

# The Work of Christ

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## Crucifixion

### A Fact of History

*“About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man... For he was one who wrought surprising feats and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks... When Pilate, upon hearing him accused by men of the highest standing among us, had condemned him to be crucified, those who had in the first place come to love him did not give up their affection for him... And the tribe of Christians, so called after him, has still to this day not disappeared.”*

- Josephus, *Testimonium Flavianum*

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## Atonement

### **1. What is it?**

*“The Atonement is the work Christ did in his life and death to earn our salvation” - Wayne Grudem*

### **2. The cause of the atonement**

The Sovereign Plan of God

God's Love and Justice

### **3. The necessity of the atonement**

Matthew 26:39

*And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."*

Luke 24:26

*Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?"*

The OT sacrificial system.

Romans 3

*[25] [God put Jesus] forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.*

*[26] It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*

**4. The nature of the atonement**

***...a multi-faceted diamond***

Four areas of Need of People Before God

1. We deserve to \_\_\_\_\_ as the \_\_\_\_\_ for sin (Romans 6:23)
2. We deserve to \_\_\_\_\_ God's \_\_\_\_\_ against sin (Romans 1:18)
3. We are \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_ by our sins (Isaiah 59:2)
4. We are in \_\_\_\_\_ to sin and to the \_\_\_\_\_ of Satan (Romans 6:6)

## Five Facets of The Atonement

### 1. **Substitution**

John 1:29

“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”

### 2. **Sacrifice**

John 17:19

“And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.”

Hebrews 9:12

“he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.”

### 3. **Propitiation**

Hebrews 2:17

Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

1 John 2:2

He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

### 4. **Reconciliation**

2 Corinthians 5:19

...that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

## 5. Redemption

### Mark 10:45

“...for even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

### 1 Timothy 2:5-6

For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all

## Theories of the Atonement

### **Christus Victor or Moral Ransom Theory**

Key texts: Mark 10:42-45, Genesis 3:15, Colossians 2:15, Hebrews 2:14, 1 John 3:8

Proponents: Origen. The dominant view in the first 1000 years of the church

View: This view sees the atonement as the victory in a divine conflict. It holds that the ‘ransom’ Christ paid to redeem his people was paid to Satan, whom Jesus refers to as the ruler of this world (Jn. 12:31), and in whose kingdom all people once were.

#### Weaknesses:

- Not actually confirmed by scripture.
- It misses the reality that it is God’s justness that demands payment for sin, not Satan who demands payment from God.
- It gives Satan an inordinate amount of power, more than he actually has. It misses the context that Satan is a fallen angel cast out by God and can’t tell God what to do.

### **Moral Influence and Example Theories**

Key texts: John 3:16; 1 John 4:19; 1 Peter 2:21-23

Proponents: Peter Abelard, a 12th c. French theological (MI); Faustus Socinus, a 16th c. Italian theologian (E); Liberal protestant and mainline traditions, Unitarianism

View: *Moral Influence Theory* holds that Christ's death was a way in which God shows us how much he loves us, because he wants to identify with our sufferings. We are then drawn to God out of gratitude for his love. Similarly for *Example Theory*, Christ's death shows us how we ought to love God, and particularly what it looks like to completely trust and obey God. Jesus is our example. This is basically the WWJD theory. These theories are both **subjective** views of the atonement. They focus on the change of attitude we *ought* to have because of Jesus' death.

Weaknesses:

- Both of these theories rob the atonement from any **objective** aspect. They don't view the atonement as having accomplished anything concrete.
- These theories don't deal with the many scriptures that refer to Christ's death **for** us, Christ as a propitiation, Christ bearing our sin, etc.
- These theories have no way of dealing with our guilt before God. They don't provide any explanation for how sin is dealt with

## **Governmental Theory**

Key texts: Isaiah 42:21

Proponents: Hugo Grotius, a 16th c. Dutch theologian; 19th c. revivalist Charles Finney; while not entirely accepted by any one of these, over the last couple centuries it has been most commonly held by those in the Nazarene tradition, Methodism, and in arminian theology in general.

View: With this theory, Grotius tried to find a middle ground between the Socinians (example theory) and Calvinist Reformers (penal substitution). So against the Socinians, he argued that God DOES punish sin, although not out of retribution but in order to maintain the moral order of the universe. And against the Reformers, he argued that Christ did not bear the *full penalty* of human sin, nor did he accomplish propitiation. In fact, this theory says that God *could have* just relaxed his law, and not punished sin, and still forgiven people... but that wouldn't have deterred people from sinning in the future. And so Christ's death demonstrates God's hatred of sin and it strikes fear into people to live differently.

Weaknesses:

- this theory views Christ's death as optional
- It fails to adequately deal with the scriptures that refer to Christ bearing our sins on the cross. Christ paid a penalty but not *our* penalty, in this view.
- It takes away the objective nature of Christ's death satisfying the just wrath of God against sin.

