

April 20, 2014  
**God's Eternal Plan**  
Easter Service  
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In chapter one, the significance of the price paid for us is emphasized. Peter acknowledges that we were not redeemed with corruptible things like silver and gold, which are of this world. Instead, we were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish and without spot. This precious price was paid by God, not silver or gold, but the blood of Christ.

### **The Divine Plan**

The text states that Christ was indeed, as he was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for us. To comprehend this truth, one must read it in the Word of God. Jesus did not come as a late thought on God's part or as a plan B because of human sin. Before the foundation of the world, before God created anything, he had already made a decision. Knowing all things, including the creation of man, his sin, and his eternal separation from him due to his righteousness, God's love provided a plan for our redemption. In his love, he conceived this wonderful plan, knowing that one of the persons in the Godhead would become a savior.

People often question why God couldn't be an angel or a man. The reason is that God had to be a man, as that is what we are. However, he couldn't be an angel because an angel could only elevate us to the level of an angel. In fact, Hebrews chapter 1 states that Christ did not take on the nature of angels. There is no Savior for angels, as they do not need one. They were all created holy. Those who chose to go their own way suffered for their choice, such as Lucifer, now known as Satan. However, all of them had holiness, while none of us did. We are born of sinful stock, tracing our lineage back to Adam and Eve. They alone initiated the journey of holiness, only to lose it through their rebellion against God. Therefore, we require a Savior.

Before the world's foundation, God had a divine plan. The Son of God submitted himself to become the one destined to come to this world at God's appointed time. His purpose was to endure suffering for our salvation, to be buried, and to offer himself as our sacrifice. Through his righteousness, we are declared righteous. This was the essence of his mission.

Verse 21 reveals who through him we believe. In God, who raised him from the dead and bestowed upon him glory, so that our faith and hope are firmly rooted in Him. God accepted that sacrifice and raised him to glory, elevating him from this earthly realm to eternal glory. As he prayed in John 17, he restored that glory to Him, which He possessed before the world's creation. The glory He desires us to share with Him forever.

The resurrection from the dead serves as the undeniable proof of His victory. Christ endured suffering for us. Since you have purified your souls by obeying the truth through the Spirit and sincere love of the brethren, love one another intensely, fervently, with a pure heart. Having been born again not of corruptible seed, you do not gain your new birth into the family of God by being born of what is termed “corruptible seed.” This refers to human beings. Your human birth does not grant you entry into the family of God, not born of corruptible seed, but incorruptible and sinless. God’s own Spirit is the agent of this birth. In fact, the command is explicitly stated in John 3: “You must be born again. You must be born of the Spirit.” The Holy Spirit is the one who brings about this new birth. Remember, He does not provide it. Jesus provides it through His death. The Holy Spirit merely receives what Jesus provides and makes it manifest within us when we accept Jesus as our Savior. He infuses us with life, transforms us into God’s children, and bestows upon us eternal life.

Yes, He suffered for us. He was sinless. He remains sinless. In chapter 22 and verse 21, it states that you are called to this because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example to follow his steps. Consider this verse: Who committed no sin nor was deceit found in his mouth? He did nothing wrong, did not say anything wrong. He lived in word and deed, living a sinless life. Nobody else, from Adam on, has ever lived a sinless life except the Son of God. Why did he have to live a sinless life? Because he was going to offer it to God as a substitute for us. Your substitute cannot be a sinner. If you want to be righteous like God, you need a perfect, righteous, sinless substitute to stand before God in your stead. Jesus did that. He paid a high price for it. Who, when he was reviled, did not revile again? When he suffered, he did not threaten, but committed himself to him who judges righteously. Who himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree? The tree is the cross. He did not die and bear any sins for himself because he was sinless. But he willingly took upon himself the sins of us, us all. On the tree, we have died to sins. In other words, when he died on the cross and stood for us as our substitute, before God, he said, “We died.” If we take him as our Savior, we say,

“God, I want what happened to Jesus to be put to my account when he was on the cross, Lord. Put me there. Put my sins there on him. When he died, Lord, count that as my death.” That is what a true substitute means. You died. If you received Christ as your Savior, you died in his death. Your sins were upon him when he died. He bore our sins in his own body on the tree, so that we might live for righteousness. That is a gift. He went ahead and in his death took our sins so that we would not be, before God, would not have sin, that we might be what God calls righteous. That is what he had in mind before the world was created. A way to bring us before God and to bring us there without sin, to bring us there as righteous. Upon receiving him, our sin is transferred to him. His death is counted as our own. However, his life, resurrected from the dead, is

counted as our life as well. This is a promise to us that in him we possess eternal life. We share the same life that he had when he rose from the dead. He bore our sins in his own body, and they are now gone. We are now living in righteousness.

### **He Suffered of Us**

Peter adds a poignant verse from Isaiah 53 in the Old Testament, asking, “By whose stripes were you healed?” This verse is a powerful reminder of the suffering Jesus endured for our salvation.

