

# Keys to Prophecy



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## #8 - Rules of Engagement

Tonight we want to talk about "Rules of Engagement" -

Every interaction between two or more people involves "rules of engagement"

Whether you are playing Football, Tennis, Monopoly, Sorry or Candyland - There are rules of engagement

If you make up the rules along the way - Or change them all the time to suit yourself - You have chaos

No one has any fun - Everyone ends up frustrated

Even in WAR we try to have rules of engagement - The Geneva Convention

You are only to attack combatants - soldiers in uniform - not civilians

Prisoners of war are to be treated humanely - provided with basic human needs - Not tortured

And - of course - each side claims the other side is not fighting fairly

Every marriage needs rules of engagement - Husbands and wives will disagree - and fight

What builds or destroys a marriage is HOW you fight - not THAT you fight

Learning how to constructively work through conflict is at the core of all successful relationships

Last night - In Revelation 12 - We discovered there was WAR IN HEAVEN

That war was imported to this earth - And we live in a war zone - A prolonged war

How did that war begin - And how did it end up here? - And what are the rules of engagement?

It all starts with - GOD IS LOVE - Love is God's one and only "rule of engagement"

LOVE gives FREEDOM -

Real FREEDOM allows real CHOICE

Real CHOICE involves RISK - including the possibility of wrong or poor choices

So how does love react when you do make a wrong choice?

Love cannot necessarily stop the intrinsic consequences for wrong choices

Love does not retaliate against wrong choices - Because that would not be freedom

Love may impose consequences for constructive reasons - or allow intrinsic consequences

Love LOVES you through the consequences

Stays with you through the consequences - even experiences the consequences with you

If I offered you the choice between these two marking pens - One is red - the other is blue

You can have whichever one you choose - But if you choose the red one, I'll kill you

Is that a real choice? - Of course not

So if God gives real choice - He cannot step in and stop all bad choices or their consequences

Remember our illustration on the night we discussed the Antichrist - Daniel 7

King Ferdinand's letter carried by Columbus to the natives of Haiti - Saying in essence...

We come in the name of God and Jesus Christ and the Christian Church

We give you the opportunity to freely accept our blessed religion - be taught and baptized

*We...will receive you with love and charity, respecting your freedom... and we shall not compel you to baptism unless you, informed of the Truth wish to convert to our holy...Faith...*

If you do we will bestow many privileges and exemptions upon you.

*BUT Should you fail to comply...we assure you that with the help of God we shall use force against you, declaring war upon you from all sides and with all possible means... we shall enslave your persons, wives and sons, sell you or dispose of you as the King sees fit; we shall seize your possessions and harm you as much as we can as disobedient and resisting vassals.*

What a mockery of the concept of Freedom - What an introduction to Christianity

What monstrous words against God

Yet that is often the picture the church has put out about God

Real LOVE gives real FREEDOM - Or love is not real

God IS love - He always functions according to WHO He IS

Regardless of the rules the other side uses - God's rule of engagement is simple - LOVE - Always only love!

He gives freedom - respects freedom - protects freedom

- For God - The MEANS JUSTIFIES THE END - Being in CONTROL without being CONTROLLING

The path you use to reach your goal is as important as arriving at the destination of your goal

Lucifer - The highest angel - the first to choose to exercise the dark side of LOVE -

Twisting the freedom inherent in LOVE - To dump the rules of engagement and make up his own

Turned his great abilities to serve others around to serve himself - To rule by force instead of love

Moved from being other centered to self centered - From serving to controlling - From giving to getting

Wanted to dethrone God and become the Most High - Began to say monstrous things about God

Used his incredible power of persuasion to convince 1/3 of angels to join him -

Started a war - God made him leave heaven - and sent him here

But God did not force sin onto Adam and Eve - Set up two trees - Choice - Love gives choice - And warning

Satan was given opportunity - from one tree - to talk our first parents into letting him take over planet earth

So he could try out his new ideas on how HE would run the universe if he were God

Satan spoke monstrous words against God to Eve - Insinuating doubt - That God was a liar

Suggesting God was withholding good things from them - and doing it maliciously

Suggesting they could join him - and become gods themselves

Here we see Satan's rules of engagement - Anything to win

He uses: Innuendo - lies - deceit - coercion - force - fear - affliction - terror - torture

He can: misrepresent - insinuate - deceive - fudge - fabricate - invent - prevaricate - manipulate

Say anything - do anything - twist anything - spin everything - dodge - duck - evade - hedge - tamper

- The END JUSTIFIES THE MEANS - Anything to win - Anything to gain an advantage

Anything to gain and maintain power and control

The whole thing at the tree was not about fruit - it was about faith - Trusting God - or trusting the serpent

Adam and Eve had every reason to trust God - and no reason to trust the serpent

But they were deceived by his cunning - Just like the angels in heaven - And fell for Lucifer's lies

They put their own perfect intellect up against Satan's - and lost

If you ever try to match wits with Satan - You will lose

They broke relationship with God - And took their chances with Satan's new ideas

And our earth - has become the laboratory - for Satan to try out his new ideas

So - How is he doing?

O - Terrible - we say - What a mess -

Yet - by the looks of things - He appears to be actually winning

More people are going his Satan's way than God's

After all - Satan has such a wide array of options to use - Whatever works - Whatever wins  
 While God - is limited to a very narrow set of options - Just one - LOVE

For God - the MEANS justifies the END - If LOVE is the end - then LOVE must be the only means  
 If you are going to arrive at love's end - You have to take love's route to get there  
 When one side is constrained by love - and for the other "anything goes" - Who has the initial advantage?  
 The evil side has the initial advantage - But can LOVE win in the end? - in the long run?

❑ What was GOD'S RESPONSE TO SIN?

When Adam and Eve sinned - They chose to go from life to death - How did God treat them?

God came down for some conversation - To talk about it

God did not come roaring in with threats and accusations - He came with questions

When they hid from God - He knew where they were - He could have hunted them down - Got-cha!

Instead - He called them - Inviting them into conversation

God knew they were afraid - ashamed - feeling vulnerable and naked

He knew they were in for some very hard times as a result of their choice

But instead of pulling the plug and leaving them to die in their choice to separate from Him - the source of life

God extended grace to keep them alive - Gave them a second chance - to choose to go from death to life

When Adam and Eve started blaming each other - and God Himself - for the pickle they were in

God gave them hope - A PROMISE - He would keep the war going - Until all that was lost was regained!

