

The Extraordinary Love of God

By Karen M Gray

Have you ever considered why God created an earth and put man on it? He could have just created people in Heaven, so why did He go through this whole process from Adam to Christ?

Before there was a creation, God existed as Father, Son and Holy Spirit in a perfect, pure and lush love relationship. However, true-love gives. It spreads out to others. It invites in. It welcomes. God's desire was to share this love and be loved in return. God wanted people like Himself to love, and who would choose of their own free will, to love Him in return without any goading or coercing or manipulation. A free will choice based on intimate knowledge of Him through relationship.

Consider with me, what life was like in Heaven before God created the earth and then later man. Heaven was and is a paradise. Those there want for nothing. Every good thing is supplied and it is beautiful beyond description because it reflects the beauty of God Himself. It is a place where God reigns in all His glory and holiness. Evil cannot live there and neither can sadness.

Think of it, all the creatures wanted for nothing and knew no pain or sadness – only the love of God and all the riches and fullness that encompassed. However, all this was not enough for one ambitious pride filled angel, Lucifer. God had honoured him above the others, but he wanted more. He had never known what it is to want for anything. He had never known hardship. He just took it for granted that he deserved everything. He had no sense of gratitude towards God, nor did he realise that God's love was the best gift he could ever possess. On the contrary, he loved himself, and wanted to be exalted even higher and reign on God's holy mountain.

He became discontent and self entitled. Discontentment loves company. He complained to other angels, and stirred them up against God, until eventually a war broke out. The angels who were still loyal to God, defeated Lucifer and his hoards, and Lucifer was exiled to the earth below, (which at this point, was still without form.)

Into this new world, God had created Eden, a beautiful garden paradise, and crowned it by creating a man in His own image, to live in it. Adam was completely innocent. He knew no sin. He knew nothing about deception and lies. He had a perfect brain that didn't have to deal with trauma, heartache, or damaging chemicals from foods or pollutants. He was smart, *but* he was completely innocent.

God walked with Adam in the garden – this speaks of a wonderful relationship. Pause and think about this for a moment. The Bible says that no one can see God and live, and yet Adam did talk to God face to face every evening. How come – because he was completely sinless!

But God didn't want someone to follow Him simply because he knew nothing else. God wants us to choose Him because He is all we want. So God put two trees in the garden. One gave him life, the other Adam was told not to touch. It was a test of love. Why else would you put something in front of someone and say, ***“Don't touch!”*** (Parents know this all too well!) He wanted to see if Adam loved and therefore, trusted Him enough to obey.

When God told Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply and to have dominion/authority over every living creature (Gen 1:26, 28), this must have really ticked off Lucifer – now Satan. He had already fallen from Heaven and did not want to submit to what he must have thought was a pitiful creature compared to himself. No, He wanted to be top-dog on earth too, making some sort of statement to those that had thrown him out of paradise.

Firstly, Satan tries to confuse Adam and Eve by asking, “*Has God indeed said.....?*” Then he tries to convince them that God lied by declaring – “*you won’t die if you eat the fruit!*” Lucifer next masterfully manipulates them into believing that God was holding out on them when they are actually entitled to be like God. Can you see how the serpent hoodwinked them into putting self first before God. Adam had been completely pure, but now he was tainted by sin.

This poses a huge problem: God is Holy and *cannot abide sin*. Why? – Because sin has “me”, “myself” and “I” at the centre of it. “I want”, “I desire”, “I feel”, “I deserve”, “I’m entitled”, “My rights”, “My life”, “My way”, “Don’t tell ME what to do”, “I’ll call the shots thank you”, I, I, I, I,Me, me, me..... Mine, mine, mine.....Sin ought to be spelt, "s I n". (i.e. sIn - has the "I" capitalized)

What’s the outcome of this self-first lifestyle? It destroys relationships and it would ultimately destroy paradise. As an example of what sin can do, just look around at the world. God originally created a paradise for mankind on earth, but look at it now! The world is full of lies, deceit, broken relationships, broken people, broken hearts, hatred, murder, addictions, theft, wars, corruption, extortion, and so on. There is poverty, sickness, starvations and death. Naturally, God cannot tolerate sin. He wants to be able to dwell with us in His perfect love, in paradise, forever. Sin would not make this possible.

Therefore, God had no alternative but to remove Adam from His presence for his own sake, and allow Adam to reap the consequences of his choice. Can you imagine the disappointment and heartache God must have felt. He wanted Adam to choose Him and dwell with Him always!!

