

Why Jesus Came

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After the fall, at least 4000 years elapsed before the atoning sacrifice was made by which the redemptive price was paid ensuring that all who would, could be brought back into communion with God. The patriarchs and prophets of the Old Testament period understood this. They all correctly looked forward to the future moment when the redemption price by which they were already set free, would be paid. There was not one of the inspired men who lived before the first advent who trusted in an atonement already made. Everyone of them looked forward to a sacrifice to be made when the antitype of the lamb should appear.

Adam and Eve were the first to whom the plan of salvation was explained. They were not taught that Christ had already made the atonement, but that He had offered to make it, had pledged His word to do it, and would fulfill that promise at the appropriate time.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 66

Heavenly angels more fully opened to our first parents the plan that had been devised for their salvation. Adam and his companion were assured that notwithstanding their great sin, they were not to be abandoned to the control of Satan. The Son of God had offered to atone, with His own life, for their transgression.

With great diligence, Adam taught these truths to his faithful son, Abel, who likewise understood that the sacrificial lamb pointed forward to a future atonement.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 72

“By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.” Hebrews 11:4. Abel grasped the great principles of redemption. He saw himself a sinner, and he saw sin and its penalty, death, standing between his soul and commu-

nion with God. He brought the slain victim, the sacrificed life, thus acknowledging the claims of the law that had been transgressed. Through the shed blood he looked to the future sacrifice, Christ dying on the cross of Calvary; and trusting in the atonement that was there to be made, he had the witness that he was righteous, and his offering accepted.

There is no question about Abel's correctly understanding the plan of redemption, for it is herein written that:

“Abel grasped the great principles of redemption.”

Not for a moment did he look back to an atonement already made, a redemptive price already paid. Instead, he rightly understood that the sacrificial lamb was a type, and that types only look forward to future events, never backwards to a previous work. He knew that when the Saviour eventually appeared, the atonement would be made, and the plan of redemption moved from a provisional to a fully confirmed status.

Enoch, who was translated to heaven, walked with God as few if any other men have done. He was a mighty prophet of the Lord, through whom the Almighty communicated marvelous things to His people. He lived at a time when hopelessness and despair seemed to overshadow the human race.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 88

But the instructions which God gave to Adam, and which were repeated by Seth, and exemplified by Enoch, swept away the gloom and darkness, and gave hope to man, that as through Adam came death, so through the promised Redeemer would come life and immortality.

Abraham was another whom the Lord thoroughly instructed in the principles of salvation, from which education the father of the faithful emerged with faith in a Redeemer to come.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 154

Through type and promise, God “preached before the gospel unto Abraham.” *Galatians* 3:8. And the patriarch's

faith was fixed upon the Redeemer to come.

When Israel left Egypt, the sacrifice of the Passover lamb pointed forward to the atoning sacrifice, not backwards to a sacrifice already made.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 539

On the fourteenth day of the month, at even, the Passover was celebrated, its solemn, impressive ceremonies commemorating the deliverance from bondage in Egypt, and pointing forward to the sacrifice that should deliver from the bondage of sin. When the Saviour yielded up His life on Calvary, the significance of the Passover ceased, and the ordinance of the Lord's Supper was instituted as a memorial of the same event of which the Passover had been a type.

Shortly after leaving Egypt, the Israelites, according to God's instructions, built the sanctuary and established the full sacrificial system. Those divinely ordained rituals were designed to direct their attention forward to the redemptive price which was to be paid when the Saviour appeared at His first advent.

The S.D.A. Bible Commentary, vol. 1, p. 1111

The sins of the people were transferred in figure to the officiating priest, who was a mediator for the people. The priest could not himself become an offering for sin, and make an atonement with his life, for he was also a sinner.

Therefore, instead of suffering death himself, he killed a lamb without blemish; the penalty of sin was transferred to the innocent beast, which thus became his immediate substitute, and typified the perfect offering of Jesus Christ. Through the blood of this victim, man looked forward by faith to the blood of Christ which would atone for the sins of the world.