❑ Genesis 3:15 (3) *And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.*"

God immediately gave the promise of a Savior - An offspring of the woman who would slay the serpent

God promised to stay in it with them until HE had regained for them all that THEY had lost

They could not win it back for themselves - So God promised to win it for them - and give it back

"This will go on for generations - But I will stick with you and bring you the victory"

Now God gives Adam and Eve some information about how sin will effect their lives - Genesis 3:16-20 (3)

Women will experience pain and trouble with children and husbands

Men will wear themselves out trying to provide for their families - until they die from stress and overwork

Next it says...

❑ Genesis 3:21 (3) *Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.*

They are standing there draped in fig leaves - Itchy - Sticky - Uncomfortable - Inadequate

God noticed this and said - "Let's get you two something to wear!"

Now up to that time they had been "naked and unashamed" - Genesis 2:25 (2)

No self-consciousness - Not a thought of "What are they thinking about me"

There is nothing freer than a naked little kid running around completely uninhibited

With no fear of rejection - or "What will people think" - No self-consciousness

Can you imagine living your whole life that way? - That is what God intended for us

❑ So God made them "TUNICS OF SKIN" - What is involved in that?

If God had made tunics of wool - We would know He sheered a sheep - Spun thread - Wove cloth

And the sheep would live to be sheered again another day

But tunics of skin must involve the death of the animal

Kind of like the breakfast of "ham and eggs" - The chicken was involved, but the pig was committed

Up to this time there had been no death - The world was perfect - No sin - No death

❑ This, then, is the FIRST recorded DEATH - When God killed an animal to clothe Adam and Eve

Picture that moment - God calls a lamb or goat - And it comes willingly - No fear - Comes bounding over

Suddenly - God moves his hand swiftly - There is blood everywhere - The animal slumps - Kicks - Lies still

Adam and Eve must have been in shock - What is happening? - Why? - This is awful

Then God pulls the skin off the animal - Blood and guts all over the green grass - Gross - Gory

I wonder if Eve had to duck behind a bush - where she lost her recent meal of forbidden fruit?

From that skin God fashion clothes - And knowing how God does things - Everything God does is “very good”  
These new clothes fit - and looked good too - And Adam and Eve felt better in those clothes

God had told Adam and Eve that sin would result in death - But they had no experiential knowledge of death  
What is death? - How do you teach someone about death without an example?  
How do you teach a little child about death? -  
It comes only through experience - when the parakeet or hamster dies - or grandma dies

Adam and Eve now get their first glimpse of what awaits them - Due to their sin - And this is not pretty  
Serpent had said - Death would improve their existence - Elevate them to a more god-like existence  
This first killing shows a chillingly different reality to this things called “death”  
“This is death” - A graphic lesson - Blood and guts - A “down” not an “up - A “bad” not a “good”

- ❑ I believe this is the story of the first sacrifice - The way God asked people to worship Him from then until the cross  
We see Cain and Abel - Noah - Abraham - Isaac - Jacob - Moses - Samuel - David - Offering sacrifices  
Worship always involved the sacrifice of an animal - And that sacrifice was not to appease an angry God  
Why? - God hates death - Blood and guts are not God’s idea of a good time  
So why all these bloody sacrifices? - They are not for God’s sake - But for ours  
I believe they were instituted to teach US some vital lessons  
To introduce lost human beings to the Gospel of salvation by Grace through faith in the coming Savior  
To reveal to us the only way we can move from death back into life

- ❑ THE SACRIFICES REVEAL several important truths

- ❑ 1. Show in graphic detail the INTRINSIC CONSEQUENCES OF SIN  
Show to Adam and Eve - to their descendants - Inevitable results we could not see on our own  
Sacrifices were NOT intended to be enjoyable - For God or the worshiper  
But to be instructive - To show graphically that sin is deadly - It will kill you  
That Death - is the INTRINSIC result of sin - not an imposed punishment  
This is where you are headed because of sin - This will happen to you!  
In this first sacrifice - and every one thereafter - They see death in all it’s dreadful reality
- ❑ 2. Teach us that we cannot SAVE ourselves - You can never un-sin a sin - Undo a wrong - Un-die a death  
Once you run a stop sign - All prior stopping has no merit  
You can’ back up and do it again - Because that is now the “next” time  
All the future stopping cannot undo the time you didn’t stop  
Step off a tall building - All the prior keeping of the law of gravity is of no value then  
And you can yell - “I’m sorry” - all the way down - and you will hit just as hard  
And God cannot just suspend gravity to save you - Change the law  
Think of the chaos and death that would result from that  
If the consequence is intrinsic - not imposed - It is unchangeable  
We cannot ourselves restore the life we have thrown away by separating from the source  
No amount of good deeds can undo a single evil deed
- ❑ 3. Reveal the LENGTHS to which God will go to save us - To rescue us  
God will go to the length of giving His own life in our place  
Here we have the introduction of the concept of a substitute -  
Another gives up its life that we may live - Taking death in our place  
Salvation may be free to us - But it costs another everything  
God is revealing how far He will go to save us from sin - to cover our shame  
God is in the business of covering our shame - But it costs the life of another - His own life

God tried to unfold these truths through the sacrificial system  
Not as imposed ritual - But because “sacrifice” is what God is all about - Love is sacrificial  
So God took the life of an innocent animal - And from that death God fashioned new clothes  
We can never cover our own shame - Our fig leaves just don’t cut it - Never really do the job  
The nakedness persists - Along with shame, fear and blame  
Only God can fashion the new clothes that will truly take care of our shame and nakedness

Genesis 3:22-24 (3) *<sup>22</sup>Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"—<sup>23</sup>therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. <sup>24</sup>So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.*

Sin must not be immortalized - So for the time being Adam and Eve had to be separated from the Tree of Life  
 We cannot have it both ways - Live forever AND rebel against God  
 Remember - God is LIFE - Sin is the choice to reject God as our source of life  
 When we sin we choose to separate from God - Choose to go it alone - To go independent  
 And separation from LIFE = Death

