

## Centuries of Assumptions and Fables

Message by: Keith Surface

Published April 2014



As a young minister I found myself staring at a scripture verse that was causing me much confusion. The verse is found in the tenth chapter of Hebrews where the writer is telling us that a body was prepared for Christ (when he came into the world) in order that he might do the will of God. Then the writer made this statement: ***“By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all”*** (Hebrews 10:10). What confused me about this verse is that it appeared to be saying that my (and every believer’s) sanctification was solely accomplished by the sacrifice of Jesus’ body on the cross. I knew this was too simplistic so I continued to study the passage looking for its *“deeper”* meaning. I knew about striving for holiness, progressive sanctification, and the daily work of the Holy Spirit to sanctify the believer. But this verse seemed to be saying that the sanctification of the believer was already accomplished by Jesus Christ. I finally concluded that this verse was just too deep for me to understand. It was sometime later that I realized that the power of this verse was in its simplicity. We are indeed sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ on the cross. **He died and I was made holy!** So simple, so powerful, so true! Why did it take me so long to see it and believe it? Was I not educated enough? Was I not mature enough? Did I not have a sufficient understanding of proper *“doctrines?”* None of these was the case. The truth is that I was too educated, thought myself too mature, and too versed in doctrine to see the simplicity of the scripture. It was not *“the world”* that had blinded my eyes, but the many traditional doctrines I believed that actually served to explained away the simplicity of the word of God.

### It’s Just What We Believe!

Over forty years ago a pastor friend from a major denomination was visiting my dad, Bro. Leroy Surface. The man was seeking to persuade Bro Surface to preach something according to the way his denomination believed it, but Brother Surface protested, asking, *“Where is that found in the bible?”* As the man continued to press his point Bro. Surface continued to ask, *“But where is that in the bible?”* Finally the man exploded with this answer, ***“That’s not in the bible. It’s just what we believe!”***

Recently, I had an experience similar to the one I mentioned above. A pastor friend and I were talking about something he had recently preached. I have heard what he preached many times from different ministers and it is almost universally accepted as gospel truth. This time, however, I asked this pastor, *“What scripture would you use as a basis for this belief?”* He took a few minutes to explain why he felt it was the truth but offered no scripture to support it. When he finished I asked, *“Well then are you saying there is no scripture to support this belief?”* *“Of course there is,”* he protested, and took another few minutes to explain to me again why these things were so, but did not use a single verse of scripture. When he was finished I asked again, *“But what verse of scripture could you use as a basis for this belief?”* Frustrated with my uncouth line of questioning, he blurted out loudly, *“I don’t know! I’m not a walking bible!”*

## Why Do We Need Theories?

The pastors in both the incidents mentioned above were good men who loved the Lord. Yet both these incidences, which occurred over forty years apart, bring home an important truth. Often people believe and preach things, not because the scripture declares it, but because it has always been presented as truth and no one has questioned it. I have come to see that many, if not most, of the foundational doctrines of the modern church have little or no scriptural basis at all. They are often just theological conclusions that are based upon the assumptions of men. Sometime back I was thinking about some of the traditional doctrinal theories concerning what Jesus accomplished in the redemption. My mind went to the words of the Apostle John where he said, *“And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin”* (I John 3:5). I was looking at the words *“ye know”* when suddenly it hit me. I did not need some man’s theory about why Jesus came into the world or what he accomplished on the cross. I know what he came to do. I do not have to assume, guess, or formulate a theory. *“He was manifested to take away our sins.”* The word of God says we *“know”* this. With such powerful statements by the Apostles concerning what Christ came to accomplish, why do we need theories?

Recently, I asked the congregation if they knew who Santa Clause was. Cautiously most answered yes. *“What does he do,”* I asked? *“He delivers gifts,”* someone said. *“Where does he live?”* *“The North Pole.”* *“What does he drive?”* *“A sled.”* *“Who helps him?”* *“Elves.”* *“What color clothes do they wear?”* *“Green.”* *“When does he work?”* *“Christmas.”* *“What does he eat when he comes down the chimney?”* *“Cookies.”* It is amazing how much most people know about something that is entirely fictional. The truth is that sometimes we are the same way concerning church doctrines. We know everything about them even though we have never seen them in the word of God. Paul warned that a time would come when *“they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables”* (II Timothy 4:4). I want to take the rest of this message and look at some major traditional church doctrines for which I have found no scripture to support. I would ask the reader that before you take offence at my questioning of these teachings, ask yourself, *“What scripture would I use to show this?”* And if you can find no scripture, then ask yourself why you should be offended when someone questions the validity of these teachings?

