

The Work of Christ

- The life of Jesus
- What is the atonement?
- Theories of the atonement
- Biblical images
- Recent criticism
- Christ's ongoing work
- The extent of the atonement

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The Life of Jesus

- Traditional theologies give little attention to Jesus' life.
 - Mine his life for information on his nature and his work.
 - Creeds generally skip over his life.
 - Patristic period - growing interest in his nature.
 - Reformation - focus on his work.
- It reminds us he's our example (1 Jn. 2:6).
- Anabaptists have focused on his life.

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The Life of Jesus

- What did Jesus' life look like?
 - Mark 1:15-18; 32-39; 6:12-13; Matthew 4:23
 - Luke 4:14-21; John 11:1-6; 13:1-5
 - Acts 2:14-39; 10:34-43

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The Life of Jesus

- What events in Jesus' life are seen as significant by NT writers?

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The Life of Jesus

- What qualities stand out to you as you think of Jesus' life?

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The Life of Jesus

- Theological significance of Jesus' life?
 - Inaugurated the kingdom of God.
 - Highlights the social dimensions of the gospel.
 - Necessary for our salvation.
 - Shows obedience is crucial to salvation.
 - Serves as foundation for ethics.
 - Source for a theology of suffering.
 - Influences our devotional life.
 - Salvation is a relationship with a Person.

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The Life of Jesus

- Significance of Jesus' life for counseling?

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What is the Atonement?

- Words related to atonement:
 - Hebrew *kephar* (to cover); cf. Yom Kippur
 - Greek *hilasmos* (propitiation or expiation)
 - English *at + one + ment* (reconciliation)
- Atonement = the work of Christ for us.

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Theories of Atonement

- *Christus Victor* (“dynamic imagery”)
 - Dominant from 2nd-6th centuries.
 - “Classical” or “dramatic” or “ransom” view.
 - Cross was decisive defeat of powers of evil.
 - See Mark 10:45; Heb. 2:14-15.
- Recapitulation (Irenaeus)
 - See Rom. 5; 1 Cor. 15 (Adam/Christ).
 - Christ retraces human history, gets it right, and becomes the source of a new humanity.

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Theories of Atonement

- Incarnational theory (patristic period)
 - “The Word was made man that we might be made divine” (Athanasius).
 - Salvation as *theosis* (deification/divinization).
 - See 2 Peter 1:4.
 - We become like God as God’s image is restored in us by the Holy Spirit.
 - Divine and human come together in Jesus.
 - Still emphasized in Eastern Orthodoxy.

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Theories of Atonement

- Satisfaction theory (Anselm)
 - *Cur Deus Homo* (Why Did God Become Man?)
 - God as feudal overlord; people as vassals.
 - Sin as offense against God’s honor.
 - Satisfaction must be made to God:
 - By a human (a human offense).
 - By God (infinite satisfaction required).
 - Therefore it must be made by a God/man.
 - Also called “commercial” theory.

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Theories of Atonement

- Moral influence theory (Abelard)
 - “Exemplarist” theory
 - Demonstration of God’s love.
 - See Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:10-11.
 - God’s love overcomes our fear and ignorance and prompts us to respond to him in love.
 - Popular in Middle Ages until Reformation; also in classical liberalism.

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Theories of Atonement

- Penal-substitution theory (Calvin et al.)
 - Further development of Satisfaction theory.
 - Satisfaction paid to God's wrath against sin.
 - God as ruler, lawgiver, and judge.
 - Sin as law breaking that deserves punishment.
 - Christ bore our punishment in our place.
 - See Rom. 4:22-25; 2 Cor. 5:21.
 - Became dominant in Protestant Scholastic Orthodoxy (following Reformation).

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Theories of Atonement

- Example theory (Socinian; Unitarians)
 - Denied human depravity.
 - People can perfectly love and serve God.
 - New covenant of Jesus was one of absolute forgiveness.
 - Jesus was merely human.
 - His life and death were example of perfect dedication to God; proves that human beings can do what God requires.

