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The Picture of Justification

3: 24-26

The picture of justification DIG: How are people made right with God? How did God demonstrate His righteousness in not just “dismissing” people’s sin? What is the significance of the definite article coming before the word grace? What is THE gift? Where is the picture of atonement, and hence, justification, seen in the B’rit Chadashah?

REFLECT: How would your life be different today without Yeshua? What has His gift meant to you? Some say that salvation by faith is “cheap grace.” Do you think so? What has your salvation “cost” you? How can you respond to God for being both merciful and just? Some have defined grace as love in action. How would you define grace? Redemption? Kapparah?

Messiah’s death on the cross is the picture of justification.

Justification is given freely through grace: By God’s grace, without earning it, all are granted the status of being considered righteous (Greek: *dikaionemnoi*, meaning *justified*, or *have been declared righteous by God*) before Him. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is THE gift of God, not of works, so that no one can boast (Ephesians 2:8-9 NIV). The definite article appears before the word **grace**, referring the reader back to Ephesians 2:5, “it is by grace you have been saved.” Grace is the fountain from which flows the living waters of ADONAI. Yeshua declared that **whoever believes in Me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them** (John 7:37b-38). Therefore, THE gift of God is our salvation, our justification before the Father, that is, being considered righteous in His sight.

Justification is accomplished by redemption: Because of man’s utter **sinfulness** and inability to bring himself up to the standard of **God’s righteousness**, the **redemption** of a **sinner** can only come through **Yeshua Messiah**. Only the sinless **Savior** could pay the price to **redeem**, or to buy back, **sinful** mankind. **Through the act redeeming us from our enslavement to sin that was accomplished by the Messiah Yeshua** (Romans

3:24; Isaiah 53:10-12). Drawing upon **the Exodus** motif, where **ADONAI** liberated **His people** from slavery to **Pharaoh** (Exodus 6:6-8), **God** now **redeems His people** from slavery to **sin** through **Yeshua Messiah**, the “second Moses.” **A midrash concerning Isaiah 52:13 states that the miracles Moshe performed were done to ensure that only one nation (Isra’el) would serve ADONAI; but when Messiah comes, He will cause all people to serve Him (Romans 6; Philippians 2:10-11).**⁸⁰

Justification was paid by an atoning sacrifice: The gift of salvation is free, but it is not cheap. **God put Yeshua forward as our propitiation for sin through His faithfulness in respect to his bloody sacrificial death (Romans 2:25a; 5:10; Second Corinthians 5:19 and 21). Propitiation** is the averting of **Ha’Shem’s** wrath by means of the vicarious (substitutionary) and efficacious (producing the desired effect) sacrifice (**death**) of **Yeshua Messiah** (the atonement). It is the work of **Messiah** which satisfies every claim of **God’s** holiness and justice so that **He** is free to act on behalf of **sinners**. **The kapparah, or propitiation,** has a special reference to the Mercy Seat (see the commentary on **Exodus, to see link click Fs - The Mercy Seat in the Most Holy Place: Christ at the Throne of Grace**) on Yom-Kippur (see the commentary on **Leviticus Ef - Yom-Kippur**). The Greek word for **propitiation** is *hilasterion*, meaning *mercy seat*. Therefore, **Yeshua** is the final **kapparah**.

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, **Your** love is so fantastic! Praise **You** for allowing the **sin** of a person to be transferred away from them to **the Lamb** that died paying the penalty for their **sin**. **He is to lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, so that it will be accepted for him to make atonement on his behalf (Leviticus 1:4).** You sacrificed **Yeshua as the Lamb of God (John 1:29)** for the **sins** of all who would choose to love and to follow **Him** as their **Lord**. **He made the One who knew no sin to become a sin offering on our behalf, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God (Second Corinthians 5:21).***

*Words cannot express the deep gratitude for such suffering and shame that **You** went through on my behalf. I choose to love **You** in all I do while on this earth - all my thoughts, actions, and desires are focused on pleasing **You**. I have no complaints for the trials I have now; though hard and painful- they will be over soon. **For I consider the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us (Romans 8:18).** Praise **You** forever for dying in my place, bearing my punishment for **sins**. I love **You**! In **Your** holy **Son’s** name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*



