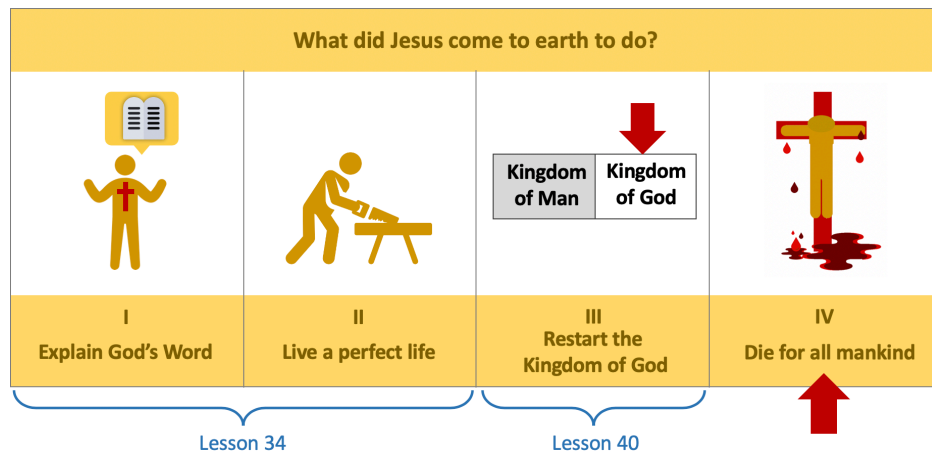


Lesson 35: Death of Christ

Previously...

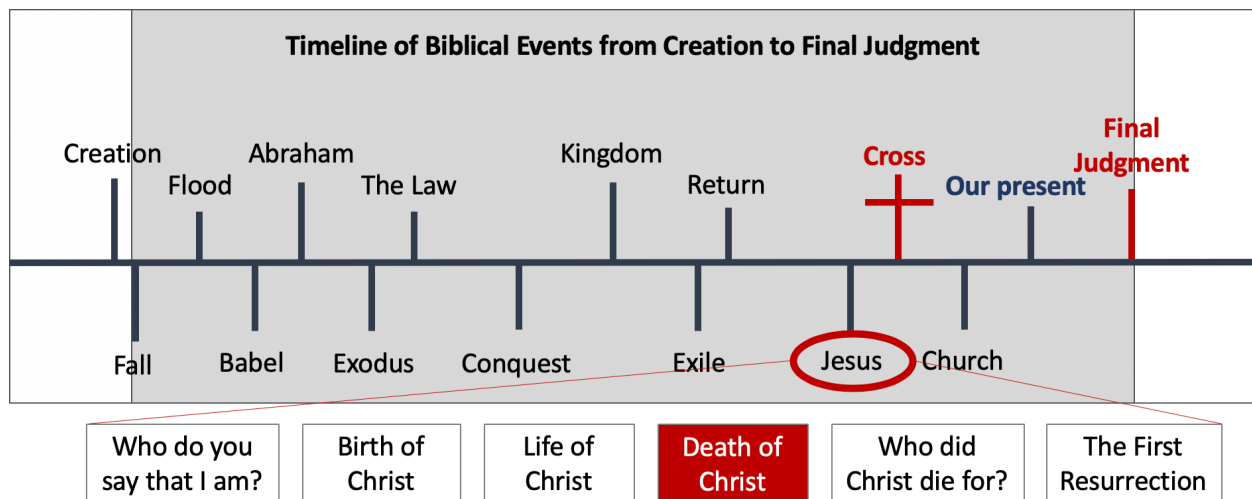
When Jesus came to earth as a man:

- (i) He explained and made clear God's Law and
- (ii) He lived a perfectly righteous life, both to fulfil God's Law as well as leave us an example on how to live.



But Jesus also came to die for the sins of mankind.

The Bible records many important things about Jesus, but the most important are His death and resurrection.

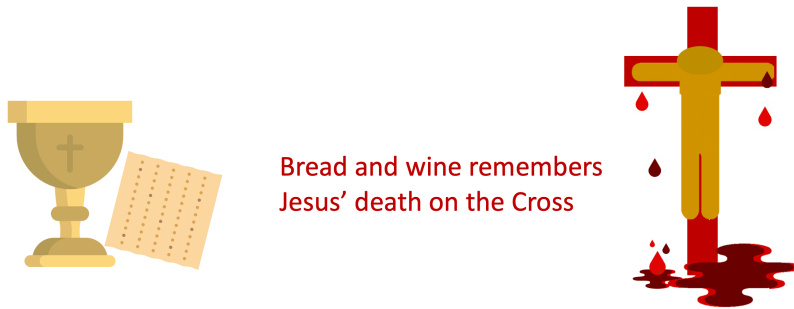


We know this because Jesus Himself didn't ask His disciples to remember His birthday or any other event in His life. But He asked them to remember His death regularly.

This is what the apostle Paul recorded.

1 Corinthians 11:23–26

²³ For I pass on to you what I received from the Lord himself. On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took some bread ²⁴ and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and said, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵ In the same way, he took the cup of wine after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood. Do this in remembrance of me as often as you drink it." ²⁶ For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are announcing the Lord's death until he comes again.



Jesus' death and resurrection is so important that the New Testament mentions it many times. For example:

1 Corinthians 1:23

So when we preach that Christ was crucified, the Jews are offended and the Gentiles say it's all nonsense.

1 Corinthians 2:2

For I decided that while I was with you I would forget everything except Jesus Christ, the one who was crucified.

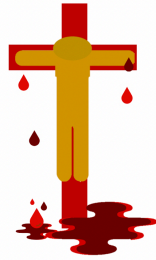
Galatians 6:14

As for me, may I never boast about anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of that cross, my interest in this world has been crucified, and the world's interest in me has also died.

(See other examples: 1 Corinthians 15:3; 1 Corinthians 1:18; Romans 6:3; Hebrews 12:2; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 John 5:6.)

Question: Why is Jesus' death and resurrection so important?

Answer: Because it is Yahweh's ultimate solution for mankind's sin problem. When Jesus died on the cross, God was satisfied that justice had finally been done.


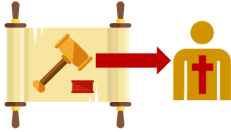




When Jesus died
on the Cross...



...God was satisfied that
justice had been done

But how was justice done? To answer that question, we need to understand justice from God's point of view. We will examine four aspects of God's justice.

A How God sees justice	B God planned to have justice through the Saviour	C God's standard of justice was satisfied	D Jesus invites everyone to benefit from the justice He obtained
			



A. How God Sees Justice

As the perfect Creator-God of the universe, Yahweh is the only One who can determine what is right, good, fair, just and what is not. Starting in the Old Testament, God slowly taught mankind about what His justice means.

His first "lesson" was in the garden of Eden after Adam and Eve rebelled against Him. This was what He did:


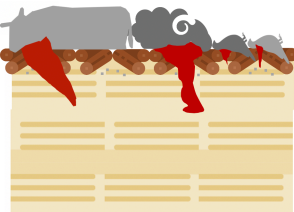

Genesis 3:21

And the LORD God made clothing from animal skins for Adam and his wife.



Yahweh killed an animal—He was the first One to take away life. He removed its skin to make leather clothes for the fallen man and woman. God spilt the blood of an innocent animal as the first example of what real justice looks like. The animal's blood paid for the sin of the man and woman.

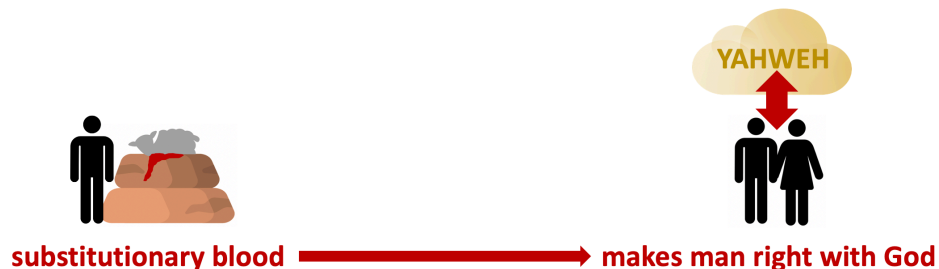
Then, as time moved on, the Bible records other instances of the killing of animals.

Abel kills animals as an offering to God	Noah sacrifices animals after the Flood	Abraham sacrifices animals in the covenant ceremony
<p>Genesis 4:4 Abel also brought a gift—the <u>best portions</u> of the firstborn lambs from his flock. The LORD accepted Abel and his gift,</p> 	<p>Genesis 8:20–21a ²⁰ Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and there <u>he sacrificed as burnt offerings the animals and birds</u> that had been approved for that purpose. ²¹ And the LORD was pleased with the aroma of the sacrifice</p> 	<p>Genesis 15:9–10a ⁹ The LORD told him, “Bring me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” ¹⁰ So <u>Abram presented all these to him and killed them.</u></p> 

But why the killing of animals? Later on, when Yahweh gave the people the Mosaic Law, He explained more. He said that an animal dies in man's place so that man can be made right with God and live.

Leviticus 17:11

for the life of the body is in its blood. I have given you the blood on the altar to purify you, making you right with the LORD. It is the blood, given in exchange for a life, that makes purification possible.



