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Faith Bible Church
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<http://www.fbcweb.org/doctrines.html>

Personal Study of the Bible-75 **Galatians 3:13-14 – The Substitutionary Death of Christ**

Galatians 3:13-14 teaches us that Christ was cursed by God as our substitute that we might become blessed by faith:

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us-- for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"-- in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

This week is known as Passion Week, the time from Palm Sunday through Resurrection Sunday (commonly known by the pagan title "Easter" Sunday). Regarding the exact day when Christ was crucified, there is significant disagreement among scholars, ranging from Wednesday (Thieme) to what has come to be known as Good Friday (traditional day). Regardless of which day He was crucified (it was Thursday), this week is an excellent time to reflect on the death and resurrection of Christ—all the while recognizing that there are no holy days as such in the church age, for we are to live every day as unto the Lord, Eph. 5:20; 1 Thess. 5:18; Heb. 13:15; Col. 3:17; Rom. 14:5-8—I recommend looking up and reading all of the Bible passages in this essay. It is religion that tends towards focusing on special holy days, Gal. 4:9-11. However, in regard to Christians who hold to special holy days, basically immature believers without doctrine, the Bible exhorts us to be patient and avoid judging their hearts, Rom. 14:4-6

Regarding the *substitutionary* death of Christ, let's begin with the beginning, the very beginning. When did God plan the Cross? Read Revelation 13:8; Acts 2:23; 1 Peter 1:20. When did the plan of the Cross include us? Read Titus 1:2; Eph. 1:4; Rev. 17:8. The Cross was not an afterthought or accident. It was all part of God's plan. Note Christ's orientation to the Cross in Luke 24:26 and John 10:15-18. His death was an absolute necessity in the eternal plan of God for the salvation of man. No cross means no salvation, no way, no how.

Note Christ as the second person of the Godhead at the point of the incarnation in Heb. 10:5-7. This passage demonstrates that Christ came to fulfill the entire sacrificial system and put an end to it forever. He accomplished with *one offering* what millions of animals on Jewish altars could never accomplish, see Hebrews 10:4.

There are at least five images in the Bible that portray Christ's sacrifice for us. First is the image of the lamb. The sacrificial death of Christ was first publicly announced by John the Baptist, note the title and the work that he used in reference to Christ in John 1:29, 36. This is a fulfillment of Genesis 22:7-8, which you should read. After John pictured Jesus as a sacrificial lamb, he baptized Jesus in the Jordan River, not because of sin, but to fulfill God's plan, read Matt. 3:15. The baptism of Jesus was to depict His death, burial, and resurrection. In other words, even from the very beginning of His ministry, He gave witness to the fact that He had

come to die for the sins of the world. When believers are baptized, they identify with Him, in a public way, in His death, burial, and resurrection.

A second image used to portray the death of Christ is of destroying a temple, see John 2:19-21. The body that God had prepared for His Son was the temple of God, as the eternal Word had become flesh and “tabernacle among us” [from original Greek], see John 1:14. Also read Colossians 1:19; 2:9. When the wicked people laid hands on His body, a holy temple, they thought they could destroy the Prince of Life, but their attempts were futile in the end. Though they whipped Him, spat on Him, beat Him, made Him wear a crown of thorns, and then led Him out to nail Him to a cross, it only further advanced the plan of God. Jesus rose triumphantly on the third day, and the sign of John was completed, as He promised, see Matthew 12:38-40; Luke 11:30.

Not only is the sacrifice of Christ pictured in terms of a sacrificial lamb and temple, it is also portrayed as an uplifted serpent, read John 3:14-15. What a shock this must have been to Nicodemus who knew the story in Numbers 21:5-9. How could the Messiah actually compare Himself to a vile serpent? It must have been unthinkable for him to hear that the Messiah must be lifted up like a serpent on a pole, the cross. What a stumbling block for so many. To be hung on a tree was the ultimate humiliation; it was the same as being under a curse, see Deut. 21:22-23. Jesus was made a curse for us and thereby redeemed us from the curse of the law, Gal. 3:13.

A fourth image of Christ’s sacrifice is one of a Good Shepherd, read John 10:11-18. Generally sheep end up dying for the shepherd, but they do it ignorantly and unwillingly. No sheep ever volunteered to have its throat cut and its body butchered and then burned on an altar. But the Word of God declares that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, willingly died for the lost sheep of the world and did it with full knowledge of all that was involved. He did not die a martyr’s death; He died a criminal’s death on a shameful Roman cross, read Isa. 53:12; Mark 15:28.

A fifth image of Christ’s sacrifice is of a seed buried in the ground to produce fruit, read John 12:20-28. Our Lord’s body was like a seed when Nicodemus and Joseph placed it in the tomb, but on the third day it was resurrected in power and glory. The saving power of God through Christ bears fruit all over the world to this day, Col. 1:5-6.

God provides us with five pictures of our Lord’s death on the Cross, each emphasizing a particular truth. Like the lamb on the altar, Jesus died as a substitute for us who deserve to die for our own sins. Jesus body was treated like a building or temple to be demolished forever, but it was raised on the third day. His death was vile like a serpent lifted up as He was made a curse for us. The Shepherd willingly dying for the sheep. The Seed planted in the ground produced new life for us all. This life is what we believers enjoy now and will enjoy forever. Let us not forget His tremendous sacrifice for our blessedness and that the best blessings are still yet to come—all because of Him and only Him.

*In 'Ehyeh,
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