- There is a mainly subjective view, that the atonement was, at least in large part, to influence people to obey God and not sin. The atonement didn't objectively accomplish much
- Downplays the spiritual regeneration of Christians

### **Anselm's Satisfaction Theory**

Proponents: Anselm of Canterbury, 11th c. theologian

View: Anselm, speaking into a context where most believed ransom theory, rejected that theory and basically said, "listen, the atonement wasn't a payoff to Satan. It was to pay off God." And that was a big shift at the time.

This theory sees God as having been offended, his honor having been attacked. (And it helps to view this through the eyes of medieval theologians who viewed God like a lord in the kingdom whose dignity was offended by his serfs). Since humans had made the offense, a human must pay the penalty, but only a perfect, holy, infinite being could satisfy the deep offense.

Weaknesses:

The main weakness of this is that the atonement for Anselm was more about repaying God's honor than it was about Jesus dying as our substitute. And he kind of saw it like Jesus merited great reward for his death, but didn't really need it, so he gave it to us.

### **Penal Substitutionary Theory**

Key texts: Isaiah 53:6; 53:12; Romans 3:25; 2 Corinthians 5:19, 21; Galatians 3:13; Hebrews 2:17; 1 John 2:2; John 1:29

Proponents: Augustine, Clement of Rome, The Reformers, modern Evangelicals

View: In this view, Christ died on the cross as a substitute for sinners. God imputed the guilt of our sins to Christ, and he, in our place, bore the punishment that we deserve. In return, we receive His righteousness (The Great Exchange). In this way, God could forgive sinners without compromising His own holy standard. This ransom payment satisfied the wrath of God, reconciled us to God, and provides redemption from Sin.

Weaknesses/Criticisms:

- sin and guilt can't be transferred
- too much emphasis on God's wrath

## **5. The Extent of the Atonement**

### **Limited atonement**

Matthew 1:21

John 10:25

Acts 20:28

John 17:9

John 17:24

### **Universal, or unlimited atonement**

John 1:29

John 3:16

Isaiah 53:6

1 John 2:1-2

1 John 4:14

### **Descent to Hell**

Where does it come from?

- 1 Peter 3:18-20
- Romans 10:6-7
- Ephesians 4:8-10
- 1 Peter 4:5-6

But similarly, there are great problems with this idea.

- Acts 2:27
- Luke 23:43
- John 19:30

- Luke 23:36

In short, it seems unlikely that Christ spent time in hell during the time he was dead. And whether he did or not, it is clear that He didn't go to pay for sin again, or to give second chances.

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## Resurrection

Biblical testimony of the resurrection

Each of the Gospels have specific resurrection accounts

Matthew 28:1-20

Mark 16:1-8

Luke 24:1-53

John 20:1-21:25

Jesus foretells his resurrection:

Mark 8:31-33; 9:30-32; 10:32-34

Matthew 16:21

*“It [the resurrection] is the fundamental doctrine of Christianity. Many admit the necessity of the death of Christ who deny the importance of the bodily resurrection of Christ. But that Christ’s physical resurrection is vitally important is evident from the fundamental connection of this doctrine with Christianity. In 1 Cor. 15:12-19 Paul shows that everything stands or falls with Christ’s bodily resurrection: apostolic preaching is vain (v. 14), the apostles are false witnesses (v. 15), the Corinthians are yet in their sins (v.17), those fallen asleep in Christ have perished (v. 18), and Christians are of all men most miserable (v. 19), if Christ has not risen.” - Henry Thiesen*

### Naturalistic Theories that Reject the Resurrection

#### **The Swoon Theory**

- This view argues that Jesus did not really die. Rather he passed out as a result of the physical toll from the beating and crucifixion. Later, he woke up in the coolness of the tomb, unwrapped himself, pushed the rock away, and left. Then he convinced his disciples that he had in fact risen from the dead.

#### **The Spirit Theory**

- Jesus was not resurrected in his body, but did return as some sort of spirit being. This is actually taught by the Jehovah’s witnesses.

#### **The Hallucination Theory**

- This view suggests mass hallucination of the disciples. The suggestion is that Jesus’ death was so difficult for them, that their imaginations revived him

because there was no other option given the pain and difficulty they had.

### **The Stolen Body Theory**

- Exactly what it sounds like. This was actually the earliest attempt to explain what happened, when we read in Matt 28, that the soldiers who guarded Jesus' tomb were bribed by the Jewish leaders to lie and say the disciples came during the night and stole the body.

### **The Wrong Tomb Theory**

- Those who first went to find the empty tomb accidentally went to the wrong tomb, and erroneously concluded that Jesus had risen from the dead.