But what has blood got to do with justice? It is because:



1. Sin is ultimately against Yahweh

Through the Law, Yahweh taught that all sin and injustice is done against Him, and not to another person. (Not only that, as the Creator of the entire universe, this same principle also applies to the invisible angelic realm. When angels sin, they are acting against Yahweh.)

Other people may have suffered because of the sin, but it is Yahweh who has been offended. He is the One who has been betrayed by the sin.

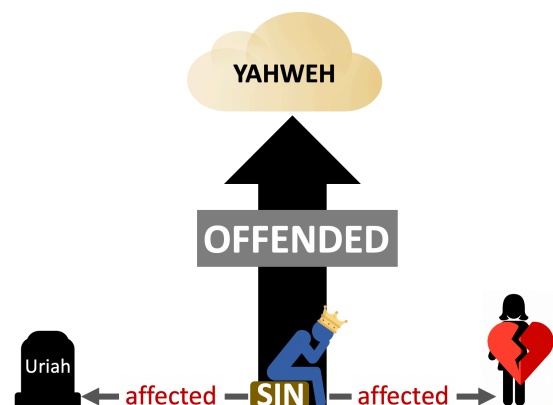
Numbers 5:5–8

⁵ Then the LORD said to Moses, ⁶ “Give the following instructions to the people of Israel: If any of the people—men or women—betray the LORD by doing wrong to another person, they are guilty. ⁷ They must confess their sin and make full restitution for what they have done, adding an additional 20 percent and returning it to the person who was wronged.

⁸ But if the person who was wronged is dead, and there are no near relatives to whom restitution can be made, the payment belongs to the LORD and must be given to the priest. Those who are guilty must also bring a ram as a sacrifice, and they will be purified and made right with the LORD.

David understood this teaching very well. When he committed adultery with Bathsheba and murdered her husband Uriah, he totally destroyed Uriah and Bathsheba’s family.

Yet, when he went before God to confess what he had done, David said that his sin was actually against God. He did not even mention Bathsheba and Uriah!



This is what David said to Yahweh:

Psalms 51:4

Against you, and you alone, have I sinned;

I have done what is evil in your sight.

You will be proved right in what you say,
and your judgment against me is just.

If Bathsheba and Uriah were the ones who suffered because of David's sin, why would the Bible say that all sin is actually against Yahweh?

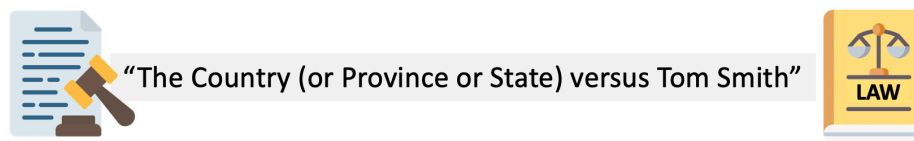
i. All sin is against Yahweh because He is the Lawmaker.

God is the authority on what is truly right and wrong. And when He gave the Law, He told man His standard. So all people were to obey His standard of right and wrong. If anyone goes against this standard, they are offending Him.

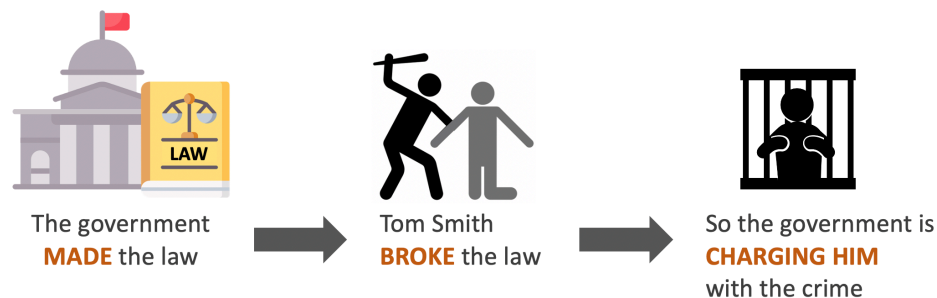
For example, God's Law states that adultery and murder are sins. When David committed adultery and murder, he went against God's Law. He sinned against God's Law. So He sinned against God Himself.



Modern-day courts also work in the same way. For example, if Tom Smith committed a crime against Robert Lee, the court case will be presented as:



Why would it not say "Robert Lee vs Tom Smith"? This is because the crime is against the lawmaker. In this case:



Similarly, God is the ultimate Lawmaker. When we sin, we are sinning against His Law. This means we are sinning against Him.

ii. All sin is against Yahweh because He created and owns everything and everyone.

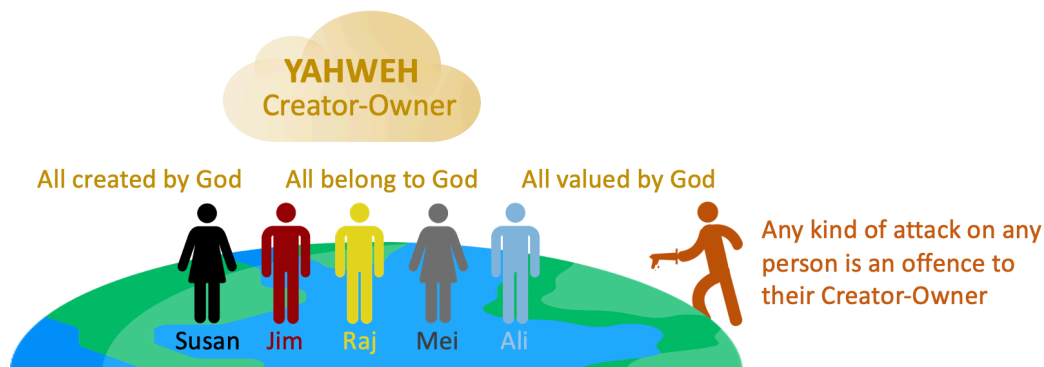
If you created an art piece that you value, and someone destroyed it, they would have offended you.

Or if you kept a cat and someone abused it, they would have offended you.



It is the same with Yahweh. He is the Creator of the universe. And He owns everyone and everything. Yahweh places value on everything He created.

Because God values and treasures all He created, all crimes against people whom He loves are an offence against Him, their Creator-Owner.



This is why ALL sin is ultimately against God, because:

- He is the Lawmaker.
- He is the Creator-Owner: He created, owns and values His creation.



2. Yahweh demands restitution (putting things back to the way it was before)

To God, justice means restitution. The word “restitution” means to fix the situation so that whatever is lost or stolen is returned to the rightful owner. This is God’s heart and plan for justice: to put right what was made wrong. For example, this is what God said in His Law:










Leviticus 24:18–21

¹⁸ “Anyone who kills another person’s animal must pay for it in full—a live animal for the animal that was killed.

¹⁹ “Anyone who injures another person must be dealt with according to the injury inflicted — ²⁰ a fracture for a fracture, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. Whatever anyone does to injure another person must be paid back in kind.

²¹ “Whoever kills an animal must pay for it in full, but whoever kills another person must be put to death.

What Justice means to Yahweh

OFFENCE		RESTITUTION
Animal killed 		Killer replaces with new animal 
Body part injured 		Offender pays equivalent amount 
Person killed 		Killer loses their own life  Since lost human life cannot be restored, the killer's own life must be taken away.

“Justice” to God means that the full value of what is lost, is repaid.

When God talks about an “eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth”, it is to teach that people should not pay back too little or too much. It should match the value of what was lost or damaged. This is what God considers fair and appropriate.

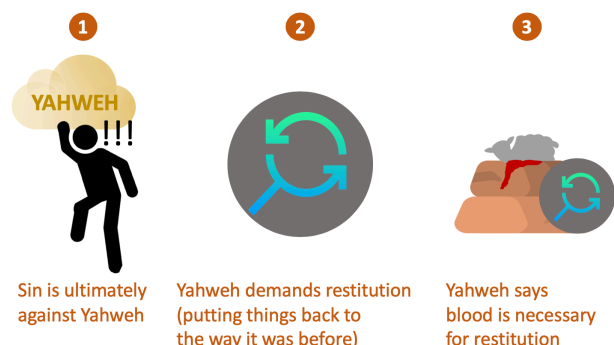
God is not really saying He wants a person’s eye destroyed if that person hurt someone else’s eye. In the giving of the Law, God already set up a system of judging or “court system” where the judge would decide the appropriate punishment, using the principles God gave (Exodus 18:13–26).

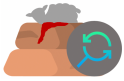
Most of the time, repayment was in the form of goods. There are no records in the Bible that showed a person actually losing a body part as a punishment for crime. (For more examples of restitution, see Exodus 22:1–15.)

In the case of killing someone, God demands that the killer pays for the crime with their own death. Why? It is because the victim is dead. No amount of money or goods will bring the person back. The only fair, appropriate and equal-value payment is for the killer to lose their life too.

At this point, we have seen how all sin is ultimately against God. And as the Creator-Owner of the universe, Yahweh demands restitution for sin wherever it occurs. Even sinning angels must make restitution (Matthew 25:41). If Yahweh were to allow His creation to continue forever in corruption, it would mock His righteousness.

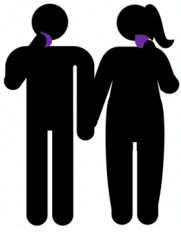
Yahweh is the only One who can determine what is fair and just for the crime that had been committed. And He says blood is necessary for restitution.

