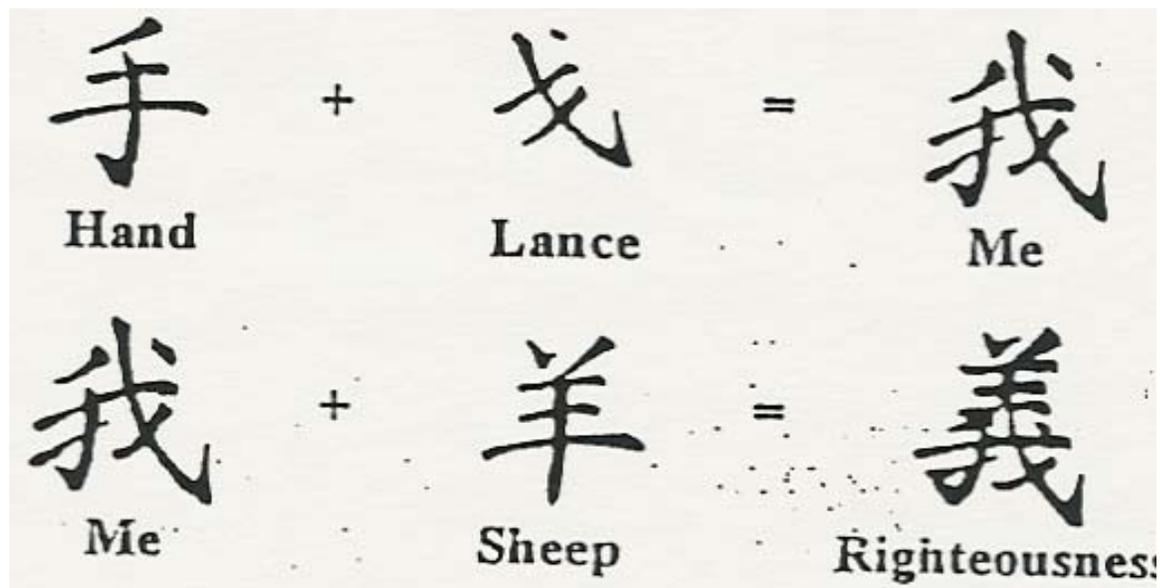


## The Concepts of Sacrifice and Atonement (16)

We learned in our last lesson, that God is a just God. He is the ultimate authority of the universe and he must punish sin. Our sins have separated us from God. Yet God still loves us and designed a plan to save us. In the beginning God already had one glorious son and he proposed that he would sacrifice this one son so that others may live and become his children. This lesson will explain how this sacrifice works.

In all civilizations we can look back in history and see the practice of animal sacrifice. Our Chinese students can appreciate the following witness in their own ancient language or characters (pictographs) written 5000 years ago.

The character for "righteousness" is made up of two characters placed over one another, the character for "me" and the character for "sheep" or "lamb".



"Me" and "sheep" equals or means "Righteousness" or "not guilty". The Chinese word for "me" can also be broken down into smaller words.

"Hand" and "sword" together means "me". So in the word for righteousness you actually have the following thought. Instead of a guilty person dying (by sword), an innocent sheep dies. The hand of the guilty sinner sheds the blood of the innocent sheep. The sheep dies, the man lives. The sheep becomes a substitute for the human being. The sheep bears my guilt; it suffers the punishment I deserve. Now, animal sacrifices were continually offered for centuries to atone (pardon) for sin, but humans were aware that a man and a sheep are not equal. For justice to occur, for a true substitution to happen, a perfect human being must take my place. If the "wages of sin is death"(Romans 6:23), a perfect man who does not deserve to die (who has no guilt) would have to give his life for mine. This would satisfy the demands of justice.

**BUT WHERE COULD SUCH A MAN BE FOUND!** We have already learned that everyone is a sinner and deserving of death.

I John 4:9-10

*"This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. (10) This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.*

1 Peter 3:18

*For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.*

Please read the following very carefully:

Romans 3:21-26

*But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. (22) This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (24) and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. (25) **GOD PRESENTED HIM AS A SACRIFICE OF ATONEMENT, THROUGH FAITH IN HIS BLOOD. HE DID THIS TO DEMONSTRATE HIS JUSTICE, BECAUSE IN HIS FORBEARANCE HE HAD LEFT THE SINS COMMITTED BEFOREHAND UNPUNISHED-- (26) HE DID IT TO DEMONSTRATE HIS JUSTICE AT THE PRESENT TIME, SO AS TO BE JUST AND THE ONE WHO JUSTIFIES THOSE WHO HAVE FAITH IN JESUS.***

From the creation until the death of Jesus, God had passed over the sins of humans who had faith in him. They were sinners and deserved to die, but God had fellowship with them as though they were without sin. In that time of history, it did not look like God was just at all. It looked like he was winking at sin or treating it lightly. But God knew and planned all along to send his perfect son as a human being and have him die as a sacrifice. In this way, Jesus would pay the penalty we all deserve. God showed his love but he also showed he was just. Even though God had taught them before Jesus came to sacrifice animals to atone for their sins, the animal sacrifices were only a shadow of the real sacrifice he planned to give them. He was teaching them a lamb or a sheep was necessary for their forgiveness, and eventually sent his own son as their lamb.

When Jesus first began teaching, a prophet of God (John the Baptist) pointed to him and declared, *"Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world"* (John 1:29). God had planned sending his own son as the world's lamb or sacrifice since the world began.

1 Pet 1:18-20

*For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, (19) but with the precious blood of Christ, **A LAMB WITHOUT BLEMISH OR DEFECT.** (20) He was chosen **BEFORE THE CREATION** of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.*

What makes the Bible story so convincing is this: As you read the 39 books of the Old Testament that were written before the birth of Jesus, they give constant clues and predictions about his coming as a sacrifice for sin. The Old Testament story gives proof or evidence that the Bible was indeed given to us by God. It plainly shows that the coming of Jesus 2000 years ago was in the mind of God before the creation.

## QUESTIONS:

1. In Chinese, the words "me" and "sheep" put together mean \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The word "me" is made up of what two words in Chinese?
3. This character shows that 5000 years ago the people in China understood the concept of atonement or sacrifice -- the human deserved to die, a \_\_\_\_\_ would die in their place.
4. Jesus was called by the prophet John "the \_\_\_\_\_ of God that takes away the sins of the world" (John 1:29).
5. When did God decide to send his son to be our lamb or sacrifice?