If you are familiar with the film “The Passion of the Christ,” I recommend watching it again. It is a powerful depiction of the events surrounding Jesus’ crucifixion. While it is a Hollywood production, it brings to life the historical reality of the events. The scenes of Jesus being whipped repeatedly are particularly haunting. The standard practice was to whip a person 39 times, believing that the 40th blow would be fatal. However, they only struck him 39 times, using whips with glass and pottery embedded in the thongs. This caused the flesh to tear and be pulled back, revealing the outline of his rib cage.

One scripture, Psalm 22, even states that all of his bones were visible. It is not solely due to his thin frame, but rather the severe whipping that tore away the flesh, exposing the rib cage.

Through his stripes, I was healed of my sin. He suffered for me, so that I might be cleansed from my sin. Peter concludes with another verse from Isaiah, saying, “For you were a sheep going astray.” If you have ever observed sheep, you will know that they tend to wander off and become lost. They do not stay together as a flock. This verse emphasizes the importance of being guided and led by a shepherd, just as Jesus is our shepherd. And they are merely seeing about one foot in front of themselves and simply eating the pleasant grass there, then moving a few feet further and eating their way along. Eventually, they look around and realize that there are no other sheep around them.

This is what we are like. We go our own way. We tend to what we believe is for our own good. And we eventually wake up sooner or later to realize that we are far from God. We are far from God. And we do not know how to get home. The shepherd has come looking for us. He calls himself the Good Shepherd. And Peter says, “We are returned to the shepherd.” When you receive Jesus, that is your way home. When you receive the one who died for you and rose from the dead, it brings you to your shepherd. It brings you home to the place that you wandered from on your own. I think I will just read those two verses in Isaiah. Just so you can see, the Apostle Peter picks them up. Here they are, Isaiah 53, verse 4:

“Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. Yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.”

Listen, folks, you cannot blame God for what happened. God willed it, that is true. God was willing to go through it, that is true. But the reason it was necessary was because of us. We are what sent Jesus to the cross. Our sin is what sent him to the cross. Our sin is what made him come to this earth and live a life and offer it up as a sacrifice. Of God, because God in love wanted to provide it for us. But we are the ones that caused it to be necessary. We are to blame. He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement for our peace was upon him. And by his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way. And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. Is that possible that God would lay on Him the iniquity of us all? Listen to what Peter says about that. I believe Peter was reading directly from Isaiah 53 when he wrote this. In John 3:16, the renowned verse, we are reminded of the profound love of God. He so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life and be with God forever. This verse encapsulates the essence of God’s love and the significance of the cross.

### **Life After Death**

However, some individuals may struggle to comprehend the necessity and value of the crucifixion. They question why Jesus endured such immense pain and whether his death had any tangible impact. It is understandable to seek answers and evidence, especially when faced with the concept of life after death.

Some individuals claim to have experienced phenomena such as leaving their bodies, floating in a bright light, or encountering gates of glory. These accounts have led some to believe in the existence of life after death. While these experiences may be compelling, they should not be considered definitive proof.

Ultimately, the question of life after death remains a profound mystery that transcends human understanding. It is essential to approach this topic with an open mind, seeking knowledge from various perspectives and relying on the teachings of faith and reason. The truthfulness of someone’s experience after an event, such as a medical procedure, is not a reliable indicator of the existence of an afterlife. While it is possible that such experiences could occur, God has provided a definitive answer through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The resurrection of Jesus offers a clear demonstration of the existence of life after death. It provides evidence that Jesus is alive and that death is not the ultimate end. His resurrection demonstrates that his death had a purpose and that he can grant eternal life to those who place their faith in him.

## **Believe to Eternal Life**

God does not compel individuals to believe in Christ. Rather, God desires to be loved, and love is a choice. Individuals must actively choose to love and receive Christ as their Savior. God has offered free salvation through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and this offer is available to anyone who desires to accept it.

I would like to invite you to join me in prayer. If you desire to receive the Lord Jesus as your Savior, you must express your intention from your heart directly to God. I am unable to fulfill this request for you, nor can anyone else. However, you can declare in your heart that you are capable of doing so without uttering a single word from your lips. The sincerity of your heart is paramount.

“Oh God, thank you for your unwavering love for me. I may not comprehend the reasons behind your actions, but I express my gratitude nonetheless. Thank you for sending Jesus to die in my stead. I acknowledge my sinful nature and the path I have chosen for myself. I earnestly seek your forgiveness and mercy. Please extend your forgiveness upon me. Let Jesus’ sacrifice be the means of redemption for me. Grant me the righteousness that Jesus possesses. Make me your own child, please. I speak these words with unwavering conviction.”

If you have prayed this prayer or a similar one with the aforementioned sentiments, and you did so with genuine sincerity, I have a message for you. By the word of God, anyone who calls upon him shall be saved. This means being delivered from sin and becoming a child of God. This is God’s promise, and God is a trustworthy and reliable being. He grants you eternal life and makes you his child immediately, not after your death.

On Resurrection Sunday morning, Jesus was resurrected from the dead. If you have prayed to receive him as your Savior, you have been born again in your spirit and become a member of God’s family.

Thank you, Lord, for those who have prayed. Thank you for those who have already experienced the joy of salvation and can now sing praises to the Savior and express their gratitude for his resurrection. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for your boundless love.

We love you with all our hearts, and we can all affirm this with a resounding “Amen.” Can you join us in this affirmation? Amen. Amen.