (34) And Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do. And parting His clothing, they cast lots. (35) And the people stood watching. And also the rulers with them, scoffing, saying, He saved others, let Him save Himself, if He is the Christ, the chosen of God.

- Man can be lifted no higher than that which he will find in thoughtful hours spent beholding the final days of Christ's life. Is this an angry God requiring the sacrifice of His own Son in order to forgive me? Or is this the unity of the Godhead working together to say, "There is nothing you can do to me to make me stop loving you. You can spit in my face, pull out my beard. You can whip me until I faint, and I will still love you. Our relationship means more than all the loss you have caused me, and I am willing to bear it that you might be restored"?

### My Cross:

Matthew 16:24 MKJV Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. (d)

Mark 10:21 MKJV Then Jesus, beholding him, loved him and said to him, One thing you lack. Go, sell whatever you have and give it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in Heaven. And come, take up the cross and follow Me.

(a) Matthew 18:22-34 MKJV Jesus said to him, I do not say to you, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven. (23) Therefore the kingdom of Heaven has been compared to a certain king who desired to make an accounting with his servants. (24) And when he had begun to count, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. (25) But as he had nothing to pay, his lord commanded that he, and his wife and children, and all that he had, be sold, and payment be made. (26) Then the servant fell down and worshiped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me and I will pay you all. (27) Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. (28) But the same servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. And he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me what you owe. (29) And his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, Have patience with me and I will pay you all. (30) And he would not, but went and cast him into prison until he should pay the debt. (31) So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry. And they came and told their lord all that was done. (32) Then his lord, after he had called him, said to him, O wicked servant, I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. (33) Should you not also have pitied your fellow servant, even as I had pity on you? (34) And his lord was angry, and delivered him to the tormentors until he should pay all that was due to him.

(b) 2 Corinthians 5:14-21 MKJV For the love of Christ constrains us, judging this, that if one died for all, then all died; (15) and He died for all, that the living ones may live no more to themselves, but to Him who died for them and having been raised. .... (19) whereas God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them. ... (21) For He has made Him who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

(c) Isaiah 53:3-5 NKJV He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, *our* faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. 4 Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet **we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.** 5 But *He* was wounded for our transgressions, *He* was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him, and **by His stripes we are healed.**

(d) There is a price to pay for freedom. There is a cost to pay for the chance that for some, justice will be realized in the change that takes place in them through forgiveness. Jesus was willing to take all the blame upon Him that our hearts might soften. Are we willing to bear the offenses of others with the same spirit to win their hearts to the Savior--that they might know His love which is life eternal? He asks us to carry our cross as He did.