It was out of spite and selfish ambition, that Satan tricked innocent Adam and Eve into believing that God was holding out on them. In their innocence they were easily deceived and did exactly what the serpent indicated would be the best course of action for them. In essence, Adam's submission to Satan's will, handed Adam's "God-given" authority over to the devil. To put it another way: Adam was given authority over the earth, but because he believed and obeyed the devil instead of obeying God, he gave that authority away.

To set the record straight: This planet belonged and still belongs to God, but it was a place where man could rule over the earth *under* God. However, because of Adam's disobedience/sin, Satan now has taken away man’s authority, and has since spread dissention against God wherever and whenever he can. He hates man because we are, in essence, his replacement, made in God's image. The good news is that now we have been born again into Christ, we have regained that authority over Satan through Christ Jesus who not only lives in us, but who defeated Satan on Calvary.

So now returning to our first premise: God wanted persons like Himself who would not only love Him, but understand that His love for them was the best deal around. He wanted people who would never take for granted the mercy and grace He was willing to pour out for them -

that is, for those who would love and obey without pride or arrogance, and those who would cherish one another.

The problem now was that sin and rebellion had entered the earth realm. So we have a conundrum. How do we solve this sin problem? How could God win these people back to His heart?

Fast forward. We all know the story of Abraham and how he trusted his God, and how God made a covenant with him. When the descendants of Abraham were enslaved in Egypt, God remembered His covenant with Abraham and delivered them out of slavery in a rather spectacular fashion. But God desired more than a people who merely kept some kind of legal agreement, or to treat them as some kind of underlings to do His bidding. He wanted to dwell with them in a loving relationship.

To do this, firstly, God wanted them to see who they were dealing with. He invited them to witness His presence on the mountain, and instructed Moses and all the people to consecrate and wash themselves for three days.

“Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes.’” – Exodus 19:10 NKJV

However, God refused to allow the people – even the priests who may have thought they were pretty holy – not to even touch the mountain or they'd be killed. Why? The people had lived as slaves under the Egyptians with all their demonic gods for 400 years. Even though Moses had told them to consecrate themselves and clean themselves up, the people didn't fully comprehend just what God expected of them in order to be clean. At that point they did not have the law.

Continuing with the story, God descended upon the mountain in awesome power, but He warned Moses not to let the people break ranks in order to get a better look. There God gave Moses the Law to live by. The people agreed to the terms of the covenant and were sprinkled with blood. Now they would know exactly what God expected and agreed by cutting a blood covenant to do things God's way.

Straight after this God tells Moses to bring up (but still at a distance) Aaron and his two sons, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel. Then it says,

“They saw the God of Israel. And there was under His feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and it was like the very heavens in its clarity. But on the nobles of the children of Israel He did not lay His hand. So they saw God, and they ate and drank.” – Exodus 24:10,11

They saw God and ate and drank in His presence – all seventy-four of them – without God killing them!!! That's mind blowing. Then Moses climbed up nearer to God and was given the stone tablets with the law written on them by the very finger of God. Nevertheless, because Moses was gone for 6 days, the Israelites assumed the worst concerning Moses, and taking matters into their own hands, made a graven image of God – a golden calf – to worship, which

was in violation of the newly cut covenant. What happens if you break a blood covenant? You deserve death!

God became angry at this point and told Moses to get out of the way as He wanted kill them all for breaking covenant, but Moses pointed out to God that His reputation in the surrounding countries was at stake, and also reminded God of the covenant He had made with Abraham. God then relented. The sin in the camp had to be dealt with before they went any further. When this is done, God renewed the covenant with them.

Exodus tells us that Moses then climbed back up the mountain, collected a new set of tablets, and this time God also included a blue print for the tent of meeting and all its fixtures, including the ark. From these blue prints, the tabernacle of meeting and the ark of testimony were built to God's exact specifications.

“Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.” – Exodus 40:34-35 NKJV

And that's about where the book of Exodus ends. The glory of the Lord filled the temple.

What is the glory? When Moses witnessed God's glory it was *God Himself!!* We see the Glory of the Lord manifest a few more times within the Torah (Leviticus 9:6, 23; Numbers 14:10,21; 16:19, 42; 20:6), but other than that we don't hear of it again until the time of Solomon.

