

158 A bridge too far

It's 2000 BC, right, and you're God, and you want to show the people of the world just how much you love them, and how you want to have a relationship with them. But you have a problem. All the people think you're an angry God who will smite them if they do things wrong. Problem!

You know the Abraham story, right? *Through you, I will bless all the peoples of the earth*, and Abe believes God, Abe trusts God, Abe is willing to do what God says.

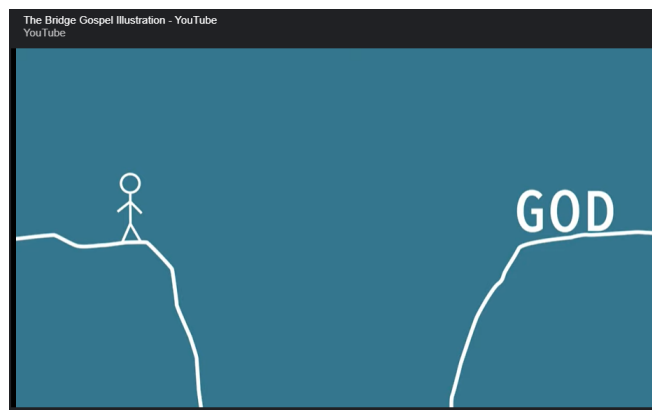
So Isaac is born, but then God says, *I want you to offer your son as a sacrifice*. What?! Can you see what a **serious** problem God has with his image – he needs a major PR makeover to convince people that he's **not** an angry God who will smite you if you do wrong.

Long story short: 2000 years later, Jesus comes, dies, comes back to life, and the PR battle is won! People realise: God really is **not** a demanding tyrant who will smite you if you do wrong; God is a loving, accepting, welcoming, **self**-sacrificing God. Jesus, God's only **Son** sacrifices **himself**, the **lamb** of God who died for us. The good news spreads like wildfire. **Hallelujah!**

Skip forward another 2000 years and ask Google how we can tell our friends and family about this **good news**. Look up “the bridge”, a 5 min video based on Romans 6:23, “You can draw this on a napkin,” the presenter says, “circling the individual words of the verse as you explain it.”

the [WAGES] of [SIN] is [DEATH],
but the [GIFT] [OF GOD] is [ETERNAL LIFE] in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Skipping quickly over the fact that this verse has been ripped totally out of context,¹ let's see what this says about the nature of God.



Here are the verses the speaker recommends we use (my bold):

Isaiah 59:2 But your **iniquities** have **separated** you from your God;

“Sins are the things we think and do and say that are not pleasing to God.”

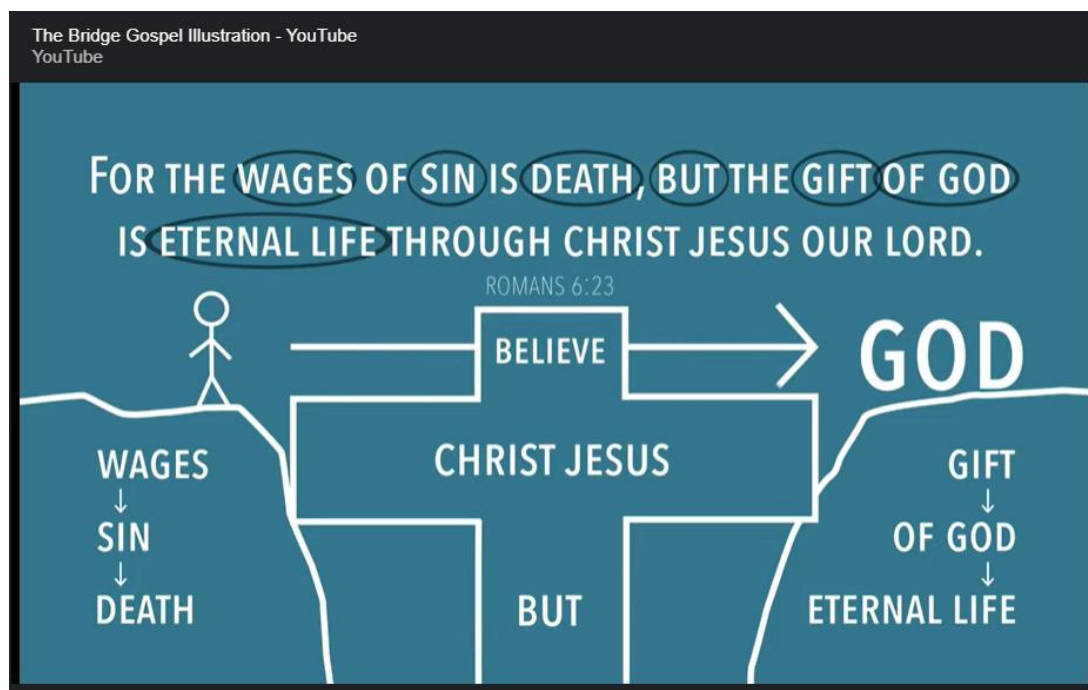
Hebrews 9:27 Just as man is **destined to die** once, and after that to **face judgment**

“Tell them about heaven and hell.”

John 5:24 I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be **condemned**; he has crossed over from **death** to life.

“Remind them about heaven and hell.”

So here’s the finished picture, drawn on your napkin:



Somebody shoot the PR agent!

What did I just say? **At last they realised that God really is not a demanding tyrant, who will smite you if you don’t do right.**

The PR agent is using a 4000-year-old (wrong!) image of God, despite it being totally overturned by Jesus himself **2000 years ago**.

What is Jesus’ image of the Father? When the prodigal son shows even the **slightest** inclination to return home, the Father sees him coming, hitches up his skirts, races down the road, embraces his pig-shit-covered son. “Get the robe! Get the ring! Let’s have a party!”

THAT is what I call good news!

Paul Bev. 12.08.21

¹ The PR agent has overheard Paul talking to already-believers. Paul was saying, “You have trusted God, believed in Jesus, yet you’re going on sinning. How stupid is that?! Don’t you know that the effect of sinning is to kill your relationship with God; the God who freely gave you eternal life. Duh! What’s not to understand?!”