

BIBLE STUDY SERIES

THE CITIES OF REFUGE

WAKE UP AMERICA SEMINARS
Proclaiming the Revelation of Jesus

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Larry Wilson

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P.O. Box 273
Bellbrook, OH 45305

The Cities of Refuge

When Adam and Eve sinned, Jesus immediately stepped in the way to prevent the death angel from executing the demands of the law. God provided a way out by allowing Adam and Eve and their offspring to transfer the guilt of their sin to a substitute. This act shows that God never forgives sin.

I know that some who read this statement will be surprised. Yet, I want to emphasize that God has provided a way for sinners to be forgiven, but He has NO provision for the forgiveness of sin. Sinners, yes—sin itself, no.

If God could forgive sin, He could have looked down at the earth, seen what Adam and Eve were doing, and said, “Hey you guys, I told you not to do that, now don’t do it anymore.” Then, He could have taken out a big eraser and erased the sin.

Many people have the idea that salvation is based on the eraser theory. They believe all that matters is you have God erase your sins from His book, and when He does, you’re spotless and without fault or blemish. You are now saved!

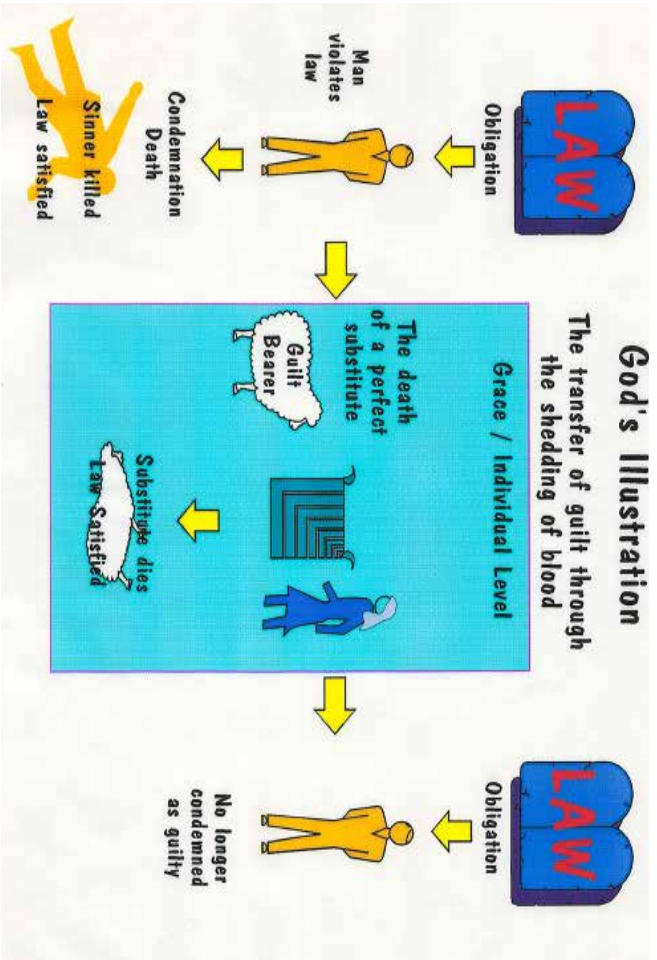
Friend, if it worked that way, Jesus would have never had to die.

Look at the chart on page 3 to better understand this process. Burn it into your minds to not forget how eloquent God's program is to save humanity.

When God created Adam and Eve, He put humanity under the obligation of law. When man sinned, the man was to be executed immediately because the wages of sin is death. So when the angel of death, the executing angel, left heaven to satisfy the demands of the law, Jesus stepped in the way. Jesus said, "Wait! Father, don't kill Adam and Eve! Let me die in their place."

The Plan of Salvation

God the Father, created the Plan of Salvation long before there was sin. In fact, He prepared the Plan of Salvation before any creatures were made. The plan was sitting on the shelf for this contingency. In a universe where each creature has the power of choice, God created the Plan of Salvation as a rescue plan—a 9-1-1 call, if you will. That is a 9-9-9 call for those who might sin in the United Kingdom.



