

THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE

- A. Introduction:** We're living at a time when false teachings about who Jesus is and why He came into this world abound. So we are taking time to look at what the New Testament says about Jesus.
1. The New Testament was written by eyewitnesses (or close associates of eyewitnesses)—people who walked and talked with Jesus, heard Him teach, saw Him die, and then saw Him alive again.
 - a. Last week we began to look at what they reported about why Jesus came to earth. John the apostle quoted Jesus as stating that He came to give people life more abundantly. John 10:10
 1. This verse is often used incorrectly to say that Jesus came to give us an abundant life, meaning a prosperous, happy life in this life.
 2. But when we consider the verse in the context of other things Jesus said, we find that He came to deliver us from the guilt and power of sin, and then give eternal life to those who believe in Him as Savior and Lord.
 - b. Believing that Jesus came to give you a prosperous life in this life, it won't necessarily cost you your salvation from sin, but it will give you false expectations about this life.
 1. These false expectations then lead to confusion and anger at God when life doesn't turn out as expected, and people don't experience the abundant life they were promised.
 2. Life is hard enough. We don't need the added pain that comes from thinking that God has failed us, or that we can't trust Him, because our life isn't what we hoped it would be.
 2. But there's another even more important reason why we need to understand the real reason Jesus came into this world. It has become increasingly common to hear people say that there are many paths to God, and that all people are saved no matter what they believe or how they live.
 - a. These ideas are completely contrary to what Jesus said about Himself, as well as what the eyewitnesses wrote about Him.
 1. Jesus said: I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me (John 14:6, NLT).
 2. Peter, speaking of Jesus, said: There is salvation in no one else! There is no other name in all of heaven for people to call on to save them (Acts 4:12, NLT).
 - b. In this lesson we're going to talk about why Jesus is the only way to God, and why we need to clearly understand this—for our sake and for the sake of the people we encounter.
- B. The Bible reveals that all human beings are guilty of sin before a holy God and, as a result, are dead. Although humans have physical life, we are cut off from or separated from God, who is life. This condition is sometimes referred to as spiritual death.**
1. Paul (another eyewitness) reminded Christians of what they were before they came to faith in Christ: Once you were dead, doomed forever because of your many sins (Eph 2:1, NLT).
 - a. Without Jesus, we are alive physically, but we lack life in our innermost being and have no access to God (we are dead). This condition becomes irreversible once our body dies.
 - b. Jesus came into this world to remedy our condition. Jesus said: God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten (unique) Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting or eternal life. John 3:16
 1. Eternal or everlasting life is not live forever life. Every human being has eternal or everlasting life in the sense that no one ceases to exist when their body dies.
 2. The Greek word that John uses when he referred to the eternal life that Jesus came to bring in John 3:16 and John 10:10 is *zoe*. This word is used for life as God has it—the uncreated, eternal life in God. This life (*zoe*) has two aspects to it.
 - A. One, if you have eternal life (*zoe*) in this life, when you leave your body at death, you

go to be with the Lord in His home—Heaven. If you do not have eternal life, when you die, you go to a place of separation from Him known as Hell.

B. Two, if you have eternal life (*zoe*) in this life, it means that God, who is life (*zoe*), has indwelled you by His Spirit, and you are literally born of (made alive by) Him.

c. If you have life (*zoe*) in this life you will not perish. The word perish means to perish or lose. The idea is not extinction. The idea is ruin or loss. For a human being, to be eternally separated from God is the ultimate ruin because you are forever lost to your created purpose.

2. God created human beings for relationship with Himself. It was His plan that men and women become more than creatures He created. He desires that we become literal sons and daughters, born of Him. He desires that we partake of His life—the uncreated, eternal life in Him.

a. Our sin has made that impossible. God, who is holy and righteous, cannot indwell men and women who are guilty of sin. God cannot have sinners as sons and daughters. Nor can God overlook sin. To do so would be equivalent to condoning it.

1. To be true to His holy, righteous nature, God must carry out the penalty for our sin. That penalty is death or eternal separation from Him, the One who is life.