## Assumptions and Fables

### What scripture tells us that the blood of Jesus covers sin?

It is true that the scripture tells us that *“charity will cover the multitude of sins”* (I Peter 4:8). David also spoke of the blessedness of the man whose sins are covered, but there is not a single verse of scripture that tells us the blood of Jesus covers sin. Here is what the scripture does say about the blood of Jesus: The blood **sanctifies** the people (Hebrews 13:12). The blood **cleanses** from all sin and unrighteousness (I John 1:7, 9). The blood **washes** from our sin (Revelation 1:5). The blood **makes us perfect** (complete) in every good work to do his will (Hebrews 13:20-21). The blood **purges** our conscience from dead works (Hebrews 9:14). The scripture is loud and clear concerning the work of the blood of Jesus Christ, yet people cling to a doctrine of covering that is not mentioned even once by the Lord or his Apostles.

### What scripture says that Jesus took the penalty for our sins?

Years back I began to search for a scriptural basis for this belief, and found none. Most people will go to the fifty third chapter of Isaiah for their proof text. *“But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity*

of us all" (Isaiah 53:5-6). Look closely. Nowhere in this passage does it say that Jesus took the punishment for our sins. The word **"for"** in these verses, and throughout the scripture, simply tells us that our sin was the cause for which Christ Jesus gave his life. What was laid upon Jesus was our iniquity (verse six). Peter refers to this prophecy in his first epistle; *"Who his own self **bare our sins** in his own body on the tree, **that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed**"* (1 Peter 2:24). Peter makes no mention of punishment, but clearly shows that the result of Jesus bearing our sins is that we become dead to sin and live unto righteousness. Paul references Hebrews 53:12 (*"...**he bare the sin of many...**"*) when he writes, *"...but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared **to put away sin** by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: **So Christ was once offered to BEAR THE SINS OF MANY**; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation"* (Hebrews 9:26-28). Jesus was offered as a sacrificial lamb bearing our sin to the cross that he might put it away. He was not punished as a criminal in our place. Never once are the sufferings of Christ tied to punishment or penalty in the scripture. If that were true would not the apostles have said it at least once? Now look at what the scriptures do say about the coming and sufferings of Christ.

**John 1:29:** *"Behold the Lamb of God that **takes away the sin** of the world."*

**Romans 6:6:** *"Our old man is crucified with him that **the body of sin might be destroyed.**"*

**Galatians 1:4:** *"Who gave himself for our sins, **that he might deliver us** from this present evil world."*

**Titus 2:14:** *"Who gave himself for us, that he might **redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.**"*

**Hebrews 9:26:** *"...but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared **to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.**"*

**Hebrews 13:12:** *"Wherefore Jesus also, **that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.**"*

There are many more passages of scripture which tell us that Jesus died to take our sin away, but still millions of people in the churches hang their salvation on a doctrine of *"penalty paid"* that is not even once mentioned in the scripture.

### **What scripture says Jesus paid the debt we owed for our sins?**

Some of my favorite songs tell of the debt that Jesus paid for me. The question is *"What debt are we speaking of?"* The scripture never once speaks of Jesus paying a debt or God demanding payment. This doctrine came from a medieval theologian who it seems assumed that the relationship between man and God was akin to a peasant and his landowning lord. The peasant was forever seeking to pay a great debt of honor that was demanded by the lord but it was never enough. In this theory of redemption, we are presented as the ones who could never pay God the honor that he demanded. Christ came and paid the debt of honor for us by dying on the cross, and that payment is imputed to us. This theory may make some good preaching, but what verse of scripture tells us that it is so? The angel Gabriel told Daniel that Messiah the Prince would come *"to finish the transgression, to make and end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness"* (Daniel 9:24-25). John the Baptist said he was the Lamb of God who *"takes away the sin of the world"* and the apostle John said he was *"manifested to take away our sins."* Paul said he came *"to put away sin"* and Peter said he died in order that we would *"be dead to sin."* With such direct declarations from the word of God, why is the church clinging to theories about why Christ came that are not even once stated in the scripture?