God does not IMPOSE death on those who sin - Sin is what is killing us - Not God  
 God is doing everything He can to save us from what sin is doing to us  
 God does not say - "Serve me, or die" - He says, "You are dying. Serve me and live!"  
 That is not a threat - That is a promise

So in sending Adam and Eve out of the garden - God simply honored their choice -  
 To go it alone in this big world - To step away from the Tree of Life and try to live on their own

Imagine the pillow talk that first night outside the garden - Lying back in their new tunics of skin  
 Looking up at the stars  
 Remember - the rest of the world was perfect and beautiful - Not just the garden  
 God declared the whole creation very good - Then planted the garden home within that creation  
 So the world - that first night outside the garden - did not yet show the results of sin we see today

Perfect minds - Perfect memories - of a very full day - Awesome - Tragic - Heartbreaking  
 "Why were we afraid of God? - Why do we feel naked now, when we didn't before? - What has changed?"  
 God's words - About crushing the head of the serpent... - How much did they understand?  
 The subject of salvation appears to be something God unfolded little by little  
 As human beings were able to comprehend it

☐ CAIN and ABEL - Turn to Genesis 4 (3)  
 vs.1-2 - Sometime later - Eve became pregnant and bore a son - named Cain - Then a 2<sup>nd</sup> son - named Abel  
 When the boys grew up - Cain became a farmer - Abel became a shepherd

Genesis 4:3-5 (4) *<sup>3</sup>And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. <sup>4</sup>Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, <sup>5</sup>but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.*

One day - They each came individually to worship God  
 Cain brought the best of the produce of his garden - Abel brought one of the best of his lambs  
 It says - God respected Abel and his offering - But God did not respect Cain or his offering  
 Probably shown by sending down fire from heaven and consuming Abel's offering  
 These boys must have been instructed on how to worship God  
 The Bible is clear that God does not hold us accountable for something we don't know

☐ Acts 17:30 (1072) *Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent.*

☐ James 4:17 (1161) *Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.*

God is fair - He does not expect us to read His mind - or hold us accountable for what we do not know  
 God is also just - He does hold us accountable for what he has shown us - and we have understood

Cain was so angry at God's rejection of his offering - and the acceptance of his brother's offering  
 First he complained to God - THEN in rage, he killed his brother

Here we get our SECOND GLIMPSE OF THIS CONCEPT OF SACRIFICE -

Concepts which remain in place throughout the whole Old Testament

Why would God accept Abel's offering - but not Cain's?

Why would an offering of your best fruit not be as acceptable to God as your best animal?

There must be deep meaning in the type of sacrifice offered - Not just its cost to the worshiper

There had to be the death of an animal

Later on God said it clearly - Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins -

Leviticus 17:11 (110); Hebrews 9:22 (1153)

Does God love blood and guts? - Or is there a higher reason for this?

- ❑ This story teaches us that... - It is NOT THE COST OF THE SACRIFICE to the worshiper that matters
- ❑ But the SPIRIT of the worshiper - Submitting to God's ways - instructions - Willing obedience  
Just the opposite of Adam and Eve's actions at the tree - That first sin of disobedience
- ❑ And the TRUTH understood by the worshiper about the sacrifice  
Recognizing that sin is lethal - We cannot save ourselves - Another must give their life for us

The Sacrifices were designed to teach us that sin is an issue with life and death consequences -

Lethal - Systemic - Terminal

Not just a cosmetic problem that needs a face-lift - Not just a wound that needs healing

You can't buy your way back into God's favor - no matter how expensive of a gift you bring

The sacrificial gift is not for God's sake - But for our sake - To teach us -

To help us express our faith - our understanding - our choice

We cannot save ourselves - Sin will cost you your life - The wages of sin is death - Romans 6:23 (1089)

The only way back is through the death of another - The animal pointing forward to Messiah

To come to God with anything less than a life reveals our lack of comprehension of the realities of sin

It reveals that the worshiper still thinks that "I can save myself by what I bring"

That the sacrifice is about appeasing God - pleasing God - Winning God favor

It denies the lengths to which God is will have to go to save us

It's not the value of the gift that counts - We cannot purchase our salvation or favor with God

It is the meaning of the gift that counts - What the gift says about our own heart

Our own recognition of what sin it - what it costs - and how we are saved

Our own confession about who God is - And what HE will do for us - Not what we do for Him

Bringing the animal sacrifice was a confession of faith in these realities

In the world today - Most seem to be following the way of Cain - Believing sin isn't "that bad"

The "I'm OK, you're OK" attitude - What I do doesn't really matter as long as I feel it's OK

The church tries to say - "But what you are doing will kill you." Sin is lethal

We are demanded in the name of tolerance to condone everyone's lifestyle as OK

And we are branded as being prejudiced - of condemning - if we dare call certain things "sin"

The sacrifices were designed to keep before people the ugliness and lethality of sin

Sin may feel good in the moment - But its end result is death

To bring as an act of worship anything less than a life is too cheap for the problem

Genesis 4:12,16 (4) - Cain was banished as a vagabond on the earth - Moved east and started his own tribe

From this point on - for a long time - The earth was divided into two groups - The faithful and the rebels

Seed of Woman vs Seed of Serpent - Sons of God vs. Sons of Men

Cain and his descendants were the rebels

Seth - the next son of Adam and Eve - and his descendants were the faithful

Eventually these two groups began to intermingle - To intermarry

What happens when you add clean water to dirty? - The clean is corrupted - the dirty is not cleaned

And so - Eventually the earth was entirely so corrupt that God had to act

God washed the world out with a flood - and started over with Noah and his sons

Since sin entered the world - Everything God has started has still been GOOD - But before long it goes BAD  
 Sin wrecks things - It does not construct things - Sin is a spoiler - A destroyer  
 Within three generations - things had gone bad again.  
 Nimrod builds the tower of Babel - And here we go again - Open rebellion against God

So God calls a man named Abram - Later renamed Abraham - Turn to Genesis 12:1-3 (10)

- ☐ Genesis 12:1-3 (10) <sup>1</sup> *Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you.*  
<sup>2</sup> *I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; And you shall be a blessing.*  
<sup>3</sup> *I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

God asked Abraham to leave his native home - which was Ur of the Chaldeans - in ancient Babylon

Notice - Abraham was a Babylonian by natural birth

God said to Abraham - "I want you to go to a new place and become a great nation for me."