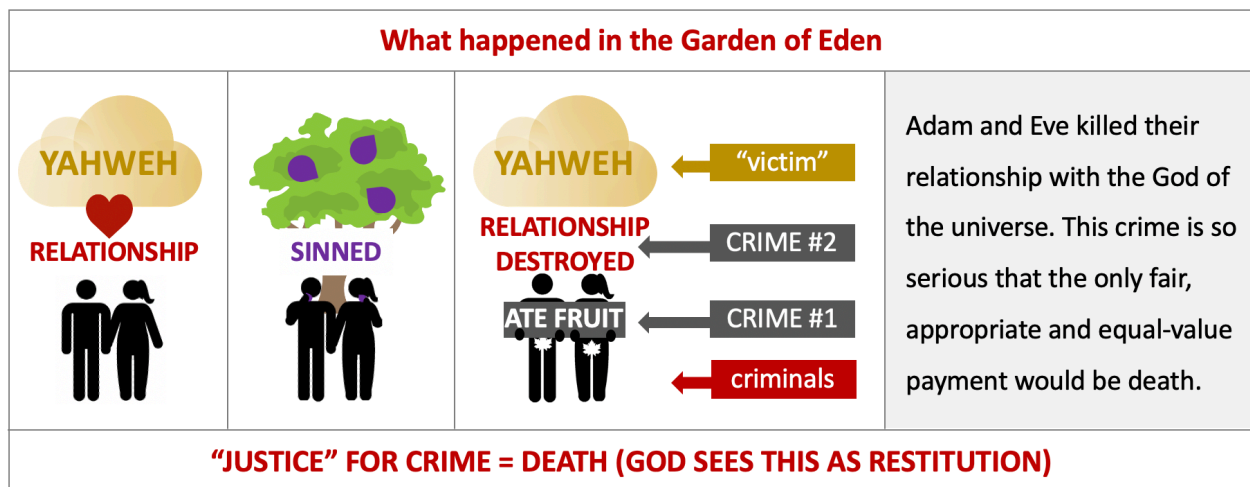




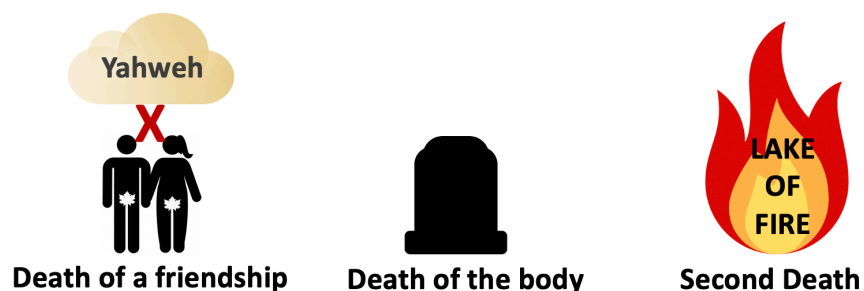
3. Blood is necessary for restitution

Why do we think God demands blood for restitution? We see this in the incident at the garden of Eden.

<p>Yahweh's Warning</p> <p>When God created man, He told them that the punishment for eating the fruit was death.</p>	<p>Genesis 2:16-17</p> <p>¹⁶ But the LORD God warned him, "You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden— ¹⁷ except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. <u>If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die.</u>"</p>	<p>They ATE</p> 
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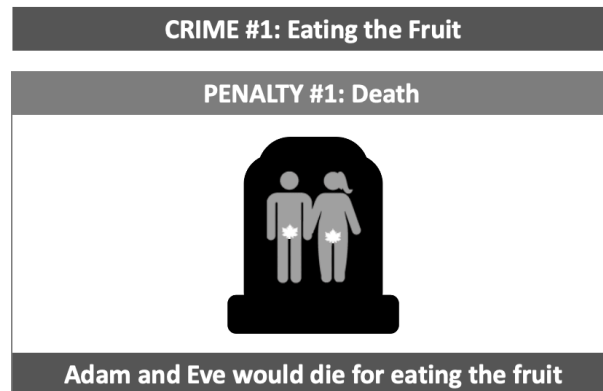
The Bible talks about death in a few different ways.



For Crime #1 of eating the fruit, Adam's and Eve's bodies would die.

Genesis 3:19b

For you were made from dust,
and to dust you will return.



However, they were also guilty of a second crime.

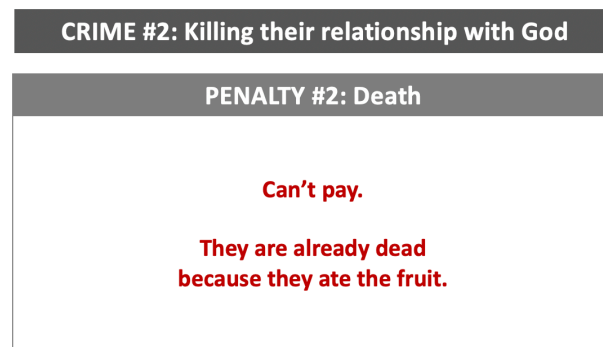
Crime #2: Destroying their friendship with God.

Isaiah 59:2

It's your sins that have cut you off from God.
Because of your sins, he has turned away
and will not listen anymore.

This death of friendship would also lead them to the second death because enemies of God can never ever have a relationship with Him and live with Him (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10, 14–15).

However, there was a problem. There was no way they could pay for this second crime.



What can be done ? They need another death...

There would be no justice if Adam and Eve did not die for killing their relationship with God (Penalty #2) as well.

So God intervened.

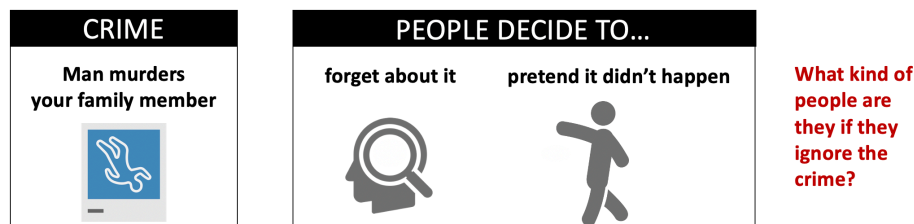
God used a live innocent animal as a substitute to die in their place. God made restitution. He brought about justice through the shedding of the animal's blood for Adam and Eve.



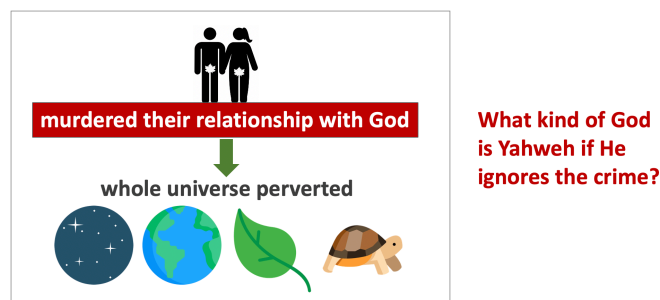
Question: Why couldn't God just forget about the crime and pretend it didn't happen? Why must He bring about justice and restitution? Why can't Adam and Eve just say sorry?

Answer: Because this goes against God's all-good character.

If your family member was murdered, would there be justice if everyone just chose to forget about the crime and pretend it didn't happen? We would start to question what kind of people they all were, to ignore a horrible crime.

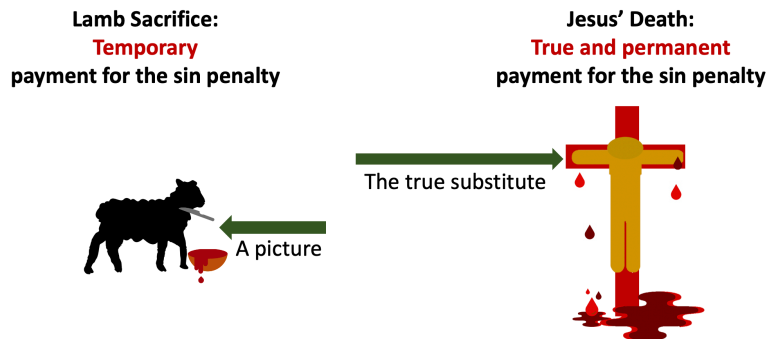


When Adam and Eve murdered their relationship with God, the whole universe was affected by this horrible act against the Creator-God. Yahweh cannot just pretend it didn't happen. Because He is all-good and all-just, He must deal with it. We would question what kind of a God Yahweh is if He ignored horrible crimes. This is what God taught people about justice and restitution in the Old Testament.



However, God also told them that the animal was just a picture of restitution. He used the animal to teach them about the idea of an innocent substitute dying in place of the guilty.

What God planned to do was to send an actual sinless man to die for sinful mankind. This is because true justice means that only a man can die as a substitute in the place of another man. An animal is not of equal value, it is not enough.