The Plan of Salvation could not be effectively implemented for Lucifer and his angels when they sinned because they defiantly sinned. The Plan of Salvation makes no provision for defiant sin. Adam and Eve did not defiantly sin. They did not openly and defiantly rebel against God. Lucifer and the angels did. I am using the word defiance to mean that Lucifer rejected the Holy Spirit, whereas Adam and Eve had not. This is the unpardonable sin. The ultimate defiance.¹

God was so forbearing with Lucifer and his angels. God did everything He could to prevent their disaffection, but—and here's what you need to know about God—when God has shown you His truth, and you refuse to accept it, He can do nothing further for you. Do you know what the unpardonable sin is?

To answer this question, I need to explain that there are three Gods who are distinct and separate beings. The trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. One of the members of the Godhead lives upon the throne, high and exalted, and is the focus of our adoration and worship. This is

¹ Luke 12:10

the Father. Jesus is the second member of the Godhead and lives among His creatures as one of them so that God experiences what His creatures have to experience. Before Jesus came to Earth, He lived as Michael the archangel. He lived as an angel, and he looked like one of them. When He came to Earth, He looked like and lived like one of us. The Holy Spirit's role as the third member of the Godhead is to live inside the heart of each of God's creatures. He is always close, communicating daily—moment by moment—with all of His creatures throughout the universe.

I am making the point that with God in us, God beside us, and God before us, there is nowhere in the universe you can go without being close to Him—the whole idea of the trinity. God is ever-present and close to His creatures.

The Unpardonable Sin

The unpardonable sin is when we reject the influence of the Holy Spirit because His role is to influence us in right doing. When the Holy Spirit cannot positively influence us in doing right, He leaves us. When we arrive at this point in our lives, only God

knows. But rest assured, as long as we are struggling with our two natures, the Holy Spirit is still working.

When Lucifer and his angels defiantly and openly rebelled, the Holy Spirit had to leave their hearts because the Holy Spirit will only dwell in a heart if He is invited. God will not force Himself upon you or overcome your will. He has given us the power of choice, and He allows us to exercise it freely. It is ours. For God to force the human will would be the equivalent of divine rape.

God, almighty as He is, with all the authority and power of the Godhead, cannot and will not force himself upon you. I think that is so marvelous. You either love Him and are drawn to Him, or you can reject Him.

He will manifest His love in many ways. He will bless you; He will do wonderful things for you, even when you refuse to love Him back. His love is unconditional. Many people have been misled to believe that God's love is doing away with the transfer process shown in the chart on page 3, but that is not true. It's a deception.

God has made a way that the guilt of sin can be transferred away from us so we can go free and no longer be condemned as guilty. When the sinner brought his lamb to the sacrifice—to the altar of burnt offering—the only question the priest had was, “Is this lamb perfect?” The priest was not concerned about the sin; he was only concerned about the substitute. The substitute had to be perfect so that the law was satisfied when the lamb was slain. I think you should be clear on this now. I have repeated it 15 times, and that should do it! 😊 I want to show you something that will amplify what I am about to present.

Sons of God and Daughters of Men

This is not a description of our day; this is a description of Noah’s day. Let’s go to the Bible and read a couple of verses. **“When human beings began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of humans were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose.”**¹

The term *sons of God* was used in ancient times for those who were spiritual, keepers of the way, those

1 Genesis 6:1-2

who lived according to the law and loved the Lord. In the New Testament, you will find that Adam is called the son of God.¹

Notice, we are using a lowercase ‘s’ for son. God created Adam, making him an offspring of God—a son of God. Not as Jesus was, but still a created being from God. So when the term *sons of God* is used, it’s referring to the spiritual men. Conversely, the term *daughters of men* means the opposite. In the English language, this is called an opposing couplet.

An opposing couplet is when you contrast two phrases using reverse language. Here are two examples: When people today say something is cool, they do not necessarily mean a lower temperature. When they use the words cool or bad, they might mean classy or good. They are using the inversion of the word’s true meaning to emphasize the quality of what they are talking about. This is done throughout the Bible, and the point in these verses is that spiritual men married beautiful women who were not spiritual. Believers marrying non-believers rarely works well for very long.

