

Was there Forgiveness Before the Cross?

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Introduction: God wants us to understand our need for forgiveness.

- A. Jesus often pleaded with men *not to* “die in their sins.” (Jn 8:24)
 - 1. He also provided *the only possible sacrifice* for sins on the cross. (1 Pt 2:24; 2 Cor 5:21)
 - 2. A natural question then arises: “How could men before the cross be saved?”
- B. We know that men that lived before the cross came to be *forgiven and thus saved*.
 - 1. Moses and Elijah *had fellowship* with God and Jesus. (Lk 9:30-31)
 - 2. How many are found in the great examples of faith in Hebrews 11.
 - 3. Let us come to know with a greater certainty what God wants us to know about *His purpose for us!* (Ex 34:6-7)

I. Forgiveness as Described in the Old Testament

- A. Men of faith were instructed *to pray for forgiveness*.
 - 1. Moses prayed for Israel. (Ex 32:32-33)
 - 2. Solomon prayed for his people. (1 Kgs 8:33-34)
 - 3. Daniel prayed for Israel. (Dan 9:19)
 - 4. David prayed for his personal forgiveness. (Psa 25:16-18)
- B. God's *nature* is described as forgiving in the Old Testament.
 - 1. What would Micah's readers *conclude?* (Mic 7:18-19)
 - 2. Those under the Law were urged to pray to a God *that will forgive*. (Psa 86:5)
- C. Those who repented were *promised forgiveness* by God Himself.
 - 1. These verses are plain! (Isa 55:6-7; 2 Chron 7:14)
 - 2. Some have tried to make a distinction between forgiveness and atonement.
When one has atonement, they *also have forgiveness*. (Lev 4:35, 5:10,13,16,18)
- D. Forgiveness *was claimed* in the Old Testament.
 - 1. How was this accomplished? (Psa 32:5; Psa 103:12)
 - 2. God's word was plain to His people. Now let us gain a better understanding from the New Testament.

II. Additional Light from the New Testament

- A. God had a plan *that required* a New Testament. (Jer 31:31-34)
 - 1. The people of God under *this testament* will be forgiven.
 - 2. The distinction here in *how you become a child of God*.
- B. The Law of Moses was not given to provide salvation *by itself*.
 - 1. There is no justification *under a system of law alone!* (Rom 3:20)
 - 2. God's purpose of the law was *to prepare them for a Savior*, not be one in itself. (Gal 3:11, 24-25)
 - 3. Abraham was *not saved by the law*. How do we know this? He lived before the Law of Moses! (Rom 4:1-4)

4. Why does law not save? Because as with any law the way to salvation is to do all without fail. (Gal 3:10; 5:3)
- C. Animal sacrifices under the Old Testament did not provide forgiveness in themselves.
 1. While God commanded these things, their blood was not the source of appeasing God's wrath. (Heb 10:4)
 2. The sacrifices had to be repeated suggesting inadequacy. (Heb 10:11-12)
- D. Forgiveness to any man who ever lived, must come through the blood of Christ.
 1. Jesus was the only sufficient sacrifice in all of history. (1 Pt 1:18-19; Heb 9:24-28)
 2. Those under the Old Testament law were forgiven by the blood of Christ. (Heb 9:15)
 3. Why is there a controversy then on this question?

III. Some problems Examined

- A. There are two verses that may indicate another possible conclusion.
 1. What did it mean for God to "pass over" sins? (Rom 3:25-26)
 2. Were the sins in the Old Testament "rolled forward?" (Heb 10:1-4)
- B. Some possible explanations to these passages.
 1. Because of the number of sacrifices it was evident that they were insufficient.
 2. Still under these sacrifices there was forgiveness. Consider the promise associated with the day of atonement. (Num 15:27-28)
 3. Rather than suggesting that sins are rolled forward it is pointing out the inadequacy of these sacrifices by themselves.
 4. The same could be said about the sacrifices given before the law.
- C. When did those in the Old Testament find forgiveness?
 1. If Jesus had not died then how could they be forgiven?
 2. God is independent of time. He knows the future and can speak of things in a present tense as not yet occurring. (Rom 4:17)
 3. If forgiveness was not realized then at that time then I cannot know how men like Moses or Isaiah could appear in His presence. (Isa 6:3-7)
 4. If forgiveness was not present then how could God's fellowship and help be present? (Isa 59:1-2)
- D. How did men before the cross find forgiveness?
 1. The same way we do, by faith. (Rom 4:3-8, 16)
 2. What are you doing with your faith?

Conclusion: What great blessings we have from the cross of Christ! (Gal 6:14)