

When reading a short story, or a play, we like the sequence to be a timeline. If the story has multiple parallel plots, then we must tell part of one plot timeline, then start the next plot timeline back at the same start as the previous, and so on. It is like holding your hand spreading your fingers out, and pointing the fingers down. Each finger represents one the plots in the story, all occurring simultaneously. We understand multiple situations occurring at the same time, but we do not have a simple way to communicate that. Maybe we can do shorter timelines to be as parallel as possible, but it is still the same problem of keeping track of the timelines for the plots. The Bible has the same problem.

Bible study can be confusing. We are comfortable with information presented logically organized, and in an overall chronological sequence. Sorry - no guarantees that scripture will be presented in this fashion. You should read the complete context (sometimes a few verses, sometimes a few chapters) and then deconstruct all that, possibly reordering it to be more easily understood. A simple example is the detail of Yom Kippur in Leviticus 16. As you read it, you can't determine WHEN this is to happen; toward the end of the chapter (verse 29 of 34 verses) the time of year is revealed. The duties of the priests overlap, but are presented as short timelines - serial presentation of parallel events.

That covers the method for this presentation. The topic today is about sin, and we are against it. Okay, now we can all go home.

What? You would like a little more information? That's like asking your grandfather about his latest illness or surgery - settle in for the whole story.

We all start our life as pure and sinless. Eventually each of us will choose to deliberately rebel against the rules, the inborn conscience. How can we get back to sinless? We can't - not in the sense of completely erasing it from our personal history, so we can avoid it later, but God does not remember.

Jeremiah 31:33_b

For I will forgive their iniquity, their sin I will remember no more.

Adam and Eve started as sinless persons. We don't know exactly how long that lasted, but in Genesis 3 it ended - they turned away from God to "be like gods" and be totally independent. Or so they thought.

The metaphor of the North Pole helps. When you are at the North Pole, that's where you are. You arrive there by always traveling somewhat northerly. From the North Pole, you can face toward Greenland or Canada or Alaska or Siberia or Russia or Norway - but your first direction will always be South - away from the North Pole.

Everything we do is either staying with God or turning away from Him. That's why only the Bible is trustworthy, but there are millions of other ways to live:

philosophies, religions, absence of religions, or lifestyles. We can't claim ignorance, any more than Adam and Eve - both disobeyed the command.

Romans 1:20-25,32,2:15

His invisible attributes - His eternal power and His divine nature - have been clearly seen ever since the creation of the world, being understood through the things that have been made. So people are without excuse - for even though they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God or give Him thanks. Instead, their thinking became futile, and their senseless hearts were made dark. Claiming to be wise, they became fools. They traded the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served the creation rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Though they know God's righteous decree - that those who practice such things deserve death - they not only do them but also approve of others who practice the same. They show that the work of the Torah is written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts switching between accusing or defending them.

When I turn away from God and Torah, then I have joined His enemies. They do not rule me - I rule me. And that rebellion is the pride of being a god unto myself, viewing Torah as a kind of cafeteria plan: I like this, I don't like that. The lake of fire is a place away from God - the desire of every non-believer, to live away from God and His Torah. You can get that desire fulfilled - and forever live in that place where God does not go, where His love is totally absent. The demons rejected God and His Torah, and I have that same freedom - and will get the same result as they get.

The good news is that only you are responsible for your sins.

The bad news is that only you are responsible for your sins.

Adam and Eve knew that their sin caused death - after confessing their rebellion, God sacrificed some animals to provide skins to cover Adam and Eve and their sin. They realized that by confessing, the sacrifices got forgiveness - for that sin only. They taught Cain and Abel about repentance and faith and the sacrifices, so Cain did the grain sacrifice and Abel did the animal sacrifice. Almost 1700 years later, Noah was doing the same sacrifices. It was not something new.

Yet why would you sacrifice your best animal (or buy such an animal) if you did not already have faith - belief - trust - that this action (when done sincerely) would get forgiveness of your confessed sin? You wouldn't waste the effort or the expense unless you believed.