So, one might continue a careful survey of the Old Testament wherein it would be found that everyone who, having been taught of God, understood the gospel, knew that the atoning sacrifice had not been made as soon as man fell, but that it was to be offered by Christ when He came to earth.

They were happily aware of the wonderful fact that, in the meantime, they could experience salvation by faith in a sacrifice yet to be made. Old Testament believers were saved exactly as are New Testament Christians.

But why did the Saviour delay so long in making the great sacrifice by which man's salvation is assured? Would it not have been much simpler to have provided the atonement as soon as man fell?

Undoubtedly, the Saviour would have died as soon as man fell, if the only work to be accomplished thereby was the salvation of mankind. But that was the least important aspect of His work, for there was much more to be accomplished than the redemption of mankind:

Patriarchs and Prophets, 68, 69

But the plan of salvation had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might regard the law of God as it should be regarded; but it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe. To this result of His great sacrifice—its influence upon the intelligences of other worlds, as well as upon man—the Saviour looked forward when just before His crucifixion He said:

“Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.” John 12:31, 32.

The act of Christ in dying for the salvation of man would not only make heaven accessible to men, but before all the universe it would justify God and His Son in their dealing with the rebellion of Satan. It would establish the perpetuity of the law of God and would reveal the nature and the results of sin.

This paragraph, rightly understood, will require on the part of many, a re-evaluation of Christ's work. Instead of man's salvation being His only and all-important work, it must be seen that this was of but minimal consequence in comparison

to His much greater mission. While it remains true that Christ would still have come and died if there had been only one sinner to save, the fact is that there were other and mightier responsibilities which had to be borne by the Saviour.

It is critically important that every believer in Jesus understands this. It will be found that when this great truth is really comprehended, it will prove to be a very humbling experience. It will certainly not lead to pride and self-exaltation as some might fear.

Let a list now be made of the major works that Christ had to accomplish in order to ensure victory for the forces of righteousness in the great controversy between Christ and Satan.

1. Clearing God's Name

His foremost responsibility was to reveal the depths and breadths of God's character so clearly and comprehensively that every doubt about the love and justice of the Almighty would be forever erased from the minds of the righteous and the wicked alike.

At the same time, He was required to so completely expose sin for what it is, that it would be deprived of any justification for its existence. Just as absolutely as He was to demonstrate that God is nothing but love, truth, and righteousness, so He was to prove that sin is only hatred, deceit, and unrighteousness.

This work could not be accomplished up in heaven when rebellion first appeared. At that time sin was found only in Satan and his angels and was so effectively covered with pretended righteousness that it was impossible to fully and effectively expose it. Nor could the fullness of God's character be satisfactorily revealed at that time either. Righteousness appears at its shining best where evil attacks it at its ugly worst. Therefore, the complete revelation of God's character and the

searching exposure of Satan's could not take place until Calvary before which time these conditions had not developed to the required full maturity.

It also must be clearly understood that for Christ to achieve these impressive results, He had to come down onto the actual stage where Satan was manifesting his character—this earth. This had to be because the two characters under question had to be shown in contrast to each other as it is written:

The Desire of Ages, p. 22

...His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan.

Two things cannot be contrasted unless they are placed side by side. So Christ, by His incarnation, planted the character of God in the same type of flesh and blood in which the devil had instituted his evil character.

So, the situation was that, as the Saviour daily walked among men, the righteousness of God in His body, was seen in marked contrast to the evil characteristics of Satan in the bodies of sinful, unrepentant men. In both cases the bodies were made of the same sinful material. The difference lay only in the totally opposite spiritual natures and characters in those bodies. During Christ's earthly sojourn they were so closely positioned side by side that the contrast was manifested as vividly as is possible. Every day, the picture became clearer to the angels and the dwellers on the unfallen worlds, though the eyes of men remained blinded by sin. Finally, at Calvary, the ultimate showdown was achieved. Christ emerged victorious and could truthfully say,

John 19

³⁰ It is finished.