## What verse of scripture says Jesus' sinless life is imputed to the believer?

Many times when "justification by faith" is mentioned this statement follows, "Jesus lived a perfect life so you don't have to and his perfect life is accounted to you when you put your faith in Jesus Christ." As much as anything I have ever heard, this teaching qualifies for what Paul calls a fable. Not even one verse of scripture in the entire bible comes close to saying such a thing.

## What verse of scripture tells us that Jesus' righteousness is imputed to us?

When I first questioned this I felt like a heretic for doing so. This is one of those things you hear so often that it just feels like the truth. But when I began to look for scripture to confirm it, I could not find any. Do you know of any? The first thing I found was that our own faith is accounted to us for righteousness just as Abraham's own faith was accounted to him for righteousness, but that was not even speaking of our redemption. I found in redemption that we are "made righteous" through the obedience of Jesus Christ (Romans 5:19). I found where the fine linen is the righteousness of saints (Revelation 19:8). I found where we receive the gift of righteousness (Romans 5:17). I found where we receive the righteousness which is of God by faith (Philippians 3:9). But in all my searching there was no scripture found that says the righteousness of Jesus Christ is imputed or accounted to the believer. What is the danger of this teaching? The church is holding to a righteousness imputed when the scripture teaches a righteousness given. The first, which no scripture says, leaves us as sinners but only seen as righteous in God's eyes. The truth, however, which fills the scripture, tells us that through the redemption we are in reality made righteous in heart, life and deed.

## What verse of scripture says God sees the believer different than what they really are?

This is absolutely a fable. We have all heard it. "God sees you as righteous, even though you are still a sinner...God can't see your sin if you have believed upon Jesus Christ...When God looks at you, he only sees Jesus...We all have our besetting sins, but God sees us as perfect." This may sound great to some, but do you know of any scripture that says God does not see things as they truly are. Look at what the scripture does say; "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but **all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do**" (Hebrews 4:13). If all things are naked and open to his eyes, why do we think that our sin is covered from his eyes? When the scripture speaks of "in his sight" it is not saying that God sees less than man, but that God sees everything, even what man cannot see. What could be a greater fable than to teach that redemption hides things from God? No! Redemption purifies the believer so that even the hidden parts are clean. What scripture would you use to support this doctrine?

## He Took Our Place?

I must admit that I was a little apprehensive writing about this last great assumption. The old song "I should have been crucified" has always touched me. Then one day I asked, "If Jesus had not gone to the cross, would my future be crucifixion or eternal damnation? And, if I had been crucified, would that have changed anything about my eternal destiny?" Of course not! So I asked myself, "On what basis did I believe that it was my place Jesus was taking on the cross?" Then it hit me. John did **not** say "Behold **the sinner of God that dies in the place of sinners.**" Instead, he said "Behold **the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world.**" Jesus was offered as a sacrificial lamb; not as a sinner. Our sin was placed upon him so that he might bear it away to the cross and destroy it (Romans 6:6). He was offered as a substitute lamb to do what no other lamb could do. Paul wrote, "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4). Every lamb that was ever offered died for a sinner, but it was not dying in the place of the sinner. Jesus also died for sinners, but he was not dying in our place. He actually died in the place of those lambs to do for us

what they could never do. He died to take away our sin. Jesus is the Lamb of God! **So I ask, what verse of scripture says that Jesus took your place or any other person's place on the cross?**

## **Should God's Light be put under a Bushel?**

Some might wonder why I would write a message which may be offensive to many people? The answer is simple; **it's what I see in the word of God.** I know that doctrinal traditions are the biggest hindrances to people knowing the truth that Jesus said would make them free. When I touched on some of these things in a message at our recent Spring Campmeeting, I received a negative response from several people. In the following service I said this; *"I know some people wonder why I would say such things, but **if I never say it the first time, I can never say it the second time.**"* Paul and Barnabas, and later Silas, went into places where they were the only ones who saw what they saw and understood in the Lord, but they began to speak the truth, and they spoke it again and again until multitudes were delivered from the power of darkness. If the doctrinal traditions of the church have become tools whereby Satan holds God's people captive, then anyone who sees what the word of God actually says must stand and declare that truth, and they must do so without ceasing.