After King Solomon completed all the temple construction, and after he and all the people had consecrated themselves and inturn the temple to God, the glory filled the temple to such an extent that even the priests were not able to minister – the glory was so intense. (1 Kings 8:10-11; 2 Chronicles 5:14; 7:1-3)

We might be tempted to say, *“Wasn't David's idea to build a temple a great one!”* Well, David had been inspired by the Holy Spirit to build God's dwelling, but it was not his idea – it was God's!

“But you shall seek the place where the LORD your God chooses, out of all your tribes, to put His name for His dwelling place; and there you shall go.” – Deuteronomy 12:5 NKJV

God always intended that He should dwell among His people. Steven Hawthorne wrote in the article ***“The Story of His Glory”*** many years ago,

“God wanted to do two things in this special place. First, He wanted to reveal Himself by ‘His name.’ It would be a place of revelation as worshipers continually exalt His character and voice the stories and songs about His working. Second, God desired a place of encounter, of relationship, of dwelling. . . . To ‘dwell’ is a relational affair. It is consummated worship. God coming near His people as they come near to Him.”

From the start God wanted a people who would choose to love Him. He didn't want people who knew no better like Adam in his innocence. God was constantly putting out His hand inviting man to dwell with Him and to love Him and be loved by Him, but man kept on tripping over the sin/“self” lifestyle.

God had been gracious and merciful to Israel. Whenever they messed up and returned again to Him, He forgave them. However, eventually the sin became so entrenched in their hearts, they passed the point of no return. The nation of Israel had failed in keeping the terms of the covenant, and had completely given their hearts over to following other gods. God had to execute justice, in order to fulfil the terms of the covenant, and because He is righteous. They had to bear the consequences, and no doubt regretted their choice to sin, when they could have chosen the blessings of the covenant.

Clearly, rules and regulations were not the answer. The chosen people did not keep the covenant for the most part, and even went after other gods and demonic entities. So again they gave their allegiance to the devil instead of God.

Now sin abounded everywhere, but God was still longing for a people who would love Him and want Him enough to be submitted wholly to Him. Clearly legalism (or more precisely, the Law) could not change hearts, only point out where people had failed. In fact, Paul said that the Law imprisoned us.

“Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed.” – Galatians 3:23 ESV

Imagine everyone on the planet imprisoned in a cage called sin. They are powerless to escape. This cage of sin remained invisible until the Law shone the light on the situation. Even so, many people still refused to see the predicament they were in, preferring to pacify their consciences by telling themselves there was no real right or wrong, only social constructs. Nevertheless, everyone on the planet remained caged by their sin nature, and that nature constantly compelled them to sin again and again.

With man trapped in sin, how could God draw us close to Him? Before any reconciliation to God could be made, the Law had to be appeased and the price of sin paid. Under the Mosaic covenant, sin demanded *punishment*, (Romans 6:23 *“For the wages of sin is death.”*) and that sin debt was huge!! The usual sacrificial offerings could not help here. As Israel knew, if you sinned after you'd made the sacrifice at the temple, you still had to sacrifice another animal to rid yourself of that sin. It was never ending and couldn't stop a person from sinning anyway.

Pause a moment and consider just how huge a debt of sin we are dealing with here. How many times a day does a single person sin – in thought, word, deed, or even in what was not said or done? Take an average number that sounds fair. Then multiply that by the number of days in a week and then weeks in a year and then by the number years in the average human life span. That's a pretty large number by itself, but now multiply that total by the number of people alive today and add to it the total number of sins of the people who have lived from the time of Adam forward, and also of those who will live until the last man. Now the figures have just gone ballistic!

Obviously the sacrificial system is/was insufficient to satisfy all that sin-debt. A once-and-for-all sacrifice was needed but who could pay such a price? Where could such a sacrifice even be found, and yet the debt for all that sin still demanded payment!

There is yet another problem. The Law could *never* eradicate sin.

“For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.” - Hebrews 10:4

Those sacrifices could only **cover** sin, and the Law was powerless to deal with the **motivation** to sin. Why does motivation matter? Can't we all just be forgiven? No! It would be ridiculous to simply dismiss every sin with the ultimate sacrifice, if people were going to continue sin constantly, or were not even sorry for sinning in the first place. Justice must be served, and justice is not served by giving everyone a “get out of jail free ticket”. That would be trying to call sin not sin. Simply to remove the label of sin does not deal with the real problem - the heart of man. Remember, sin is disobeying God's Laws and following Satan's will, and it begins in a man's heart - with self - I, I, I... Me, me, me... To really deal with the sin, the motivation to sin within the heart of man also needed to be eradicated. Otherwise people would remain in that sin cage.

