

### **Jesus our substitute (Romans 5:6-8)**

Previously we were under God's judgement for our selfishness, with the sentence of death hanging over us. If things were to follow justly, we would be condemned to die. Instead, Jesus takes our place as a substitute in our place, and despite his own innocence, willingly takes the punishment of death for our wrongdoing. So we go free like innocent people.

### **Jesus is God's sacrifice (Hebrews 10:1-18)**

The full measure of humanity's rejection of God and our twisted ways amounts to a terrible quantity of human wrongdoing. Such great wickedness damages our own lives, those we know, wider human society and even the planet. This is a great injustice. To clean up this mess and terrible crime requires someone great enough to absorb the punishment on our behalf. Sent by God, Jesus voluntarily becomes the sacrificial offering, to receive the full weight and heat of God's good and fair justice. He dies both under the agony of the cross, but also under the cleansing power of God's condemnation of evil. So God is able to be truly just, and yet incredibly merciful, by providing a pure and sufficient sacrifice. We are forgiven.

### **Jesus wins the battle with evil (1 John 3:8)**

There is an invisible war going on, where God is fighting the devil over the destiny of humanity. The devil wishes to destroy humanity by trapping us in our own selfishness and blind wickedness. God wishes to restore us back to the liberty we had when he originally made us. On God's behalf, Jesus is sent to overcome the devil, but he chooses to fight with a different approach. Instead of fighting with force and violence (which are the tools of the devil), he fights by surrendering to death. He willingly dies on the cross: the ultimate symbol of corrupt power. To the surprise of the devil, his death breaks Satan's power, and with Christ's resurrection, Jesus is fully vindicated as the winner. Jesus now has control over the devil and can set willing human beings free from his control.

# The Message of the Cross



The New Testament writers use multiple pictures to describe what Jesus has done for us. Like facets of a diamond, each different picture helps us see, understand and explain the meaning of the cross. These ten explanations are for you to learn and then share with others, so that many people can receive and believe this amazing message.

### **Jesus is the bridge (John 14:6)**

There is a gulf between God, and ourselves because we as naturally selfish people can't stand before a good God. However, God sends Jesus as a man, and as God's own Son, to bridge the gap by dying for us. Now we can find a way by going through Jesus to God. Only perfect Jesus can reach between humanity and God.

### **Jesus cancels debts (Matthew 18:23-35, John 19:30)**

When we do wrong, consciously or not, we find ourselves in debt to God. He made us to live well and good, but our self-centered ways increasingly lose credit before God, who is always good. We are all deeply in the red, unable to pay off our own debts. The kindness of God sends a payment to cancel our debts. He sends what is most precious to him, his only Son, Jesus. The death of Jesus covers the balance owed because this perfectly good man, who is also God, can outweigh the debt of the whole world. The death of Jesus places humanity back in credit, and if anyone chooses to acknowledge Jesus as his debt-payer, they are forgiven.

### **Adopted because of Jesus (Romans 8:15)**

Because we don't live right, our lives are signed over to the surrounding influence of wrong ways. We live like children of evil, showing behaviour that reflects such a parent. Yet Jesus comes as a true Son of God. He is the true heir of God and everything God has made. He lives free from the influence of all that is wrong, and operates with the loving power of goodness, even dying for us as potential brothers and sisters. To all those who choose to follow him, Jesus gives the gift of God's adoption. God acknowledges such people as a child like his one and only Son. Those who follow will gain all the benefits of a firstborn child, knowing God the Father and receiving the privileges of all his love, gifts and family status.



### **Jesus identifies with us (Matthew 1:23, Mark 15:33-34)**

The human condition is full of mistakes and suffering. We hurt others and are hurt by others. Bad things happen to us. Jesus doesn't condemn us as a lost cause, but comes into the world and draws alongside us. He stands with us and fully experiences the suffering of humanity on the cross. He cries out to God, and shows us that God is not against us, but totally with us, even in our suffering.

### **Reconciled by Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:18-19)**

When two parties are at odds with each other, there are differences that need to be resolved. We all need an advocate, who will represent us and help us make peace with God. Jesus speaks on our behalf by becoming humanity's representative. This allows human beings a fresh start with God and the possibility of a real relationship with him, because Christ reconciles us to his Father through his cross.

### **Jesus is in charge (Philippians 2:5-11)**

We may feel that evil in the world and in ourselves is stronger than good. We fear that there is no way forward and there is no power to change things. Yet Jesus comes, lives a perfect life, and dies on the cross, breaking the power of selfishness and sin. Jesus then rises from the dead, demonstrating his authority over every evil force in the world (including death). As a result he has received power and authority over everything in the Universe from his Father, and we now can have a sure hope of good winning out. Jesus is ultimately in charge.

### **Bought out of captivity (John 8:34-36, Titus 2:13-14)**

Imagine a slave, under the ownership of a cruel master. The slave is unable to break free from the control of the wicked influences of the master. This master is a picture of selfishness in us and in the world. However, Jesus comes and pays a dear price on the cross to buy us back into true freedom. He pays with his own life, but then rises and sets us free to be under his caring protection and loving guidance. We are no longer slaves to evil, but owned by God.