

## Connecting Minds

"These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31)

### The Gospel of John

Chapter 19:18,30

**"They crucified Him... He said, 'It is finished!' And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit."**

The best way to expose false teachings is to present the correct teaching. In these two verses we are looking at the biblical doctrine of Atonement. We're asking, "Why did Jesus die? What is the purpose of Jesus' death? What is it that is "finished"?" These are incredibly important questions to have answered correctly.

The Bible clearly sets forward the teaching that Jesus' death had something to do with our sins. All the authors of the New Testament speak with one voice in this matter. In 1 Corinthians 15:3 Paul says plainly "Christ died for our sins..." Peter says it similarly in these words – "Christ suffered once for sins..." (1 Peter 3:18). Peter's words tie in with the suffering we have been looking at in Jesus' physical crucifixion. The writer to the Hebrews says "He [Jesus] appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself..." (9:26). The apostle John writes "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin..." (1 John 1:7). And Jesus Himself says in Matthew 26:28 "This is My blood... shed for many for the remission of sins..."

To deny that Jesus' death is linked to our sin is to deny plain language, maybe even language itself. But perhaps someone might ask "Why can God not just simply forgive us our sins? Why must there be an atonement?" It is a good question. One that too many people never even consider but just carry on in life with a vague notion of Jesus' death being needed for entrance into heaven. The atonement is necessary because of two truths that are tied together – God's character and our character. God is holy, just and righteous and must punish sin. We are sinful, defiled, unclean, rebellious and incur the wrath of God.

In order to prepare ourselves to understand the work of Christ that was finished on the cross, we need to look at these two biblical truths - the reality and gravity of our sin and the holiness of God.

Our sin is described in many different ways in the Scriptures. It is described as a debt – “And forgive us our debts...” (Matthew 6:12; 18:22-27). It is spoken of as unrighteousness – “All unrighteousness is sin...” (1 John 5:17). Sin is a breaking of the Law of God – “Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness...” (1 John 3:4). Lastly, sin is described as a hatred of God because we hate the law of God – “The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be...” (Romans 8:7).

The very essence of sin is to not love the Lord with all our heart, soul and mind. It is to glory in anything other than that we know God. (Matthew 22:35-39; Jeremiah 9:24). John Stott says "The emphasis of Scripture... is on the godless self-centeredness of sin. Every sin is a breach of what Jesus called 'the first and great commandment', not just by failing to love God with all our being, but by actively refusing to acknowledge and obey Him as our Creator and Lord."<sup>1</sup>

So that is us: sinners. But who is God? We'll begin this week by looking at just one attribute of God that makes us, in our sin, to shudder. God is holy and the prophet Habakkuk writes of God “You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness...” (1:13). Isaiah says to the people of Israel in his day “Your iniquities have separated you from your God and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He will not hear...” (59:1,2). God's absolute holiness has driven us away from Him. It is impossible for God to “just forgive sin” without either making a change in Himself or in us. Since it is impossible for God to change, that work of change must occur in us.

## TableTalk

Read Numbers 6:22-27 – Perhaps someone might think it would be desirable to have God's face hidden from us. We'd be able to do whatever we wanted outside the watchful gaze of an almighty God. But what is the blessing of God's face shining upon us?

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<sup>1</sup>The Cross of Christ, John Stott, pg. 90