Note the complexity of the one-an-for-all-sacrifice. No one could afford such a sacrifice. However, God so loved the world that He took the cost upon Himself, and sent His only Son to be that sacrificial offering. Think of that! God sacrificing Himself (Jesus and the Father are one) to pay a debt that man's rebelliousness against God had caused! What an amazing act of love! God's only Son, Jesus, was the most expensive and heart-wrenching gift God could possibly give, but also the ultimate display of His love for mankind. That sacrifice was the only sacrifice capable of paying all debt that sin was due and the only sacrifice that could pave the way to total eradication of man's constant motivation to sin. When Christ hung on that cross and shed His blood, He completely **redeemed** us from sin.

Now the verb “redeem” and its noun, “redemption”, have their roots in **business** transactions. Basically, if there's something still to be acquired but some form of payment is due as part of the conditions of the agreement/deal/contract/covenant, if payment could be met, you could redeem whatever it was.

Here's a not so modern-day example: People once layby-ed items they couldn't quite afford but wanted to buy. They would take the item to the layby office in the store and put a deposit on it so that the store would hold it for them, and not sell the item to another person. A layby agreement or contract was then drawn up, usually stating how many and how often a certain payment was expected or the buyer would forfeit their rights to the item. The papers were then agreed upon and documents signed.

Now if you wanted to redeem that item, you had to take the full amount owing together with the layby agreement back to the layby office at the store. The clerk would take your paperwork, look up your file, count out your redemption payment, and providing the outstanding amount was all there, would stamp both the store copy and your copy with a “paid in full” stamp, and possibly even a “completed” or “finished” stamp. They would then retrieve your item from storage and hand it to you.

Once you have redeemed the item, the store can never call you up and tell you that you still owe more service fees or some such moneys. You have the paperwork that proves it was paid in full. Likewise, Jesus paid the debt of our sin fully. The devil may try to convince us that there's still something outstanding, but Jesus paid it fully. There's no more to pay! Any amount of self-flagellation, penance, or even good works can ever pay the debt of sin. There's simply no more to pay.

What's more, when Christ died, that reality of the redeeming power of Jesus blood sent shockwaves throughout the spirit realm and through time itself from the first man, Adam, to the last man to be alive on earth. As a result, every cage door of sin exploded off its hinges and now Jesus has become **THE** door. He is **THE WAY** out – the way to receive the forgiveness for sin that we could never pay for ourselves.

What about the motivation to sin? God's plan was so ingenious it covered that too. As we step out of that cage through the door of Christ, the old nature of sin is crucified with Christ as we step into Him. It's as if the old man of sin peels off and falls dead in the sin cage behind us as we walk into Christ. We now walk away joined to Christ as a new creation – a God-man creation. The old has passed away. Now it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.

“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” – Galatians 2:20 NKJV

All we need to do is accept it by faith. As He is, so am I in this world.

“Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.” – 1 John 4:17 NKJV

In other words we're just like Him only we live on the earth. If you don't believe you are a saint, but still a sinner, you will continue to sin. Proverbs 3:27 says, *“For as he thinks in his heart, so is he”*. You'll begin to act that way under the deception that you are still in that cage and can never break free. The truth, however, is that you have been forgiven and not only that, but you've been given a new nature that has no appetite for sin.

Sure we still have the *capacity* to sin but because we are in a love relationship with Christ, we don't want to do so, just like a married person does not want to deliberately hurt or go against their spouse.

But you say, *“I still sin! Does that mean I'm not saved?”* No! You have been deceived just like Adam, and if you believe you are powerless to prevent it, your faith is misplaced. You have been given the mind of Christ, and thus, any thought that is not in line with God's thoughts, is not yours, but coming from the enemy of your soul. Therefore, the desire to sin is not from you in the first place, but from Satan. He wants you to think you have no way out because you're a sinner, but that's a lie. Jesus is *not* a sinner, and now it is no longer you who live but Christ in you. You died with Christ. That old man of sin has been crucified. You have the ability and the authority to say, “No!” to any temptation that comes your way because it is from hell – not you! You are victorious over sin because Christ who now lives in you has won that victory for you!