*After all, we are making a one of a kind, one time kind of claim that has never been duplicated at any time, in any place, by any other person. As stated earlier, Christians must, and do, bear the burden of proof on this, and the evidence must be both substantial and strong.*

- Danny Akin

*Today, most critical theologians find much less history in the gospels than their 19th-century counterparts, to be sure. Yet, a substantial number of historical facts are recognized with regard to the death and resurrection of Jesus.*

*Virtually all scholars today agree that Jesus died by crucifixion and that his body was afterwards buried. Due to his death, his disciples were despondent, believing that all hope was gone. At this point many contemporary scholars add that the burial tomb was found empty a few days later, but that it did not cause belief in the disciples.*

*It is virtually unanimous that, soon afterwards, the disciples had experiences which they were convinced were appearances of the risen Jesus. These experiences transformed their lives as they believed that Jesus was literally alive. These experiences also emboldened them to preach and witness in Jerusalem, the very city where Jesus had been crucified and buried only a short time previously. Here it was the message of Jesus' resurrection which was the central proclamation for these eyewitnesses.*

*History also relates that, due to this testimony, the Christian church grew, featuring Sunday as the primary day of worship. Some scholars add here that one of the early church leaders was James, the brother of Jesus, who was a skeptic until he believed he saw the risen Jesus. Basically all agree that a persecutor of the church, Saul of Tarsus, was converted to Christianity by an experience which he also believed was an appearance of the risen Jesus.*

*These are a minimum number of facts agreed upon by almost all critical scholars who study this topic, whatever their school of thought. From this summary, at least eleven separate facts can be considered to be knowable history (while another is additionally recognized by many): (1) Jesus died due to crucifixion and (2) was buried afterwards. (3) Jesus' death caused the disciples to experience despair and lose hope, believing that their master was dead. (4) Although not as widely accepted, many scholars acknowledge several weighty arguments which indicate that the tomb in which Jesus was buried was discovered to be empty just a few days later.*

*Almost all critical scholars further agree that (5) the disciples had real experiences which they thought were literal appearances of the risen Jesus. Due to these experiences, (6) the disciples were transformed from timid and troubled doubters afraid to identify themselves with Jesus to bold preachers of his death and resurrection who were more than willing to die for their faith in him. (7) This message was the center of preaching in the earliest church and (8) was especially proclaimed in Jerusalem, the same city where Jesus had recently died and had been buried.*

*As a direct result of this preaching (9) the church was born, (10) featuring Sunday as the special day of worship. (11) James, a brother of Jesus who had been a skeptic, was converted when he believed that he saw the resurrected Jesus. (12) A few years later, Paul was also converted to the Christian faith by an experience which he, likewise, thought was an appearance of the risen Jesus.*

*Such facts are crucial in terms of our contemporary investigation of Jesus' resurrection. With the possible exception of the empty tomb, the great majority of critical scholars who study this subject agree that these are the minimal historical facts surrounding this event. As such, any conclusions concerning the historicity of the resurrection should at least properly account for [all of] them.*

- Gary Habermas

## 10 Lines of Evidence That Support the Historical Resurrection of Jesus

1. *Naturalistic theories don't provide satisfactory explanations*
2. *The advent of faith and life change in the disciples*

*“People will die for their religious beliefs if they sincerely believe they’re true, but people won’t die for their religious beliefs if they know their beliefs are false... [T]he disciples were in a position to know without a doubt whether or not Jesus had risen from the dead....If they weren’t absolutely certain, they wouldn’t have allowed themselves to be tortured to death for proclaiming that the Resurrection had happened.” - Lee Strobel*

### 3. The empty tomb and the grave clothes

William Lane Craig gives these 8 pieces of evidence for the tomb being empty:

- 1) The historical reliability of the story of Jesus’ burial supports the empty tomb.
- 2) Paul’s early testimony in 1 Corinthians 15 supports the truth of the empty tomb.
- 3) The empty tomb story is part of Mark’s source material and is old, perhaps dating to within 7 years of Jesus’ crucifixion.
- 4) The phrase “the first day of the week” is very ancient. (This would not as likely have been added later)
- 5) The story itself is simple and lacks legendary development.
- 6) The tomb was probably discovered empty by women. (Not seen as reliable witnesses—this would not have been added to make it more believable)
- 7) The disciples could not have preached the resurrection in Jerusalem had the tomb not been empty.
- 8) The earliest Jewish propaganda against the Christians presuppose the empty tomb.

### 4. Women were the first witnesses

5. Change in the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday
  
6. Numerous and varied resurrection appearances
  
7. Neither Jewish leaders or Romans could disprove
  
8. The unexpected bodily resurrection
  
9. The conversion of James and Saul/Paul
  
10. The reliability of eye witness (NT) documents

### Works Referenced

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