Satan now knew that he was defeated and his kingdom was lost while the salvation of God's government throughout infinite space, and of lost mankind was made forever certain.

No longer would Christians receive salvation on the basis of the purpose and the promise of God in an atonement to be made, sure as that was, but on the basis of a sacrifice already successfully offered.

So then, here was a vital work which could not be done until sin came to full maturity, and which required the Saviour to dwell in sinful, fallen, mortal flesh and blood.

2. Vindicating the Law

The second task on this list is the vindication of the divine law. Satan had declared that it was impossible to keep the ten commandments, and that sin was therefore both justified and incurable. There was only one way to refute this monstrous lie, and only one Person who could do it. Jesus had to come into the scene of conflict blessed with no advantages unavailable to the human family, while, at the same time, He was handicapped with every weakness and liability to sin present in the fallen, mortal, human natures of those whom He came to save. Under those conditions, in order to disprove Satan's claims, He had to keep the law to perfection. Had He by even so much as a thought conceded to sin He would have failed in His mission and all would have been lost.

The Desire of Ages, p. 24

Satan represents God's law of love as a law of selfishness. He declares that it is impossible for us to obey its precepts. The fall of our first parents, with all the woe that has resulted, he charges upon the Creator, leading men to look upon God as the author of sin, and suffering, and death. Jesus was to unveil this deception. As one of us He was to give an example of obedience.

For this He took upon Himself our nature, and passed through our experiences. "In all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren." Hebrews 2:17. If we had to bear anything which Jesus did not endure, then upon this point Satan would represent the power of God as insufficient for us. Therefore Jesus was "in all points tempted like as we are." Hebrews 4:15. He endured every trial to which we are sub-

ject.

And He exercised in His own behalf no power that is not freely offered to us. As man, He met temptation, and overcame in the strength given Him from God. He says, "I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart." Psalms 40:8. As He went about doing good, and healing all who were afflicted by Satan, He made plain to men the character of God's law and the nature of His service. His life testifies that it is possible for us also to obey the law of God.

Many pages could be written on this vital aspect of Christ's mission and many have been in the book, *The Destiny of a Movement*. Even so, that presentation does not exhaust the subject by any means. This theme is as inexhaustible as it is wonderful, but for our present purpose, the paragraph above contains the information needed. It reveals Satan's charge that the law cannot be kept, and that God is the author of all the suffering and death in this world. It advises us that, by coming into human flesh where He bore every trial to which we are subject, Jesus exposed Satan's monstrous deception.

Again, it must be clearly understood that Jesus rendered this perfect obedience at the time when it was most difficult to do so—when sin's power was greatest. For that maturity to be reached, He had to wait for 4000 years, a moment described in Scripture as "the fullness of the time". *Galatians 4:4*

That is to say that it was quite impossible for the Redeemer to have proved the law could be kept when man first sinned. The conditions under which conclusive proof could be given had not yet developed. Instead, everything was far too favorable to living righteously. There were only two people living on the earth and, even though they had transgressed, they had quickly accepted the offer of salvation, had truly repented, and had been reinstated into God's family. So, until Cain and, in turn, his descendants came on the scene, the devil had no one in whom to develop the fullness of his evil character, and no one through whom he could bring the maximum pressure of temptation to bear on Christ if He had appeared at that

time. The Saviour had no choice but to wait for 4000 years until the conditions had developed in which He could give the absolute proof necessary to fully expose Satan's lie.

3. Redeeming Mankind

The third mighty task Jesus came to accomplish was the redemption of mankind through His sacrificial death. The price required was one that only He could pay, for only a life that measured with the perfection of the law to the infinite degree could equal the penalty for its being broken. Not even a spotless angel who had never sinned could have successfully died for mankind.

As is iterated and reiterated in God's word, Christ paid that price on Calvary. So great and wonderful was the work done there at that focal point in history, that the cross becomes the meeting place for the Omnipotent and His estranged children.

