



What We Believe

Article 7 of 13: The Redemption of Christ

7. **The Redemption of Christ:** We believe that, moved by love and in obedience to His Father, the eternal Son became human: the Word became flesh, fully God and fully human being, one Person in two natures. The man Jesus, the promised Messiah of Israel, was conceived through the miraculous agency of the Holy Spirit, and was born of the virgin Mary. He perfectly obeyed His heavenly Father, lived a sinless life, performed miraculous signs, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead on the third day, and ascended into heaven. As the mediatorial King, He is seated at the right hand of God the Father, exercising in heaven and on earth all of God's sovereignty, and is our High Priest and righteous Advocate. We believe that by His incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus Christ acted as our representative and substitute. He did this so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God: on the cross He canceled sin, propitiated God, and, by bearing the full penalty of our sins, reconciled to God all those who believe. By His resurrection Christ Jesus was vindicated by his Father, broke the power of death and defeated Satan who once had power over it, and brought everlasting life to all His people; by His ascension he has been forever exalted as Lord and has prepared a place for us to be with Him. We believe that salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved. Because God chose the lowly things of this world, the despised things, the things that are not, to nullify the things that are, no human being can ever boast before him—Christ Jesus has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness, and redemption.

The Redemption of Christ

As we continue on through our theme of Creation, Fall, Redemption, it is the great truth of the redemption accomplished by Christ that we focus on in this article. Redemption in Christ is a broader subject than we might have initially thought. It is related to or built upon several other very important foundational truths. Some of these are the Existence of the Triune God as our Creator, His absolute righteousness and holiness. The fact that Jesus is God the Son from eternity, the creation of Adam and Eve as the first humans, the Fall, the Incarnation, the Virgin Birth, Two Natures of Christ, Jesus' genealogy, His Messiahship, His sinless and obedient life, Jesus as a revelation of God, the prophetic nature of Scripture, and the death and resurrection of Christ.

The Lord Jesus Christ - God the Son from Eternity

Our Lord Jesus Christ is God the Son from all eternity. This is also known as the Eternal Sonship of Christ. He was eternally generated from the Father. By stating this we should not understand that He was created by the Father, but instead that He proceeded from the Father in eternity, begotten, as a distinct Person within the essence of God.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made." John 1:1-3 also see Hebrews 1:1-3

"And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed." John 17:5

The Incarnation

The Incarnation of Jesus Christ is one of the most monumental miracles and events in all of history. The coming of the Christ, the Messiah, was foretold since Genesis ch. 3, when God said that the "Seed" of the woman would prevail against the serpent. Scripture continued to foretell the coming of Messiah, the Savior, in various places, but three passages in Isaiah stand out in revealing that the Messiah would be born of a virgin, that He would be a full union of God and man, that He would reign over His kingdom as ruler and that He would be the Redeemer of His people.

"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." Isaiah 7:14

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

Isaiah 9:6

"But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—everyone—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all."

Isaiah 53:5, 6

The Virgin Birth – Through the Agency of the Holy Spirit

The man Jesus, the promised Messiah of Israel, was conceived through the miraculous agency of the Holy Spirit, and was born of the Virgin Mary. The Virgin Birth is a miracle of God which is absolutely essential to redemption and to the Gospel. In relationship with and fulfillment of Isaiah 9:6, quoted above, the angel Gabriel announced to Mary:



“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. Luke 1:35

Gabriel later announced to Joseph:

“an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” Matthew 1:20, 21

The very name Jesus has redemptive meaning, it means “God is salvation”, and the reason given for the name, is that He would save His people from their sins! Since, the inheritance of the sin nature was passed down through the generations from Adam through natural conception, it necessitated that Jesus as Messiah would not have a human biological father! He is the One Unique Son of God the Father. If Jesus would have had a natural human father, the line of inherited sin would not have been interrupted and would have been disqualified as Messiah. Sandy Wilson has written,

The conception and birth of Jesus Christ is not just unusual or miraculous but rather sui generis (of its own kind; unique). . . Only in the case of Jesus of Nazareth was a human being conceived and born of only one human parent and God . . . some have said that the doctrine of the virgin birth is nice but not necessary, something we should not fight over . . . On the contrary, the great theologian Athanasius taught that the full humanity of Christ was necessary because God could save only what Christ became, so if Christ were not fully human, humans could not be fully saved. Anselm taught that Christ must be fully God in order for his sacrifice to be sufficient for all God’s people; otherwise one man could, at best, be substituted for only one other person.” Christ’s Redemption, TGC

The Hypostatic Union – The Two Natures of Jesus

Another tremendous Scriptural truth about Jesus is that He has two distinct natures, a divine nature and a human nature. This awesome truth has become known as the “Hypostatic Union”, from the Greek *hypostatis*, meaning “substantive reality, essential nature or underlying reality.

“Early church figures such as Athanasius used the term "hypostatic union" to describe the teaching that these two distinct natures (divine and human) co-existed substantively and in reality in the single person of Jesus Christ. The aim was to defend the doctrine that Jesus was simultaneously truly God and truly man.”

[Theopedia, Article on The Hypostatic Union](#)

Jesus - Fully God and Fully Human

Biblical support for this awesome truth is found in passages like John 1:1; 14 and Luke 2:52.

John ch. 1 teaches us that Jesus is Eternal God, and that in history He took humanity upon Himself.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” John 1:1, 14

Luke ch. 2 shows that Jesus in His human nature grew in wisdom, whereas in His divine nature He was All-wise. **“And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.” Luke 2:52**

As we come to grips with this challenging concept of the two natures of Christ, we must be careful accurately portray its truth. Jesus is fully God and fully human, one Person with two natures, a divine nature and a human nature. In His divine nature, He is equal with the Father and His human nature is real. By this we are not saying that Jesus is part God and part man. He is not 50% God and 50% man, or 3/4 God and 1/4 man, etc. He is fully God and fully man. He differed with the rest of humanity in one essential thing, He lived His earthly life without any sin whatsoever. We developed the Biblical doctrine of the Trinity in our second article, “The Triune God - Part 2. We refer you to that article for more details, but in summary, to bring this all together as clearly as possible, as Christian Trinitarian Monotheists we believe the Bible teaches that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit co-equally and fully share the one being, or essence of God. To state this truth positively:

The Father is YHWH God, the Son is YHWH God and the Holy Spirit is YHWH God.