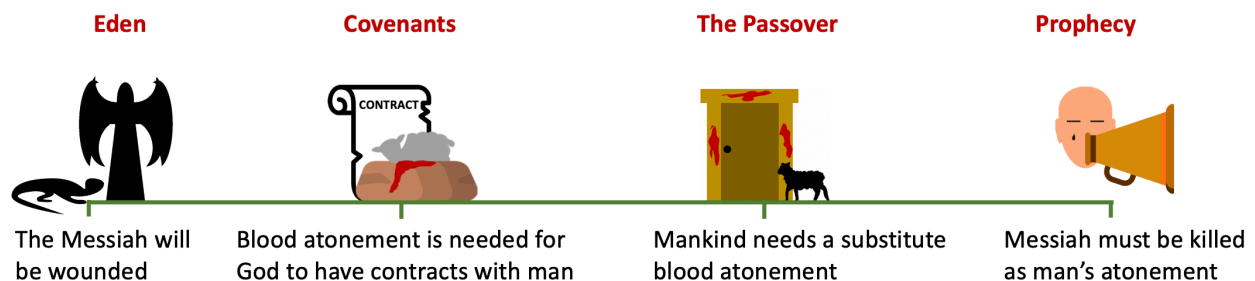
While it is important to understand how God sees justice, it is equally important to understand God's merciful rescue plan for man.

God's merciful rescue plan			
A How God sees justice	B God planned to have justice through the Saviour	C God's standard of justice was satisfied	D Jesus invites everyone to benefit from the justice He obtained



B. God Planned to Have Justice Through the Saviour

Right from Old Testament times, God had already planned for the Saviour to satisfy or take care of His requirement for justice. So Yahweh used different events in the Old Testament to explain about Messiah Jesus.





In Eden: Yahweh told man that the Saviour would be wounded

After the Fall in the garden of Eden, God hinted to Adam and Eve that justice would be done when He sent a Saviour (the offspring of the woman) to crush Satan. However, this offspring of the woman (not the offspring of the man) would be hurt by Satan.

In many Bible translations, the phrase “offspring” is translated as “seed of the woman”. (In some Bibles, this is found in the footnotes.) For example, the New King James Version says:

Genesis 3:15 (NKJV)

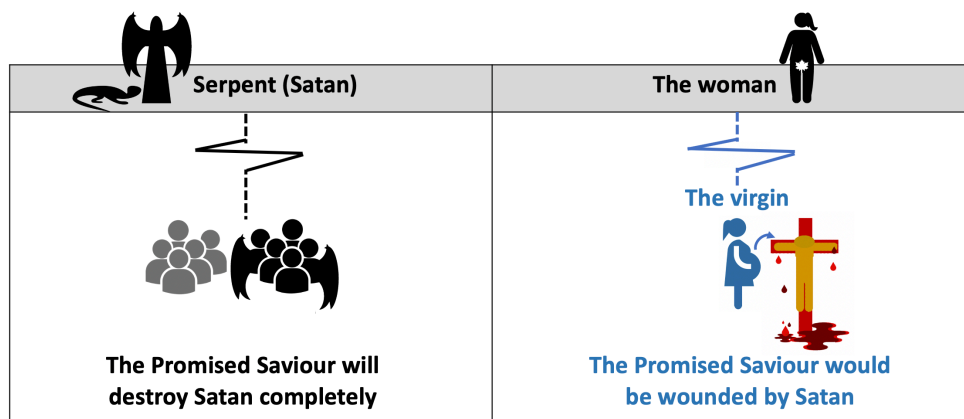
And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head,
And you shall bruise His heel.”

Genesis 3:15 (NLT)

And I will cause hostility between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring.
He will strike your head,
and you will strike his heel.”

The phrase “the seed of the woman” was very unusual! “Seed” or “sperm” was from the man. So what did “seed of the woman” mean? Yahweh was saying that the Messiah would be born from a woman alone. There would be no human father! Salvation would come to mankind independently of anything men could do. They were completely dependent upon the woman.

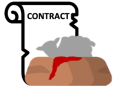
This “seed of the woman” would be hurt by Satan (“strike his heel”). God was prophesying that Messiah would die as a substitute for mankind. Here in the garden, God was already connecting restitution with Messiah.



What we now know when Jesus came

He was the human son of Mary but He did not have a human father. He was the “offspring of the woman” promised in Genesis. Just as Yahweh said, Jesus was “wounded” by Satan. In fact, Jesus died on the cross. But it was only an “injury to the heel”, meaning it was temporary.

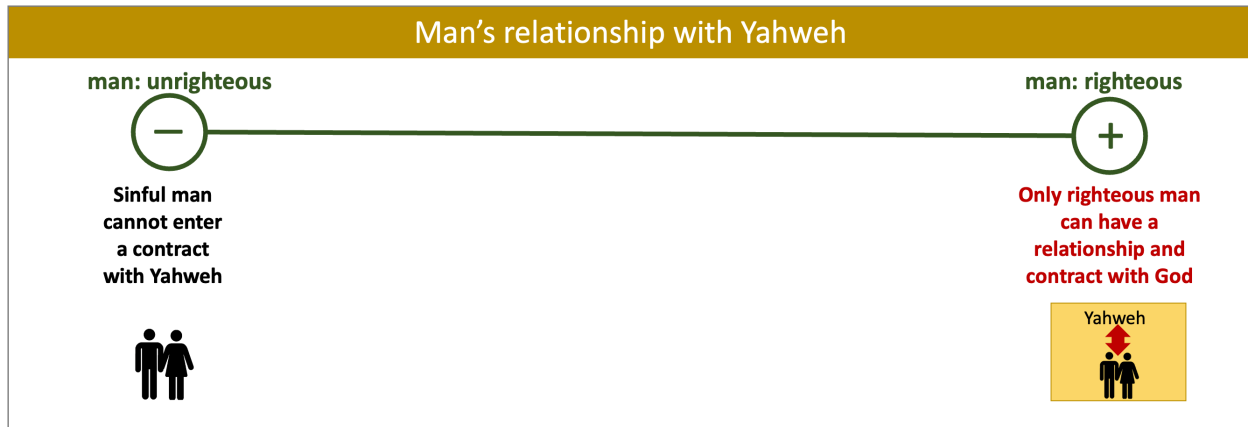
Because Jesus completed the payment for mankind’s sin, He came back to life. With the resurrection, Jesus destroyed death. He had struck Satan’s head, destroying him and his power over death forever.



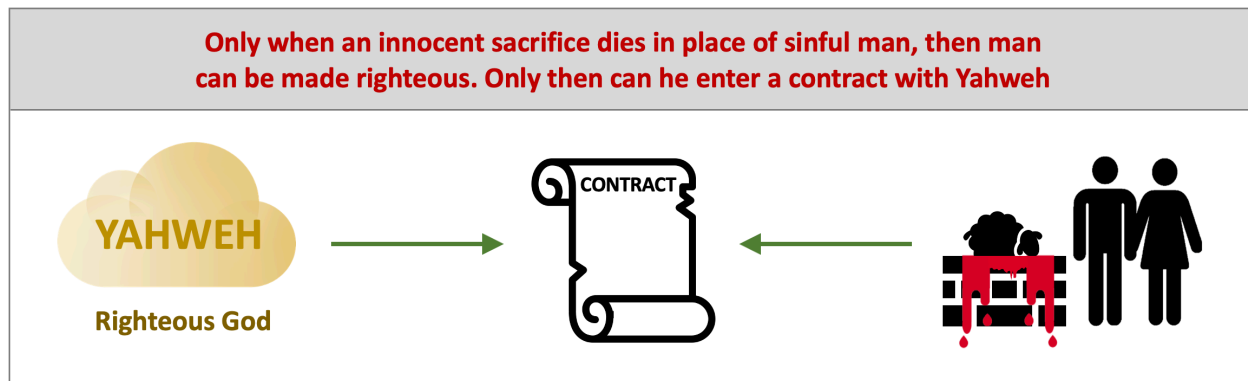
With the Covenants: Yahweh taught man that blood atonement was needed to start the contracts

In the Old Testament, we saw that all the main contracts or covenants that God made with mankind had to be initiated or started with a blood sacrifice.





This is because sinful man cannot enter into a contract with Yahweh. Only righteous man can make a covenant with a righteous God.



The way to be made righteous was to have an innocent substitute die in the place of sinful man. Then Yahweh and man can have a contract together.



God taught the people about this through all the earlier covenants. But God was also preparing them to understand that finally, a human sacrifice would be needed.

Covenant	Initiating sacrifice	Scripture Reference
New World (or Noahic) 	Noah sacrificed groups of clean animals.	Genesis 8:20–22
Abrahamic 	Abraham sacrificed a heifer, goat, ram, turtledove, and pigeon. (These animals also served as God's signature.)	Genesis 15:9–10
Sinaitic (or Mosaic) 	Moses sacrificed bulls and took the blood to sprinkle on the altar and also on the Israelites.	Exodus 24:4–8 Hebrews 9:16–20
New Covenant 	Jesus' death on the cross was the blood sacrifice.	Jeremiah 31:31–33 Luke 22:14–20

What we now know when Jesus came

At His final Passover meal with His disciples, Jesus initiated the New Covenant that Jeremiah prophesied about.

Jeremiah 31:31–33

³¹ “The day is coming,” says the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah. ³² This covenant will not be like the one I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand and brought them out of the land of Egypt. They broke that covenant, though I loved them as a husband loves his wife,” says the LORD. ³³ “But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel after those days,” says the LORD. “I will put my instructions deep within them, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

(See also Ezekiel 36:26–27.)