Let it be repeated so that it will not be forgotten that sinless flesh and blood is immortal and therefore cannot die. Death's only access is through sin. Firstly comes the transgression, and then comes death. Therefore, Christ had to be tabernacled in fallen, sinful, mortal flesh and blood. Otherwise He could never have died.

A Similarity and a Difference

There is a striking similarity common to all three of the ministries that the Redeemer came to this earth to perform. It is that Christ could have discharged none of these responsibilities without His coming into fallen, mortal, sinful flesh and blood. Let us look at each in turn.

The character of God had to be manifested in the same fallen flesh in which Satan was developing his character.

To prove that the law could be kept in fallen, sinful, mortal flesh and blood, Christ had to obey it in the same flesh and blood.

And to die for mankind, Jesus had to have a fallen, sinful, mortal humanity that could die.

The difference is that, while Christ had to wait for sin to come to full maturity in order to fully reveal God's character in contrast to Satan's fully exposed nature, and prove that the law could be kept to perfection by fallen man, He would not have had to wait for these developments before dying for mankind, if paying the redemptive price was the only work He had to do. Under those circumstances, that sacrifice could have been made when man first sinned as well as at some future date.

No one can ignore the fact that there is a strong tendency due to man's way of thinking, to argue for immediate payment. The law had been broken and the penalty was immediately due. Fallen man could not meet the debt, yet he needed redemption on the spot, not later. Fortunately, Christ's credit rating was so superb that He could as fully cover the debt even when payment was still pending, as if it had actually been paid.

Now, consider the complicated and in fact impossible situation which would then have existed if no one could be saved until the price had been specifically and literally paid. This is talking of a situation in which there is no credit given; where nothing is available until the dues are paid in full. If these were the rigid conditions, then Christ would have had to have died the instant man sinned. There would not have been a moment to lose, for, otherwise, the penalty would have been immediately exacted as God had warned:

Genesis 2

¹⁷ But from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat the fruit of it you shall surely die.

The fact that Adam and Eve were not annihilated that very day was not due to Christ's actually dying that day, for, in fact

He did not, but rather to the truth that by virtue of His pledge, His promissory note to eventually meet the penalty, He could and did step in between fallen man and the broken law.

The S.D.A. Bible Commentary, vol. 1, p. 1085

The instant man accepted the temptations of Satan, and did the very things God had said he should not do, Christ, the Son of God, stood between the living and the dead, saying, "Let the punishment fall on Me. I will stand in man's place. He shall have another chance."

So then, let us return to the line of thought being developed. The truth stated above is that if no one could be saved without Christ's having actually and literally died, then the Saviour would have had to have died the instant that man sinned. But, inasmuch as death is not possible for divinity, in the same instant He would have had to have taken on fallen, sinful, mortal flesh and blood. Otherwise it would have been quite impossible for Him to have died.

But, it was utterly impossible for Jesus under the terms of the plan of salvation to partake of fallen, sinful, mortal flesh and blood in an instant. The Almighty, in His unimpeachable wisdom had decreed that Jesus should not only partake of the same flesh and blood as the children, but also in the same way that they do—by the process of reproduction as it is written:

Hebrews 2

¹⁴ Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.

Now, this process takes time. It would require the implantation of Jesus in the womb of an earthly mother just as He was later embedded in Mary. Eve would have been the only possible choice if this was to have taken place at the fall. Nine months would then have passed before the birth of the child, and many years thereafter before He would be old enough to make the willing sacrifice of Himself.

However, this presupposes that Eve would have survived long enough for Jesus to be born of her, an achievement which she would not have managed, for, since no actual atoning sacrifice had been made as yet, then there would have been absolutely no protection from the wrath of the broken law, and she and her husband would have perished together with the barely implanted embryo. Thus the human family would have become immediately extinct, and the plan of redemption would have been a complete failure. Thus, in the very nature of the case, God could not provide the actual death of Christ the moment that man sinned. Believers had to be redeemed back then on the basis of a future sacrifice. There was no other way.