Jesus, in His Eternal Deity reigned as YHWH sharing the Father's glory along with Him. He shares all the glorious attributes of the divine nature, omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, etc. It was in Jesus, as God the Son through whom all things were created, and so He, as Eternal God is also Creator of the heavens and the earth, humanity and all living things, John 1:3. As man, Jesus is fully human and is the long promised Messiah, Savior and Lord.

“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” Luke 2:11

We will write more about Jesus as Messiah later in this article below, but as we focus on His human nature we see His mission summarized by the Apostle Paul:

**“ . . . being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!”
Philippians 2:6-8**

Jesus in His humanity, “made Himself nothing”. As the innocent babe in the manger, He was a true infant, not fully aware of what was going on around Him, doing what babies do, wanting His mother, needing care and attention. Scripture tells us He grew in physical strength and in knowledge as time passed, honoring His earthly parents, amazing the scribes of the Jewish faith at age 12, Luke 2:41. Scripture also tells us that Jesus performed His miracles by the authority and enabling of the Father, John 10:37-39, and by the power of the Spirit, Matt. 12:28. Since His resurrection and now exalted in heaven at the Father's right hand, Jesus remains fully God and fully human forever.

The Unfolding of Redemption in the O.T.

The historical drama of redemption began early on in the history of our human race. Harmony between God and our first parents, as free-will agents, soon plunged into disobedience and rebellion as know all too well. But God in His proactive condescending mercy initiated His plan of redemption. Starting with promises, types and foreshadows, as time and the generations passed, these foreshadows of the O.T. became fulfillment in the N.T. Atonement involved the shedding of blood, the death of a sacrificial substitute.

Genesis 3 - Proto Evangelum - In previous articles we have mentioned the “Proto Evangelum”, God's promise in Genesis 3:15 that the Seed of the woman, Christ, would conquer the serpent the devil.

Sacrifice – After the fall, animal sacrifice was practiced among the pre-Hebrew patriarchs. Not much detail is known about the earliest of these, but we see that sin was costly and covering it required the shed blood of a substitute. The historical accounts begin in Gen. 4. Abel brought an offering of the first-



born his flock to the LORD. Cain's offering of produce was not regarded by the LORD. Noah offered sacrifice in Genesis 8. Abraham in Genesis 15 and 22, Isaac in Genesis 26, and Jacob in Genesis 31.

Exodus – The Old Covenant

Animal sacrifice continued under the Mosaic Old Covenant, but with much more strict parameters. With the exception of the Passover lamb, they had to be offered in the temple by someone who was a member of the Aaronic Priesthood. There were various offerings made to God, but the sin offerings stood out as bloody sacrifices serving as coverings for sin.

Day of Atonement

The Day of Atonement, “Yom Kippur,” was the yearly day of national repentance of God's Old Covenant people, Israel. It was ordained particularly in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, and was a solemn Sabbath day of repentance and fasting. The high priest offered sacrifice for himself and for the nation. This solemn day was a foreshadow of the ultimate atoning sacrifice of Christ on Calvary.

Kinsman Redeemer – Go el

The Kinsman Redeemer, the Hebrew, *go el*, was a male relative who had the responsibility to act for a relative who was in trouble, or need of vindication, Gen. 48:16, Exod. 6:6, Lev. 27:9-25, Lev 25:47-55, Num. 35:9-34, and Ruth deal with this. Ultimately, God is Israel's Kinsman Redeemer, Ex. 4:22-23, 6:2-8, 20:2; Deut. 32:6; Lev. 25:23. Christ is our Kinsman Redeemer being identified with us in His Incarnation, redeeming us His kin by His life, death and resurrection, Heb. 2:11,16-18;4:14-16.

Promise of the New Covenant

We have touched upon the subject of God's use of covenants in Scripture and have mentioned the

New Covenant in previous articles. The primary O.T. text for the promise of this New Covenant is Jeremiah 31 along with other texts such as Ezekiel 11:17-21; 36:25-27; Jeremiah 32:38-44. Here is the main promise from Jeremiah 31:31-34

"I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah . . . I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his Neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me . . . For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

The importance of the New Covenant is that it is a fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant and it replaces the Mosaic Old Covenant as a better covenant with better promises. More on this later.

Foreshadows Pointing to Christ as the Perfect Atoning Sacrifice

As we shall see, all these examples have served as foreshadows and types pointing to one perfect atoning sacrifice, the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. Baker's Theological Dictionary comments:

"The Old Testament sacrifices are shown to be but shadows of the real sacrifice of Christ on the cross by the fact of Aaron's sinfulness; an imperfect high priest cannot offer a true sacrifice, just as the blood of bulls and goats could never truly pay for the offense of human sin or substitute for the shedding of human blood."

[Theopedia, Atonement](#)

Redemption in the NT

It is in the establishment of the New Covenant and within the writings of the New Testament that the accomplishing of redemption comes to its fulfillment and clearest presentation. Jesus as Messiah, fulfills everything required to secure the redemption of God's people through His life, death and resurrection. And again in the N.T. the shedding of blood is required for atonement of sin.

Baker's Dictionary explains:

"The N.T. presents the person and work of Christ as God's ultimate provision for atonement. The English word atonement is used to describe the New Testament concept of Christ presented as our reconciliation, 2 Cor. 5:18, as a propitiation 1 Jn 4:10, in giving his life as a ransom for many" Matt. 20:28, having poured out his blood for the forgiveness of sins, Matt. 26:28.