Abraham said, "There's only one problem. Sarah and I can't have children."

God says, "That's not a problem for me. Go, and I'll show you when you have arrived"

Abraham packs up his stuff and heads off to become a great nation - Going to someplace he doesn't even know  
 That takes a lot of faith - Not even knowing where he was going - Just following the Lord on an adventure

- ☐ Genesis 15:6 (12) *And he (Abraham) believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.*

Abraham was a Babylonian who believed - It is not where you come from that matters -

FAITH makes the difference - FAITH takes you from wherever you are to wherever God wants you to be!

- ☐ Hebrews 11:8-12 (1155) <sup>8</sup>*By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. <sup>9</sup>By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; <sup>10</sup>for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*

- ☐ <sup>11</sup>*By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. <sup>12</sup>Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.*

Why did God call Abraham? - Why did God establish the nation of Israel? - I believe it's very simple -

What is God's rule of engagement? - Love and freedom

What are the world's governments' rules of engagement? - Power and control

Just try not paying your taxes

You'll learn that no matter how good your government is - it comes down to power and control

All the governments of Earth - from the time Adam fell - have been run by power and control

God desired ONE example on planet earth of a nation run His way - Based on freedom and love

An exhibit for all the world to see what life is like lived God's way

What Israel was supposed to be THEN - is what the Church is supposed to be NOW

A place where love, freedom, choice and truth prevail - not power, control, anger and coercion

And yet when people look at the history of Israel - and at our churches - what do they see?

People inside so often act just like the people outside

In Israel God wanted a people who would demonstrate to the world what life would be like lived His way

Life lived by His rules of engagement - His rules of life

And God says that demonstration will be a blessing for all the earth

Abraham and Sarah - Unable to conceive - Tried to work things out themselves  
 Sarah gave her personal servant Hagar to Abraham as a 2<sup>nd</sup> wife - And they had a son - Ishmael  
 But God said NO - The son of promise will be born through Sarah

When Abraham was 100 - and Sarah was 90 - They finally had their own child - Isaac  
 God made it clear - This was the heir - The child through whom the "great nation" would be built  
 This new nation would be built on God's miraculous power - Not natural human abilities

Then one day God told Abraham to go to Mt. Moriah and sacrifice Isaac on an altar there  
 As they climbed the mountain Isaac made note that they had the wood and fire, but no lamb for the sacrifice  
 Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering"  
 When they came to the mountain top - Abraham built an altar and laid out the wood  
 Then he bound Isaac - and put him on the altar

Genesis 22:10-12 (18) <sup>10</sup> *And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.*  
<sup>11</sup> *But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!"*  
*So he said, "Here I am."*  
<sup>12</sup> *And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you*  
*fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."*

This story is tough to understand - Especially since God specifically prohibited all human sacrifice  
 But this story teaches two vital lessons about sacrifice and salvation  
 Expanding the understanding of the Gospel

- ❑ IN THE SACRIFICE - and by extension in all the sacrifices - WE SEE ILLUSTRATED...
- ❑ 1. We see the HEART OF GOD - the Father- regarding the sacrifices  
 We see what it was like for God the Father at the cross  
 We see how the sacrifice of Jesus effects God - What it cost Him  
 The closest earthly example is that of a father and his son  
 For a father to sacrifice his son is more painful than dying himself  
 There is no anger to be placated - No violent wrath to be appeased - No venting of His rage  
 There is the kind of pain - pathos - a father feels when he watches his only son die  
 Here is prefigured the Father-Son relationship that Jesus had with God while on earth  
 The pain of the Father was as great as the pain of Jesus at the cross  
 The sacrifice of Jesus was not the appeasement of God - But the travail of God Himself
- ❑ 2. We see the HEART OF JESUS - the Son - What it was like for Jesus to go to the cross - as the ultimate sacrifice  
 Isaac was a big enough boy to easily overpower the old man and escape off that mountain alive  
 Isaac willingly allowed himself to become the sacrifice  
 Isaac trusted his father completely -  
 Accepting that if the old man said this was of God - then he would submit  
 So - Jesus went willingly to the cross - A voluntary act - He could have easily escaped with His life
- ❑ John 10:15,17 (1037) <sup>15</sup> *...I lay down my life for the sheep.* <sup>17</sup> *...I lay down my life that I may take it up again.*  
 In the garden - John 18:1-13 (1046) - He flattened the crowd with a word  
 Then He let them bind Him and take Him away - They did not TAKE Him - He went willingly
- ❑ Philippians 2:5-8 (1130) <sup>7</sup> *...[He] made Himself of no reputation...*  
<sup>8</sup> *...He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*  
 No one, not even God, forced Jesus to be our Sacrifice - It was a voluntary act

Isaac lives to marry Rebecca - Who is also unable to conceive - Until God opens her womb  
 She has twins - Jacob and Esau

Jacob marries Leah - then Rachel - Neither are able to bear children - Until God opens their wombs  
 They both give Jacob their personal servants - who also cannot bear children - Until God opens their wombs  
 Together they give Jacob 12 sons - The 12 tribes of Israel

God made it clear - 3 generations deep - That Israel was a nation that existed by His power alone  
To become the one nation on planet earth to demonstrate what it is like to live life God's way

Abraham's descendants end up as slaves in Egypt for four generations - Then God delivers them  
They experience the plagues - the Red Sea - the manna - Water from the Rock - Pillar of cloud and fire  
God guides them to Mt. Sinai - Where God gives them his laws and rules for living  
His instructions to a group of uneducated slaves - on how to set up a society based on freedom and love  
A society of true justice and fairness - That will truly be a joy to be a part of  
We will talk about this on a future night - And God's purpose for the nation of Israel  
Tonight we want to stay focused on the sacrifices and their meaning

