

And there, a man named Jesus of Nazareth is identified by John the Baptist with these words: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

All the previous sacrifices pointed forward to Him.

Jesus lived a perfect life. He never sinned. Yet He was condemned to die. On the cross, He cried out, "It is finished." And as He hung there, the sin of the world was placed upon Him.

"He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin."

Jesus became the substitute.

The Empty Tomb

Three days later, something happened that changed everything.

The tomb was empty.

That matters for several reasons.

First, because animal sacrifices were never enough. They could only cover sin temporarily. But Christ, by His own blood, entered once and obtained eternal redemption.

Second, because the empty grave proves that death itself has been defeated. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

And third, because if it is true, it demands a response.

You cannot ignore it.

What Will You Do With Christ?

If it is true, then there is a God who is calling you to trust Him. To reject Him is to choose separation from Him.

And that is where the decision becomes personal.

Pascal's Wager lays it out simply. If Christianity is not true, it makes no difference in the end. But if it is true, then everything is at stake.

The evidence points to a real man named Jesus. A real crucifixion. And an empty tomb. Lives were changed. Cowards became bold witnesses. History itself was altered.

I was not there. I cannot prove it in the absolute sense. But we do not live life on proof like that. We live by evidence.

And the evidence points to a risen Savior.

If that is true, then I owe Him everything.

That is why Christians speak with urgency. Not because they are trying to pressure you, but because they believe your eternity is at stake.

The Invitation

The tomb is empty. Jesus is alive. And He calls you to respond.

Your sin required a sacrifice. And Jesus shed His blood for you.

Every sin, every lie, every lust, every act of anger, every wrong thought, can be forgiven. Not ignored. Forgiven. Paid for. Nailed to His cross.

This is not about joining a church or doing good works. The work has already been done.

The response is simple. Trust Him. Turn to Him. Believe on Him.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."



The SUBSTITUTE



CALVARY BAPTIST
CHURCH
TEMECULA, CA

Adapted from a sermon on

Easter 2026

Pastor Ryan Rench

One of the Strangest Stories in the Bible

One of the strangest stories in the Bible is when God asks a father to sacrifice his own son on an altar.

This is not just any father and son. This is Abraham and Isaac.

The storyline of Scripture tells us that God promised Abraham, "I will make of thee a new nation and give you a new land." And in his old age, Abraham was going to have a son. Years passed, and nothing happened. So Abraham tried to fulfill God's promise his own way. He took a concubine and had a son named Ishmael. But that was not the promised child. Ishmael's descendants would go on to become many of the Muslim nations surrounding Israel today. They would say, "We are the true line of Abraham." And the Jews would answer, "No, it is us."

But God had made it clear. Isaac was the promised son.

Eventually, when Abraham was 100 and his wife was 90, against all natural odds, God miraculously gave them a child. Isaac.

Then comes one of the most shocking commands in all of Scripture:

"Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest... and offer him... for a burnt offering."

The Road to Moriah

Abraham rises early the next morning. He takes his son, some servants, wood, fire, and a knife, and travels three days to Mount Moriah. At the base of the mountain, he leaves the servants behind and begins the climb with Isaac.

Isaac notices something.

"We have the wood. We have the fire. But where is the lamb?"

You can almost hear it in his voice: "Dad?"

And Abraham answers, "God will provide himself a lamb."

That statement hangs in the air as they walk up the mountain together.

They had seen animal sacrifices before. But this? A human sacrifice? It feels wrong. And yet Abraham lays Isaac on the altar, lifts the knife, and prepares to obey.

Why Blood?

Why would God require something like that?

That question forces us to step back and ask a bigger one. Why sacrifice at all? Why blood? Why must something die?

The answer goes all the way back to the beginning.

Adam walked with God in the Garden of Eden. He knew God, spoke with God, lived in perfect fellowship. But Adam disobeyed. He broke God's command. And when he did, death entered the world.

From that point on, the Bible teaches that mankind is no longer pure. We are born in sin. We have broken God's law.

And if God is perfectly holy, then His justice must be satisfied. Sin cannot simply be ignored. The penalty is death.

But here is where grace enters.

God allows a substitute.

A Substitute in the Place of Another

Instead of man paying with his own blood, something else can die in his place.

When Adam sinned, God clothed him with skins. Something died so that Adam could be covered. Later, Cain and Abel bring offerings. Cain brings the fruit of his labor. Abel brings a blood sacrifice. Only Abel's offering is accepted.

This was not a later invention under Moses. This idea of substitution, of one dying in the place of another, came from the mind of God from the very beginning.

David and the Threshingfloor

Fast forward nearly a thousand years after Abraham, and you come to David.

David is king over Israel, the promised nation. In 2 Samuel 24, David sins by numbering the people. God judges that sin with a plague that sweeps through the land for three days. As judgment approaches Jerusalem, God tells David through the prophet, "Go build an altar."

Once again, sin requires blood.

David purchases the threshingfloor of Araunah, builds an altar, and offers sacrifices. The burnt offering is consumed entirely. The peace offering follows. And the Bible says the plague stops. The judgment is satisfied. There is peace.

Is God Fair?

But this raises another tension.

Some people look at this and say, "That is too much. God is harsh. The payment is too severe." Others say the opposite. "That is not enough. What about all the evil in the world? Are you saying people can just be forgiven?"

The Bible answers: yes, they can be forgiven. But not without a sacrifice.

God Provides

Back on Mount Moriah, just as Abraham raises the knife, God stops him. And right behind him is a ram caught in a thicket.

A substitute.

God provides what Abraham could not.

And that same mountain becomes incredibly important. Not only does Abraham offer there, and not only does David offer there, but that very site becomes the location of the temple. Year after year, sacrifices are made there. Blood is shed. Sin is covered.

And generation after generation, the people gather for Passover. A spotless lamb is slain. Its blood is applied. The judgment of God passes over.

The message is clear. Someone must die, but God allows a substitute.

From Moriah to Calvary

Then, just a short distance from that same hill, another hill appears in history.

Golgotha. Calvary. The place of the skull.