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The spotlighted theme throughout the Scriptures, from Genesis to Revelation, is THE SUBSTITUTE, the One who would sacrifice Himself to forgive & restore all would come to Him. Journey with us to discover the Spotlight of Scripture.

People in our culture think the idea of a *substitute sacrifice* - Jesus dying for our sins - is strange. It has always and will always be that way. Paul wrote these words 2000 years ago:

1 Corinthians 1:18, 23 (NIV)

¹⁸ For **the message of the cross** is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God...²³ but **we preach Christ crucified**: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles,

Why IS that? When the **Jews** lined the streets with palm branches, hence 'Palm Sunday', they cried out '*Hosanna, Hosanna!*' - a cry for help meaning 'save us'¹ (cf. Ps. 118:25), they were hoping Jesus was the Messiah who would be a Conquering King, not a suffering servant.

Gentiles were often looking for the next great philosophical teaching, but sinners needing a savior to die in their place was just plain silly to many. This sacrificial substitute tripped up the Jews & caused the other nations to think this was **foolishness** (cf. Acts 17:30-32).

This is why both Jews & Gentiles just hearing **the message of the cross** would struggle to understand, but what ought to surprise us, even frustrate us, is when those who claim to be followers of Jesus discount his death.

THE SUBSTITUTE: Spotlight of the Scriptures

- **Substitute Sacrifice** (Gen. 22:1-24) God provides a substitute sacrifice for Isaac. Abraham named the place 'Yahweh will provide'.
- **Passover** (Exodus 12) Jews kill the unblemished passover lamb and spread it's blood over the door. They were to eat the lamb in their homes & were to make sure NOT to break any of it's bones. Ultimately, protecting them from God's wrath & releasing them from captivity.
- **Day of Atonement** (Leviticus 16): Aaron was told to take 2 male goats & 1 ram (Leviticus 16:5).
 - One goat was destined to die - **a Substitute**.
 - The other was called the **Scapegoat**. According to Lev. 16:20-22, Aaron was to lay his hands on and confess the sins of the Israelites.
 - ★ It's important to note that *neither of the goats were guilty*. The SUBSTITUTE was killed, and the SCAPEGOAT was banished, for the sins of the people.

BIG TRUTH: Sin is serious. God is gracious.

God's graciousness was seen in the Substitutes, yet these animals were still only SHADOWS of what was to come. There there was never a sense of completion. Instead, there was the reality that we would be back next year to for the substitutionary sacrifice.

Yet the Old Testament gives a glimpse of what the substitutes were pointing to.

Isaiah 53:5-6 (NIV)

⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. ⁶ We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

700 years later John the baptizer sees Jesus and says this:

John 1:29 (NIV)

²⁹ "Look, **the Lamb of God**, who takes away the sin of the world!

Now listen to the language of Jesus.

Mark 8:31-32 (NIV)

³¹ He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and **that he must be killed and after three days rise again**. ³² He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

We don't know the exact words, but Peter essentially said, "Jesus, you must be mistaken. We just confessed you as our Messiah and our will never die." (It was a stumbling block to Jews - see 1 Cor. 1:23) Then Jesus rebuked Peter.

Just as Jesus said, He is taken before the religious rulers of Israel where he is mocked, beaten, & judged guilty of blasphemy. They then hand Him over to the Romans to be flogged, beaten, & crucified.

All this fulfills Isaiah's 700 yr. old prophecy from chapter 53 as well as the 1,000 yr. old prophecy from Ps. 22.

Psalms 22:16-18 (NIV)

¹⁶ Dogs surround me, a pack of villains encircles me; **they pierce my hands and my feet**. ¹⁷ All my bones are on display; people stare and gloat over me. ¹⁸ They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.

Jesus is crucified and his clothes are gambled for in fulfillment of Ps. 22:16-18. **All this happens on Passover weekend**. Just as the thousands of lambs killed that weekend had no bones broken in the butchering process (to obey Ex. 12:46), Jesus, the ultimate Passover Lamb would not have any of His bones broken.