- At Mt. Sinai - God instructed Israel to build the Sanctuary - We have already looked at that  
In the sanctuary - God systematizes the sacrifices into a whole liturgy, so to speak
- The Altar of Sacrifice - is where the lambs and goats were slain, pointing to Messiah's sacrifice
- The Priest - Represented the ministry of Messiah before God on our behalf -  
Ministering His own blood which He willingly shed for our salvation
- The Laver - Represents God's cleansing of our lives - Not just forgiveness - but transformation  
Being washed clean of sin - Entering God's presence as a whole new creation
- Having gone through the sacrifice - and cleansing - We enter God's living room - The Holy Place  
There we are well cared for - well fed
- The dining table is always set with the Bread of Life - Ready for us to eat
- The lights are always on - The Light of the World is there to give us inspiration and direction
- The Incense is always ascending - representing conversation and prayer
- We have open communication with God -  
Whose throne is represented by the Ark - In the Most Holy Place
- While being safely visually separated by the veil

That Veil also represents the Messiah - Through whom we can "see" God without seeing Him  
Remember Jesus said - "If you have seen me you have seen the Father" - John 14:9 (1043)  
Because being sinners - we cannot survive visual-physical contact with God  
But through Messiah we can see a true picture of God - a revelation of God's character - veiled in human flesh  
Through the Sacrifice - we can come home - To relationship - communication - companionship  
Sin separated us from God - Messiah reunites us with God

Everything God does - is always VERY GOOD - Even these ugly sacrifices - Because of what they teach  
Everything Satan does - always wrecks something God has done

What did Satan do to the sacrifices? - He attacked God through misrepresentation  
He counterfeited the sacrificial rituals in the pagan religions of other nations  
The pagan sacrificial rituals were just the opposite of God's sacrificial system  
Their gods were made out of the things GOD had actually made - Nature  
Worshiping the creature instead of the creator  
Their gods would get angry with them - And have to be appeased with gifts  
They demanded bigger and more costly sacrifices  
Until - The ultimate gift was to sacrifice your son or daughter on the altar to the god

Satan took God's gospel of salvation and turned it completely up-side-down - He portrayed...  
The gods reveling in an orgy of blood - Not a loving Father giving up His beloved son  
The gods demanding we die for our own sins - Rather than God himself dying to save us from our sin  
People sacrificing their sons to appease an angry god to gain their own salvation  
Instead of a loving God sacrificing His only Son to facilitate our salvation - and GIVE it to us

Pagan sacrifices were for the sake of the gods - to appease their wrath  
God's sacrifice is for the sake of the people - to save us from sin's wrath  
A God of love does not need to be appeased  
The sacrifices are for OUR sake - So we can understand who God is and what HE is doing for us

And ONE MORE THING

Pagan sacrifices included the torture of the victims - to further please the blood thirst of the gods  
 In God's sacrificial system there was never torture of the sacrifice  
 The animals were killed in the most painless, humane way possible

Yet - over time - Israel came to view the sacrifices much the way the pagans did  
 As rituals that you had to do just perfect - just right - in order for God to approve and give His blessings  
 They lost sight that it is all about restoring relationship - Not performing rituals  
 Sin is a broken relationship - Salvation is a restoration of relationship

Israel first got off track by mingling pagan sacrifices with their worship of God  
 They erected idols right inside God's temple - and treated God just like another pagan god  
 Even to the point of sacrificing their own sons and daughters to the gods  
 And they became worse than the nations around them - more evil - inhumane - Injustice - Power - Control  
 Until God finally sent them back to Babylon - Where they came from in Abraham  
 And we have the stories of the book of Daniel set in that time of exile

After Israel returned from the 70 year Babylonian captivity - They had learned their lesson  
 They never again mingled worship of God with worship of pagan idols

Instead - they isolated themselves from the pagan peoples around them  
 They came to believe that their God and the salvation He offered - was only for THEM  
 That they alone were God's special people - That God cared nothing for the rest of the world  
 That the blessings promised by God were exclusively for them - and not to bless the whole world

And again - They came to see the sacrifices as rituals to earn God's favor  
 Instead of faith-centered activities through which they accepted God's favor towards them  
 and His gift of salvation through the Messiah to come  
 The sacrifices again became a counterfeit gospel - a system of behavior - of earning God's favor  
 And in isolating themselves - They thwarted God's original plan as outlined to Abraham...  
 That in his descendants all the world would be blessed

Who was the ultimate blessing that would come through Israel - to bless the whole world?  
 The Messiah - Who we believe to be fulfilled in Jesus Christ - That's why we are called "Christ"-ians  
 We believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah - The ultimate Lamb of God - The Savior of the world

- We have looked in depth at the sacrifices pointing forward to the Messiah  
 Now let's talk about the Messiah Himself - The fulfilment of the sacrifices  
 Turn to the Gospel of John 1 (1025) - Who was this Jesus?  
 Remember, John the Baptist introduced him as the "Lamb of God" - John 1:29,35 (1025)  
 He pointed to Jesus, and he said, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"  
 In essence he was saying - "That person is the one to whom every other sacrificial lamb has pointed"
- Look at John 1:1-3 (1025)  
*<sup>1</sup>In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup>All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.*
- John speaks of someone he calls THE "WORD" - Who is he referring to? - Look at verse 14.  
 John 1:14 (1025) *<sup>14</sup>And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*
- John is identifying JESUS CHRIST as this "Word"  
 The ultimate communication from God to human beings about Himself  
 And how does John describe this "Word"?

- ❑ v.1-2 - In the BEGINNING WAS the Word- When the beginning began, Jesus already existed - No beginning or end  
Therefore Jesus is truly God - He is eternal - Before anything else was, He was - Always there
- ❑ The Word was WITH God - God is evidently plural - More than one - Existing from eternity as One with Another  
God is an eternal community of Father, Son and Holy Spirit - Three so united as to be functionally ONE  
  
Genesis 1:26 - Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...  
The Old Testament word for God is Elohim - which is plural  
Deuteronomy 6:4 - Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God (elohim - plural), the Lord is one!
- ❑ The Word WAS God - Jesus was not just WITH God - Jesus IS God - And WAS God from eternity  
You have ONE God - "Jesus was God" - Yet you have a community - "Jesus was with God"  
The same - yet separate - Jesus is not another God - Not "a" God - Jesus is GOD - Fully God  
When Jesus was down here on earth, God was here - Yet God was still up there - "I and the Father are One"
- ❑ v.3 - Everything that was ever created was created by this "Word" - Jesus is the Creator of all  
Jesus is God in essence - Eternal existence - Infinite power - Creator of the world - Our Creator
- ❑❑ So this Messiah = Jesus = God
- ❑ Colossians 1:15-17 (1132) *<sup>15</sup>He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. <sup>16</sup>For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. <sup>17</sup>And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.*

v.15 - Jesus is the image of the invisible God

As Jesus said - If you have seen me, you have seen the Father - John 14:9 (1043)