[Theopedia - Atonement](#)

Jesus as Messiah, Savior and Redeemer

We briefly touched on Jesus' Messiahship above as we addressed the Incarnation, and indeed of the world is very well documented on the pages of Scripture. The very title "Christ" comes from the Greek, *christos*, which in turn translates the Hebrew word, *mesiah*, which means "anointed one". Jesus, by virtue of being called Christ is being called Messiah. In Hebrew, the name "Jesus" and the title "Christ" is *Yeshua ha Meshiach*. Scripture seems to portray two aspects to the office of Messiah, one is the "Suffering" Messiah, 1 Pet. 3:18, and the other is the "Conquering" Messiah, 2 Thess. 1:7, 8. It is widely held that the Jewish nation was expecting the conqueror. But God's plan was the suffering Messiah first, then the conquering Messiah at the Second Coming.

ישוע המשיח

Yeshua ha Mashiach

Jesus the Christ

Messianic Prophecies and Fulfillments

There are multitudes of messianic prophecies in the O.T. which the N.T. records Jesus fulfilling as Messiah. We cannot take the space in this article to list them systematically, however Daniel 9:24-27 is an amazing prophetic passage in that it limits the coming of the Messiah to no later than the early first century. Here is a chart that lists many of these prophecies. [Messianic Prophecy Chart](#)

The O.T. calls God Savior various times and the N.T. identifies Jesus as the Savior of the world:

"And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.

John 4:14

Our Lord is referred to as redeemer in the following passages:

"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace"

Eph. 1:7

"...waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works."

Titus 2:13-14

See also, Luke 1:68, Romans 3:23, 1 Cor. 1:30; Gal. 3:13, 4:4, 5; Col. 1:14; Heb. 9:12

The great theologian of a generation ago, B.B. Warfield wrote:

"There is no one of the titles of Christ which is more precious to Christian hearts than Redeemer. There are others, it is true, which are more often on the lips of Christians. . . Redeemer, however, is a title of more intimate revelation than either Lord or Savior . . . Whenever we pronounce it, the cross is placarded before our eyes and our hearts are filled with loving remembrance not only that Christ has

given us salvation, but that He paid a mighty price for it.” Warfield, ["Redeemer" and "Redemption"](#)

Obedient to the Law of God – The Active Obedience of Christ

One of the requirements of being Messiah, was that Jesus was to obey God’s Law to its fullest. No mere man was ever able to do this. Jesus, the God-Man, fully and perfectly obeyed the Law of God in thought, word and deed. This is called the “Active Obedience” of Christ. Grudem comments:

“If Christ had only earned forgiveness of sins for us, then we would not merit heaven. Our guilt would have been removed, but we would simply be in the position of Adam and Eve before they had done anything good or bad.... For this reason, Christ had to live a life of perfect obedience to God in order to earn righteousness for us. Sometimes this is called Christ's ‘active obedience’... It is not just moral neutrality that Paul knows he needs from Christ ... but a positive moral righteousness. . . And he quite explicitly says, for as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous, Romans 5:19. Grudem, *Systematic Theology* p. 570 -71

Jesus is our example of God’s obedient servant. He is our example of God’s command to be holy as God is holy and be perfect as He is perfect! But even more than that, by His obedience to the Father’s will in all things, He has merited righteousness, not just moral neutrality, but moral righteousness for us His people. This He accomplished in His active obedience.

Death on the Cross – The Passive Obedience of Christ to the Point of Death

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures”
1 Corinthians 15:3,4

The most heinous crime of humanity against God was to crucify His only begotten Son on the cross at Calvary. That being said, this greatest of all crimes was foreordained by God to bring about the redemption of guilty sinners into God’s kingdom!

“Men of Israel . . . this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.”
Acts 2:22, 23

Christ’s willing submission to death on the cross has come to be known as His “Passive Obedience”. During all the years of His earthly life, He whole-heartedly and actively obeyed His Father’s will, then in His death, He willingly and passively submitted to the suffering and death on the cross. Grudem writes that there are four different aspects of the pain Jesus endured:

1. Physical pain and death 2. Pain of bearing sin 3. Abandonment 4. Bearing the wrath of God p. 575

The physical pain of the cross was obviously daunting, but as terrible as it was, it was common for people to be crucified by the Romans. Christ’s bearing our sin was greater suffering than the physical because the innocent Lamb of God had all our sin laid on Him. Also, the abandonment that our Lord experienced from the Father was worse than physical pain. Being made to be sin for us, the Father in His perfect holiness turned away, forsaking Him. He cried out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Matt. 24:46. Lastly, even more difficult than the first three aspects of Jesus’ suffering was the bearing of the full measure of the wrath of God against sin. Our Lord bore the guilt of our sin. He bore God’s intense hatred of sin, He endured God’s full vengeance.

Redemption Accomplished – The Aspects of Redemption

The Biblical concept of redemption comes from various words found in the O.T. and N.T. with various shades of meaning. In general, redemption can involve the release of people, animals, or property from bondage. In particular we are focusing on the redemption of sinners from bondage to sin.

“The language of redemption involves the Hebrew roots *pada*, to redeem, ransom, and *ga al*, to redeem, or serve as Redeemer, and the Greek *lytroo*, to redeem or ransom, and *agorazo*, to buy...”
New Dictionary of Biblical Theology, p. 716



Our English words redemption, ransom, rescue, deliverance, liberation, payment are closely related to the original words for redemption in the Bible. It is important that we realize that there are various aspects to redemption.

Atonement

One of the fundamental aspects of redemption in the Bible is atonement. Genesis to Revelation reveals God’s proactive work in reconciling a people to Himself. The Hebrew word is *kaphar*, basically meaning to cover. The Greek word is *katallage*, and can mean an exchange of equivalent values, adjustment of a difference, restoration to favor. Atonement was at the heart of God’s plan.

“Atonement may be defined as God's work on sinner's behalf to reconcile them to himself. It is the divine activity that confronts and resolves the problem of human sin so that people may enjoy full fellowship with God both now and in the age to come . . . For in the final analysis Scripture presents his (Christ's) sacrificial death as the central component of God's reconciling mercy.”

