

## QUESTIONS

Imagine you are a Jew in Jerusalem at Passover about 2000 years ago. You witness Jesus' death and have heard it has parallels to the Day of Atonement (Yesterday's readings focussed on this Day of Atonement).

1. What similarities are there between the achievement of Jesus' death and the Day of Atonement?
2. How is his death better than the Day of Atonement?
3. What has Jesus' death achieved for us? How does it change us? What is left to do?

## PONDER

In what ways might you try to keep offering 'sacrifices' to fix things between you and God?

## PRAYER IDEAS

Thank God that he took not only our problem seriously, but also the solution. Pray that you will trust and honour the sufficiency of Jesus' death when it is tempting to rely on other things.

## Thursday

Read Romans 5:12-21

## QUESTIONS

1. What impact has Adam (the "one man" of v. 12) had on human history? What action on his part has caused such widespread effects?
2. What impact has Jesus Christ had on human history? What action on his part has caused such widespread effects?

3. Who has had the bigger impact—Adam or Jesus? Why?
4. Which is easier: to cause death or to cause life? Does this affect your answer to the previous question?

## PONDER

We often think about Jesus' death in terms of 'bringing me personal forgiveness'. What are some of its wider effects?

## PRAYER IDEAS

Pray for friends who don't have a clue just how significant and good Jesus' death is—and for ways of sharing it with them.

## Friday

Read Galatians 4:3-7 , 5:1-6

## QUESTIONS

1. What were we enslaved to?
2. What are the results of being redeemed?
3. How are you to live as someone who is redeemed?
4. It's unlikely you are under pressure to be circumcised! Are there any other ways people try to impose religious rules and regulations on you? Or do you do it to yourself? How does Paul help us to avoid them?

## PONDER

Is your experience of being a Christian one of slavery or freedom?

## PRAYER IDEAS

Thank God that you now have the full rights of a son. Ask him to help you to live out your freedom.



# 15 Steps through the Bible

## SIN

Adam and Eve chose to reject God their

ruler (or king). The effects of rejecting God were devastating. He withdrew his blessing from them and from all creation. This is known as 'The Fall'.

As a result, humans no longer relate rightly to God, to each other, or to the creation in which we've been placed.

One example of this rejection of God as ruler is the tower of Babel. The people tried to build a tower so huge that they could make a "name" for themselves apart from God. The tower of Babel represents human pride, self-made religion, and an attitude that says, "I can do without God". People followed in Adam and Eve's footsteps, crying out to God, "We know better—we'll do things our way!"

### Genesis 11:4

*Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth."*

God's response to humanity's actions at Babel was to confuse their language, so that they could not complete the tower, and scatter them over the whole earth. However, we will see that God did not give up on humanity.

The Fall and God's intervention in the building of the tower of Babel reveal more to us about how God relates to the world.

## Who God is

We see that the Creator hates it when humans reject his Kingship.

### GENESIS 6:5-6

*The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. 6 The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain.*

### ROMANS 1:18-20

*The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, 19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.*

## What God does

The Fall shows us that God responds to Adam and Eve's rejection of himself by bringing judgement upon all humans and all creation.

### GENESIS 3:14-19

*The Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. 15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." 16 To the woman he said,*

*“I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.”<sup>17</sup> And to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; 18 thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. 19 By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”*

#### **ROMANS 5:12**

*Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned...*

#### **How God works**

God punishes sin by reversing the blessings he had originally bestowed. The goodness and orderliness of creation are turned upside down.

Humanity’s rule over creation is disrupted. God sends Adam and Eve out of Eden and scatters their descendants across the earth.

#### **GENESIS 11:8–9**

*So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. 9 That is why it was called Babel—because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world. From there the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole earth.*

#### **QUESTIONS**

1. What is God's response to sin?

2. Read through the ‘More detail’ section. What's something that strikes you about what God reveals here?
3. What is the consequence of sin for humanity?

#### **PONDER**

How widespread is sin (both in the passages listed here, and in the world around us)?

How might the tower of Babel incident affect our attitude to human technology, and plans for human unity and achievement?

#### **PRAYER IDEAS**

Pray that God would mercifully delay his judgement so that many can repent.

Repent of your own sin and evil.

### **Further Readings**

#### **ATONEMENT**

The death of Jesus Christ is both the wonder and the scandal of Christianity.

These studies explore the theme of sin by pondering its resolution. We see the depths of the problem when we realise the cost of restoring what was lost-- Jesus’ death.

Being topical studies, we will jump around the Bible, exploring the Old Testament ideas that help us understand Jesus’ death, delving into the predicaments that Jesus’ death overturns, and reading key New Testament passages on the meaning and scope of his atoning work.

But we mustn’t stop there—we will also move on to the wonderful achievements of Jesus’ death and its impact on our lives, our churches and the whole cosmos.

#### **PRAYER**

You might like to use this prayer before each of these daily readings:

*Dear Father,  
Help me today to understand the height and depth and length and breadth of what you've done for me in Christ.  
Amen.*

#### **Monday**

Read

- Romans 3:10-18
- Isaiah 6:1-5.

#### **QUESTIONS**

1. What is Paul's assessment of humanity? Who does it include?
2. Now read Isaiah 6:1-5. What difficulties are there for humans who want to relate to God?
3. Can you relate to how Isaiah felt (v. 5)?

#### **PONDER**

What helps you realize how holy God is?

#### **PRAYER IDEAS**

Pray for God's help in understanding his holiness.

#### **Tuesday**

Read Leviticus 16.

These are the instructions for priests under the Old Testament law for the Day of Atonement.

#### **QUESTIONS**

Skim over the passage, noting especially what the High Priest does with the animals.

1. What happens to each goat? How does this help us understand what is needed for human sin to be dealt with?
2. Why was the Day of Atonement necessary?
3. What has been achieved by the end of the Day? How long does the effect last?

#### **POINTER**

*Atonement = a 'making at one', or reconciliation process of bringing those who are estranged into a unity.*

*Tent of Meeting = a literal tent; God's dwelling place on earth where he met with his people the Israelites (also known as the sanctuary). The Temple was a more permanent version of the tent.*

#### **PONDER**

How seriously does God take sin? Why doesn't God just overlook sin? Think back over this reading and the previous reading. Imagine if there was no atoning sacrifice—how could we relate to God?

#### **PRAYER IDEAS**

Pray for God's help in understanding his attitude to sin.

#### **Wednesday**

Read Hebrews 9:11-14, 24-28.