Jesus is the firstborn over all creation

In becoming a human being - Jesus became the pre-eminent person of us all - of all time

v.16 - Jesus created all things - Whether we can see it or not

Including principalities and powers - Jesus created all the angels - Even Lucifer

v.17 - Jesus existed before all things - He is eternal - No beginning - No ending - Truly God

Jesus holds the current creation together - He is the sustainer of all creation and life

Notice - Jesus is truly and fully God - Not someone just possessed by God or inspired by God

Jesus is not a lesser god - He is God - Fully God - With all the attributes of God - Creator - Sustainer - Eternal

The ONE eternal God revealed Himself to human kind as Father and Son

The "Father-Son" title shows relationship - Not origin

As a human being - Jesus came to relate to God as a son to a father

Jesus took a subordinate role - He became one of us - The Creator became His own creature

The Eternal God on earth became a willing subject to the Eternal God in heaven

Jesus said - "I and the Father are ONE"

It is absolutely vital that we understand that Jesus is TRULY GOD - in human flesh?

Jesus is not somebody God picked to dwell in - He's not somebody who was God-like

Jesus is 100% God - Jesus is 100% Human - Impossible to fully understand - He's all-divine, all-human

Why is it so absolutely important that we understand that Jesus is truly God?

When Jesus died on the cross, WHO died on the cross? - God died

Why is that important? - Who is the one who has been violated by sin? - God

The original sin - Lucifer in heaven - was against God - Defaming God's name - Usurping God's position

The sin in Eden - Adam and Eve - was against God - Rejecting His leadership - Distrusting Him

Choosing to trust the serpent - Satan - in place of God - To live independent of God

Every sin since then - even if it seems to only hurt another person - is ultimately against God Himself

It hurts one of His children - And thus it hurts him

If you sin against a child, you sin against the parent

Every sin is another statement that "I will be independent of You, God. I will live my life my own way"

Sin pushes God out of our lives - saying, "Go away - Stay away - I'll do it myself, thank you."

Why did God make us? - Did He need gardeners? - or servants? - He has plenty of angels to serve Him  
 Why did God make human beings? - For RELATIONSHIP - He wanted to hang out with us  
 Love always seeks to expand its sphere of love - More beloveds - More to love  
 Love can grow forever - It can be complete today and complete tomorrow - Total today and total tomorrow  
 Love can be more today, without having been less yesterday  
 Love is an infinite thing that can always get bigger - Forever expand and grow  
 Love is beyond the realm of human thinking - Yet available for us to experience  
 Love works in the infinite - Yet it invades and functions in our finite

God made us to hang out with - God made us for relationship - With Him and with each other  
 So when we sin - when we reject God -  
 We are telling the One who made us to be in relationship with Him to get lost - To leave us alone  
 Has any parent here ever felt the pain of a child treating them like that?  
 "Leave me alone" - When the heart desire of the parent's is to love that child  
 Every sin is an affront to God - A violation against God - A separating from God - Breaking of God's heart  
 Every sin is primarily against God - though that same sin will secondarily effect yourself and others

Let me illustrate it this way -

Joe owes me \$1000.00 - And I'm really angry that he hasn't paid it back - So what can I do about it?  
 I go over to Mike and I grab him by the throat, and say, "You pay me the \$1000.00 Joe owes me."  
 Is that fair? It is not fair for me to force some innocent 3<sup>rd</sup> party to pay someone else's debt  
*Jesus was not some innocent 3<sup>rd</sup> party God grabbed and forced to pay my debt for me*  
 Jesus is God Himself - bearing the debt of sin for me

Suppose I'm really angry at Joe for stiffing me \$1000 - So I vent my rage on Mike - I beat up Mike  
 Now that I've worked out my aggression - I feel better towards Joe - Does that work? - Is that right?  
*Jesus was not some innocent 3<sup>rd</sup> party God beat up to relieve His anger and aggression towards me*  
 Jesus is God Himself - bearing the rage of sin for me

What if Mike says to Joe - "I forgive you of the \$1000 you owe Gary." Does that work?  
 Who alone has the right to forgive the \$1000 debt? - ME! - The one to whom the debt is owed  
*Jesus has to be God - the one who has been wronged - in order to legitimately offer forgiveness*

I've heard it explained that God is so angry because of sin, that...  
 When in His wrath God was about to destroy us - Jesus jumped in the way and said, "Hit me instead"  
 When God was about to kill us - Jesus put himself in between us and God  
 He deflected God's anger onto Himself - and took the lethal blow for us  
 So now that Jesus got smashed - God feels better towards us - Does that make sense?  
 When God demanded payment - And when we could not pay - In His wrath - God made Jesus pay instead  
 Now that God is paid up - He is satisfied and won't destroy us

NO - Jesus is not some third party that God made pay my bill for me  
 Jesus is not some third party God beat up instead of me  
 Jesus is not some third party that paid my bill so an angry God wouldn't require me to pay  
 Jesus is God Himself taking the hit that SIN is laying on us - Taking SIN's hit for us

God was not venting his anger on Jesus instead of on us  
 Jesus was God Himself taking upon Himself the results of sin - in our place  
 God, in Jesus, took the wrath of sin for us - Not the wrath of God against us  
 All because of God's great love for us - not God's great anger against us

□ 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 (1114) <sup>18</sup>Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, <sup>19</sup>that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself...

