A Quiz on the Doctrine of the Atonement

The cross of Christ stands at the very center of the Christian faith, for without what Christ accomplished there, we would be utterly lost. “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed” (1 Peter 2:24). This is the great doctrine of the atonement. How well do you know this doctrine? This quiz is designed to help you find out. Read each carefully and circle your answer.

1. I have sinned against the holy God, who by nature hates sin, and so I have offended him.
   True False

2. My sin separates me from God.
   True False

3. Because of my sin I deserve to die.
   True False

4. Because of my sin I deserve the wrath of God.
   True False

5. Though I sin, I don’t have to worry because God’s loving character will cause him to overlook my sin.
   True False

6. God’s wrath is retributive justice. It is his just—and necessary—response to sin.
   True False

7. The word ‘atonement’ means to make amends by blotting out an offense.
   True False

8. No one can have fellowship with God unless their sins are atoned for.
   True False

9. I can atone for my sins by giving my life to God in service to him.
   True False

10. No one can escape the outpouring of God’s wrath unless their sins are atoned for through the death of Christ.
    True False

11. Christ’s death on the cross on behalf of sinners caused the Father to love them.
    True False

12. The primary purpose of Christ’s death was to provide an example of God’s love for sinners so that they, in turn, would be motivated to love him.
    True False

13. To say Christ ‘redeemed’ or ‘ransomed’ sinners means sinners were in bondage, and he paid a price for their freedom.
    True False

14. Christ’s death on the cross was a ransom price paid to Satan to buy back sinners to whom Satan had a rightful claim.
    True False

15. Christ’s death on the cross was a ransom price paid to God.
    True False

16. Christ’s death redeemed sinners from bondage to sin and Satan.
    True False

17. Christ’s death did not pay the actual penalty for sins, but incentivizes obedience by demonstrating the seriousness of sin.
    True False

18. Christ’s death was a propitiatory sacrifice. It appeased the wrath of God.
    True False

19. Christ’s death on the cross reconciles sinners to God.
    True False

20. It would be unjust for the Father to exact the penalty for our sin on his Son.
    True False

21. When he died, Christ voluntarily substituted himself for sinners.
    True False
22. God counted people’s sins to Christ, so that when he died, he was enduring the retributive justice of God due to them for their sins.
True False

23. It was necessary for Christ to be human in order to substitute himself for human sinners and endure the wrath of God on their behalf.
True False

24. It was necessary for Christ to be sinless in order to substitute himself for sinners and endure the wrath of God on their behalf.
True False

25. Because he endured the just penalty for sin and was raised, Christ was victorious over death, hell, and the powers of evil.
True False

26. Christ’s death atoned for the sins of everyone who has ever lived and who will ever live.
True False

27. The purpose of Christ’s death was to atone for everyone’s sin, but those who refuse to believe and be saved frustrate God’s purpose for Christ’s work.
True False

28. The purpose of Christ’s death was to atone for the sins of a small number of people.
True False

29. The saving effect of Christ’s death is limited to those who believe.
True False

30. Christ’s death achieved a totally effective redemption for those for whom it was made.
True False

31. During the time of the Old Testament, the sins of the people of Israel were actually atoned for by the animal sacrifices God instituted for them.
True False

32. Christ’s death on the cross is an expression of the love and justice of God.
True False

33. It was necessary for Christ to die in order for God to save us. There was no other way.
True False

The complete atonement which Jesus Christ has made for our sins, by the sacrifice of Himself, is the life and center of the evangelical system, and that which endears it so much to the hearts of those who believe. Here we see pardon procured, and the sinner saved, while sin is condemned and punished. Here we see the most solemn display of justice and holiness, in conjunction with the freest exercise of mercy. Here we see sinful rebels delivered from deserved punishment, and advanced to a state of dignity and honor; and at the same time, the rights of that divine government against which they had rebelled inviolably preserved and maintained. Through what Jesus Christ has done and suffered for us – we behold the righteous law of God magnified, in justifying those who had violated its precepts, and brought themselves under its curse. In the death of that Lamb of God, we perceive at once – the Almighty’s eternal abhorrence of that which is evil and His infinite love to His offending creatures.