¹ Luke 3:38

You would think these verses have nothing to do with this, but they do. **“Then the Lord said, ‘My Spirit will not contend with humans forever, for they are mortal; their days will be a hundred and twenty years.’ The Nephilim [powerful giants] were on the earth in those days—and also afterward—when the sons of God went to the daughters of humans and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown. The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled.”**¹

His heart was filled with pain because spiritual men had married women who were not spiritual, and the offspring of such a union is not spiritual. The odds are almost 100 percent that the offspring will be unspiritual if you have a spiritual parent and an unspiritual parent. That is what has happened to our nation today. As you consider our country, would you say that we have a spiritual nation moving toward God and His ways, or do we have a degenerate nation

1 Genesis 6:3-6

moving away from God and His ways? This is why the Bible says believers should not marry unbelievers. It is not that they cannot love one another; the problem is what happens to the offspring. It happened in Noah's day.

Kill All Murderers!

Look at the chart on page 11. In Noah's day, there was much violence, just like today. God looked down upon the earth, saw the violence, and said, "I've had enough." He sent a flood to destroy all of humankind from the face of the earth, both men and animals. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord and the Lord saved only eight people. When Noah and his family came off the ark, God gave Noah a particular law. You will recognize the law as one of the Ten Commandments; but remember, God had not yet publicly stated the Ten Commandments as He did at Mount Sinai many years later.

When Noah came off the ark, the Lord emphasized the law's importance by saying, "[Noah, I am deathly opposed to murder,] **And for your lifeblood, I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each**



human being, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of another human being.”¹ God is saying in this last sentence that whoever sheds man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed. Today, this is called capital punishment. God established capital punishment as a deterrent (detergent) to crime.

God says, in His administration, that the law always seeks equilibrium. Equilibrium is that whatever you do unto others will be done to you, that’s the law of justice. Then, He told Noah to be fruitful and multiply—repopulate the earth—but, every time someone commits a murder, kill that person. Kill all murderers!

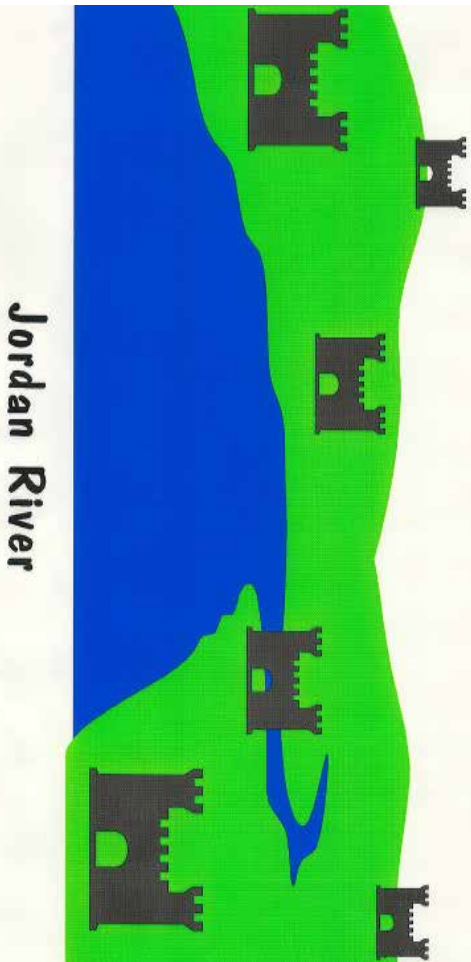
Would there be less murder and violence in our cities today if the law’s inescapable consequence was to kill the murderer? If this rule had no exception, so anyone who kills another person, whether intentionally or unintentionally, were immediately killed, would there be less murder? You know there would be.