God is in the "reconciliation" business

God was on the cross, in Christ - because Jesus is God incarnate, in human flesh  
 Every sacrifice, every lamb, had to be perfect, pointing to the perfect God sacrificing Himself for us  
 Every lamb pointed forward to the God who would bear the violation of sin for us  
 He's the one who is owed - He swallows the debt.  
 Jesus was not abandoned by God on the cross - Jesus was God on the cross  
 When Jesus cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken me"  
 Jesus was experiencing the ultimate desire of sinners - to be left alone by God  
 Jesus, as a human, was feeling the final separation from God all unsaved sinners will experience  
 When the God they have told to "go away" - finally actually goes away and leaves them alone

Back to our illustration - Joe owes me \$1000  
 Who alone has the right to forgive Joe of that debt? - Only ME - The one to whom he owes the  
 If I forgive Joe that \$1000, who takes the loss? - I do - I am out every one of those \$1000 dollars  
 Forgiveness does not mysteriously cause the loss to disappear  
 Forgiveness means the one owed accepts the loss and sets the debtor free  
 Somebody takes the loss for every violation - Who does? - God Himself  
 God doesn't make some third party pay - He take the loss upon Himself

This Lamb of God has to be God himself  
 "The seed of the woman" who will crush the serpent's head - is the God Adam and Eve rejected  
 Mary was the mother, but God was the Father - through the Holy Spirit  
 Therefore God was IN Christ - the God-man - Reconciling the world back to himself.

Other religious systems have looked at Christianity and been repulsed by the idea that...  
 We believe in a God who had to have some blood - So he killed Christ - and thus saved us  
 But the difference they need to see - and so do we - is that God was Jesus - Himself  
 Not taking the wrath of God - But taking the reality of sin - in our place - to save us

Once again, see God's rule of engagement - LOVE - God is out to save, not to condemn.  
 God is not sitting up in Heaven, looking down to catch you in your sin so He can whack you  
 God is up in Heaven saying, "Come to me, please! I have already forgiven you."

Which leads to this question - When, and only when, did God bear the hit of sin for us?

☐ 1 Peter 2:24 (1163) *...who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree... by whose stripes you were healed.*

Jesus bore our sins "in his body" - Peter uses physical language  
 Jesus' bearing our sins is not just a spiritual metaphor or illustration  
 Somehow, at the cross - The Creator God who can say...  
 "Rock" - And there is a rock  
 "Tree" - And a tree appears  
 The God who can speak and it is done - Who commands and it comes to pass  
 That God gathered up the sin of the world and by His creative power physically placed it in Jesus

How many sins did God put on Jesus at the cross?

☐ Isaiah 53:6 (710) *And the Lord has laid upon him the iniquity of us all* - That means EVERYONE's sins

God gathered up all the sin of all time - from the first sin at the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil  
 Until the last sin committed before Jesus comes  
 And by His divine creative power and foreknowledge - God put that sin physically into Jesus  
 Jesus bore all of our sin "in his body" on the cross

☐ 2 Corinthians 5:21 (1114) *For He (God) made Him (Jesus) who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

God "made" Jesus - "who knew no sin" - Jesus had no sin in himself - He was sinless  
 God made Jesus "to be sin for us" - Jesus, the sinless one - literally became your sin and my sin - Everyone's sin

How did God do that? - I don't know - But He did - And those sins crushed out Jesus' life  
 Death on a cross normally took three to four days - Jesus died in about six hours. Why?  
 Jesus did not die of crucifixion - Jesus died from the crushing weight of the sin of the world

Have you ever felt the crushing weight of your own sin?  
 Have you ever felt the guilt of realizing you had wronged someone - wronged God - wronged yourself?  
 You had done things that hurt - damaged - destroyed...  
 And the weight comes down on you - and it is too much to bear - And that is just your own sin  
 What about feeling the weight of all the sins in your family - your neighborhood - your city  
 God made Jesus to be ALL of our sin - Jesus felt the weight of ALL sin for all time  
 When Jesus entered the Garden of Gethsemane the night He was betrayed, Scripture says...

- ❑ Mark 14:33-34 (985) <sup>33</sup>And He took Peter, James, and John with Him, and He began to be troubled and deeply distressed. <sup>34</sup>Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch.

Troubled = *ekthambeo* - To be greatly amazed - totally alarmed - utterly astonished  
 Deeply distressed = *adēmoneo* - Mental stress - a heavy weight - separated - alone - isolated  
 Exceedingly sorrowful = *perilupos* - Intensely sad - surrounded with grief - "Even unto death"  
 "I feel a sorrow that is killing me" - And that was not an exaggeration

- ❑ Matthew 26:39 (964) *He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed...*
- ❑ Luke 22:43-44 (1020) <sup>43</sup>Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. <sup>44</sup>And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

As Jesus entered the garden - Something hit Him with incredible force - That knocked Him completely off balance  
 I believe it was at this point that God laid on Jesus the sin of all the world for all time  
 An overwhelming weight that would have killed Jesus in the garden - had the angel not strengthened Him

And what if Jesus had died in the garden? - Would that have provided what was needed for our salvation?  
 Would that have fulfilled the atonement pre-figured in all the animal sacrifices?

YES - If Jesus had died in the garden - My sins would have been paid in full  
 The torture of the beatings and crucifixion had nothing to do with my forgiveness from sin  
 The torture was not necessary for personal forgiveness  
 The torture was not something God desired, needed or ordained  
 The torture of the animal was never part of the sacrificial system - or sanctuary services  
 Sacrificial animals were always killed in the most humane, painless manner possible  
 Only pagan sacrifices included torture - To appease blood-thirsty gods

What about the torture of Jesus on the cross? - Why was it allowed? - What did it accomplish?  
 The torture was not God - It was the Devil - Pure evil - Purely Satanic - Lucifer venting his rage at God  
 And it had a purpose - Which we will explore on a future night

Now, let's draw this to its logical conclusion -

When is the one and only time that God dealt with all the sins of the world? - At the cross - 2000 years ago  
 How many sins did God deal with at the cross? - Every sin of every person who has ever lived  
 That is the reason that "whoever believes" can have eternal life  
 Eternal life is a reality that is IN THE BANK waiting to be claimed by any person who is willing

SO - How many sins have already been dealt with in our world today? - ALL  
 All sins have already been handled - The violation has already been paid in full for all sins  
 God has already borne them in Christ at the cross  
 Therefore, how many people has God saved? - God has saved EVERYONE  
 But by God's rule of engagement - will He force everyone to be saved?