The Jewish leaders didn't want these men left on crosses during the Sabbath, so the Romans came to break their legs (bringing quick death). But Jesus He was already dead. They made sure by shoving a spear into His heart. Yet they broke no bones, in fulfillment of Ex. 12:46 & Zech 12:10.

The apostle John then notes:

John 19:36–37 (NIV)

³⁶ These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: “Not one of his bones will be broken,” [Ex. 12:46] ³⁷ and, as another scripture says, “They will look on the one they have pierced.” [Zech 12:10]

WHY did this have to happen? WHY did Jesus have to die like this? This was God's plan to demonstrate that...

BIG TRUTH: Sin is serious. God is gracious.

After Jesus died, He resurrected, appeared to His disciples, and reminded them of previous discussions.

Luke 24:44–48 (NIV)

⁴⁴ He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things.

Remember the quote from the pastor in Sarasota? “*Jesus did not come to die as a sacrifice for our sins.*”

That IGNORES the clear teaching of the Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. YES! Jesus DID come to die as a sacrifice for our sins! Because...**Sin is serious. God is gracious.**

Steven Curtis Chapman's new album (song *Sing for You*)

*In His hands He holds creation
Highest mountains deepest seas
And on His hands He bears the scars
Of His great love for you and me*

Jesus is **THE SUBSTITUTE: the Spotlight of Scripture.**

Look what Peter - the guy Jesus rebuked for saying He didn't have to die - later wrote:

1 Peter 2:24–25 (NIV)

²⁴ “**He himself bore our sins**” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.” ²⁵ For “you were like sheep going astray,” but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

BIG TRUTH: Sin is serious. God is gracious.

🕒 **Trust Jesus with your PAST.** Bow your knee and ask Jesus to forgive you. Then bask in the brilliance of God's forgiveness. Stop living in the past!

🌟 **Gary King** writes: (blog "Forgetting what lies behind")

Thoughtful analysis of last year's mistakes and failures can help us recognize where we went wrong so that we do not repeat them. Once the analysis is done dwelling on the past is not helpful. Morbid musing on our past can paralyze present action, and forestall future progress. Don't let the past become a prison.

🕒 **Trust Jesus with your FUTURE.**

If you are truly forgiven...then stop living for the stuff Jesus died to pay for! **Die to your sins and live for righteousness.**

- What sins do you need to die to?
- What are some practical decisions you need to make to live for righteousness?
- Tell another believer about your decision & ask them to help you start growing in Jesus!

📖 It's good to forget faults and pursue friendships. It's GOOD to stop wallowing in past sin that has been forgiven! But we should never forget the Substitute - Jesus - the One who sacrificed Himself for our sins. **Jesus THE SUBSTITUTE: The Spotlight of Scripture** reminds us that...

BIG TRUTH: Sin is serious. God is gracious.



1. **Read about what Jesus did for you: Matt. 26-28 & John 18-21** (7 chapters).
2. **Join us for Good Friday Meal: Mar 25, 6-8pm.** Bring side dish or dessert. We've got the meat. Food, Fellowship, Communion, & egg hunt for the little ones.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These open-ended questions are designed to help you LIVE what you LEARN with your Family, Friends, or Small Group.

1. **Read 1 Cor. 1:18, 23.** What are 3 different ways people view *the message of the cross* & what role should it play in the lives of those who are followers of Jesus? Explain.
2. After considering the ram substituted for Isaac (Gen. 22:1-24), the Passover lambs (Ex. 12), & the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16), what does this tell you about the seriousness of sin, the graciousness of God, and the need for a permanent sacrifice.
3. **Read Isaiah 53:5-6 & John 1:29.** How do these passages point to a person instead of an animal and what would be the significance of this person taking on the sin of others?
4. **Read Mark 8:31-32, Luke 24:44-48, & 1 Peter 2:24-25.** How does the death of Jesus challenge you to trust Him with your past (sin) and your future (righteous living)? Which do you struggle with more? Explain.
5. **FEET2FAITH CHALLENGES.**
 - Have you been reading? What questions/insights have come up? How have you been impacted? Who are you accountable to talk with this week (reading Matt. 26-28 & John 18-21)?
6. Share prayer thanks & needs. Then pray for one another.