To be part of the New Covenant, the people of Israel and Judah first had to be made righteous through a blood atonement. At the last supper, Jesus said that His spilt blood would be the blood sacrifice.

Luke 22:14–20

¹⁴ When the time came, Jesus and the apostles sat down together at the table. ¹⁵ Jesus said, “I have been very eager to eat this Passover meal with you before my suffering begins. ¹⁶ For I tell you now that I won’t eat this meal again until its meaning is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.”

¹⁷ Then he took a cup of wine and gave thanks to God for it. Then he said, “Take this and share it among yourselves. ¹⁸ For I will not drink wine again until the Kingdom of God has come.” ¹⁹ He took some bread and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

²⁰ After supper he took another cup of wine and said, “This cup is the new covenant between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood, which is poured out as a sacrifice for you.”

When Jesus’ blood makes Israel righteous, then they can enter the new contract with Yahweh



With the Passover: Yahweh put in place a picture that would constantly remind mankind of the need for the blood atonement

God told the Israelites to celebrate the Passover every year (Exodus 12:14–28). This was a reminder that Israel had to be made righteous before they could be God’s “son”.

When they killed the lamb, Israel was reminded of how God judges and saves. The ones who are saved escaped judgment only because a substitute died in their place.

God’s Judgment:

Death in every house



EITHER...

the firstborn dies



OR...

a substitute dies



What we now know when Jesus came

The New Testament says that Jesus is the real Passover lamb.

1 Corinthians 5:7b

Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed for us.

The Bible called what Jesus did on the cross an “exodus”. This was mentioned during the conversation Jesus had with Elijah and Moses at His transfiguration.

Luke 9:28–31

²⁸ About eight days later Jesus took Peter, John, and James up on a mountain to pray.

²⁹ And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was transformed, and his clothes became dazzling white. ³⁰ Suddenly, two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared and began talking with Jesus. ³¹ They were glorious to see. And they were speaking about his exodus from this world, which was about to be fulfilled in Jerusalem.

At the first Exodus, Yahweh freed Israel from being slaves in Egypt.

With this new exodus, Yahweh would free people from being slaves to sin. He would lead many to salvation, just as He had led Israel out of Egypt.

Romans 8:2

And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death.



In Prophecies: Yahweh told the people that Messiah must be killed as man's atonement

God also taught the Jews that Messiah had to be killed for the sins of the people.

Isaiah 53:4–6, 11

⁴ Yet it was our weaknesses he carried;

it was our sorrows that weighed him down.

And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God,
a punishment for his own sins!

⁵ But he was pierced for our rebellion,
crushed for our sins.

He was beaten so we could be whole.

He was whipped so we could be healed.

⁶ All of us, like sheep, have strayed away.

We have left God's paths to follow our own.

Yet the LORD laid on him
the sins of us all.

¹¹ When he sees all that is accomplished by his anguish,
he will be satisfied.

And because of his experience,

my righteous servant will make it possible

for many to be counted righteous,

for he will bear all their sins.

What we now know when Jesus came

The Messiah fulfilled precisely the prophecy of Isaiah and died on mankind's behalf. Because Jesus Himself is sinless, He could be the perfect substitute.

God's Judgment:

Death to every sinner

EITHER...

OR...



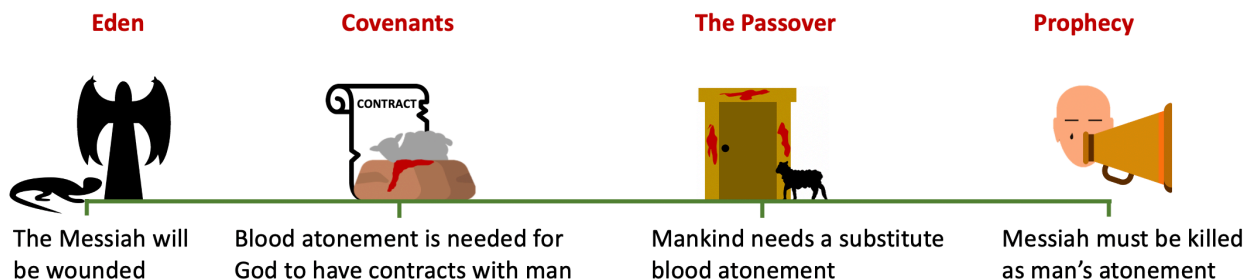
the sinner dies



a substitute dies



God deliberately put all these events in the Old Testament to help man understand His plan that Messiah would die in place of sinners and satisfy God's justice.





C. God's Standard of Justice was Satisfied

The perfect, sinless man that God sent is Christ Jesus. He died as the **real substitute** for all the crimes of mankind.

After many years of teaching mankind about atonement in the Old Testament, God finally dealt with it once and for all with Jesus' death on the cross.

Hebrews 10:11–12

¹¹ Under the old covenant, the priest stands and ministers before the altar day after day, offering the same sacrifices again and again, which can never take away sins. ¹² But our High Priest offered himself to God as a single sacrifice for sins, good for all time. Then he sat down in the place of honor at God's right hand.

In the past, priests continually offered sacrifice after sacrifice because their sacrifices didn't really take care of the sin problem. They were only a picture of what was necessary.

But when Yahweh looked at the work of Jesus on the cross, He was completely satisfied because all the crimes of mankind had been fully paid for. Justice had been done. No more work was needed, which is why Jesus is now seated at God the Father's right hand!



Priests offering
sacrifices...

...is a picture of...



...How Jesus would be the
real and final sacrifice.

Jesus' work on the cross accomplished a lot and had an impact on the entire physical and spiritual universe.

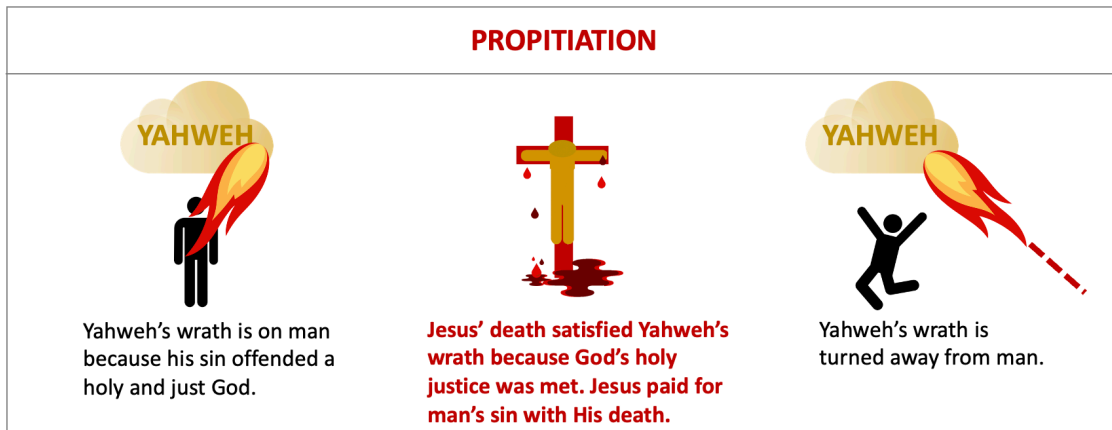
But even if we just look at what He accomplished for mankind alone, it is so much more than what many of us think! For example:

1. Jesus turned God's wrath away from us.

The Bible uses the word "propitiation", which means to "satisfy or appease God's wrath" to describe what Jesus did for mankind.

1 John 4:10 (ESV)

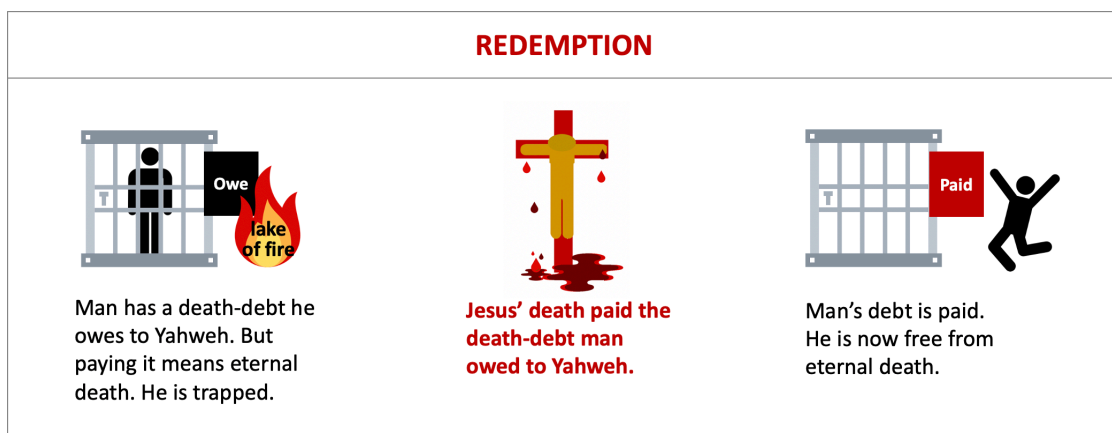
In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.



