

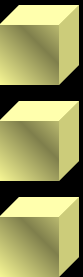
# The Atonement

*What exactly happened when  
Jesus Christ died on the cross?*



## *Christ's Vicarious or Substitutionary Death*

- Also referred to as the *Penal Satisfaction* or *Penal Substitution* Theory
- Description:
- Christ, by offering Himself as a sacrifice, by substituting Himself for us, and actually bearing the punishment which should have been ours, satisfied the Father and effected a reconciliation between God and man.



# Biblical Substantiation

- The lexical argument is based on the words rendered “to propitiate” or “propitiation” in four (4) crucial passages describing the death of Christ.
- These words are in the word group that relates to the Hebrew *kippur* (*hilasmos*—meaning mercy seat, covering).



## (1) Romans 3:25

- *whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation by His blood, through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed.*

## (2) Hebrews 2:17

- *Therefore, he had to be made like his brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.*

## (3) 1 John 2:2

- *and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.*

## (4) 1 John 4:10

- *In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

# The “Necessity” of the Atonement

- Explained:
- God cannot merely overlook man’s sin, nor can he just forgive man without requiring that payment be made or punishment be given for sin. In this sense, the atonement is necessary for man to be made right with his creator.



# Scriptural Support

- Hebrews 9:22:
- *And according to the law almost all things are purified (cleansed) with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission (forgiveness).*

# Objection:

- Why does God not simply forgive us as an act of good will instead of requiring a payment?

# Response:

- Even if God could overlook sin against Himself as an act of good will, He is still bound by nature to preserve justice in the universe.
- To ignore sin would destroy the meaningfulness of the concept of justice .  
..

# Furthermore:

- Humans may simply forgive other humans as an act of good will because we are imperfect and in desperate need of forgiveness ourselves. But God is perfect and does not need forgiveness.
- Consequently, the parallel between man's and God's forgiveness breaks down.

# **What this Teaches us about God's Character:**

- The “necessity” of the atonement emphasizes God's sovereignty and position of official administrator of the judicial system of the universe.

# The “Substitutionary” Nature of the Atonement

- Explained:
- The normal meaning of the word is to be taken into context. It simply means that the atonement is a sacrifice offered in the place of the sinner. Thus the sacrifice bears the sinner’s guilt.

# Scriptural Support:

- Galatians 3:13:
- *Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree').*

# Objection:

- Is it not improper and unjust to penalize an innocent party?



# Response:

- The answer to this question is yes unless the innocent party receives the penalty voluntarily and the judge is inseparable from the innocent party.
- Jesus meets both of these requirements (John 10:17-18)

# What this Teaches us about God's Character

- “Substitution” emphasizes God's love for His creation. He defines love by His nature. Real love always demands a personal sacrifice.

# “Propitiation”

- Explained:
- To regain favor or appease God. To satisfy His demands and thereby divert His anger.
- Man’s sin does not just make God sad, it makes Him angry. His anger, or wrath, can be satisfied only by the execution of His justice. His judicial system cannot be short-circuited.

# Scriptural Support:

- Romans 8-9:
- *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.*

# Objection:

- Doesn't the appeasement of the Father by the Son reveal conflict within the Godhead?

# Response:

- The answer to this question may be put in the form of another question:
- Can a person be angry and loving at the same time?
- Any parent knows the answer is yes. The Father was angry over the world's sin, but he loved the world so much . . .

- . . . that he sent his Son to atone for the sin of man. Thus the Father did not change from an angry God to a loving God when Christ died on the cross.
- God's love was there all the time and was in fact the motivation for the atonement. His holiness demanded a payment for sin. His love provided the payment.

# What this Teaches us about God's Character

- “Propitiation” emphasizes God’s absolute holiness and justifiable anger over sin. He deserves respect and absolute obedience and vents his wrath on ungodliness.



# “Imputation”

- Explained:
- While substitution and propitiation have to do with negative aspects of the atonement (what God has taken away from us), imputation has to do with the positive aspect of the atonement (what God has given to us).
- God has taken away the guilt of believers, but he has also imputed to them the righteousness of Christ.

# Scriptural Support:

- 2 Corinthians 5:21
- *For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

# Objection:

- Is it not unfair to reward a guilty party?

# Response:

- This question is the other side of the objection to substitution. It doesn't seem fair that an innocent party is punished and likewise, it doesn't seem fair that a guilty party is rewarded, yet that is what happens in the atonement . . .

- . . . The reason that God sees this transaction as absolutely just is that when we put our faith in Him, we become united with Christ.
- In a sense, we become married, inseparable, so that it is not a transfer of righteousness as much as it is holding it in common. It is shared.

# What this Teaches us about God's Character

- “Imputation: emphasizes God’s desire for intimate fellowship with His creation. Because of the atonement we are heirs of the Father and joint-heirs with the Son.




Abraham and Isaac



*“The LORD will provide”*



John the Baptist



*“Behold the lamb, which takes away the sin of the world.”*

# The Sinner's Substitute

- Barabbas:  
“Father’s son”
- Fallen son of Adam
- Malefactor
- Deserved to be punished
- Allowed to go free
- Jesus: “Savior”
- Faithful Son of God
- “Went about doing good” (Acts 10:38)
- Innocent
- Nailed to the cross prepared for Barabbas



*Jesus was not only the substitute  
for Barabbas, He endured the  
cross as our substitute too.*