—John Fawcett
Answers & Explanations

1. **I have sinned against the holy God, who by nature hates sin, and so I have offended him.**

2. **My sin separates me from God.**
   True. "Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear" (Isaiah 59:2).

3. **Because of my sin I deserve to die.**

4. **Because of my sin I deserve the wrath of God.**
   True. Wrath is God's just response to sin. Romans 1:18; 12:19-20; Colossians 3:5-6.

5. **Though I sin, I don't have to worry because God's loving character will cause him to overlook my sin.**
   False. God can't tolerate sin, and he can't simply ignore it. Habakkuk 1:13; Romans 3:23-26; Nahum 1:3.

6. **God's wrath is retributive justice. It is his just—and necessary—response to sin.**
   True. It is because God is perfectly just that he can't ignore sin. His justice requires that sin receive what it deserves from him. Romans 1:18; 12:19-20; Colossians 3:5-6.

7. **The word 'atonement' means to make amends by blotting out an offense.**
   True. It is "making amends, blotting out the offense, and giving satisfaction for wrong done; thus reconciling to oneself the alienated other, and restoring the disrupted relationship." —J. I Packer, *Concise Theology*

8. **No one can have fellowship with God unless their sins are atoned for.**
   True. "When iniquities prevail against me, you atone for our transgressions. Blessed is the one you choose and bring near, to dwell in your courts! We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, the holiness of your temple" (Psalm 65:3-4).

9. **I can atone for my sins by giving my life to God in service to him.**
   False. Our sinful offenses against God can't be atoned for by any good works we do, because for one, all of our good works are still tainted by sin. But more importantly, our offenses require nothing less than death. Service to him isn't enough to escape the death we deserve for our sins. Ezekiel 18:4; Romans 6:23.

10. **No one can escape the outpouring of God's wrath unless their sins are atoned for through the death of Christ.**
    True. Christ's death frees us from the death we've earned because of our sin and appeases God's wrath toward us. Romans 5:9-10; 6:23.

11. **Christ's death on the cross on behalf of sinners caused the Father to love them.**
    False. It was from love that the Father sent the Son to die for sinners. He loved sinners and so he sent his son. John 3:16; 1 John 4:10. While it is true that Christ's atonement makes it possible for sinners to be reconciled with God and commune with him, it is clear from Scripture that the Father's love for sinners precedes Christ's death on the cross.

12. **The primary purpose of Christ's death was to provide an example of God's love for sinners so that they, in turn, would be motivated to love him.**
    False. This view of the atonement called the Moral Influence Theory ignores what the Bible teaches about Christ dying to appease God's wrath or dying in place of sinners. God's love does serve as an example for us, but we cannot love God in return based on his example. We can only love God in return because Christ bore the wrath for our sins (1 John 4:10).
13. To say Christ ‘redeemed’ or ‘ransomed’ sinners means sinners were in bondage, and he paid a price for their freedom.
   True. Redemption is “rescue by ransom: the paying of a price that freed us from the jeopardy of guilt, enslavement to sin, and expectation of wrath.” —J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology*

14. Christ’s death on the cross was a ransom price paid to Satan to buy back sinners to whom Satan had a rightful claim.
   False. This very early view of the atonement, the Ransom to Satan Theory, has no support in Scripture. Sinners are not indebted to Satan.

15. Christ’s death on the cross was a ransom price paid to God.
   True. Christ’s death cancelled the legal debt to God that our sins incurred. Colossians 2:14.

16. Christ’s death redeemed sinners from bondage to sin and Satan.
   True. Sinners who are redeemed are transferred from the kingdom of darkness to Christ’s kingdom. Colossians 1:13.

