

Atonement Intro

Background factors—

- God’s loving and holy nature—This is the way God is. There is rich and gracious mercy toward His creative handiwork. However, sin and evil, being contrary to God’s holy nature, is repulsive to Him. He cannot look upon it. He is compelled to turn away from it. Indeed, His holy nature consumes sin,
- Law—Moral law is something of a transcript of God’s nature. Disobeying the law is an affront to God Himself. There are serious consequences for deliberate transgressions and even negligent failure to fulfill the law.
- Human condition—People are powerless to please God in our own efforts. When we say humanity is totally depraved, we don’t mean that humans are as bad as they possibly can be. We mean that humanity cannot do anything to save themselves or to extricate themselves from their waywardness.
- Christ—Jesus’ person is central to His redemptive mission. Being God, He is able to meet God’s righteous standards. Being human, He is able to shoulder the penalty for sin of humanity’s behalf. 2 Corinthians 5:21 provides a succinct summary.
- Old Testament sacrificial system—Christ’s atoning death must be seen against the backdrop of the Old Testament sacrificial system. See Hebrews 9-10 notes.

*Atonement’s basic meaning—*The atonement encompasses—

- A sacrifice offered, the perfect sacrifice of Christ (Heb. 9:26; 10:5-10)—Christ’s saving work is likened to the Old Testament Day of Atonement (Heb. 9:6-15). Christ is depicted as the high priest who enters the Holy place to offer sacrifice. However, the sacrifice He offers is not the blood of bulls and goats, but His own blood. He is both priest and victim and His sacrifice is once-for-all, not one that needed to be repeated (Heb. 10:5-18).
- Payment of the penalty for sin—He redeemed us (Eph. 1:7) by paying sins' due penalty (Rom. 3:25-26; 6:23; Gal. 3:13).
- Substitution—Christ died for sins as a substitute for us. (2 Cor. 5:21).
- Satisfaction—The love and wrath of God are brought together in the atonement (Rom. 5:8-9). Christ died to satisfy the justice of God’s nature, becoming the object of His holy wrath against sin.
- Reconciliation—Death of Christ brings an end to the enmity and estrangement between God and humanity.

Views of the Atonement:

Early Church views:

	<i>Ransom to Satan</i>	<i>Recapitulation</i>	<i>Christ as Victor</i>
<i>Description</i>	Christ's death was a ransom to Satan to purchase enslaved humanity from Satan's claims.	Christ's life recapitulated all the stages of human life, reversing the course initiated by Adam and established by Christ.	Christ is the victor in a divine conflict with evil and wins humanity's release from bondage.

Proponents	Origen; Gregory of Nyssa	Irenaeus	Augustine
Person to be satisfied	Satan as the one to be satisfied.	Satan as the one to be satisfied.	Satan as the one to be vanquished.
Human condition	Humanity in bondage to Satan.	Humanity in bondage to Satan.	Humanity in bondage to Satan.
Atonement's result	Victory over Satan and humanity's freedom from enslavement to Satan.	Christ's recapitulation of all the stages of human existence. This reverses the human trajectory from disobedience to obedience and its consequence.	Victory over Satan; God reconciles humanity out of bondage to evil.

Subjective Theories:

	<i>Example</i>	<i>Moral Influence</i>	<i>Mystical Influence</i>
<i>Description</i>	Christ's death provided an example of faith and obedience which inspires human obedience and softens human hearts to respond to God.	Christ's death demonstrated God's love, which causes humanity to soften and repent.	Christ took on a sinful human nature but through the power of the Holy Spirit triumphed over it. Knowledge of this will mystically inspire human striving.
<i>Proponents</i>	Pelagius; Abelard; Socinus	Abelard; Ritschl; other 19 th century liberals	Schleiermacher
<i>Person to be satisfied</i>	Humanity is the one to be inspired by Christ's example.	Humanity is the one to be influenced spired by Christ's moral example.	Humanity is the one to be mystically influenced by Christ's triumph over sinful human nature.
<i>Human condition</i>	Pelagius=Humanity is free to sin or not to. Abelard=Humanity is sick and needing help.	Humanity is free to sin or not to. God meets us in our weakness with ready forgiveness.	Lacks God-consciousness.
<i>Atonement's result</i>	Humanity inspired to strive to be at our best by Christ's example of true faith and obedience.	Humanity moved to repentance and striving to be our best by God's love and sacrifice.	Christ triumphs over His own sinful nature and becomes a mystical subconscious influence for humanity.

Hybrid theories through Church history:

	<i>Substitution (God's honor)</i>	<i>Governmental (God's Law)</i>
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Description	Christ's death brought honor to God. God in turn honored the Lord Jesus, which the Lord passed on to humanity.	Christ's death demonstrates God's attitude toward His law and towards our sin. Through the Lord's death God has a rationale to forgive sin of those who repent and accept Christ's sacrifice.
Proponents	Anselm (11 th century Medieval scholastic)	Grotius (17 th century Dutch Arminian)
Person to be satisfied	God is honored and satisfied; Human dishonor overlooked due to Christ's sacrifice.	With God's justice satisfied, God's love able to be expressed.
Human condition	Humanity is dishonoring God.	Humans are violators of God's moral law.
Atonement's result	Christ's death brought infinite honor to God, which is applied to sinners for salvation.	Substitute for the penalty of the Law's violation; God's holy nature towards His law's violation demonstrated. Christ's death makes God's love and forgiveness legally kosher.