The Cities of Refuge

Several hundred years later, God brought the children of Israel into the Promised Land. Before they

¹ Genesis 9:5

Six cities of refuge



arrived in the Promised Land, God told Moses and Joshua to build six cities of refuge, three on each side of the Jordan.¹

On the chart on page 13, I have drawn three cities on one side of the Jordan and three cities on the other side.

Now, the purpose of these cities is that God was about to introduce the topic of grace to the children of Israel. Here are the specifications of grace. The idea was if someone killed another person—whether accidentally or intentionally was not significant (at the moment)—if someone committed murder, he must run to one of the cities, get inside, and hide there. He would be safe from the avenger of blood (next of kin) when he was inside the city.

If someone killed you, your spouse, being the next of kin, would be the avenger of your blood. Your spouse could seek out the murderer and kill him without guilt because whoever sheds man's blood, by man must his blood be shed.

Some people use the commandment, “Thou shalt not kill” as a defense against capital punishment,

¹ Numbers 35:13-14

but they do not understand it is not murder to kill a murderer. Killing the murderer is fulfilling the law, not breaking the law. Murder is the unlawful or unjust taking of human life. Killing a murderer is justified because it is satisfying the demands of the law.

Here is the story about the cities of refuge. Look at the chart on page 17, starting at the top left corner, where two people go to work one day. This is back in the days of Moses, and one man kills the other—shoots him dead.

Then, the aggressor (shooter) takes off his hat and mask, throws down his gun, and runs as fast as possible to the city of refuge. When he gets to the city of refuge, he bangs on the gate and says, “Let me in, let me in, I’ve killed a man.” The city elders open the gate, and the guilty man runs inside. Understand that he is guilty of murder, but it has not been determined whether it is accidental or intentional. His motive has got to be examined before the penalty is determined.

As long as the aggressor stays in the city, the avenger of blood cannot slaughter him without incurring guilt. The avenger can’t come in the city, but if the

avenger of blood catches the guilty man outside the city, he's fair game. The aggressor is only protected while remaining inside the city.

After he is in the city for a few days, the elders take the guilty man under guard back to his hometown, where he is put on trial to determine the motive for the murder. If it is found that the victim was shot willfully, the guilty man is immediately taken outside the village and stoned to death. When this is done, the demand of the law is satisfied—life for life. Swift justice is served.

On the other hand, if the trial finds that the murder was accidental, not intending the the victim harm—it was an accident—he was cleaning his gun and it went off and killed his best friend. Then, God provided a way for the murderer to return to the city and live out his life inside the city where he was protected from the avenger of blood. As long as he stayed in the city, the victim's next of kin (NOK) could not seek revenge and kill him. He could live in that city as a free man until the high priest died. When the high priest dies, the most joyous event occurs. This murderer comes out of the city and goes home as a free man.



Transfer of Guilt to a Substitute

God says, “I am willing to transfer your guilt to the high priest. When the high priest dies, I will accept his death as satisfying the demand of the law—life for life.” Now, I want to emphasize there is a legal need for two witnesses. No one could be put to death on the testimony of one witness. A minimum of two witnesses was required. Revelation 11 talks about two witnesses during the end time.

Examine the chart on page 19. Jesus was murdered on Calvary. He was an innocent man. Our sins were put upon Him, and he was murdered. Now, the death of Jesus will either save you or destroy you. If you take Jesus as your Savior, if you put your faith in Him, and allow Him to become your substitute, you live in the city completely free and without condemnation. You go free because Jesus, our High Priest has died. This is a parallel with the cities of refuge.

This is called grace. This is called love. God is demonstrating that He is willing to transfer the guilt of sin from us to our substitute. However, understand sin is never forgiven. This is what the sanctuary ser-



vices teach. If we accept Christ as our Savior, our substitute, we are free because the High Priest of man has died.

If we do not receive Christ as our substitute, the guilt of our wrongdoing is upon our heads, because we have no substitute. However, if we do accept Him as our substitute, He still bore our sins and went to Calvary to die for us. Therefore, we have responsibility for Christ's death.