New Dictionary of Biblical Theology, P. 388, 389

Atonement then may be summed up generally as all of God's acts in reconciling sinners to Himself, but more particularly that ultimate act of atoning sacrifice in the crucifixion of Christ.

The Necessity of Atonement

We know as humans we are sinners. We covered the doctrine of Original Sin in the article, “The Fall”. Adam represented humanity and humanity sinned in him. The Apostle Paul wrote:

“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned. Romans 5:12

“For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, as it is written: None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.” Romans 3:9-12

We know we need God's forgiveness, but just what in the nature of God necessitates blood atonement? We could summarize this by saying that it is both the love and justice of God that necessitates atonement for sin. Grudem writes:

“what was the ultimate cause that led to Christ coming to earth and dying for our sins? . . . Scripture points to two things: the love and justice of God. The love of God as a cause of the atonement is seen in the most familiar passage in the Bible, John 3:16. But the justice of God also requires that God find a way that the penalty due to us for our sins would be paid (for he could not accept us into fellowship with himself unless the penalty was paid). . . Therefore both the love and the justice of God were the ultimate cause of the atonement. Grudem, Systematic Theology, P. 568

Views of the Atonement

Over the span of church history, various views or “theories” of the meaning of the atonement have been devised, proclaimed and debated. We do not have the space to deal with each theory here, however they are listed at the end of the article in an appendix.

Penal Substitutionary Atonement

The phrase penal substitution is very descriptive of what we might say is the most biblically consistent view of the atonement. The word “penal”, from penalty, refers to the fact that guilt for sin was realized and a penalty had been placed upon the guilty. “Substitutionary” speaks of the fact that the atonement was accomplished by a substitute, a representative. This is also known as a “Vicarious” atonement. A vicar is a substitute. In this view, Adam is seen as the representative head of fallen humanity and the source of original sin, and Christ and the “Last Adam” is seen as the representative head of redeemed humanity and the source of their salvation. Isaiah 53 beautifully summarizes this penal substitutionary sacrifice as we are told that Messiah would bear our penalty for sin as our substitute.

“Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Isaiah 53:4-6

The Apostle Paul developed this substitutionary theme when he wrote:

“For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.” Romans 5:17

“Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.” 1 Corinthians 15:3

“For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.” 2 Cor. 5:14, 15

By these tremendous passages, we see the clear substitutionary and penalty bearing nature of Jesus' atoning death. R.C. Sproul has written:

“A key phrase in the Bible regarding the Atonement is the phrase, ‘in behalf of’. Jesus did not die for Himself, but for us. His suffering was vicarious; He was our substitute. He took our place in fulfilling the role of the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”

R.C. Sproul, Essential Truths of the Christian Faith, p 174

Propitiation

Now that we see the penal and substitutionary nature of Christ's death, let's go deeper into the various facets of the atonement. Within the atonement we have the very important aspect of propitiation. 1 John 2 emphasizes Jesus as the propitiation for our sins:

"we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world." 1 John 2:1, 2

Propitiation in the N.T. is the Greek word, *hilasterion*, and basically means to appease or satisfy anger or wrath due to an offense. So, the concept of propitiation has to do with making satisfaction for the offense of sin. In His atoning sacrifice, Jesus satisfied the wrath of God against us for our sin.

"But the justice of God also requires that God find a way that the penalty due our sins would be paid . . . Paul explains that this was why God sent Christ to be a propitiation, Rom. 3:25 (that is, a sacrifice that bears God's wrath that God becomes propitious or favorably disposed toward us.)"

Grudem, Systematic Theology Page 568

Expiation - Cancelled Sin

Another important facet of the atonement that complements propitiation is that of expiation. Expiation basically means the removal, cancellation or dismissal of the guilt of sin.

"Expiation literally means to make pious and implies either the removal or cleansing of sin. The idea of propitiation includes that of expiation as its means; but the word expiation has no reference to quenching God's righteous anger. The difference is that the object of expiation is sin, not God. Christ's death was therefore both an expiation and a propitiation. By expiating (removing the problem of) sin God was made propitious (favorable) to us." [Theopedia, Propitiation vs. Expiation](#)

Born sinners, separated from God, humans are children of wrath, at enmity with God and continue as rebels against Him. On top of the guilt of original sin, all humans then add to their sin debt the guilt of their own personal sin, transgression and iniquity. In the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, He effectively dealt with this sin debt so that it is cancelled and all legal demands are satisfied.

The Apostle Paul wrote:

"And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross." Colossians 2:13, 14

In Christ our sin debt is cancelled, the legal demands against us in the court of heaven are settled.

Christ Bore Our Sin - He Became Sin for His People

Jesus is our sin-bearer, God made Him to be sin for us. The Apostle Peter and Paul wrote:

"He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed." 1 Peter 2:24

"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." 2 Cor. 5:21

Christ's Death a Purchase Price or Ransom

Slavery as repulsive as it is has been a very common thing in the history of mankind. Slavery likely existed in all of the ancient cultures and still occurs in parts of our modern world. The Israelites lived in bondage for generations and the Exodus, their deliverance as a nation is a type of eternal deliverance. When we think of bondage to sin, we see slavery too in a spiritual sense. One of the aspects of Christ's death was deliverance of His people from the slavery market of sin. His death was a purchase price! The Apostle Peter so beautifully wrote:

"knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot." 1 Peter 1:18, 19

The Apostle Paul exhorted the Corinthians:

"For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body." 1 Cor. 6:20

"You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men." 1 Cor. 7:22

The N.T. word for bought or purchase is *agorazo*. This means to acquire a possession by the means of paying a price. Tom Wells had written:

"The word, in Greek, is *agorazo*. According to the standard N.T. Greek lexicon, Arndt and Gingrich its meanings are buy and purchase. Both of these words in English mean, of course, to acquire ownership by paying a price. . . a man might indeed purchase a slave without releasing the slave from bondage. He might purchase a slave for specific purpose of keeping a slave in bondage to himself, the purchaser. But what remains true in such transaction was this: the slave was always released from his previous master by such a purchase. There are times when the N.T.

represents Christians as being precisely in that situation. We were bought out of slavery to sin and Satan, but we are now the slaves of Christ. *Agorazo*, means to buy or to purchase not simply to put down a price." Wells, *A Price for a People*, page 134, 135

The use of the word purchase in relation to redemption demonstrates more than a ransom price offered, but a purchase made and a sinner released from slavery to sin.