2. If the penalty is enacted, God loses His family. God devised a plan to deal with human sin and still be true to His righteousness and justice. God took on flesh (incarnated) and offered Himself as a sacrifice for our sins so that we can be set free from sin's penalty.

b. God introduced the idea that a sacrifice (or a death) is necessary to free us from sin. After Adam and Eve sinned, the Lord made coats for them from animal skins. An innocent animal's blood was shed to cover their sin. Gen 3:21

3. Many centuries later, God set the Jewish people apart as the nation through whom Jesus would come into this world. And, He began to build it into their consciousness the idea that "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" (Heb 9:22, NLT).

a. As part of this process, God gave them a system of animal sacrifices to cover their sins so that He could live among them, until the perfect sacrifice could be made that would take away sin.

1. The Lord told these people: For the life of any creature is in its blood. I have given you the blood so you can make atonement for your sins. It is the blood, representing life, that brings you atonement (or covering for sin) (Lev 17:11, NLT).

2. From these revelations, the Jewish people came to understand the idea of substitutionary death—one taking the place of another so that the other can be freed from a penalty.

b. As part of this system of sacrifice, at a special feast known as the Day of Atonement, the High Priest of Israel laid his hands on the head of a goat and confessed the sins of the people over it. The goat was led away into the desert and let go to signify the carrying away of Israel's sins.

1. Lev 10:17—(This goat) was given to you for removing the guilt of the community and for making atonement for the people before the Lord (NLT).

2. Lev 16:22—After the man sets it free in the wilderness, the goat will carry away all the people's sins upon itself into a desolate land (NLT).

A. At the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, John the Baptist identified Jesus as the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. John 1:29

B. The Greek word translated takes away means to lift, to take up and carry away. It is comparable to the Hebrew word used to describe what the goat did on the Day of Atonement (*nasa*)—it bore and took away the guilt or punishment of sin.

c. Jesus' death was a fulfillment of what the Old Testament prophet Isaiah was inspired to write, seven hundred years before Jesus came into this world to die for our sin.

1. Isa 53:6—All of us have strayed away like sheep. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on him the guilt and sins of us all (NLT).

2. Jesus died a substitutionary death on the Cross. Our guilt and sin went to Him. In the mind of God, when Jesus died, we died, and when He was punished, we were punished. He went to the Cross for us, as us.

4. Because of the value of Jesus' Person (He is the God-man), He was able to satisfy justice on our behalf. His sacrifice does not merely cover sin. His sacrifice abolishes sin. Heb 9:26
- a. When a person believes in Jesus as Savior and Lord, on the basis of Jesus' sacrifice, God can justify that person—declare him no longer guilty, declare him righteous—because the penalty has been paid, the punishment carried out.

1. Rom 4:25-5:1—(Jesus) was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification. Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (ESV).

2. II Cor 5:21—For God made the one who did not know sin to become sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God through our union with him (TPT).

- b. The blood of Christ so thoroughly cleanses us from the guilt of sin that God can deal with us as though we never sinned. He can do what He intended from the beginning—indwell us by His life (*zoe*) and Spirit.

1. We are born of God and become actual sons and daughters of God, partakers of His uncreated, eternal life (*zoe*). This new birth becomes the basis of our identity.

2. John 1:12-13—But to all who believed him and accepted him (the Word), he gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn! This is not a physical rebirth resulting from human passion or plan—this rebirth comes from God (NLT).

- c. The New Testament writers (the eyewitnesses) use three word pictures to describe our relationship with Jesus once we believe in Him. All depict union and shared life—vine and branch (John 15:5); head and body (Eph 1:22-23); husband and wife (Eph 5:30-32).

1. Becoming partakers of life (*zoe*) is the beginning of a process of transformation that will ultimately restore every part of our being to what God intended—sons and daughters who are fully glorifying to God in every thought, word, and action (upcoming lessons).

2. Rom 5:10—For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, we shall be saved by his life (ESV).

C. Conclusion: I realize that a lesson like this one doesn't seem practical. But not only is it practical, it is vital, given the growing religious deception all around us.

