

Day Four: The Ultimate Love

Let's Start with a Few Questions



Q: What is the biggest problem?

Q: What hero did we learn about on our first day?

Q: What amazing things did he do with God's help?

Q: Who was the second hero we learned about?

Q: What amazing things did he do with God's help?

Q: What hero did we learn about yesterday?

Q: What amazing things did she do with God's help?

Q: What is one of the truths we've learned this week?

Q: Those heroes all did amazing things when they trusted God and allowed Him to work through them—but did any of them solve the world's biggest problem: sin?

The Ultimate Hero



Today we get to learn about the hero who *did* solve the problem of sin. He's no ordinary hero, but a true superhero. Actually, he's way more powerful and important than any superhero.

If you had to invent a word for someone who is more heroic than all other heroes and superheroes combined, what word would you invent?

It's hard to imagine a superhero that powerful. They wouldn't just save people from a burning building, or from a shipwreck, or from some other disaster, but would have to be powerful enough to save *all people* from the biggest problem the world has ever known. The word for that kind of hero is 'Savior'. The word 'savior' means 'one who saves', but when we capitalize it like this — 'Savior' — we're talking about *the* Savior. The ultimate and best savior, who takes away the sin of the world. (Other words like 'Savior' are 'Messiah', and 'Christ'.)

That Savior is Jesus! Jesus is the Messiah that the scriptures promised from the very beginning.

Maybe you've heard the story of Jesus' birth that we celebrate every year at Christmas. An angel appeared to some shepherds with good news on the night Jesus was born — the best news that the world had ever heard:

And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”

Luke 2:10-14 ESV

The news of the Savior being born was wonderful, but the world would have to wait for Jesus to grow up and fulfill his mission to learn the full story of why he had come.

The Unexpected Baptism



When Jesus had grown into an adult, the Spirit of God came to a man named John (who happened to be Jesus' cousin) and told him to preach to people about the Savior who was almost ready to save the world from sin. John preached about the coming Savior (or Messiah) by baptizing people. When someone is baptized, they get into some water, and for a moment they go under the water and then come back up out of it.

They do this to show everyone that they have asked God to make a big change in their life. They were following their own way, but now they want to follow God's will for their life. They are telling everyone that instead of being dead (living under the punishment for sin—'the wages of sin is death'), they are now alive in Christ.

We might think it's strange to show that using water, but baptism is an image of what God did with Noah and his family. He brought them through the great flood that was impossible to escape—certain death! By trusting God, they made it safely through the flood and survived.

Jesus knew that his cousin John was baptizing people in the Jordan River, and went there one day to be baptized. When John saw Jesus coming to him to be baptized he told everyone:

"Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

John 1:29 ESV

Do you remember what God told Moses to put on the doorposts of the Hebrew houses in Egypt to protect them from the punishment that was coming? A lamb had to be sacrificed and the blood of the lamb had to be painted above the door and on its sides. John was saying that Jesus was the lamb who would be sacrificed not just to save one house from death, but the whole world!

John felt that there was no reason for Jesus to be baptized, since Jesus had no sin. Why would Jesus have to show people that he was turning away from sin to follow God? It didn't make sense to John.

But Jesus insisted on being baptized to show that he would soon be taking on sin that was not his own—the sins of the world. John baptized Jesus, and when Jesus came up out of the water, God made sure everyone there that day knew exactly who Jesus is:

And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”
Matthew 3:16–17 ESV

The Unfair Punishment



Jesus chose twelve followers to walk with him daily and learn about God. We call them his 'disciples', a word that means 'students', or 'pupils'. They helped Jesus preach to many people over the next three years. Most people loved Jesus and wanted to hear him teach about God as often as they could. Huge crowds followed Jesus everywhere.

Some people didn't like what Jesus was doing, though. The priests of the Jewish temple should have recognized who Jesus really was. They would have if they had noticed how the scriptures pointed to Jesus. Instead, they felt threatened. They didn't want the people hearing about God from some new person they didn't know much about.

They spread untrue rumors about Jesus. They tried to get him arrested. They tried to get people to condemn him to death for pretending to be God. Jesus wasn't pretending, though. Anyone who had been at his baptism could have told them that.

Finally, they arranged for Jesus to be arrested by the Roman authorities and condemned to a criminal's death on a cross. It was the worst kind of punishment that anyone could imagine—and *Jesus had not done anything to deserve it.*

Jesus' disciples couldn't believe what they were seeing! It was the most unfair punishment ever! They also couldn't believe that Jesus was letting it happen! They had seen him do many miracles. They knew that he could wave a hand and set himself free—so why didn't he do that?

It was all part of God's plan to save us from sin. Jesus knew this, even though the disciples didn't understand it yet.

From the beginning, God taught his people that only blood can remove sin. For thousands of years, God's people had brought animal sacrifices (including lambs) to the temple from time to time to remove their sin. That was a temporary solution, though. They had to repeat the sacrifices at various times each year.

Remember how John called Jesus 'the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world'? He meant that one day Jesus would be the perfect sacrifice. Animal sacrifices would not be needed after that. Sinful people could finally be restored to a right relationship with God.

Years after Jesus was unfairly killed, Peter wrote the perfect summary of what Jesus did for us that day:

Christ carried our sins in his body on the cross. He did this so that we would stop living for sin and live for what is right. By his wounds you were healed.

1 Peter 2:24 ERV

Jesus took care of sin forever by dying in the place of sinners. He took the punishment that all of us deserved. Only the Savior could do that. Jesus didn't stay dead, though! On the third day after he died on the cross, Jesus rose again, showing that the Savior who freed us from sin has the power to save us from death!

Pray, Listen, Say, Memorize



Prayer

Father God we thank You for sending Jesus to save us from our sin and bring us back to You. Please help us to understand Your great love for us and all that Jesus did for us to defeat sin and death. Even though we deserve death because of our sin, we thank You that You freely offer us forgiveness and eternal life through Jesus Your Son. Help us to accept the gift of Jesus and trust You with our lives from now on.



Watch or listen to the song 'Love of God' by Travis Cottrell, and read the lyrics as you listen. What parts of this song remind us of Jesus love for us and his sacrifice to save us from sin?



Today's Truth

Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. (John 14:6)



Memory Verse

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16