Reconciliation

Another rich component of the atonement is the blessing of reconciliation. It's clear that the Bible teaches that mankind in its fallen state is at enmity with God, they are rebels, slaves to sin, and held under the sway of the devil. Romans 8:7 says that the sinful mind is hostile to God. There exists a state of enmity between God and fallen humanity. Although God does love humanity in a very general sense, the Scripture is clear that the lost are under the wrath of God. So then, since God and man are enemies, a way had to be found to bring a state of peace between them. God in his redemptive love has proactively made a way for peace by reconciling a people through the work of Christ. Wells wrote:



"The Lord's sacrificial death removes the enmity between God and man, and replaces it with friendship. Christians are not mere slaves to God. We are the friends of God. . . In fact, we are now members of God's family. An earthly judge may pronounce a prisoner innocent and then never again see that prisoner. But God does much more. He makes those who were slaves to sin into his own sons and daughters!"
Tom Wells, *A Price for a People* page 34

"For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him to the death of his son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!"
Romans 5:10

"God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them."

2 Corinthians 5:19

In the redemption accomplished by Christ, as our sacrificial substitute, He has not only satisfied the wrath of God against us, born our guilt, paid our sin debt, purchased us from slavery to sin, He has won reconciliation with God for us also. Reconciliation leads us to become members of God's family and that in turn, makes us heirs. What a great blessing!

Inauguration of the New Covenant – Christ's Blood the Blood of the New Covenant

We mentioned the promise of the New Covenant above under O.T. Redemption, now we look at it's initiation. Jesus repeatedly told His followers that He would go to the cross and give His life as a ransom for many. Matt. 20:18,19, 28; 26:2. At the Last Supper, He held up the cup and proclaimed it, "the cup of the New Covenant in My blood", Luke 22:20. Jesus inaugurated the New Covenant at the Last Supper, itself a Passover celebration, and then went out the next day and confirmed it in His own precious blood on the cross of Calvary. At long last, God honored His promise of a new covenant with His people, an eternal covenant. 1 Corinthians 5:7 says:

"Christ our Passover lamb had been sacrificed, He shed His blood an atonement for our sins."

The main O.T. promise text for the New Covenant are Jeremiah 31:31ff along with Ezekiel 11:17-21; 36:25-27; Jeremiah 32:38-44. N.T. texts that deal with it are Luke 22:20; John 17:3; 1 Cor. 11:25; 2 Cor. 3:1-18 Hebrews 8, 9. In these passages, we see many great promises fulfilled for us in Christ:

- | | |
|--|--|
| * God's law written on our hearts | * Sprinkled with clean water |
| * YHWH as our God and we as His people | * Cleansed from all our unrighteousness |
| * All His people will know Him | * The indwelling of the Spirit |
| * Our sins forgiven and remembered no more | * It is an everlasting covenant |
| * One heart and a new spirit | * God will not cease to do us good |
| * Replace the heart of stone with a heart of flesh | * God will put the fear of Him in us that we would never depart from Him |

These are just some of the various rich and wonderful blessings of the New Covenant in Christ. The New Covenant supersedes the Old Covenant as it is a better covenant with better promises!

Christ's Atoning Death was the Only Way

Could God have chosen to save sinful humanity apart from the death of His Son? First, we should make it clear that God was not obligated to save anyone at all. He could have very well opted not to spare anyone at all and still be holy, just and self-sufficient. Grudem explains:

". . . once God, in his love, decided to save some human beings, then several passages in Scripture indicate that there was no other way for God to do this but through the death of his son. . . Hebrews emphasizes that Christ had to suffer for our sins: he had to be made like his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful High Priest in the service of God, to make expiation, literally propitiation, for the sins of the people (Hebrews 2: 17). Only the blood of Jesus

that is, his death, would be able really to take away sins (Hebrews 9:25 - 26). There was no other way for God to save us that for Christ to die in our place.” Grudem, *Theology* p. 569

It was God’s redemptive love for humanity that caused Him to seek and save the lost, and it was His holiness and justice that required Christ’s sacrifice be made to address His just wrath against sinners. Only the precious blood of Christ could accomplish this, 1 Peter 1:19.

God’s Purpose in Redemption – A Price for a People

Thus far we have seen that the Lord Jesus Christ acted as our representative and substitute on the cross, where He satisfied the wrath of God, bore the full penalty of the guilt of sin, redeemed and reconciled a people for God. But, who are these people and how can we know them? When Christ went to the cross was it merely to make salvation possible? Was it merely to make sinners savable? Or was it God’s intention to actually secure the redemption of a people for His name and a Bride for His Son? Whom did Christ actually, propitiate, purchase, reconcile and save on the cross?

Christ’s Death All-Sufficient

Some passages of Scripture seem to teach that Christ represented all humanity at the cross and some passages seem to teach that He represented only His people. One thing we can all agree upon is that our Lord’s atoning death was totally sufficient to save every sinner that has ever lived. But we see that most humans are lost and will endure condemnation and eternal death in rebellious unbelief. If God had truly desired that the death of Christ actually atone for, propitiate, expiate, ransom and reconcile every last sinner, He could have readily designed it to do so. However, as we compare Scripture with Scripture and piece together God’s plan of redemption as He has revealed it, we find as we have mentioned in previous articles, that our Triune God from eternity marked out a particular people to be heirs of His great salvation, Eph. 1:4, 5. This people who He has identified based solely on God’s own perfect, righteous, loving decision He has given to His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, John 6:36-40. “God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”, Rom. 5:8. John Murray has written:

“It was of the free and sovereign good pleasure of His will, a good pleasure that emanated from the depths of His own goodness, that He chose a people to be heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.”