17. Christ’s death did not pay the actual penalty for sins, but incentivizes obedience by demonstrating the seriousness of sin.
   False. This view of the atonement called the Governmental Theory contradicts Scripture and presents Christ’s death as payment of a legal debt and a sin-bearing sacrifice. Isaiah 53:4-6; 11-12; Colossians 2:14; 1 Peter 2:24.

18. Christ’s death was a propitiatory sacrifice. It appeased the wrath of God.

19. Christ’s death on the cross reconciles sinners to God.
   True. The result of propitiation—or the appeasement of God’s wrath—is reconciliation. Romans 5:9-11; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19.

20. It would be unjust for the Father to exact the penalty for our sin on his Son.
   False. As Christ bore our sins and the Father “put him to grief.” He “was pierced for our transgressions.” Isaiah 53:5-6; 10. We know this isn’t unjust for God did it, and he never acts unjustly.

21. When he died, Christ voluntarily substituted himself for sinners.

22. God counted people’s sins to Christ, so that when he died, he was enduring the retributive justice of God due to them for their sins.
   True. “Christ, by His... death, did fully discharge the debts of all those that are thus justified, and did make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to His Father’s justice in their behalf.” —Westminster Confession of Faith, XI.3. Isaiah 53:4-6; Colossians 2:14; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21.

23. It was necessary for Christ to be human in order to substitute himself for human sinners and endure the wrath of God on their behalf.

24. It was necessary for Christ to be sinless in order to substitute himself for sinners and endure the wrath of God on their behalf.
   True. “[O]ne who is himself a sinner cannot satisfy for others.” —Heidelberg Catechism, Question 16. 1 Peter 3:18.
Answers & Explanations

25. Because he endured the just penalty for sin and was raised, Christ was victorious over death, hell, and the powers of evil.
   True. Christ triumphed over the rulers and authorities because he cancelled the record of debt for our sins on the cross. Colossians 2:13-15.

26. Christ’s death atoned for the sins of everyone who has ever lived and who will ever live.
   False. We know that some people’s sins were not atoned for because some are still “storing up wrath,” which they will receive from God on the day of judgment. Romans 2:5.

27. The purpose of Christ’s death was to atone for everyone’s sin, but those who refuse to believe and be saved frustrate God’s purpose for Christ’s work.
   False. The purpose of Christ’s death was to redeem those the Father “chose... before the foundation of the world” to adopt as sons and daughters. Ephesians 1:3-14. Christ came to give himself up for the church. Ephesians 5:25. God gave Christ up for “God’s elect.” Romans 8:31-34.

28. The purpose of Christ’s death was to atone for the sins of a small number of people.
   False. The purpose of Christ’s death was to ransom “people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation... a great multitude that no one [can] number.” Revelation 5:9; 7:9.

29. The saving effect of Christ’s death is limited to those who believe.

30. Christ’s death achieved a totally effective redemption for those for whom it was made.
   True. Those God gave Christ up to save will be saved for certain. Romans 8:31-39; Hebrews 10:14.

31. During the time of the Old Testament, the sins of the people of Israel were actually atoned for by the animal sacrifices God instituted for them.
   False. The sacrifices God instituted for the people of Israel pointed forward to Christ’s sacrifice, which would be an actual and effective atonement for sin, including the sins of Old Testament believers. Hebrews 10:11-14; Romans 3:25.

32. Christ’s death on the cross is an expression of the love and justice of God.
   True. From his love God sent his Son to atone for our sin. He also “put [him] forward as a propitiation... to show God’s righteousness” —or justice.) 1 John 4:10; Romans 3:25-26.

33. It was necessary for Christ to die in order for God to save us. There was no other way.
   True. If God was not going to exact justice on sinners, he had to “put [Christ] forward as a propitiation.” Romans 3:26; Matthew 26:39.

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