2. Jesus redeemed us.

Ephesians 1:7

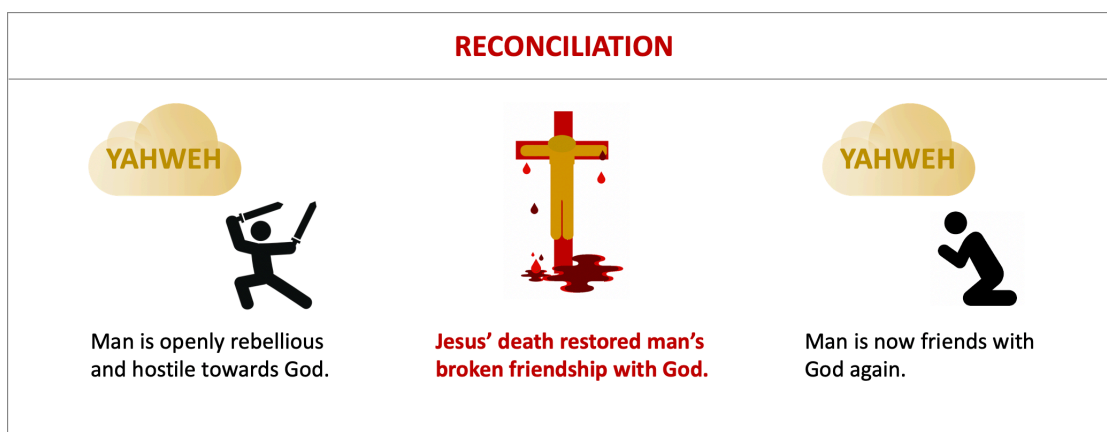
He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins.



3. Jesus reconciled us to God.

Romans 5:10–11

¹⁰ For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son. ¹¹ So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God.





How thankful we should be knowing that Messiah Jesus is our perfect and all-sufficient substitute!

The depth of God's love for us that He would send His only Son to die such a horrible death to save us from eternal separation from Him! Let us never take God for granted!

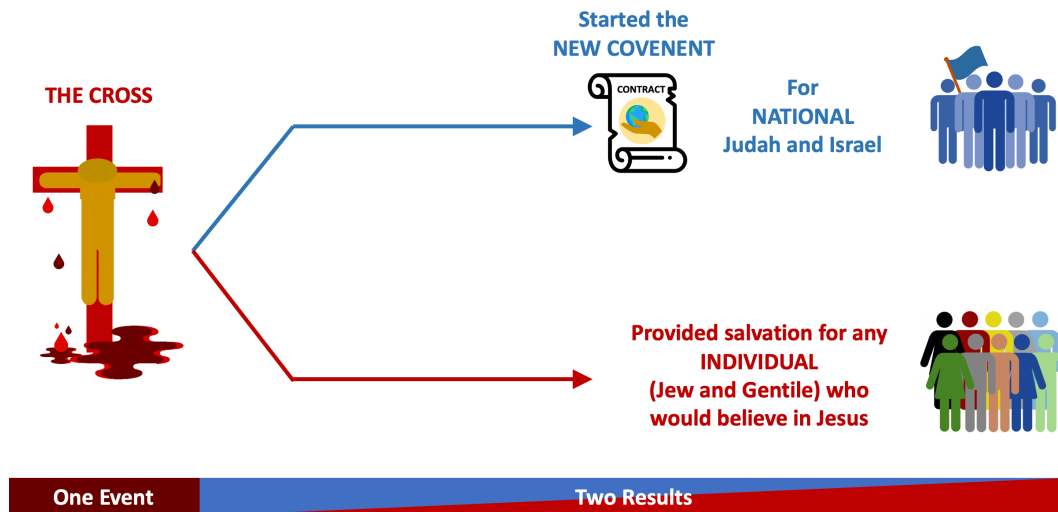


D. Jesus Invites Everyone to Benefit From the Justice He Obtained

God had planned that the nation of Jews would be saved through the New Covenant. Their Messiah Jesus made this possible through His blood.

NEW COVENANT	Parties	Promises
 <p>Jeremiah 31:31 “The day is coming,” says the LORD, “when I will make a <u>new covenant</u> with the people of <u>Israel</u> and <u>Judah</u>.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God • Israel • Judah 	<div>  <p>God will forgive their sins</p> </div> <div>  <p>God will change (circumcise) their hearts</p> </div> <div>  <p>God will regather Israel to the Promised Land</p> </div>

But Yahweh planned that Jesus' substitutionary death on the cross would also be the way to save Gentiles as well.



The Jews didn't know that God would do this, so He had to make it very clear to them.

How did God tell them? He gave Peter a vision.

Acts 10:9b–16

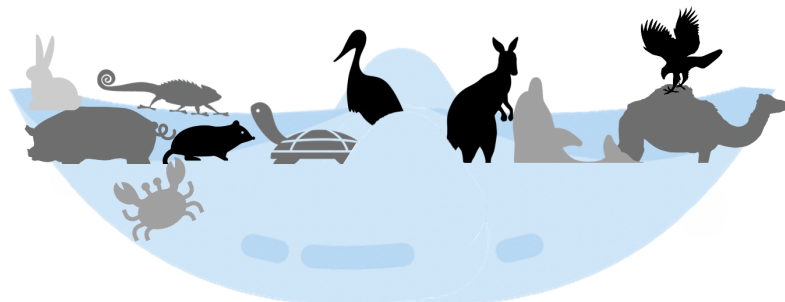
⁹ Peter went up on the flat roof to pray. It was about noon, ¹⁰ and he was hungry. But while a meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. ¹¹ He saw the sky open, and something like a large sheet was let down by its four corners. ¹² In the sheet were all sorts of animals, reptiles, and birds. ¹³ Then a voice said to him, "Get up, Peter; kill and eat them."

¹⁴ "No, Lord," Peter declared. "I have never eaten anything that our Jewish laws have declared impure and unclean."

¹⁵ But the voice spoke again: "Do not call something unclean if God has made it clean."

¹⁶ The same vision was repeated three times. Then the sheet was suddenly pulled up to heaven.

God used a vision of unclean animals (food that Jews were not permitted to eat under the Mosaic Law). By telling Peter to eat, God was saying that He would make the Gentiles "clean" as well. Yes, even Gentiles, whom Jews previously thought to be "unclean"!



However, Peter did not fully understand what God meant.

But right after that, Peter was invited to the house of Cornelius, a Gentile who was a Roman army officer, to share the news about Jesus. In order to share the gospel with Cornelius, Peter literally had to eat meals made of unclean foods (Acts 11:3)!

What happened at Cornelius's house made Peter and the Jews who were with him finally understand what God was saying.

Acts 10:44–48

⁴⁴ While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. ⁴⁵ The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles.

⁴⁶ For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, ⁴⁷ “Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.”

⁴⁸ So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.


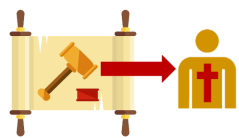




Cornelius was the first Gentile church-age believer in the New Testament! The Holy Spirit entered (indwelt) Cornelius and his family in the same way He did with the Jews at Pentecost!

God did this because He wanted to make it absolutely clear to Peter and the Jewish believers that Gentiles could also be saved by faith in Jesus. And they would also receive the same Holy Spirit!

This is why Jesus' death is so important! His death satisfied God's justice and it was not just for the benefit of the Jews, but for all mankind as well!

This is why Jesus wants all believers to always remember His death!

A How God sees justice	B God planned to have justice through the Saviour	C God's standard of justice was satisfied	D Jesus invites everyone to benefit from the justice He obtained
			

How Did People React to the Death of Christ?

While there were those who believed, there were and still are many who reject. We will examine why most Jews and even people today reject the death of Jesus.

Why most Jews reject Jesus as Saviour

Many Jews in Jesus' time as well as many Jews today do not accept that Jesus is the Messiah that God had sent. Why? There are many reasons, but here are three important ones.

1. The Jews were horrified at Christ's terrible death.

The Jews were shocked that the Messiah would be killed in such a terrible manner. Death on a cross was as bad as death by hanging. In the Mosaic Law, God laid a curse on anyone who is hanged on a tree.

Deuteronomy 21:22–23

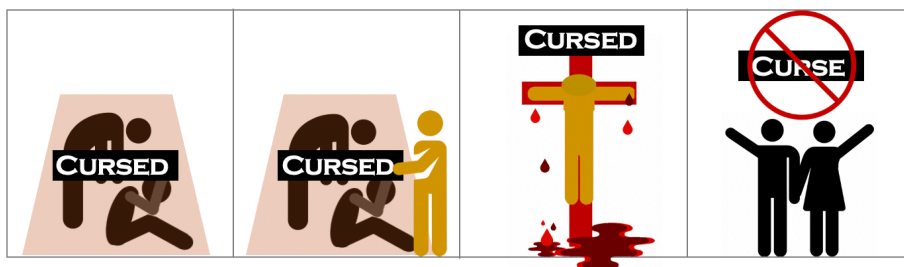
²² “If someone has committed a crime worthy of death and is executed and hung on a tree,
²³ the body must not remain hanging from the tree overnight. You must bury the body that same day, for anyone who is hung is cursed in the sight of God. In this way, you will prevent the defilement of the land the LORD your God is giving you as your special possession.

The Jews couldn't believe that Yahweh would curse the Messiah. If God cursed Jesus, they thought He could not be the Messiah and so, many rejected Him.

What they didn't understand or realise is that mankind is under the curse of eternal death. As the Messiah, Jesus took mankind's curse and put it on Himself.