Nevertheless, if we do slip up, although the devil will accuse us, we have an advocate who defends us in the courts of heaven. Picture this: I'm standing before the Father judge and the accuser of the brethren is making his case against me. The Father turns to me and says, *“Did you do this? How do you plea?”* I cannot lie! God knows all! I must reply, *“I did do those things. I am guilty, BUT I plead the blood!”* Now pleading something is a legal term. We plead innocence, or guilty, or plead our case. *“Pleading the blood”* is not a term from the Bible. This term has been borrowed from the law to illustrate a point. After I have pleaded the blood, the Father

turns to my advocate, Jesus, and asks if I am actually under the blood as I claim to be. The book of life is opened and Jesus thumbs through the book until He finds my name. He then shows His Father, the judge. In turn the judge then inspects the entry. The evidence is clear. He lifts His gavel and strikes it on the base declaring, “*Innocent! The case is dismissed!*” Jesus blood has completely paid for every sin, past, present and future.

Now that’s no license to keep sinning. Jesus told us to be Holy (or perfect) even as our Father is Holy.

“*Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.*” – Matthew 5:48 NKJV.

And John echoes this sentiment:

“*And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.*” – 1 John 3:3 NKJV

But why would we want to keep on sinning? Why would I want to dig up that "old man" corpse – that motivation to keep sinning? We may have left that in that cage when we stepped into Christ, but the corpse that is left behind isn’t still incarcerated. No! It’s been *buried* with Christ. It is the enemy’s deception that causes us to believe that that old man is back and we have absolutely no control over sin, but that’s a *lie*! Our new nature does not desire to sin at all. Our love for God compels us to follow Him with our whole heart. Now the Law is written on our heart. Love is our new motivation – that is, we are motivated now by our love for God, not a "to-do" or "not-to-do" list.

To have our sin completely paid for, **and** the old motivation to sin now gone, is wonderful news indeed, but there’s so much more to this tale. If that was all the cross of Christ Jesus accomplished, there would still be ample joy indeed, but in reality, the blood cut a new covenant for us – not like those gone by, but something far better. When Jesus told His disciples at the Last Supper that the wine was to be a remembrance of the New Covenant He was about to create, what did He mean? And further, what do we understand, when we hear the word, “Covenant”? A solemn contract perhaps? To understand the full meaning of this transaction that occurred on Calvary, we also need to understand the full ramifications of a blood covenant.

In order to explain this term, I’ll give a small précised version of a description given in E. W. Kenyon’s book, *The Blood Covenant*¹:

Covenants, or more accurately “blood covenants”, were rituals from ancient times. In fact, some have speculated that because blood covenants are still practiced by every isolated primitive people in the world, it is evidence of a single ancient origin when people all lived in close proximity. You might be interested in reading about Stanley’s travels in Africa, and how the tribes he encountered were already very fluent in cutting covenants – covenants about which he knew nothing about. There is also ancient archaeological evidence from other

¹ *The Blood Covenant* by E. W. Kenyon, © Copyright 2016, Crossreach Publications

countries such as India, China, Borneo and other island countries, that blood covenants existed well before western man could have introduced them. In fact, western man has largely forgotten about them. So the origin could have easily been with God. Perhaps He discussed this with Adam or even Noah. We may never know.

A blood covenant was usually cut for one of three reasons:

- 1) It was made between two tribes when one was a lot stronger than the other, and the weaker did not want to be destroyed.
- 2) Two people doing similar trade or business cut the covenant so that neither would take advantage of the other.
- 3) If two people were devoted to each other. Example: David and Jonathon.

The terms of the covenant depended on the situation of course, and were generally forged for the benefit to both parties.

- 1) In order for the covenant to be cut, the chiefs or representatives from both parties stood before a priest or some officiate, usually in some public setting.
- 2) They exchanged gifts to show that, should the person require it, all the belongings of the giving party are now at the disposal of the receiver. This did not mean that this privilege could be abused, but that if circumstances absolutely required it, the blood brothers would stand together, combining resources, fighting skills or whatever, to see the situation through to its conclusion.
- 3) Then the priest poured a cup of wine, and after making an incision in the arm or hand of both people, allowed the blood from each to drip into the wine. Both parties then drank this blood-wine mixture.
- 4) After this, the two parties would seal the deal by placing their wounds together in order to mingle the blood. Alternatively they would lick each other's wounds. This mingling is symbolic that the two have become blood brothers - that is, *closer* than real brothers. If you were to look at one party it was understood that it was the same as looking at the other, and they must be treated as such.
- 5) Covenants could not be broken under **any** circumstances. If someone was to break a covenant, he was not only cursed, but deserved death. It was also expected that these covenants were kept and revered by the children to the third and fourth generation. A covenant was/is perpetual, indissoluble and simply could not/cannot be annulled.
- 6) After the ceremony, memorial trees were planted, or if this was not possible, a monument of stones was erected. If neither memorial could be employed, some other memorial was agreed upon. These were to remind the descendants who follow, of the covenant that was made, and that they too are partners in this unbreakable covenant.