You say, "wait a minute. I had nothing to do with that. I did not even live back then. How could I have any responsibility in that?" While the guilt of sin can be transferred away, the propensity for sin can be transferred to us. When Adam and Eve sinned, the nature of their offspring became sinful so each generation transferred sin to their offspring. Now, as tiny babies, we have not sinned. I am not saying that babies are sinners. I'm simply stating that a little baby inherently has the nature to sin and will sin. It is built into the baby and comes with the baby.

Stoning and the Second Coming

When Jesus comes in the clouds of glory, the seventh and final plague will be great hailstones com-

ing out of the sky, weighing about a hundred pounds each. The Bible says, **“From the sky huge hailstones, each weighing about a hundred pounds, fell on people. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail because the plague was so terrible.”**¹

In Old Testament times, the ancients used stoning to kill murderers. When Jesus appears in the clouds of glory, that is what the big rocks in the chart represent. In our story of the cities of refuge, the first person who led in the stoning was the next of kin. The big rocks coming from heaven are doing the same thing—stoning all murderers. The Father, Jesus’ next of kin, is casting the stones! He is the avenger of the shed innocent blood of His Son.

The Sanctuary Process

Let us discuss the essential functions of the sanctuary to ensure we understand the process. Look at the chart on page 3. If you brought a sacrifice and produced your perfect substitute, your sin was transferred away from you into the sanctuary, and momentarily you were freed from sin. Yet, what did God do with all the accumulated sin in the sanctu-

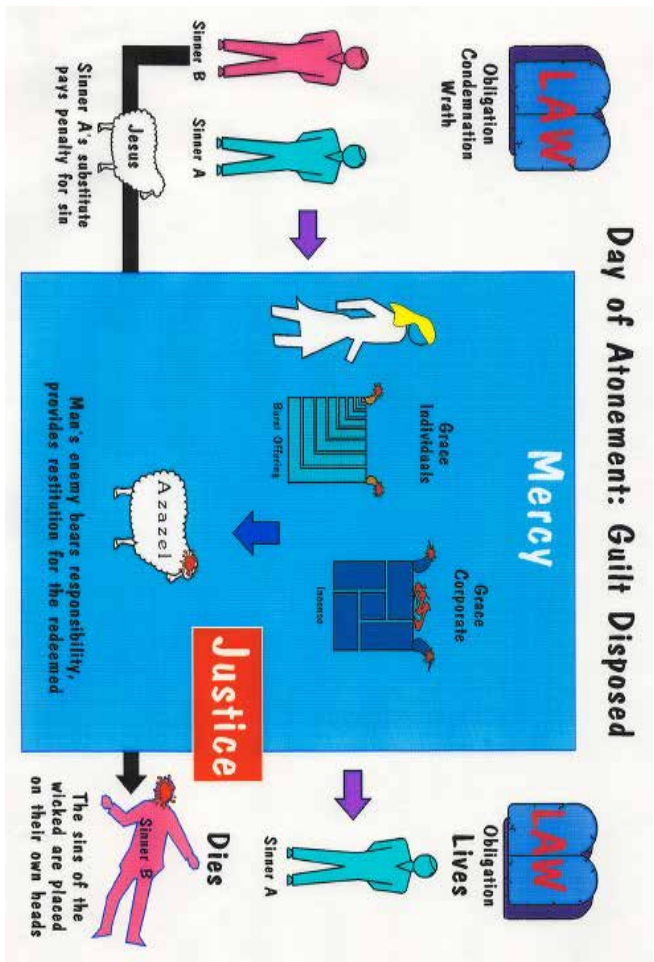
¹ Revelation 16:21

ary? God cleansed the sanctuary at the appointed time on the tenth day of the seventh month. He removed all sin from the temple so it is restored to a holy state. Otherwise, the sanctuary remained defiled.

Let us consider how the sanctuary is restored to its original condition. Study the chart on page 23 to visualize the process. There are two sinners, A (blue) and B (pink). Both are under the obligation of law. Because both men are sinners, they are under the law's condemnation. Executing what the law requires could be described as God's wrath. I just wrote something very profound. 😊

God did not move into a frenzy when He destroyed the world by the flood. He did not proceed with uncontrollable emotion and wipe out the whole world, only to spare eight people. God is not compulsive. God is in control. All that He does is lawful and righteous and perfect, always.

