**WOODLANDS CHURCH**

**April 7th 2019. Cross Vision**

**Discussion notes: Sacrifice. Hebrews 9 & 10. Matthew 26:36-45**

The Cross is at the heart of the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It has become the defining image of worship for Christians, and what was a fearful symbol of torture and execution in the Roman world is now worn casually as jewellery by people of faith and without it. The cross is like a diamond with many facets, and this Lent we willbe looking at three aspects of the work of Christ on the cross.

Last week we looked at *Ransom* and the difference between Ransom and Sacrifice. Ransom we defined as a payment or substitute to release someone from captivity (as in war or kidnap). *Sacrifice* is something lawfully and appropriately paid to God. Jesus positioned himself both as a ransom (Mark 10:45) in the tradition of O.T. redemption and ransom teaching (e.g. Hosea 3) but also as a sacrifice, a sacrificial lamb in the O.T. Sacrificial and atonement teaching and practice. (Romans 3:25)

1. John the Baptist calls Jesus ‘the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world’ (John 1:29). What is the significance of the lamb in the history of Israel (Genesis 22. Exodus 12. Leviticus 5:6, Luke 22:7 etc)?
2. What is the significance of the last supper being at the Passover festival in helping us understand what Jesus did on the cross?
3. What is the tension between Jesus death being at the agency of Satan (John 13:18-30) and the plan of God (Matthew 26:36-46)?
4. If *Ransom* frees us from spiritual slavery to sin and the power of Satan, with the consequence of death, why is a sacrifice to God a necessary part of the same act? What is the meaning of the ‘cup’ that Jesus says the Father has given him to drink (Matthew 26)?
5. If Jesus is a voluntary sacrifice for others and to God, how should we follow his example as ‘living sacrifices’ (Rom 12)?

In his book ‘Mere Christianity’ C.S. Lewis has a chapter called ‘The Perfect Penitent’ in which he begins to give some reasons as to why the death of Jesus washed our sins away. He makes the point however that ‘theories we build up as to how Christ’s death did all this are quite secondary: mere plans and diagrams to be left alone if they do not help us..’

What is in practice true for me (and for those who accept it) is that ‘the blood of Christ never failed me yet’ and that in the mystery of the self-offering of the Son of God I find I truly can know a relationship with the Father that is unimpeded by my sin. His sacrifice is a gift to be received with reverence and thanks.