We can see this play out between God and Abraham. Abraham was told to journey to a place God would show and give him, and God would multiply him greatly. Then a little later in

Genesis, we see this covenant is solemnised when Abraham is asked by God to get some animals to be His “stand in” or representative, and to cut them in half to shed the blood for Him. God then appears as a fiery pot walking between them. (See Genesis 15 & 17) Conversely, Abraham’s blood shedding was the through the process of circumcision, which also became the memorial for successive generations.

“And My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting Covenant.” – Genesis 17:13 NKJV

Both God and Abraham knew exactly the seriousness of ceremony, and what this would mean for Abraham’s descendants. In fact, so solemn was the covenant that God said He wouldn’t hide anything He was about to do from Abraham! (Genesis 18:17) And not only that, but Abraham was able to change God’s mind about how many righteous people would prevent the destruction of the cities. God was true to His covenant with Abraham.

Nevertheless, God wanted to be sure that Abraham would live up to his side of the covenant and asked Abraham to offer up his son to Him. Abraham knew that because of the terms of the covenant, God had to keep His promise to birth nations through Isaac, (Genesis 17:19) so he reasoned that God would raise him from the dead again even though He’d asked Abraham to sacrifice him. Such was the power of covenant!

When the Israelites were enslaved in Egypt, God delivered them because He heard their cries and He remembered His covenant to them. By this time they had become a nation, so God gave Moses laws for them to live by, and cut a new covenant – the terms of which are given in Exodus 22. The sprinkling of blood then sealed this. All those present knew what this meant. The covenant was not to be broken, or there would be a huge penalty – curses and death, but so long as they kept covenant, God would bless them. Note: It wasn’t a replacement for the Abrahamic covenant, but an outcome or reason for the Mosaic covenant. He was giving them a code to live by that would be beneficial to them, so that He could continued to bless Abraham’s seed.

OK, how does all this relate to the *New Covenant*? When Jesus announced at the Passover Supper that the wine they were about to drink was the blood of the New Covenant, His statement no doubt, shocked the disciples. One moment they are celebrating the Passover Lamb, and recalling how God kept covenant with Israel. In the next moment Jesus was talking about a whole new covenant where He was to be the new Spotless Lamb that caused the penalty of sin to pass over men without executing judgement. The whole Jewish culture revolved around the Mosaic Covenant. Now Jesus was replacing thousands of years of that culture. They knew as they drunk that wine, they were entering into a binding agreement.

To see better how this works, let's now do a comparison between the bullets points above that describe how a blood covenant is cut, and the New Covenant that Christ cut for us:

- 1) When Jesus suffered and died, it was His blood as both man and God that sealed the covenant. (The circumcision of the New Covenant was of man’s heart.) Jesus was also the high priest that presented that offering to the Holy of Holies in the temple of God in Heaven. (Remember how He told Mary not to touch Him because He needed to first ascend to the Father as the pure and spotless One.) This was to completely fulfil all the terms of the Mosaic Covenant/Law and usher in the terms of the New.

Jesus is now the great High Priest who ministers in the true Tabernacle not one built with hands, and who now makes intercession for us. He is our true mediator between us and God. We are no longer under any condemnation. We stand completely justified. He is now our righteousness.

2) In exchange for all that we are, we now have complete access to everything that He has. Peter says that:

“His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature” - 2 Peter 1:3-4 NKJV

He has also given us the Holy Spirit as a Guide, Counsellor and Comforter, and enabled us to use His Spiritual gifts. He has withheld nothing from us. Paul even describes us as spiritual heirs of Abraham and therefore, we have access to the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant as well.

"Therefore, know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, 'In you all the nations shall be blessed' So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham." - Galatians 3:7-9 NKJV

3) Jesus, our great high priest, taking the cup representing His blood, blessed it before God the Father and in front of His disciples, and drank it with them as representative of both God and man, thus sealing the deal - the New Covenant was now cut on our behalf, and would be fulfilled by His death!