John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, p. 10

God appointed this people unto salvation to be His children and a holy bride for His Son. These are the people who are the intended subjects of Christ’s redemptive work and the recipients of its benefits by grace through faith. Since as we have seen the Bible teaches a penal, substitutionary atonement, a real penalty was paid and real persons were objectively represented and substituted for. Christ’s redemption was not provisional, it was objective and effectual. So in the universal offer of the Gospel, redemption in Christ, we don’t offer the lost a Savior who merely makes salvation a possibility, we present them a Savior who actually saves. Christ’s redeeming work is appropriated to the repentant sinner by faith, but the efficacy of His work is not contingent upon the sinner’s faith. God grants repentance and faith to those He has given to His Son to save, Eph. 2:8,9; 2 Tim. 2:25. Although the precious blood of Christ is intrinsically valuable enough to redeem every sinner, ultimately the benefits of His death only avail for those who by God’s unearned favor trust in Christ.

* Christ propitiated, satisfied the wrath of God for the offenses of the individuals whom He represented in such a way that God now favors those people. 1 John 2:2

* He expiated, that is, He bore or removed the sin guilt from the people He represented. 1 John 3:5

* He purchased and redeemed, or acquired possession of those He represented.

Once slaves of sin, now His willing bond slaves. Mark 10:45; Colossians 1:13

* He reconciled the people He represented to God. 2 Corinthians 5:19-19

* He secured the eternal salvation of those whom He represented. Hebrews 9:15



J.I. Packer has commented:

“Calvary, in other words, not merely made possible the salvation of those for whom Christ died; it ensured that they would be brought to faith and their salvation be made actual. The Cross saves.”

[Theopedia, Redemption](#)

It is Finished – Tetelestai - Paid in Full

On the cross when He had suffered, Jesus cried out, “It is finished!” John 19:30. The original word used in this verse is *tetelestai*, meaning finished, complete, paid, fulfilled, paid in full.

“The word *tetelestai* was also written on business documents or receipts in New Testament times to show indicating that a bill had been paid in full. The Greek-English lexicon by Moulton and Milligan says this: Receipts are often introduced by the phrase *tetelestai*, usually written in an abbreviated

manner... (p. 630). The connection between receipts and what Christ accomplished would have been quite clear to John's Greek-speaking readership; it would be unmistakable that Jesus Christ had died to pay for their sins." Tetelestai - Bible.org



In the first century, Greek was the universal language. The word *tetelestai* was used to declare that an account had been paid in full. What accounts did Jesus pay in full? What or who did He purchase by this payment?

Tom Wells has written:

“Christ’s death is something far more glorious than the payment of a price that may leave millions still in bondage to sin . . . Christ’s death is emancipation. That shows beyond doubt that his atonement was only for those who actually come to experience liberty.” A Price for a People, p. 134

Jesus’ sacrificial death, advocacy and mediatorship are for those who the Father had given to Him. In His High Priestly Prayer, Jesus says to the Father:

“I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. John 17:9

Charles Spurgeon, himself a renowned Gospel preacher and soul winner said:

“Some insist that Christ died for everybody. Why, then, are not all saved? Because all men will not believe? That is to say that believing is necessary in order to make the blood of Christ efficacious for redemption . . . We hold that Christ only redeems those who will ultimately attain unto eternal life. We do not believe that he redeemed the damned we do not believe that he poured out his life blood for souls already in hell. We never can imagine that Christ suffered in the stead of all men, and that afterwards these same men have to suffer for themselves, that in fact Christ pays their debts, and then God makes them pay their debts over again. . . We rather hold that he laid down his life for his sheep, and that this secured the salvation of every one of them” Spurgeon at his Best, p. 18

Other Benefits of the Redemption of Christ

One secondary benefit of the redemption of Christ is that creation will be freed from corruption:

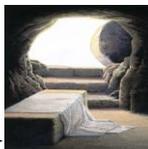
“For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.” Romans 8:20-22

Jesus Christ Risen from the Dead – Vindicated by the Father

Christ’s physical resurrection from the dead is another absolutely essential truth of the Gospel and the Christian faith. In the Apostle Paul’s statement of the Gospel in 1 Corinthians 15, he writes:

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures”
1 Corinthians 15:3,4

The Apostle writes that in accordance with dead. What a wondrous event indeed ! come alive to die again, like Lazarus. body, forever transformed. In the resurrect-



the Scriptures, Christ was raised from the He was not merely revived and did not just Jesus was raised with a special resurrection tion, Jesus was vindicated by the Father.

The Father received Christ’s life and sacrificial death as fulfillment of His plan of redemption. One day believers will also receive a marvelous resurrection body like His, fit for eternity. Oh glorious day! The lost, sadly, will be resurrected unto eternal damnation.

The Resurrection was Prophesied Beforehand

The resurrection of Christ was foretold beginning in the OT.

“For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption.” Psalm 16:10

“God will redeem my life from the grave.”

Psalm 49:15

Jesus predicted his own resurrection.

“For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” Matthew 12:40

“and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead” Luke 24:46 Also see: Matt. 12:40, 16:29, 17:22; Mark 9:9, 10:34, 14:28; John 2:19

How Was Christ Raised from the Dead?