Some may counter by arguing that God can do anything. No one will dispute His physical power to do anything. But, let it not be forgotten that God does nothing unrighteously. Therefore, there are things that the Lord cannot do. He cannot tell a lie, commit a murder, or in any other way break His law. When He formulated the gospel, He did so within the framework of moral and natural law. Therefore, anyone who really wishes to understand the gospel, must learn to recognize the operations of those laws in harmony with which the gospel has been designed.

Now, in our endeavor to understand that there is no alternative way to that decreed by God, let it be supposed that Christ could have instantly taken on fallen, sinful, mortal flesh and blood and as swiftly died to pay the penalty. A few minutes of careful thought would quickly show that this would but further hopelessly complicate matters.

So, as is now being supposed, Christ, tabernacled in instantly acquired sinful flesh and blood, died for sinners the instant that man sinned. This would be followed by His resurrection in a matter of a few days, when He would arise in sinless, immortal flesh and blood. Wonderful as that would be, He would be eternally disqualified to carry out the other two

much more important missions, namely the revelation of His Father's character, and the proving that the law could be kept. As has been stressed above, Christ could not fulfill either of these responsibilities except He was tabernacled in the some flesh and blood as fallen mankind.

Therefore, if under these conditions He was to finish His work, He would have to be again incarnated into sinful, fallen humanity. Again He would have to die and be resurrected into sinless, immortal humanity. But, in the seed principle, no one, not even Christ, can be physically born twice. Admittedly, there are heathen religions which teach reincarnation, but there is no place for it in God's truth.

How simple, beautiful, understandable, and consistent is the real truth in contrast to all these complicated contradictions.

Eternally, before man sinned, the plan of salvation was prepared in order to meet the emergency of sin's entry should it ever occur. The instant that man sinned, Christ was prepared. Stepping in between man and the penalty, Christ assured His Father that He would die for humanity, would vindicate the Father's character, and would prove both by declaration and demonstration that the law could be kept to perfection even by fallen humanity under the greatest possible pressure of temptation.

Both the Father and the Son were fully aware that all these missions which had to be completed concurrently, could not be fulfilled at the beginning of the great controversy, so Jesus, in effect gave His Father a promissory note in which He pledged that He would pay the price as soon as circumstances permitted. The Father fully accepted these terms and granted salvation to the Old Testament believers on the basis of a debt to be paid.

Finally, the fullness of the time came. Jesus entered into sinful flesh, convincingly proved the law could be kept by

fallen humanity even in a sinful world, and fully revealed His Father's character. Then, having gotten the victory over Satan, announced in the triumphant words, "It is finished", He gave up His life as the ransom for all who would accept the gracious offer.

Thus, those who accept the word of God as the one infallible guide while placing confidence in no impression, imagining, or supposed revelation from heaven which disagrees with what the Scriptures say, will have no difficulty understanding that the Old Testament believers were saved by a sacrifice to be made while those of us who live this side of Calvary are redeemed by a sacrifice already made. So sure, powerful, and effective was Christ's promise to die that it was in effect as if He had actually done so, and the Father certainly accepted it as such. Not even Satan could successfully contend the validity of the arrangement.

Why Jesus Came

F B^b F C Dm Gm A Dm

1. E - vil times had ful - ly come, mor - al dark - ness cov - ered earth;
 2. So God came to dwell with men, to ex - pose the man - y lies
 3. And to jus - ti - fy God's law as the way of right - eous - ness;
 4. And to form a ho - ly seed in all will - ing hearts, made free
 5. And to pay sin's hor - rid price, when a - lone, the press He trod;

C F Gm A B^b Gm F C F

God's Son came in mor - tal flesh, and par - took of hu - man birth.
 That had marred His im - age bright, in men's hearts and in men's eyes.
 Show - ing true o - be - di - ence as the way of peace and rest.
 From old Ad - am's self - ish mind, to walk in love's new de - cree.
 Like a lamb He bowed His head; died, to bring us back to God.