

The Accomplishments of the Atonement

INTRODUCTION

A. The great problem – What is the biggest problem that is in the world now – or that has ever been in the world or will ever be? Is it bigotry, bullying, crime, discrimination, greed, hatred, inequality, infidelity, poverty, or war? Actually, these are all the fruit (the results) of a root problem; the root problem, according to the Bible, is humanity's depravity (**SIN**).

B. The great process – Sin did not take God by surprise. Nothing does. He had things all planned out from before Creation as to what He would do about sin, and He was the only one who could really solve the problem.

However, it would be costly. Humans cannot atone for, make up for, or do anything to pay the sin debt that's owed to God (our Creator). To atone for human sin, the Trinity (God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit) decided that the second person of the Trinity (the sinless Son of God) would take on human nature (without partaking in human sin) and become the God-Man. In this way He (as God – sinless and infinite) but also as man could atone for human sin – in fact, the sins of more than one human. So nearly 2,000 years ago “when the fulness of the time was come” (Gal 4:4), Jesus was born of a virgin, and He thus avoided having the sin nature that is passed along among human beings. The Incarnation was God's biggest and greatest intervention in human history, and the most important part of that time was Jesus' death.

C. The great product – Becoming a man was not the end of what Jesus needed to do. Some people think that He came to earth merely to teach good things. Nicodemus, in fact, said to Him, “We know that Thou art a teacher come from God.” (Jn 3:2) In reality, Jesus was not just “come from” – He WAS – God, and He came to do much more than to teach. Others think Jesus came mainly to be an example for humans to follow. Others look at what angels said in announcing Jesus' birth to the shepherds (“on earth peace” – Lk 2:14), and they assume Jesus came to stop all war.

No, the main reason for the Incarnation was death – Jesus' death. Jesus was the only one who ever chose to be born. He chose to be **born to die** – in order to save helpless sinners who would trust in Him alone for salvation from sin. There are two major aspects of Jesus' death at Calvary – what happened when He died and what happened because He died.

I. What happened when Christ died (concurrent experiences)

A. Personally (for us vicariously) – The Bible has 4 ways of relating what Jesus endured at Calvary for us:

1. Jesus SUFFERED for US – Peter said this twice – with the emphasis in these verses on “us” (believers): “Christ also suffered for US.” (1Pt 2:21) and then – in the next chapter – “Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring US to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.” (1Pt 3:18)

2. Jesus GAVE HIMSELF for US – This idea is perhaps the one that is most often repeated. Paul says “He gave Himself for US” (Tit 2:14) – “Who gave himself for OUR sins” (Gal 1:4)– One chapter later he wrote “gave Himself for me” (Gal 2:20) Ephesians 5:25 says “He gave Himself for it” (the Church).

3. Jesus LAID DOWN HIS LIFE for His SHEEP – Almost a whole chapter (John 10) is devoted to this idea. “I lay down my life for the sheep.” (Jn 10:15) “I lay down my life, that I might take it again.... No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” (Jn 10:17-18) “The good shepherd giveth His life for the sheep.” (Jn 10:11) Jesus told the Jews who disbelieved that “ye are not of My sheep ... My sheep hear My voice ... and I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish...” (Jn 10:24-29) “Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him.” (Jn 10:31)

4. Jesus BORE OUR sins – God had predicted this: “He shall bear their iniquities.” (Isa 53:11) “His own self bare OUR sins in His own body on the tree, that WE, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness.” (1Pt 2:24; cf. Paul's emphasis on believers “being dead” in Rom 6:3-8) As the great hymn “My Savior's Love” puts it, “He took my sins and my sorrows – He made them His very own. He bore the burden to Calvary – and suffered and died alone.”

B. Redemptively (for us doctrinally) – Paul uses four different Greek words to express the idea of redemption.

1. Purchase (Paul exhorted the elders in the church at Ephesus to “Feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood.” [Ac 20:28 – *peripoieomai* # 4046– 2x in NT]

2. Ransom – (*lutron* = 2x in NT – “The Son of Man came ... to give His life a ransom for many.” (Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45)

3. Redeem (*exagorazō* – 4x in NT [2x for Christ redeeming us = “[He] gave himself for US to redeem US” [Tit 2:14] – “Christ hath redeemed US.” (Gal 3:13) – and 2x for “redeeming the time” (Eph 5:16; Col 4:5)

4. Redemption (*apolutrōsis* – 10x in NT: “redemption” 9x, “deliverance” 1x – means “to buy back” – e.g., slave, prisoner – “the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” [Rom 3:24; “in Whom we have redemption” (Eph 1:7; Col 1:14)

