

# The Atonement of Jesus Christ Explained

## Introduction:

There are a number of words, mostly Biblical terms, which are used to show the nature of our Lord's death on the cross. These words perceive a particular aspect of the most wondrous event in all of history.

We need to know them, their meaning, and their place in Scripture.

## I. Those Terms which Relate Christ's Death to Man

### A. Substitution

Although we do not find this word in the Bible, its meaning when applied to the death of Jesus Christ most certainly is.

Christ's death was a substitutionary death, which means He died in the place of another. "Christ died for us!"

The Lord Jesus Christ died a substitutionary death when He personally took upon Himself the responsibility for all our guilt and the punishment of our sins.

Romans 4:25; 5:8, II Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 2:20; Isaiah 53:6

The "Scapegoat" (Leviticus 16:21, 22) is a type of Christ our substitute.

### B. Vicarious

Christ's death was Vicarious. This word is similar to 'substitution', and means Christ died on behalf of another.

A vicar is one who takes the place of another and acts in his stead. (Hence the wicked blasphemy of the Pope who claims to be the "Vicar of Christ!")

Christ did not die for His own sins, but for the sins of others — I Peter 2:24; 3:18.

### C. Propitiation

Christ's death was propitiatory. The word means "to 'appease,' 'placate,' 'pacify'." Jesus Christ appeased the wrath of God by becoming our Covering — He hides our sinfulness, making us holy in the sight of God. When God looks at the Christian He does not see a sinner, but Christ.

Romans 3:25; I John 2:2; 4:10

It is the blood of Jesus Christ which propitiates, or covers us, from the wrath of God.

Compare Romans 1:18 with Romans 5:9

### D. Redemption

Christ's death was redemptive. The word "redemption" or "redeem" has to do with the thought of purchasing, buying back, or ransoming.

Leviticus 25:25, 48, 49; 27:20.

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Note: The ransom is not paid to Satan, but to the Justice of God.

The thought of redemption in salvation is borrowed from the ancient slave markets. There are three Greek words, similarly translated in our English Bible, which convey the full range of the meaning of redemption:

1. "Agorazo" — "to purchase in the market."
2. "Exagorazo" — "to purchase out of the market."
3. "Lutroo" — "to loose, or set free, by paying a price."

The sinner is enslaved by sin. Jesus Christ has paid the price in full. We are bought by Him ("Agorazo") — therefore we are His; we are bought out of sin ("exagorazo") — therefore we are no longer in bondage to sin.

Matthew 20:28; Romans 3:24; 6:17-18; Galatians 3:13; 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:7, 14; 4:30; Colossians 1:14; I Timothy 2:6; Titus 2:14; Hebrews 9:12, 15, 16; I Peter 1:18-19.

### E. Reconciliation

Through the death of Christ, man is reconciled ("restored") to fellowship with God. The Bible does not say that God is reconciled to man, for the offense came not from God.

Christ's death removed the enmity existing between God and man — sin is a barrier to fellowship.

Romans 5:10; II Corinthians 5:18-20; Ephesians 2:16; Colossians 1:20-21; Hebrews 2:17.

## II. Those Terms which Relate Christ's Death to God

### A. Sacrificial

I Corinthians 5:7; Ephesians 5:2; Hebrews 10:12

The death of Jesus Christ was an offering for sin — Isaiah 53:10. God's holiness demands that sin be paid for, and paid in full.

Christ's offering of Himself fully accomplished this, so that there remains no more sacrifice for sin.

1. It was a Necessary Sacrifice — Luke 24:26, 46; Galatians 3:21; Hebrews 2:10.
2. It was a Voluntary Sacrifice — John 10:17-18; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 5:2; Hebrews 9:14; 10:7-9
3. It was a Bloody Sacrifice — Hebrews 9:11-23; I Peter 1:18-19; Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; Ephesians 1:7; 2:13; Colossians 1:14, 20; I John 1:7; Revelation 1:5; 5:9.
4. It was an Acceptable Sacrifice — John 19:30; Hebrews 9:26; 10:12, 14.

### B. Expiation

Christ's death was expiatory. This means that it appeased the Justice of God (in that sin was fully paid for), and satisfied the Law of God (for the death of Christ fulfilled the Law.) His death removed the guilt of sin by cancelling and purging it.

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John 1:29; Galatians 3:13; Hebrews 1:3; 9:14, 26; I John 3:5.

### III. The Finality of the Atonement

- A. Complete — John 19:30 — “It is finished”; Hebrews 10:26 — “No more sacrifice”
- B. Final — Hebrews 7:27; 9:26; 10:12, 14 — “For ever”
- C. Never to be repeated. — Romans 6:9; Hebrews 1:3; 10:10 — “Sat down”

### IV. The Importance of the Blood

Like Cain of old, man naturally wants a bloodless ‘gospel’ — a way of salvation based upon personal labor. The thought of the bloody cross is an offense to the sinner, because it (above all else) declares the true nature in the sight of a trice-holy God. Bible-Believers have long been ridiculed for their “slaughterhouse religion.” Several modern version of the Bible omit references to the blood of Christ, along with a number of the newer Hymn books produced by modernistic denominations.