Galatians 3:13

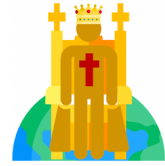
But Christ has rescued us from the curse pronounced by the law. When he was hung on the cross, he took upon himself the curse for our wrongdoing. For it is written in the Scriptures, “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.”



Jesus suffered death to take away mankind's curse. It was not His own curse that was on Messiah. It was man's!

2. The Jews were expecting a triumphant Messiah.

Many Jews had looked forward to a victorious Messiah who would restore the Davidic Kingdom and save Israel. Even the angel Gabriel who had announced Jesus' birth mentioned it.



Luke 1:32–33

³² He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³ And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!"

(See also Mary's and Zechariah's responses to the coming Messiah in Luke 1:46–55, 67–79.)

But instead, Jesus' life followed the prophecy of the suffering servant from Isaiah (52:13–53:12). Many Jews could not accept that the Messiah would suffer. Even Jesus' followers could not accept this part of His mission when they first heard it.

Matthew 16:21–23

²¹ From then on Jesus began to tell his disciples plainly that it was necessary for him to go to Jerusalem, and that he would suffer many terrible things at the hands of the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would be killed, but on the third day he would be raised from the dead.

²² But Peter took him aside and began to reprimand him for saying such things. "Heaven forbid, Lord," he said. "This will never happen to you!" ²³ Jesus turned to Peter and said, "Get away from me, Satan! You are a dangerous trap to me. You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God's."

After his death, the two disciples on the road to Emmaus also mentioned how disappointed they were that Jesus had died. (They were speaking to Jesus but didn't recognise Him).

Luke 24:19–21

¹⁹ "What things?" Jesus asked. "The things that happened to Jesus, the man from Nazareth," they said. "He was a prophet who did powerful miracles, and he was a mighty teacher in the eyes of God and all the people. ²⁰ But our leading priests and other religious leaders handed him over to be condemned to death, and they crucified him. ²¹ We had hoped he was the Messiah who had come to rescue Israel. This all happened three days ago.

3. God placed spiritual blindness on the Jews.

Jesus' first believers were all Jewish. But then, the question is, why did the majority of the Jews reject Him? God said it was because of Israel's spiritual blindness. Over 700 years before, Yahweh hardened their hearts by putting a spiritual blindness on them because of their sinfulness toward Him. This is what God said to the prophet Isaiah.

Isaiah 6:9–10

⁹ And he said, "Yes, go, and say to this people,
'Listen carefully, but do not understand.
Watch closely, but learn nothing.'"

¹⁰ Harden the hearts of these people.

Plug their ears and shut their eyes.
That way, they will not see with their eyes,
nor hear with their ears,
nor understand with their hearts
and turn to me for healing.”



do not
understand



harden
their hearts



plug
their ears



shut
their eyes

As time progressed, their spiritual blindness grew worse.

Isaiah 30:8–11

⁸ Now go and write down these words.

Write them in a book.

They will stand until the end of time
as a witness

⁹ that these people are stubborn rebels
who refuse to pay attention to the LORD's instructions.

¹⁰ They tell the seers,
“Stop seeing visions!”

They tell the prophets,
“Don't tell us what is right.

Tell us nice things.

Tell us lies.

¹¹ Forget all this gloom.

Get off your narrow path.

Stop telling us about your
'Holy One of Israel.'”



Although God would continue to share His truth with Israel, their hearts were hardened against Him because of their sinfulness. They would hear God's Word but they would not understand nor accept it.

But Yahweh will not abandon Israel because He chose them and made covenants with them. Because He is a promise-keeping God, He told Isaiah that one day, He will reverse this blindness and fulfil His New Covenant with them.

Isaiah 59:20–21

²⁰ “The Redeemer will come to Jerusalem to buy back those in Israel who have turned from their sins,” says the LORD.

²¹ “And this is my covenant with them,” says the LORD. “My Spirit will not leave them, and neither will these words I have given you. They will be on your lips and on the lips of your children and your children’s children forever. I, the LORD, have spoken!”

The apostle Paul quoted Isaiah to explain to the Gentiles that a day would come when God lifts Israel’s spiritual blindness. Then, as a nation, they will believe in their Messiah and receive the benefits of the New Covenant.

Romans 11:11, 25–27

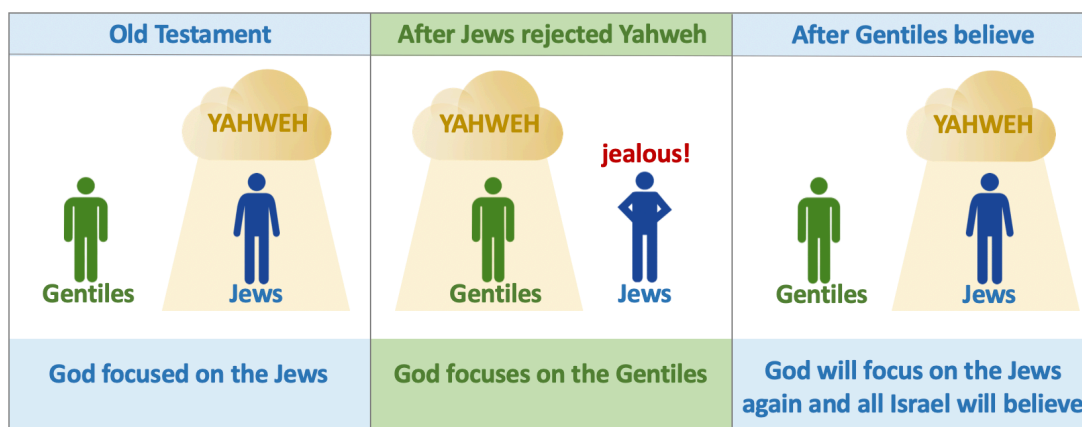
¹¹ Did God’s people stumble and fall beyond recovery? Of course not! They were disobedient, so God made salvation available to the Gentiles. But he wanted his own people to become jealous and claim it for themselves.

²⁵ I want you to understand this mystery, dear brothers and sisters, so that you will not feel proud about yourselves. Some of the people of Israel have hard hearts, but this will last only until the full number of Gentiles comes to Christ. ²⁶ And so all Israel will be saved. As the Scriptures say,

“The one who rescues will come from Jerusalem, and he will turn Israel away from ungodliness.

²⁷ And this is my covenant with them, that I will take away their sins.”

This coming day will happen when God sees that all Gentiles who will believe in Christ have done so. Then He will turn His attention back to saving the Jews.





Why many people today reject the death of Jesus

Today, many people reject Yahweh, His Word and especially what Jesus did on the cross—His death and His resurrection.

This is because they have made themselves the ultimate authority.

- They have created their own understanding of who God is.
- And they have changed God's meaning of justice and love.

This box summarises how many of them think:

 Pagan Kingdom of Man Based on WORKS Man would save himself through his own ideas	Kingdom of God Based on GRACE God would save man  Yahweh
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “God is a loving God and surely he will just forgive our sins. There’s no need for the cross.” • “When God forgives, he sweeps all the hurt under his heavenly carpet and all is forgotten.” • “I have tried my best to be a good person. When I die, I’m sure God will accept me.” • “God will forgive us because He will never send anyone to hell because He is loving.” 	<p>If they believe Jesus they have to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Recognise that Yahweh is holy and righteous Admit that they are criminals before God Accept Jesus’ payment on their behalf for their crime of rebellion against Yahweh <p>But they refuse to.</p>

These people ignore the fact that when a crime has been committed, **justice and restitution must happen**. The criminal must pay back for what was lost in order for a relationship to be restored. They don't understand that without restitution, man and God cannot have any relationship.

When Jesus died on the cross, He paid for man's sin. God was satisfied that there is now restitution. Mankind's crime has been paid for.

If Jesus did not die, then God would have to be in a relationship with criminals whose crimes have not been paid for! That cannot be. A holy God cannot have a relationship with evil man.

People ask why does restoring a relationship with God have to be so “bloody”? Why must there be death? Why can't God just forgive? They think Christians have a warped sense of justice.

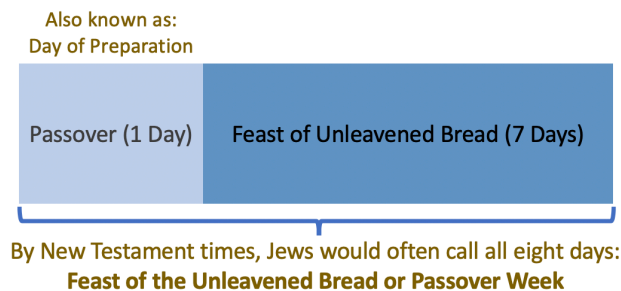
Many do not want to think about how God sees the whole situation. They are too proud to believe what God says about them. They do not want to admit they are criminals and cannot save themselves. Like the people of Babel, they reject God's truth and invent their own.

How about us?

- What do we understand and believe about Jesus' death on the cross?
- Do we agree with God that we are rebels and helpless sinners who are enemies of the Creator-Owner of the universe?
- Do we thank God for providing a Messiah to take care of the penalty for our crime?
- Seeing what He has done for us through the cross, are we grateful in our daily lives for the gift of salvation through Christ?