Leviticus 1:4, 4:20, 4:26, 4:31, 4:35, 5:10, 5:13, 5:16, 5:18, 5:26, 19:22

... make atonement for his sin that he committed - and he will be forgiven. All of these have the same pattern as Leviticus 1:2-5 - the person who offers the sacrifice symbolically transfers his sin to the sinless animal by confessing his sin while laying hands on the animal and slaughtering it, and this makes atonement (covering) for him over the sin that he committed - and he will be forgiven.

At some point each of us has sinned, and thus each of us needs to return to God. We have free will, so this is optional - but the consequences are not optional. Either we follow God and His word, or we turn away from it and go our own way. Returning to Him, to draw near, requires a sacrifice, a covering, and that includes the blood of that sacrifice. Ultimately all sacrifices are vicarious actions pointing to the ultimate sacrifice of Yeshua, because (as Paul says in Romans) since a man sinned, a man must die to pay for those sins - not an angel, not even God - but a man (although born of God). So we have offerings - now Yeshua - to draw near, to forgive the sins of those offerings.

1 Peter 2:24

He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we, removed from sins, might live for righteousness. "By His wounds you were healed."

Romans 3:19-28

Now we know that whatever the Torah says, it says to those within the Torah, so that every mouth may be shut and the whole world may become accountable to God. For no human, on the basis of Torah observance, will be set right in His sight - for **through the Torah comes awareness of sin**. But now God's righteousness apart from the Torah has been revealed, to which the Torah and the Prophets bear witness - namely, the righteousness of God through faith in Messiah Yeshua, to all who keep on trusting. For there is no distinction, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. They are set right as a gift of His grace, through the redemption that is in Messiah Yeshua. God set forth Yeshua as an atonement, through faith in His blood, to show His righteousness in passing over sins already committed. Through God's forbearance, He demonstrates His righteousness at the present time - that He Himself is just and also the justifier of the one who puts his trust in Yeshua. Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. By what principle? Of works? No, but by the principle of faith. For we consider a person to be set right [redeemed] apart from Torah observance.

Habakkuk 2:4_b

The righteous one will live by his faith.

This faith and trust (that the blood of the sacrifice covers our sins) is the same faith that Adam and Eve had in Genesis 3, faith that the death of the sacrifices made by YHVH (which he used to get the skins) covered the sins of Adam and Eve until the final sacrifice of a sinless man would happen. That same faith applies to all who followed YHVH before Yeshua lived as a man during the Second Temple period, and that same faith applies to all who followed YHVH after Yeshua resurrected and ascended to heaven. The only difference is looking forward in time to Yeshua's sacrifice, or looking back in time to Yeshua's sacrifice - the faith is the same. The covering (atonement) is the same. The turning back to YHVH in obedience is the same.

Deuteronomy 30:14-16

The word is very near to you - in your mouth and in your heart, to do it. See, I have set before you today life and good, and death and evil. What I am commanding you today is to love YHWH your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His mitzvot, statutes and ordinances. Then you will live and multiply, and YHWH your God will bless you in the land you are going in to possess.

That's great for that confessed sin. Now, what about the next one, and the one after that, and so on? We want to stop this cycle. We don't just want forgiveness, we want to stop sinning.

Each time we obey, it will result in not committing sin, but how do you change your whole viewpoint and attitude toward life, so that you do not have any inclination to sin? You need a transformation - your faith needs to lead the way to more consistent obedience. Faith and obedience grow together, each reinforcing the other. It's not a relay race, it's a collaboration.

Romans 12:2

Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the will of God - what is good and acceptable and perfect.

We are not perfect - God knows that. He provides a solution - repent!

1 John 1:8-9

If we say we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

When you stumble and fall, dust yourself off, get back up, and continue on the path God gave us.

Isaiah 43:2

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, or through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned, nor will the flame burn you.

For me, this promise is always uplifting - it is my personal favorite. God probably won't remove our obstacles, our difficult situations, our pain - but He is always with us as we go through them!