	<i>Penal Substitutionary Atonement</i>	
Description	Christ's death was a substitutionary sacrifice that satisfied the demands of God's justice upon sin, paying the penalty for human sin, bringing forgiveness, imputing righteousness to redeemed humanity, and reconciling humanity to God.	
Proponents	Calvin & Reformers	
Person to be satisfied	God is the one to be satisfied.	
Human condition	Humans are unable to do redemptive good. Enslaved to sin and self.	
Atonement's result	Christ bore the penalty for sin. Through repentance and faith, humans can accept the benefits of Christ's sacrifice,	

Penal substitutionary atonement—Christ's death was a substitutionary sacrifice that satisfied the demands of God's justice upon sin, paying the penalty that should have been ours for human sin, bringing forgiveness, imputing righteousness, and reconciling humans to God (see Rom. 3:25-26; 5:8-9).

- God's love and wrath held together bothers us moderns. Many have trouble with the picture of a wrathful God. The New Testament regards the death of Christ as propitiatory, that Christ died to appease or satisfy God's wrath against sin. Numerous passages speak of the wrath of God against sin. We read of God's wrath in Rom. 1:18; 2:5,8; 3:25-26; 4:15; 5:9; 9:22; 12:19; 13:4-5; Eph. 2:3; 5:6; Col. 3:6; 1 Thess. 1:10; 2:16; 5:9).
- Romans 5:8-9 as embracing love and wrath in the atoning death of Christ.
- This idea is conveyed in the New Testament by a word family—*hilaskomai* (Heb. 2:17); *hilasterion* (Rom. 3:25); and *hilasmos* (1 Jn 2:2; 4:10).
- C.H. Dodd & translation debate
 - Propitiation=the act of turning away God's wrath (righteous anger) by means of an offering. Focus on satisfying God's justice.

- Expiation=the act of taking away guilt; cleansing or covering for sin. Focus on removing the obstacle (sin's guilt).
- Atoning sacrifice as increasingly the choice.
- Objection to the idea of the necessity of atonement—Why does God not simply forgive sins. Why does He require payment of a pound of flesh, so to speak. This objection doesn't reckon with who God is. He is not merely a private person who has been wronged. He is the administrator of a moral universe. For God to ignore guilt of sin without requiring payment would in effect destroy the moral fiber of the universe and any distinction between right and wrong. The ultimate consequence of wrong left perennially unjudged is a lawless universe, hell in the here and now. In addition, this response would deny who He is. He is holy, an attribute that has a consuming nature about it. Sin and evil cannot stand before a holy God.
- Objection to the idea of substitution—This attacks the morality of substitution altogether. The idea of the Father substituting the Son to bear our guilt isn't fair. It's the guilty party (me!!!!) who should bear the penalty. Three replies:
 - The voluntary nature of the sacrifice by the Lord Jesus (Jn. 10:17-18; 15:13).
 - The work of the Lord Jesus in giving His life involved the Father. The Father did not place punishment of someone other than Himself. How the Trinity interacts is beyond us, but it is clear that God is both judge and the person paying the just penalty.
 - Important here is the idea of double identification. The sinner is one with Christ (he or she is "in Christ"). The Father and the Lord Jesus are one as well. The Father sent the Son in His love and the Son voluntarily took it upon Himself in His love. God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. (2 Cor. 5:19). In addition, when Christ died for me, I died with Him (Gal 2:20).
- Objection to propitiation—That a loving Son wins over a stern and unrelenting Father from His anger and wrath against sin to a loving and forgiving disposition is an indication of internal conflict within the mind of God. But the Father sent the Son to atone for sin. It was an expression of His love as well as that of the Son. **Propitiation is not about changing a wrathful God into a loving one. It is to say that a wrathful God (a holy God whose very nature consumes sin), is a loving God who takes that penalty on Himself.** Propitiation does not detract from God's love and mercy. It rather highlights how great that love and mercy really is. The holy wrath against sin must be satisfied or there could be no remission of sin. That satisfaction could only be rendered by Himself (His Son) as a truly human substitute for us. The love of God meets the holiness of God. Divine holiness requires satisfaction; divine love supplies it.
- Objection to the idea of the imputation of righteousness—Here, the objection is to the idea of Christ's righteousness can be imputed to us. One person cannot be good in another person's stead. We are responsible for ourselves and transferring credit is quite inappropriate in the matter of our standing before God. But imputation has its basis in identification. People coming to faith in Christ are new creatures. They are in Christ. Thus, imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believer is not a matter of transferring moral or spiritual quality from one person to another as it is in bringing two together so that they hold all things in common. Union with Christ is basic to the entire redemptive ark of our salvation. In coming to sincere biblical faith, I have died with Him, been buried with Him, been raised with Him, now find my life with Him in the power of the Spirit, am exalted and will be exalted with Him, and will one day reign with Him.