1. First, this information can bring you peace of mind as you face life's challenges. Far too many sincere Christians believe that their troubles are God's way of punishing them for sin.
- a. Life's troubles are not expressions of God's justice and punishment. Your car wreck or sickness is not enough to pay the penalty you owe for sin. The penalty for sin is eternal separation from God. Jesus took the punishment due you for your sins so you don't have to.
- b. I'm not saying that there are no consequences for sin in this life, because there are. But consequences are not God's way of punishing you (lessons for another day).
2. The information in this lesson is also vital. It has becoming increasingly common to hear people say that there are many paths to God. And, because He is a loving God, the Lord would never allow anyone to be eternally separated from Him.
- a. They use Bible verses to try to prove their point. For example, I Tim 4:10 states that God is the Savior of all men, especially those who believe. Some take this verse out of context and use the passage to say that all are or will be saved.
- b. Sadly, a lot of sincere Christians are vulnerable to teachings based on verses taken out of context. In many churches, solid Bible teaching has been badly neglected for several decades

and replaced by motivational messages. Consequently many lack understanding of basic themes that are repeated throughout Scripture—like what saves us from the guilt of sin.

1. The Bible is not a collection of independent, unrelated verses. It is a collection of books and letters written by real people to other real people to communicate information.

2. To properly interpret an individual verse, we must consider what it would have meant to the first readers—first century men and women whose view of reality was shaped by the Old Testament documents and by what they saw and heard from Jesus.

c. The first Christians understood from Jesus and the eyewitnesses (the apostles) that you must believe in Jesus and accept His sacrifice to be saved from the guilt of sin. They understood that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin (Heb 9:22). Remission means to release the sins from the sinner. They understood that Jesus is the only way to salvation.

2. When you recognize humanity's greatest problem—we're guilty of sin before a holy God and that there is nothing we can do to fix it—then you can understand why there is only one way to God.

a. There is no other way to be delivered from the guilt of sin, but through Jesus, because His sacrifice is the only remedy for our condition, the only way to be reconciled to God.

1. I Tim 2:5-6—For there is only one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and people. He is the man Christ Jesus. He gave his life to purchase freedom for everyone (NLT).

2. Col 1:19-20—For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, and by him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of his blood on the Cross (NLT).

b. When Jesus said: I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the Father but by Me (John 14:6), He wasn't being bigoted or narrow minded. He was speaking the truth.

1. I Am the way of access—Through His sacrifice Jesus opened the way to God. I Am the truth, the full revelation of God—There is no way to know God in His fullness apart from Jesus. I Am the life (*zoe*)—The life that Jesus gives is the life in Him (*zoe*).

2. I John 5:11-12—And this is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life (*zoe*), and this life (*zoe*) is in his Son. So whoever has God's Son has (*zoe*); whoever does not have his son does not have life (*zoe*) (NLT).

3. Jesus' sacrifice of Himself is the once and for all sacrifice that takes away sin. But to experience the effects of this sacrifice, a person must accept Jesus and His sacrifice. Consider these verses.

a. Jesus said that whosoever believes in Him will not perish (John 3:15-16). He said: Those who don't obey the Son will never experience eternal life, but the wrath of God remains on them (John 3:36, NLT). He said: Unless you believe that I Am who I say I Am, you will die in your sins (John 8:24, NLT).

b. Peter and the other apostles (eyewitnesses) proclaimed this same message: Whosoever believes in Jesus will receive remission of sins. Acts 10:42-43

1. Jesus is the Savior of all men—potentially. He died for all, but not all men accept Him and His sacrifice. Therefore, not all will be saved.

2. Paul wrote: Those who refuse to obey the Good News of our Lord Jesus...will be punished with everlasting destruction, forever separated from the Lord (II Thess 1:8-9, NLT).

4. This lesson is vital. If you don't clearly understand why and how we are saved from sin, you are vulnerable to deception (Matt 13:19), and you will not be able to clearly present the good news of salvation to those around you. Much more next week!