Since the theme of atonement is so central to the message of the B'rit Chadashah, it should not be surprising to discover other references to Yom-Kippur, the Day of Atonement, within it. **Luke 4:16-22** records that **Yeshua** was called to the Torah in **His** local synagogue in Nazareth. After reading the powerful passage from **Isaiah 61**, **He** delivered a simple, yet strong message, claiming to be **the Messiah, the Anointed One**, who would set the captives free. **Some of the classical rabbis believed this passage in Isaiah 61 would be words the Messiah would speak to Isra'el when He came. The fact that this passage speaks of the Messiah as the liberator of the Jewish people has led other rabbis to speculate that Messiah would appear on a very special Yom-Kippur in the Year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25:10).**⁸¹

Messiah's death on the cross is the picture of justification: The theme of the book of **Romans**, and thus the heart of the gospel message, is the doctrine of **justification** by **faith** alone in response to **the grace** of **ADONAI**. It is a doctrine that has been lost and found again and again throughout the history of the Church. It has suffered from understatement, from overstatement, and perhaps most often, simply from neglect. It was the central message of the early Church, and the central message of the Protestant Reformation, under the godly leadership of people such as Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Olympia Morata of Italy (1526-1555). It is still today the central message of every **faithful** church that is **faithful to God's Word**. Only when the Church understands and proclaims **justification by faith**, can it truly present the gospel of the atoning **death of Yeshua Messiah on the cross**.



The cross affects those who **trust** in **Yeshua** by giving them eternal life. Through **His death** and resurrection, **Yeshua** rescues us from the impending fury of God's judgment (**First Thessalonians 1:10**). As **Paul** testifies later in **Romans**, "God demonstrates His own love for us in that the Messiah died on our behalf while we were still sinners. Therefore, since we have now come to be considered [justified] by means of his bloody sacrificial death, how much more will we be delivered through Him from the anger of God's judgment (**Romans 5:8-9**; **Second Corinthians 5:18**; **Titus 2:14**).

The cross affected the **Adversary** by breaking his power and dominion over the earth. The writer to the Messianic **Hebrews** declares that through **His death**, **Yeshua Messiah** rendered ineffective the one who had power over death, that is, the **Adversary** (**Hebrews 2:14**). In doing so, **Yeshua** rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the **Kingdom of His dear Son**, in whom we have redemption, that is, our sins have been forgiven (**Colossians 1:13-14**).

And **the cross** obviously affected **Yeshua Messiah Himself**. In obedience to **His Father's will**, **He** suffered the agony of taking the **sin** of the world, all the way back to Adam, upon **Himself**, paying its **death** penalty, and separation from the godhead (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Ly - The Second Three Hours on the Cross: The Wrath of God**). He was resurrected, however, in order that **He** might return to the never-again-to-be-broken presence of **His** heavenly **Father** and **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh**.⁸²

Then, **Paul** gives two reasons for why **God** chose the cross to deal with our **sin**. First, **YHVH** demonstrated **His righteousness in the past**. **Messiah's** substitutionary **death** on the cross **vindicated God's righteousness**; because, in His forbearance, **He had passed over [with neither punishment nor remission] the sins people had committed in the past**, before **Messiah** died (**3:25b**). In the Dispensation of Torah, **sins** were not done-away-with, but merely covered until the individual felt the burden of **sin**

again, and would have to continually offer sacrifices over-and-over-and-over again. Therefore, when **Messiah** died, **He** not only paid for the **sins** committed after **He** died, but also for the **sins** before **He** died.

The second reason was to demonstrate **His righteousness in the present age**. And what **Messiah** did on the cross **vindicates his righteousness in the present age by showing that He is righteous Himself and is also the One who makes people righteous on the basis of Yeshua's faithfulness (3:26)**. The final purpose is that **ADONAI** might prove **Himself** to be **righteous**. If **God** does not send us to hell because of our **sins** as believers, it doesn't prove that **He** is not **righteous**; it doesn't prove that **He** doesn't punish **sin**. The very fact of our salvation proves that **He** *did* punish **sin**. But **He** punished our **sins** on **the cross**, where **Messiah** suffered the full wrath of our **sins**.⁸³