I repeat that *when God executes the demands of the law, it is called wrath*. Today, we would call this the penalty. When you are caught speeding, and you pay the ticket, the wrath of the law is \$200. The



judge who has to execute the demands of the law is not angry at you. He may give you a stern warning, but he does not know you. He is not sitting there as the judge to beat you up. However, as judge, he must uphold the validity of the law.

God's law says the wages of sin is death, so these two men, in the chart, are both under the condemnation of the law. Both are to receive the wrath of the law which is death.¹

God loves each one of us. He loves sinner A and He loves sinner B. He loves us equally and has provided a perfect substitute in Christ. God is eager for us to receive Christ as our Savior and accept Him as our substitute because Jesus has paid the penalty for our sins.

Since we live after the cross, we can say that Jesus paid the penalty for our sins.² But those who lived before the cross in the Old Testament times were saved on the credit card concept. In other words, Jesus one day would pay the penalty. When you buy an item with a credit card, you do not give money. You have entered into a covenant with your bank that for whatever you buy, you agree to pay later.

1 Romans 6:23

2 Hebrews 9:28

Those who received Christ as their Savior before His death on the cross were saved based on a covenant that *would be* fulfilled. Those of us who are saved afterward are saved based on the covenant that *has been* fulfilled. The result has no difference.

Sinner A receives Jesus as his Savior. What this means is easy to understand but very difficult to perform. It means that when you accept Jesus as your Savior, you give your life to Him because He's going to give His life for you—life for life. When you give your life to Jesus, it means completely surrendering your will to Him. Putting your faith in Him means submitting everything to Christ, willing to go, be, and do all He asks.

Sinner A did that and brought his lamb as God required, and the blood was put on the altar's horns. This was grace for individuals. You can see that altar on the chart. God also had corporate grace for the whole camp of Israel. This is a different altar than the one used for individuals.

God became angry with the camp of Israel when they made the golden calf. Remember when Moses was up on Mount Sinai, God said, "Moses, stand

aside. I will destroy the whole camp, and I will make you a great nation.”

Moses said, “No, no, Lord. Don’t do that.” Moses interceded with the Lord, and the Lord spared the camp. God has grace for individuals, and God also has grace for our world.

On the Day of Atonement, the sanctuary had to be cleansed. The record of sin was there. The cleansing process was very specific.¹ The high priest first went in before the Lord to be found worthy to serve on behalf of Israel. On this first entrance into the Most Holy Place, he brought an offering to see if the Lord would accept his service on behalf of Israel. For this offering, he killed a bull and carried some of its blood into the Most Holy Place and sprinkled it on the atonement cover. Afterward, he communed with God and God said, “Okay, I accept your sacrifice. I see that you are worthy. You may serve on behalf of the camp of Israel.”

The priest took the remaining bull’s blood back into the Holy Place and set it aside. Then he returned to the courtyard and killed a goat. He carried the blood of this goat into the Most Holy Place to make atone-

¹ Leviticus 16

ment for all of Israel. This is the second entrance into the Most Holy Place.

As the priest puts this blood on the mercy seat (atonement cover), God says, “All right, I accept the atonement made on behalf of Israel. You may now begin cleansing to remove all the sins from the sanctuary.”

According to Jewish literature, the high priest would enter on the north side and push the veil aside. He would walk into the Most Holy Place and sidestep while facing the Ark of the Covenant until he stood directly in front of it. After communing with the Lord a second time, he continued his route when it came time to leave and exited through the other end of the curtain that separated the Holy and Most Holy Places. He then picked up the bull’s blood and mixed it with the goat’s blood to combine both sacrifice. Then he used the mixed blood to cleanse the interior altar by putting it on the four horns. Next, he went out to the exterior altar and cleansed that altar by putting the mixed blood on its four horns.