Is there an error in the Bible? Why are there two Passovers during the week that Jesus died?

Here is some cultural information before we discuss the issue. During the Exodus, Yahweh had given Israel two feasts to remember, or commemorate, the Exodus event: the one-day Passover, followed by the week-long Feast of Unleavened Bread. Because the Passover happens first, it is also called the Day of Preparation.



When we read in the New Testament about the week that Jesus died, some people think that there must be a mistake.

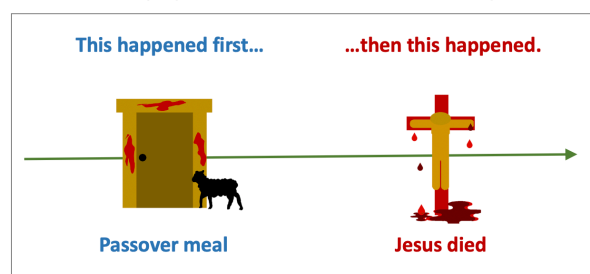
- This is because the books of Matthew, Mark and Luke say that Jesus died **AFTER** the Passover meal.

Mark 14:12

On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb is sacrificed, Jesus' disciples asked him, "Where do you want us to go to prepare the Passover meal for you?"

(See also Matthew 26:17; Luke 22:7–8.)

The gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke say:



More...

- But the book of John says that Jesus died in the afternoon **BEFORE** the Passover meal.

John 18:28, 19:14–16

²⁸ Jesus' trial before Caiaphas ended in the early hours of the morning. Then he was taken to the headquarters of the Roman governor. His accusers didn't go inside because it would defile them, and they wouldn't be allowed to celebrate the Passover.

¹⁴ It was now about noon on the day of preparation for the Passover. And Pilate said to the people, "Look, here is your king!"

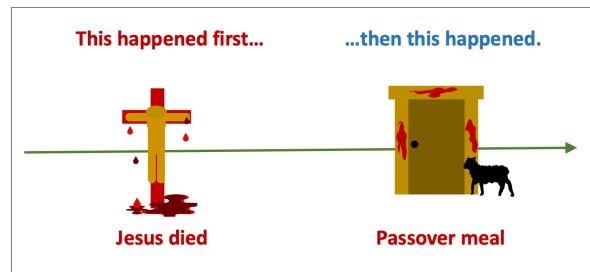
¹⁵ "Away with him," they yelled.
"Away with him! Crucify him!"

"What? Crucify your king?" Pilate asked.

"We have no king but Caesar," the leading priests shouted back.

¹⁶ Then Pilate turned Jesus over to them to be crucified.

The gospel of John says:



Is there really a mistake in the Bible? What is going on?

There is no mistake in the Bible.

During the New Testament period, the Jews had two slightly different ways of counting time.

The Jews in Galilee in the north used a sunrise-to-sunrise method of counting when the day began.

- The Pharisees preferred this.
- The gospel writers Matthew, Mark and Luke followed this method.

The Jews in Judea in the south used a more traditional sunset-to-sunset method of deciding when the day began.

- The Sadducees and the Temple officials used this.
- The gospel writer John also followed this. (Unlike the other disciples, John was familiar with the Temple and its officials. See John 18:15.)

7 8 9 10 11 12pm 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12am 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12pm 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12am

Secular: Day starts at midnight and ends at midnight



Galilean (North): Day starts at sunrise and ends at sunrise

Matthew, Mark and Luke followed this

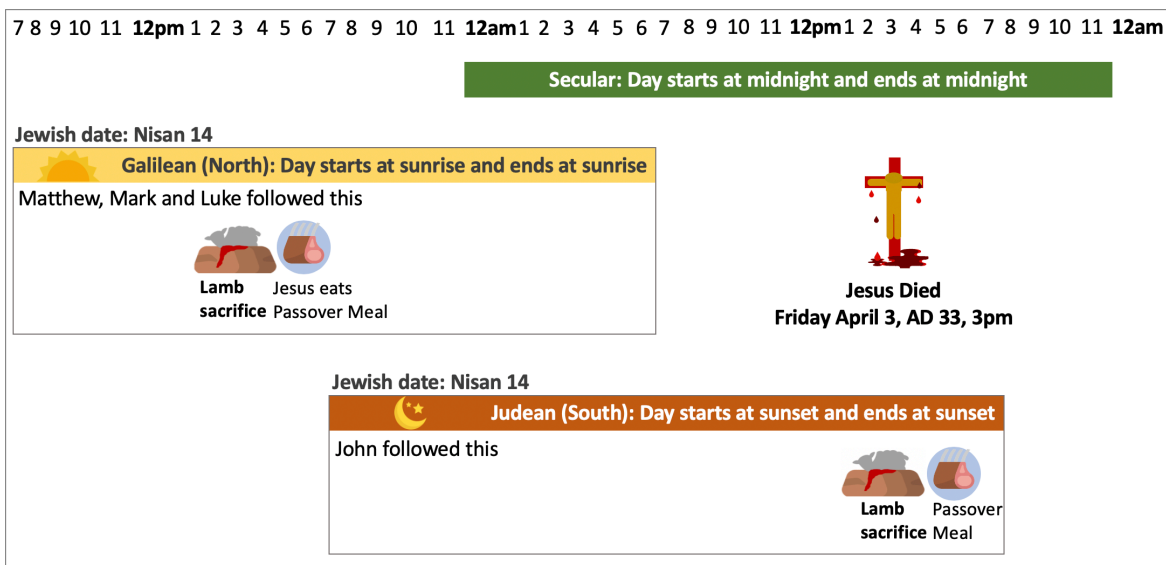


Judean (South): Day starts at sunset and ends at sunset

John followed this

So by the **northern way of counting**:

- Jesus started the **Passover meal on a Thursday afternoon**. This was important as Jesus used the Passover bread and wine to talk about the New Covenant. He was telling His disciples that He was the Lamb who was going to die for them.
- After the meal, Jesus was arrested. He ended up on the cross on Friday.



By the **southern way of counting**:

- **Friday was the Passover day**. Jesus died right at the lamb sacrifice hour.
- Then the temple officials wanted Jesus removed from the cross because their Passover meal was about to begin.

It's fascinating to see that God allowed the Jews to split over how to count the timing of their festival days. In this way, God made the Passover twice as significant:

- Jesus was able to celebrate the Passover meal and explain how the bread and wine were pictures of His upcoming death on the cross.
- And the next day, Jesus died during the time of the Passover lamb sacrifice to show He was the final and perfect Lamb.

There is therefore no error or contradiction in the Bible. With a little background information on how the Jewish people calculated their calendar, we can see God using exact timings for His purposes. This also hints to us that for future events prophesied in the Bible, God has specific timings for these yet-to-be fulfilled events.

A note on how the Jews count days

During Jesus' time on earth, He had announced that He would be dead for three days.

Matthew 12:38–40

³⁸ One day some teachers of religious law and Pharisees came to Jesus and said, "Teacher, we want you to show us a miraculous sign to prove your authority."

³⁹ But Jesus replied, "Only an evil, adulterous generation would demand a miraculous sign; but the only sign I will give them is the sign of the prophet Jonah. ⁴⁰ For as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights.

But if we count the actual time He was dead, it was only about 40 hours. That is not three days. Did Jesus make a mistake? Of course not.

The Jews considered part of a day as a full day when counting the number of days. From the time Jesus died on the cross till He rose again was about 40 hours. But those 40 hours crossed three days (part of Friday, all of Saturday and part of Sunday) and so the Jews considered that to be three days.

We see another example of how the Jews count days in the book of Esther. This book records the time during the exile when many Jews lived in Persia. When Queen Esther was told by her cousin Mordecai of the plot to kill all the Jews, she responded by asking all the Jews in Susa, the capital of the Medo-Persian empire, to fast for three days and nights before she would approach her husband, Xerxes, the Persian king.

Esther 4:15–17

¹⁵ Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: ¹⁶ "Go and gather together all the Jews of Susa and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will do the same. And then, though it is against the law, I will go in to see the king. If I must die, I must die." ¹⁷ So Mordecai went away and did everything as Esther had ordered him.

Then, on the third day itself, Esther went to see the king.

Esther 5:1

On the third day of the fast, Esther put on her royal robes and entered the inner court of the palace, just across from the king's hall. The king was sitting on his royal throne, facing the entrance.

By our modern way of counting days, we would expect Esther to see the king on the fourth day, after the three full days and nights of the fast had passed. But she went to see the king on the third day. Why? Because in Jewish culture, a part of a day was considered a full day. So as soon as the fast crossed into the third day, Esther considered it three full days and so she went to see the king.

In the same way, while Jesus was only in the tomb for about 40 hours, that time period crossed over three days and for the Jews, that was considered three full days.

Discussion Questions

Discuss the following questions as a group or use them for personal reflection.

1. How has the Old Testament explanation of God's divine restitution affected your understanding of what happened when Jesus died on the cross?
2. Can you describe the biblical view of justice and grace and contrast that with the popular ideas about "rights", "entitlement" and "social justice"?
3. How do you think we can help unbelievers accept the cross of Christ? In other words, how do we help them see they are helpless sinners in need of the Saviour? (You may want to think of someone specific and address questions they may have.)



Pre-reading for next lesson: Romans 3, Hebrews 10