C. Practically (4 affected areas) – We might call these 4 major changes or **the ramifications of redemption**.

1. Statutes – “Ye are NOT under law – but under grace” (Rom 6:14,15) – The Law was fulfilled in and by Christ (Mt 5:17) and finished by Him (Jn 19:30) – “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross” (Col 2:14) – “We are delivered from the Law” (Rom 7:6) and “dead to the Law. (7:4; Gal 2:19) Jesus “abolished ... the law of commandments contained in ordinances.” (Eph 2:15) “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.” (Gal 3:13)

2. Satan – Jesus’ death **destroyed** “him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” & **delivered** them [US] “who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” (Heb 2:14-15) “Who hath **delivered** us from the power of darkness **and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son**” (Col 1:13) – WE WERE “darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord.” (Eph 5:8) – God “called you [US] out of darkness into His marvelous light.” (1 Pet 2:9)

3. Society – Jesus “gave Himself for OUR sins to deliver US from this present evil world.” (Gal 1:4)

II. What happened because Christ died (subsequent effects) We enjoy “all spiritual blessings” (Eph 1:3) – e.g., peace with God, access to God, joy, hope (Rom 5:1ff; cf. 8:32-35,37) and what may be called legal aftereffects of Jesus’ death.

A. Justification (exoneration – a legal or forensic term) – from the Greek word for “righteous” – right with God, no guilt and penalty – “God commendeth His love toward US, in that, while WE were yet sinners, Christ died for US. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, WE shall be saved from wrath through Him.” (Rom 5:8-9)

B. Propitiation – This is the idea of appeasement (*hilastērion* – 2x in NT – Rom 3:25; Heb 9:5) and (*hilasmos* – 2x – 1Jn 2:2; 4:10). Christ’s death satisfied God’s standard of holiness; it turned away God’s wrath from believers.

1. God’s wrath on unbelievers – God’s wrath is “against all ungodliness & unrighteousness of men” (Rom 1:18). John 3:36 says that “the wrath of God abideth on” unbelievers right **now** in this life, but more wrath is **coming**: “The wrath of God is coming [is yet to come] upon the children of disobedience” (the unsaved – Col 3:6; Eph 5:6).

2. No wrath on believers – By contrast, we are **no longer** under wrath (“we WERE by nature the children of wrath, even as others” (Eph 2:3) and **in the future** “We shall be saved from wrath through Him.” (Rom 5:9) – “Jesus ... delivered us from the wrath to come” (1Th 1:10) – when, in the Tribulation, “the day of His wrath is come.” (Rev 6:17)

C. Reconciliation – Christ’s death brought accord and conciliation – in two ways.

1. Between God and believers – “For if, when WE were **enemies**, WE were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, WE shall be saved by His life.” (Rom 5:10)

2. Between Gentiles and Jews – “that He might reconcile both unto God in **one body by the cross**” (the Church, the Body of Christ Eph 2:16). Gentiles were “made nigh by the blood of Christ” (v. 13). “He ... made both one and hath broken down the middle wall of partition ... to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace.” (vv. 14-15)

D. Remission – Jesus’ death at Calvary forever cancelled **all** believers’ debts (sins) – sins committed before salvation as well as those after salvation. The Greek word *aphesis* occurs 17x in the NT – “remission” 9x, “forgiveness” 6x, “deliverance” 1x, “liberty” 1x). “Without shedding of **blood** is no remission.” (Heb 9:22) “This is My blood of the new testament, ... shed for many for the remission of sins.” (Mt 26:28) “That they may receive forgiveness of sins” (Ac 26:18), “In Whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.” (Eph 1:7; Col 1:14)

E. Adoption (*huiiothesia* – occurs 5x in NT) Believers have been placed into God’s family as sons of God – “Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will” (Eph 1:5), “When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” (Gal 4:4-5)

CONCLUSIONS

A. The Redeemer – The One who died had to be both man (God can’t die) and God (sinless and infinite). Our Creator came to earth 2,000 years ago and died for His creatures.

B. The result – Jesus’ died once (Heb 9:28; 10:11-14) and paid for ALL – yes, ALL – of believers’ sins (past and future).

“He hath made Him Who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” (2 Co 5:21) Believers died when Christ died, since He died as our representative, the federal Head of redeemed humanity (just as Adam was the federal head of sinful humanity). Paul declared “I have been crucified with Christ.” (Gal 2:20) We “were baptized into his death” (Rom 6:3) and “planted together in the likeness of his death.” (Rom 6:5) “Ye are in Christ Jesus, who from God was made to us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.” (1 Cor 1:30)