Jesus was raised by the Father and He raised Himself. Scripture tells us that Jesus was raised by the power of God, Eph, 1:19-21, by the glory of the Father, Rom. 6:4, and by Jesus’ own authority, John 10:17,18. Grudem writes:

“Both the Father and the Son participated in the resurrection. Some texts affirm that God the Father

specifically raised Christ from the dead, Acts 2:24; Rom. 6:4; 1 Cor. 6:14; Gal. 1:1; Ephesians 1:20, but other texts speak of Jesus as participating in his own resurrection. Jesus says: the reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life – only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again, John 10:17 – 18. Indeed, Jesus says, "I am the resurrection and the life", John 11:25; Heb. 7:16." Grudem, Systematic Theology, p. 613

Nature of Christ's Resurrection Body

The Apostle Paul goes into quite a bit of detail about the resurrection body in 1 Cor. 15:35-49. It is a spiritual body, not to be confused with mere spirit, a heavenly body, an imperishable body. We can also glean truths about Christ's resurrection body from the historical accounts in the Gospels. It is clear that Jesus could appear and disappear, remain unrecognized and then be recognized at will, Luke 24:31. He could appear through solid walls. The wounds from the cross remain in His hands, side and feet, Luke 24: 36-40. Theologian Louis Berkhof wrote:

"The resurrection of Christ did not consist in the mere fact that he came to life again, and that body and soul were reunited if this were all that is involved, he would not be called "the first – fruits of them that slept," 1 Cor. 15:20, nor "the firstborn of the dead," Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5, since others were restored to life before him. It consisted rather in this that in him human nature, both body and soul, was restored to its pristine strength and perfection and even raised to a higher level, while body and soul were reunited in a living organism. From the Gospel story we learn that the body of Jesus had undergone a remarkable change, so that he was not easily recognized and could suddenly appear and disappear in a surprising manner, . . . John 20:13, 19; 21:7; but that it was nevertheless a material and very real body, Luke 24:39." Louis Berkhof, Sys. Theology, p. 346

Jesus' resurrection body was awesome! Our resurrection bodies will be like His! The Apostle John encouraged the first century believers by writing that our resurrection bodies will be like His, because we will be like Him. 1 John 3:2

Death Defeated, Satan Defeated, Everlasting Life Brought to His People

Through our Lord's death and resurrection, He is proven the victor over sin, death and Satan and has brought eternal life to His people.

*Christ the victor over Sin - Rom 6:9, 10

*Christ the victor over Death - 1 Cor. 15:57, Rev. 1: 17, 18

*Christ the victor over Satan - Heb. 2:14, 1 John 3:8

No Resurrection, No Christianity!

We cannot mix words here, we cannot minimize nor allegorize. This literal, historical event is absolutely essential to Christianity. Without the resurrection of Christ, there is no Christianity!

"And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. . . . But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead . . . For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead." 1 Corinthians 15:16-22

If Christ is not risen, we are still in our sins and are to be most pitied. **But Christ is risen!** He did conquer death! He was vindicated by the Father and risen for our justification, Romans 4:25.

Significance of the Resurrection for Us

Christ's Resurrection Insures our Regeneration.

"We have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead"
1 Peter 1:3

Christ's Resurrection Insures our Justification.

"Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification." Rom. 4:25

Christ's Resurrection Insures our Resurrection.

"And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power" 1 Corinthians 6:14. Also 2 Cor. 4:14

What encouragement and hope it is for us as believers as we persevere in the faith, knowing that our Lord Jesus Christ has secured eternal life for us, and that by His resurrection He has as insured our regeneration, our right standing with God and our own resurrection.

The Ascension

Jesus' ascension into heaven was His physical parting from His followers, Acts 1:8-11, but not the end of His presence. He told the apostles beforehand that He would have to depart so that the Holy Spirit could come in His abiding indwelling presence within Jesus' people, John 14:15-17, as our Lord took up His ministry as our mediator in heaven seated at the right hand of the Father while His enemies are being subjugated and made a footstool for His feet.

“But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. Hebrews 10:12

In the Great Commission, our Lord promised to be with us until the end of the age, Matt. 28:18-20.

Prophet, Priest, and King

It seems that in our times not much emphasis is put on Jesus’ three-fold ministry of prophet, priest and king. However, throughout His earthly ministry our Lord Jesus served in them and continuing on in His exalted state, ministers in these three important offices or roles. As prophet, He is the ultimate revelation of God and the chief revelator of the Triune God. As priest, He is the Great High Priest, our savior/redeemer, our mediator and advocate. As King, He is our Sovereign Lord, ruling over His current kingdom, made up of us His people, awaiting the day when His full reign will be realized in every realm, whether spiritual or physical.



Christ is our Mediator and Advocate

We can take great comfort that it is Jesus, in His role as our Great High Priest that is at the Father’s right hand mediating and advocating for us. Scripture tells us there is “one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus”, 1 Tim. 2:5. The word for mediator is *mesites*, meaning one who intervenes between two parties, in order to make or restore peace and friendship. Jesus is our faithful mediator before the Father. We are also told that Jesus is our Advocate with the Father, 1 John 2. The word for advocate is *parakletos* and speaks of someone called to one's side, one who pleads another's cause before a judge. In the case of Christ in His place at God's right hand, He faithfully and effectively pleads our case for continued forgiveness in Him with the Father. With Jesus as our mediator and advocate with the Father, we don't just have someone who can give good arguments, but one who went to death for us, one who shed His precious blood for us and one who rose from the dead for our justification, our right standing with God, and who pleads our case to the Father on the basis of that precious shed blood. These promises inherent to the Gospel are as much life and hope to believers as when we first believed. How fitting are Paul's words:

“Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies, Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died more than that, who was raised who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.” Romans 8:33, 34

Christ Has Prepared a Place for His People

One of the precious promises our Lord left us is that of preparing a place for us.

In John 14, Jesus promised:

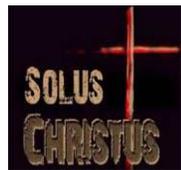
“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?”

John 14:1-3



The Lord Jesus has a special heavenly dwelling for each one of His people. Far from worry, we can rejoice in the hope of our eternal dwelling with Christ in His Father’s house, and indeed where ever our Lord is, we will be with Him, John 17:24. Our Lord is a faithful savior and has done what He has promised.

Salvation is in Christ Alone! – No Other Name under Heaven



One of the most controversial claims of our faith is the fact that there is salvation in Christ alone. The world hates this, other religions despise it. This claim however is part and parcel of the Christian faith and to the Gospel. We cannot give ground on this either. Jesus said:

“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. John 14:6

The Apostle Peter boldly stated:

“And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” Acts 4:12

“Solus Christus”, Christ Alone! This is central to the Gospel!