See, this is the enigma of it all - The enigma of LOVE

God saved everyone: Adolph Hitler - Saddam Hussein - Joseph Stalin - Jeffrey Dalmer - Charles Manson and everyone else

God already bore all their sins - Nailed them all to the cross - And said, "Come to me. I will give you life"

But He won't force us to come home - If we want to die away from home, He will let us have our way

Because that is God's rule of engagement - freedom and choice

Even to make lousy choices - To reject salvation already given - To suffer dreadful consequences

This is why Scripture can say...

- ☐ 1 John 1:9 (1168) *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

Confession is simply our power of choice - To admit we need what God has already provided

And note - It does not say that when we confess God forgives our sins - He dealt with our sins 2000 years ago

It says - When we confess - admit your need - God forgives "us" - Forgiveness is towards people - not sins

Jesus nailed our sins to the cross - Jesus paid our sins in full - Jesus took the hit of sin in His own body

So that He can forgive US

And that forgiveness is waiting in the bank - Ready to be applied the moment we say YES

You are not the one person who has out-sinned God's mercy - That is impossible

And some of you have wandered far - many times - And even recently

You ask - Can God forgive me for that last round of sin? -

And the answer - He already has - God foreknew that sin 2000 years ago - And already paid it in full

You'll never surprise God with a sin you sin in the future, because he already took it upon Himself

He already bore it at Calvary - He already nailed it to the cross.

That's the message of the Old Testament sacrificial system that is fulfilled in Jesus Christ

God's rule of engagement is to be the Savior of all - But a Savior who will not force all to be saved

He already saved you - But you can die anyway if you want to

I'm not a universalist - I don't believe everybody will be saved - even though I believe God saved everybody

This is the interesting juxtaposition between God's SOVEREIGNTY and God's LOVE

This is a theological problem the church has struggled with for 2000 years

We tend to either elevate God's sovereignty over His love - Or His love over His sovereignty

- ☐ GOD IS "SOVEREIGN" - Which means? - Absolute power and authority - When you speak, it happens  
If you are sovereign - You get your way - You get what you want when you want it  
If you are sovereign - Someone doesn't say, "Well, I really don't feel like doing what you ask today."  
If you are sovereign - Your word is law - No questions asked
- Is God sovereign? - Yes, he's the absolute, all-knowing, all-powerful ruler of the universe.
- ☐ But GOD IS LOVE - Which means? - God creates with Freedom - Choice - Risk
- ☐ How do sovereignty and love fit together? - THE MYSTERY OF SOVEREIGN LOVE  
LOVE has sovereignly chosen to give free choice to creatures in love  
And when those creatures chose against God - against life - and ended up in death  
LOVE sovereignly saved every one of them - whether they wanted it or not  
Then LOVE sovereignly gives everyone the choice of whether or not to receive that salvation already given

If I told you, "I have given you \$1 million - It's down at the bank - It is yours"

I deposited it in an account in your name - It has left my account and gone into your account

I can't even go get it back - My signature is not on that account - I can deposit, but only you can withdraw

Have I given the \$1 million? - Has it left my account? - Yes. I've lost it - It is gone

Have you received it yet? - NO - You could die of starvation if you never go down and draw it out - Right?

And that's the way it is with God - He has given salvation to everyone - put it in the bank  
 And the Bank is only a prayer away - But you don't have to collect - You can die anyway -  
 That is God's rule of engagement - That is love - Love gives everything - Including freedom to reject

God has given everything He has to possibly give - God has given Himself to the death  
 What more can One give? - You can't give anybody else any more than your whole self - your life

God has given all that the infinite universe can give to save everybody who is caught in this vortex of sin  
 That storm of woe unleashed when Adam and Eve invited Lucifer into our world  
 That storm we're all born into and caught up in  
 It is not fair that you and I are born lost - drowning in sin - and God knows it  
 So He made it fair by saving you before you were born - Rescuing you before you even knew you were lost  
 And yet love gives you the choice of whether or not to receive the rescue He died to give you

All of Christ's sacrifice for you will be wasted - if you don't say "YES"  
 And God's heart will have a little empty spot for eternity where He desired that relationship with you  
 That doesn't mean God's going to be unhappy for eternity  
 But God wants nothing more than to have you back home with Him, forever.

- ☐ Philippians 2:5-8 (1130) <sup>5</sup>Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,  
<sup>6</sup>who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,  
<sup>7</sup>but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bond-servant  
 and coming in the likeness of men.  
<sup>8</sup>And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself  
 and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Jesus was God - From the beginning - So for him to consider himself equal with God is not "robbery"  
 When Lucifer said, "I will be like the Most High" - That was attempted robbery  
 That was Satan's attempt to rob God of His throne and usurp it for himself  
 But how did God act? - What was God's rule of engagement in dealing with this attempted robbery?  
 God came down - Made himself of no reputation - Became human  
 God humbled Himself - To the point of death - The cruel death on the cross at the hand of his creatures

There is a principle of the universe that says - What goes up must come down  
 There is another principle in God's universe that says -What goes down will come up

Which is God's way? - Which is God's rule of engagement?  
 God says, "I will go down and save, and bring them up."  
 Lucifer's rule of engagement is, "I will go up and rule - And bring everyone else down"  
 To which God says - As a result, you will come down - You will ultimately crash and burn

Every one of us is choosing to live our lives by one of those two rules of engagement, aren't we?  
 Are we trying to go up and take over? - God warns that we will come crashing down in the end  
 Or are we going to let this mind be in us which was in Christ Jesus - Who went down to bring us up?  
 And he says, "By this all men will know you are my disciples, if you love one another." - John 13:35 (1042)  
 And that love is a lifting, a serving - not a ruling or controlling.

Have you brought yourself under God's rules of engagement?  
 Or are you still out there trying to do it yourself? - Is that a fair question?  
 Jesus has already saved you, but he won't force you to be saved  
 Jesus has already forgiven you, so if you're bearing guilt, it's nonsense, really  
 It's the devil making you think thoughts that are not real, because Jesus already took it away.  
 Have you heard God speak to your heart, saying "I need to accept that gift Jesus offers me tonight."  
 It is as simple as a prayer - Jesus I accept - I confess my need - I receive all you have already given to me!