4) Further, now He is closer than any earthly brother. We have become partakers of the Divine Nature. Paul says that it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me (Gal 2:20). It doesn't get any closer. God the Father looks at us and sees Jesus. I am in Him and He is in me. Because of this, we have authority and power in His Name, and wherever the enemy sees us, he sees Jesus and therefore, the enemy knows that he is under authority. The other benefit is that God who, as the stronger party joined to us, has covenanted to protect us.

5) The covenant is a very solemn legal agreement. None of this is dependant on how you merely feel. We have been united with Christ as a new man joined to God Himself. God takes that very seriously. It doesn't disappear if you wake up feeling grumpy or a complete failure. We are legally under the New Covenant, and it is eternal.

6) And what was the memorial Jesus gave to us? As He took the cup He said, *“As often as you do these things, you remember Me!”* This was an everlasting covenant, with a memorial that we re-enact every time we have communion!

I hope you are following to this point. The enormity of this transaction can literally cause you sit back and exclaim, "Wow!" It's so incredible that it poses the question: why would God go to

the trouble to create a blood covenant and then to bind Himself to *man*? Surely we could simply exist in a loving relationship without this union? John gives us a clue to that answer.

“This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.” – 1 John 1:5 NKJV

It was/is not sufficient that we are merely forgiven. As mentioned, the motivation to sin had to be dealt with or sin would continue. As the Bible clearly demonstrates, man is not capable of being sinless of himself. Of ourselves, we fail, and constantly *fall into darkness*. However, God yearns to have fellowship with us. John 3:16 stresses that God *so* loved that He gave. His whole purpose in creating us was to have eternal fellowship with us and share in His immense love. So there is a problem. God is pure pristine light and light can have no fellowship with darkness.

“What fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?” – 2 Corinthians 6:14 NKJV

Clearly, it was necessary not to just give us a new heart with new desires, but to be transformed also into *children of light*. This transformation into a new creation man not only changed our carnal desires, but as the Bride of Christ, it was essential to be wed to the King of kings and Lord of lords. There is no inter-species union here. We have been made totally compatible. We are spiritual beings of light. We now have the Father's Spiritual "DNA", and our hearts cry out, "Abba! Father!"

To illustrate this: if you can, imagine 4 cups. Three represent the Trinity and are each full to the brim with the same brilliant light. The 4th cup represents man. Man's cup is full of clear water. It is clear because of the blood of Jesus – the Pascal Lamb, has cleansed us of every sin. However, it contains water not light – water that can easily be dirtied up again. When Jesus forgave us our sins, He had to empty our sinful nature (represented by the water being poured out) and then fill us completely with Him – put the whole glass that represents Jesus, complete with light, into our empty one. Now we are like Him because as Paul states,

“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” – Galatians 2:20 NKJV

Not only that but Paul also states, *“For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily”* – Colossians 2:9 NKJV, which means that both the Father and the Holy Spirit live in Him. So now place those glasses into the stack. Further, He has poured out His Spirit upon us so that now there is not just a spring or fountain (John 4:14) welling up from within, but now there are rivers of living water flowing out from us (John 7:38). So if it were possible to have a jug full of light, you could pour this light out over the whole thing until it flowed out to the world.

Now we are completely compatible with God and are able to have fellowship with Him. God's desire was always to love and be loved by man, not because man was innocent and knew no better, not because a set of rules and Laws describing what can and cannot be done to please God, but out of a genuine heart that knows and desires God because it understands the real choice – That is: His glorious life-giving love, OR the destructive "self" lifestyle and the damaging consequences of it.

Unlike Adam who lived in innocence in a paradise until he made the wrong *choice*, we have a lifetime of experience where we've seen the consequences of sin play out in our lives and in the lives of those around us. There can be no claim of naivety when it comes to sin. We've experienced the real difference between the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and the tree of life in the garden. Our *choice* was, and can only logically be, for Him, because we comprehend (at least in part) the enormous cost, and the immense love poured out by God to win us back to Himself while we were yet sinners. Our response now is that we are deeply and forever grateful.

What an astounding tale of God's pursuance of man's heart! What extraordinary love God has for us! Why would you want to choose anything else! He is more than we could ever want or need – greater than any selfish desire that sin could conjure. The choice really is a “no-brainer” in the end. Choose Jesus! Choose Life! Choose to be forever loved!