Even within the more ‘conservative’ ranks of Christendom there are those who deny the necessity of the blood, arguing that it was Christ’s death which was exxential — in which the blood was only incidental.

According to the Bible, the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ is absolutely essential. to the atonement.

#### A. The Blood is Demanded

Genesis 9:4 and Leviticus 17:11, 14 tell of the importance of the blood to God. See also Hebrews 9:22.

Furthermore, God has plainly indicated that BOTH death and the shedding of blood are necessary and essential in atonement.

The Passover Lamb illustrates this truth. God said, “...when I SEE the BLOOD, I will pass over you...” — Exodus 12:13. God did not say, “when I see the death...”, but by the same token the shedding of blood required the life of the lamb. On the other hand, if the blood only was necessary then the lamb could have simply been bled.

God’s prescribed penalty for sin is death by the shedding of blood. Jesus Christ had to bleed and die! (Romans 5:6-9 and Colossians 1:20-22 speak of both aspects.) He could not simply sweat blood — Luke 22:44.

#### B. The Blood is Detailed

Like a crimson cord, the doctrine of the blood runs through the Bible. It begins immediately after the entrance of sin and the fall of man — Genesis 3:21, and continues through the last Book — Revelation 1:5; 19:13.

The offerings and sacrifices detailed in the Old Testament were blood sacrifices. The Book of Hebrews explains these to be types (shadows) pointing to God’s perfect sacrifice in His Son Jesus Christ.

Genesis 4:4; 22:8, 13; Leviticus 4:5-7; Hebrews 9:6-24

#### C. The Blood is Depicted

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The Lord gave to His churches the ordinance of the Lord's Supper for perpetual observance "till He come." In this memorial, the cup containing the fruit of the vine symbolizes His shed blood — Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; I Corinthians 11:25.

If the blood were incidental and non-essential to the atonement, it might well be asked:

### D. The Blood is Declared.

That the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ is central to the atonement is stated throughout the New Testament.

1. We are justified through the Blood. — Romans 5:9
2. We are propitiated by the Blood. — Romans 3:25
3. We are Redeemed through the Blood. — Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; Hebrews 9:12; I Peter 1:18-19; Revelation 5:9
4. We are cleansed (washed) in the Blood. — Hebrews 9:14, 22; 10:4; I John 1:7; Revelation 1:5; 7:14
5. We are reconciled by the Blood. — Colossians 1:20; Ephesians 2:13
6. We are sanctified through the Blood. — Hebrews 10:29; 13:12; I Peter 1:2
7. We have victory through the Blood. — Revelation 12:11
8. We come before the Father because of the Blood. — Hebrews 10:19-22

### E. The Blood is Defined

We are informed in Hebrews 10:4 that not just any blood can atone for the sin of the world. All the blood shed in all the Levitical animal sacrifices was unable to take away sin permanently.

A man cannot personally atone for his own sin by shedding his own blood, for the simple reason that his blood is sinful blood. Only the blood of Jesus Christ is sufficient and efficient to do these things.

The Bible specifies what kind of shed blood purchases eternal salvation:

#### 1. It must be Pure Blood.

- a) Human Blood is Adam's Blood — Acts 17:26
- b) Adam's Blood is Tainted Blood — Romans 5:12
- c) Christ's Blood is God's Blood — Acts 20:28
- d) Christ's Blood is Pure Blood — Matthew 27:4; I Peter 1:18-19

#### 2. It must be Presented Blood

On the annual Day of Atonement, the high priest would present the blood inside the holy of holies by sprinkling it on the mercy seat. (Leviticus 16:2, 3, 14-16; Hebrews 9:6, 7, 25) Since this was a shadow of what Christ did, we notice:

- a) The Tabernacle was patterned after the Temple in Heaven. — Exodus 25:9; Hebrews 8:5; 9:23
- b) Only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies. — Hebrews 9:7
- c) Christ is our Great High Priest. — Hebrews 4:15; 7:24-8:2
- d) Christ offered His Blood before the Mercy Seat in Heaven. — Hebrews 8:3; 9:24-26; Ephesians 5:2

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- e) It is apparent Christ Ascended to Heaven to Present His Blood Immediately after His Resurrection.
3. It must be Preserved Blood
- a) The Blood of Christ is Still Efficacious Today — I John 1:7-9  
Believers are able to receive cleansing today — it is the blood which cleanses.
  - b) Prophecies of Future Events Speak of Fresh Blood
    - (1) Wounds, not scars — Zechariah 13:6
    - (2) A Lamb as it had been slain, not a carcass — Revelation 5:6
    - (3) A Blood that speaketh, not spoke — Hebrews 12:24