God Chose the Lowly to Nullify Human Boasting

Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection, indeed the Gospel is a stumbling block to the world. God in His abundant wisdom rather prefers to use the lowly, humble, ridiculed things to confound the wise, highly esteemed people and things of this worldly system to humble the proud.

“but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.” 1 Corinthians 1:23-29

Christ is the Wisdom of God for Us, Our Righteousness, Holiness, and Redemption

As we bring this article to a close, we do so with a deep desire to exalt our Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed He is our redemption, righteousness, holiness and wisdom! The Apostle Paul, writing to the young Colossian church, told them that all the treasure of wisdom and knowledge are to be found in Christ, so that they would not seek the “plausible arguments” of mere human philosophies:

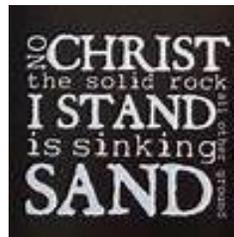
“to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” Colossians 2:1-3

“And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, . . . as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

1 Corinthians 1:30, 31

Christ is our Solid Rock

My hope is built on nothing less
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
When darkness veils His lovely face,
In every high and stormy gale,
His oath, His covenant, His blood
When all around my soul gives way,
When He shall come with trumpet
Dressed in His righteousness alone,



than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
but wholly lean on Jesus' name.
I rest on His unchanging grace;
my anchor holds within the veil.
support me in the whelming flood;
he then is all my hope and stay.
sound, Oh, may I then in Him be found;
faultless to stand before the throne.

On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand; all other ground is sinking sand. Amen.

The Solid Rock – Edward Mote

Amen, what a perfect, merciful, compassionate, complete Savior our Lord Jesus is to us!

The next best thing to the wonderful expectation of dwelling with Christ in future eternity, is the blessings of knowing and following Him now. John 17:3

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Appendix Theories of the Atonement

1. The Ransom to Satan Theory

This view was held by Origen (C. A. D. 185 – C. 254), a theologian from Alexandria and later Caesarea, and after him by some others in the early history of the church. According to this view, the ransom Christ paid to redeem us was paid to Satan, in whose kingdom all people were by virtue of sin. This theory finds no direct confirmation in Scripture and has few supporters in the history of the church. It falsely thinks of Satan rather than God as the one who required that a payment be made for sin and thus completely neglects the demands of God's justice with respect to sin. . . . Nowhere does Scripture say that we as sinners owe anything to Satan, but it repeatedly says that God requires of us a payment for our sins. This view also fails to deal with the texts that speak of Christ's death as a propitiation offered to God the Father for our sins . . .

2. The Moral Influence Theory

First advocated by Peter Abelard (1079 – 1142), a French theologian, the moral influence theory of the atonement holds that God did not require the payment of a penalty for sin, but that Christ death was simply a way in which God showed how much he loved human beings by identifying with their sufferings, even to the point of death. Christ death therefore becomes a great teaching example that shows God's love to us and draws from us a grateful response, so that in loving him we are forgiven. The great difficulty with this viewpoint is that it is contrary to the so many passages of Scripture that speak of Christ dying for sin, bearing our sin, or dying as a propitiation. Moreover, it robs the atonement of its objective character, because it holds that the atonement had no effect on God himself. Finally, it has no way of dealing with our guilt – if Christ did not die to pay for our sins, we have no right to trust in him for forgiveness of sins.

3. The Example Theory

The example theory of the atonement was taught by the Socinians, the followers of Faustus Socinus (1539 – 1604), and Italian theologian who settled in Poland in 1578 and attracted a wide following. The Example Theory, like the Moral Influence Theory, also denies that God's justice requires payment for sin; it says that Christ death simply provides us with an example of how we should trust and obey God perfectly, even if that trust and abstinence leads to a horrible death. Whereas the Moral Influence Theory says that Christ death teaches us how much God loves us, the Example Theory says that Christ death teaches us how we should live. . . . While it is true that Christ is an example for us even in his death, the

question is whether this fact is the complete explanation of the atonement. . . .These considerations alone mean that the theory must be rejected. . . . Thus it fails to show how the guilt of our sin can be removed, because it does not hold that Christ actually paid the penalty for our sins or made provision for our guilt when he died.

4. The Governmental Theory

The Governmental Theory of the atonement was first taught by a Dutch theologian, Hugo Grotius (1583 – 1645). This theory holds that God did not actually have to require payment for sin, but, since he was omnipotent God, he could have set aside the requirement and simply forgiven sins without the payment of a penalty. Then what was the purpose of Christ death? It was God's demonstration of the fact that his laws had been broken, that he is the moral lawgiver and governor the universe, and that some kind of penalty would be required whenever his laws were broken. Thus Christ did not exactly pay the penalty for the actual sins of any people, but simply suffered to show that when God's laws are broken there must be some penalty paid. The problem with this view is that it fails to account adequately for all the Scriptures that speak of Christ bearing our sins on the cross, of God laying on Christ the iniquity of us all, of Christ dying specifically for sins, and of Christ being the propitiation for our sins. Moreover, it takes away the objective character of the atonement by making its purpose not the satisfaction of God's justice but simply that of influencing us to realize that God has laws that must be. This view also implies that we cannot rightly trust in Christ completed work for forgiveness of sin, because he has not actually made payment for those sins. . . .

5. Christ Death as a Penal Substitution

. . .Christ's death was "penal" and that he bore a penalty when he died. His death was also a "substitution" and that he was a substitute for us when he died. This has been the orthodox understanding of the atonement held by Evangelical theologians, in contrast to other views that attempt to explain the atonement apart from the idea of the wrath of God or payment of the penalty for sin. This view of the atonement is sometimes called the Vicarious atonement. A "vicar" is someone who stands in the place of another or who represents another. Christ's death was therefore vicarious because he stood in our place and represented us. As our representative, he took the penalty that we deserved.

Grudem, Systematic Theology, p. 581-586