Leviticus 16 indicates the high priest came out of the Most Holy Place and mixed the blood of the bull

and the goat. He then put the mixed blood on the four horns of the Altar of Incense and on the four horns of the blood of the Altar of Burnt Offering. The high priest applied the blood as God proscribed to cleanse the sanctuary. I thought about that because it seems counterintuitive to clean the sanctuary by applying blood. You would think the blood needs to be washed off to clean the horns. However, that is not the way the Bible describes the process.

Atonement and Reconciliation

After a while, I realized this significant fact, **“For God so loved the world [corporately] that he gave his one and only Son.”**¹ Jesus is the Lamb of God because He died as God’s lamb to reconcile men unto himself.

Who wanted reconciliation first, man or God? In the Garden of Eden, who came looking for reconciliation, Adam and Eve or God? When God called, “Adam, Eve, where are you?” What did they do? They hid. They had no clothes on. The Lord continued calling and calling. Finally, they could no longer resist Him and came out of hiding.

¹ John 3:16

This is our experience as well! God comes tenderly calling and calling to coach us out of hiding. We are naked and we know it. When the Holy Spirit brings a sense of our guilt, it is an overwhelming feeling of despair. Just like Adam and Eve. He called them out of their darkness and shame, providing them with suitable clothing.

Jesus became the Lamb of God because God wanted to reconcile the world to himself. The Father killed the Son on Calvary. We call Jesus the Lamb of God, not man's lamb. Jesus became sin for us, and the Father is the one who executed the demand of the law upon the Son.

The Father stands responsible for the death of Christ. He did it because He loves you and me. He wants to see Adam and Eve and their children restored to the Garden of Eden.

God has a wonderful plan for restoring all of His creatures to life, but the condition is you have to live by faith. If sins are not transferred away, they remain upon our heads.

The reason the mixed blood is used for cleansing both altars is that the blood of the bull represents

the gift of the Father to man, and the blood of the goat represents man's gift for reconciliation to the Father.

Jesus is our mediator, and He comes to us from both sides. God gives Him, and we accept Him. Thus, we have mixed blood. If Jesus is your perfect substitute, you can put your confidence in His blood on your behalf. This is why Jesus is our personal Savior. He saves you and me—one individual at a time. So, we have mixed blood in the sanctuary: the gift of God and the faith of man in that gift.

Consider the chart on page 23. The results of the atonement (cleansing) process are the sins of sinner A are moved onto the scapegoat and he gets to live forever. Sinner B, though, does not accept Christ as his Savior. He does not submit to the authority of the perfect substitute. He does not see Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords. The law demands that Sinner B must die. His sins will be on his head. The sins of the wicked are placed on their heads.

God has a way of transferring sin, but God has no provision to forgive sin. He has a way of forgiving sinners, but not the sin itself. This process is called

love. It is called grace. God did it, not because we deserved it, not because we were worthy of it, and not because earned it. God did it because He loves us.

God has the ability from day one to look through 6000 years, and see all the children of Adam and Eve, and He loved them. **“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.”**¹

GO-BE-DO

If you believe in Jesus, you are willing to let Him speak to you and direct your life. That is tricky when you have your agenda. It is hard when you're self-directed. It's tough when you want to go your way, and Jesus says, “No, put your faith in me. Put your confidence in me. Come unto me.”

Are you willing to go and be and do what God asks of you? Are you ready to go and be and do what Jesus would have you do? If you are, you have received Christ as your perfect substitute. It means that your sins have been transferred away and put

¹ John 3:16, KJV

into heaven's temple, and at the appointed time, all of your sins will be removed and placed upon the scapegoat, the devil. When the devil burns, he not only has his sins to burn for, but he will also make restitution for the sins of all those who are redeemed.

I pray this study provides an understanding of why Jesus established cities of refuge and what He is doing in heaven. At this time, Jesus is serving as our high priest in the true heavenly tabernacle. The world does not have a clue as to what Jesus is about to do; but when He acts, everyone will know that Jesus is moving drastically and dramatically.

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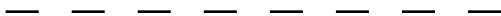


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