

The Atonement of Christ

- I. Atonement was at the heart of Christ's coming into the world as a man and therefore lays at the heart of the Christian religion.
 - A. Christ came to remove the curse of God's Law under which men fell by their sin, Gal 3.13-14.
 - B. Christ came to reconcile men to the image and fellowship of God, Col 1.19-22.
- II. The revelation of this effect of Christ's death can only be found in the Word of God, 1Cor 15.3.
 - A. Scripture alone can explain the atonement and the occasion for it.
 1. Adam was created by God in a Covenant of works, Rom 5.12. This Covenant promised life upon his obedience and threatened death upon his disobedience, Gen 2.17.
 2. Adam deliberately and defiantly disobeyed, corrupting his moral nature, incurring the threatened penalty, and in effect enslaving himself irreparably to sin and Satan.
 3. Since Adam stood before God as a public person, his sin corrupted all his posterity, the entire human race. This plunged and left all men in an estate of sin and misery from which they could not rescue themselves; and given the corruption of their nature, they had neither the desire nor the ability to reform. If God had left man in that estate—as He did the fallen angels—there would be no gospel.
 4. If God would allow atonement to be made for man by a substitute, no man among men could be found since every man is a born a sinner. Even if one could be found, he could at most atone for one man's life by his own life. Thus man's case was truly desperate.
 5. By God's grace, which grew out of the Covenant of Redemption (Isa 49-53), the Second Person of the Trinity was both willing and able to atone for man since His life is of infinite value and could sufficiently redeem all those whom the Father had elected to save. But He would need to become a Man in order to do so.
 6. The Son therefore became incarnate in order to remove the curse of the Covenant of Works from the Elect and reconcile them to God by His own obedience to the Covenant of Works and His own suffering of the penalty due for man's disobedience to that Covenant, 1Pet 1.18-19; Rev 5.9-10; 7.12; 15.3-4.
- III. The Infinite Value of Christ's Sacrifice
 - A. The chief mystery in regard to the Atonement is that God chooses to accept the unmerited sufferings of Christ as a just equivalent for the suffering *due* to sinners. The question therefore arises: How can the suffering endured by Christ be set to the credit of His people, and how can His suffering suffice to save all the Elect?
 1. Christ's life, and therefore His death, is of far more value than the life/death of the entire human race because Christ is God, Isa 40.15 cp. Jn 1.1, 3; 2Cor 5.19; Col 1.16-17; 2Cor 2.8; Acts 20.28.
 2. Therefore the value of Christ's *offering* of suffering and death was more than sufficient to redeem as many of the human race as God saw fit to draw to Himself.
 3. It was the great value of His Person which gave great value to His suffering and made it unnecessary for Him to suffer on the cross for eternity as men would have done in hell. Nor was His pain as great as the sum total of that which all the Elect would have suffered. Rather, because He was a Person of infinite value and dignity, His suffering was what God could not but consider a just equivalent for what was due to all the Elect.
 - B. To understand how the Second Person of the Trinity was able to accomplish this for us, let us remember that He possessed two natures, one Divine and the other human, and that it was His human nature which suffered on the cross, not His divine nature, since God cannot suffer.
 1. But since Christ is two natures in one Person, what one nature suffered the whole and single Person is said to have suffered, Acts 20.28; 1Pet 1.18-19; Heb 9.14; 1Pet 2.21.

2. The need for the atonement rests in the fact that the Law of God set forth in Gen 2.17 cannot be brushed aside or nullified, but had to be honored since it's not an arbitrary law, but the very reflection of God's holiness because of which He judges sin and rewards righteousness.
3. The entire sacrificial system of the Jews impressed on their, and our, minds that God could make no compromise with sin, and that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins, Heb 9.22.

IV. No Injustice Done When Our Penalty Was Laid on Christ.

- A. Unitarians and Liberals object to the doctrine of the atonement saying it's unjust to punish one person for the sins of another.
- B. But there is no injustice or impropriety on the part of God in the atoning work of Jesus Christ.
 1. The Triune God covenanted Himself to redeem a people from perdition by uniting them to the Second Person in an election of grace to salvation, Ps 89; Gen 12; Jn 6.37.
 2. The Son was thereby made covenantally one with His people and voluntarily agreed that He would become incarnate in order to provide *the righteousness* by which they can be rewarded with eternal life, as well as *the payment* in His own death by which they can be absolved of all sin and guilt, Heb 10.1-14.
 3. As the incarnate Son of God, His people's sins were placed on Him by God and He was arrested, tried, convicted, and punished before the bar of God's justice as a public person, as the Second Adam, Rom 6.5-12; 7.4. Being of infinite value, His suffering and death were more than enough to satisfy His people's debt, Jn 19.30; Acts 2.24.
 4. Therefore, those for whom He died, when they come to Him in faith, will enjoy the full removal of their sin and guilt to Christ's cross and a full participation in His own righteousness, 2Cor 5.21.
 5. Thus there was no injustice in the atonement since the One who died died guilty of sin, and those absolved by His death are absolved because, through faith in Him, they are without the guilt they once had and possess the gift of a righteousness worthy of eternal life, 1Cor 1.30-31.
- C. Thus by faith in the atoning work of Christ, we have an unshakable assurance of salvation and peace with God, Heb 6.17-20; 10.11-23.