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Theories of Atonement

- Governmental theory (Grotius)
 - Emphasizes God's law.
 - God is ruler and lawgiver.
 - He must uphold the moral order.
 - The cross demonstrates the penalty for sin.
 - Jesus did not suffer our punishment.
 - The cross should deter people from committing future sin. This allows God to forgive sin without encouraging further sin.

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Theories of Atonement

- What do you think of these theories from a counseling perspective?
 - Strengths/weaknesses
 - Appropriate applications

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Biblical Images

- Jesus' death is an example (Phil. 2:3-8).
- It's a ransom (Mark 10:45).
- It's a victory (Col. 2:15).
- It covers sin (Rom. 3:25-26).
- It reconciles us to God (Rom. 5:10-11).
- It's a sacrifice (Heb. 9:6-15).

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Biblical Images

- Expiation or propitiation?
 - Expiation = cover sins.
 - Propitiation = turn away someone's wrath.
 - Does God's attitude toward us need to be changed?
 - Romans 1 shows God's wrath in action.
 - Grenz: Christ's work is directed toward human sin (expiation) - *hilaskomai* in Heb. 2:17.

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Biblical Images

- NT uses many images to express atonement.
 - J. Driver: No single image can capture the full meaning of Christ’s work.
 - Images are powerful expressions of a reality that we can’t fully express rationally.
- Atonement theories tend to specialize in certain aspects of the human problem.
 - No single theory of atonement is sufficient.
 - None of these has dogmatic authority.

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Biblical Images

- Jesus serves as our substitute in death.
 - He suffered alienation so we wouldn’t have to (exclusive substitution).
 - He went through death to transform it for us (inclusive substitution).

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Recent Criticism

- Is the atonement “divine child abuse”?
 - Shows God as abusive father punishing the innocent son.
 - Encourages abuse, especially in families.
 - Popular version of penal-substitution theory is the main target of this criticism.
- We must be careful to be biblical and not to elevate one theological model as normative.
- C. N. Kraus: representative substitution?

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Christ's Ongoing Work

- Ascension and exaltation (Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:9; 2:32-36).
- Reigns as Lord (1 Cor. 15:24-28).
- Intercedes for believers (Heb. 7:25).
- Directs his church (John 16:13-14).
- Will return to complete his reign (1 Cor. 15:24-28).

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Christ's Ongoing Work

- Implications of Christ's ongoing ministry?

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Extent of the Atonement

- Christ's work was sufficient for the sins of the world. For whom was it intended?
 - Limited or particular atonement: Christ died for the elect only (Calvinism).
 - General or universal atonement: Christ died for everyone, but only those who believe will benefit (Arminianism).

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Extent of the Atonement

- Limited atonement focuses on passages that say Christ died for his people.
 - Lays down his life for the sheep (John 10:15).
 - For his friends (John 15:13).
 - For the church (Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:25).
- Logically follows from the other four points of Calvinism. Why would Christ die for people God had decided not to save?

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Extent of the Atonement

- “If God from eternity determined to save one portion of the human race and not another, it seems to be a contradiction to say that the plan of salvation had equal reference to both portions; that the Father sent his Son to die for those whom He had predetermined not to save, as truly as, and in the same sense that He gave Him up for those whom He had chosen to make the heirs of salvation.”
Charles Hodge

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Extent of the Atonement

- Universal atonement focuses on passages that say Christ died for the everyone.
 - Takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29).
 - God so loved the world (John 3:16).
 - He died for all (2 Cor. 5:14-15).
 - He’s a ransom for all (1 Tim. 2:6).
 - God doesn’t want any to perish (2 Pet. 3:9).
 - Savior of all, especially believers (1 Tim. 4:10).
 - Atonement for sins of world (1 John 2:1-2).

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Extent of the Atonement

- Universal atonement also focuses on the command to proclaim the gospel to all.
- Universal atonement is NOT universal salvation.
 - Means Christ died for all.
 - Does not mean all will be saved.
 - Either not all are elect, or not all will respond.

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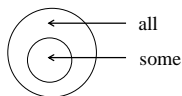
Extent of the Atonement

- Grenz: atonement is both objective and subjective.
 - Objective = accomplished fact that has changed the reality of the human situation. Offered to everyone.
 - Subjective = experienced only by those who respond to the offer.
- This means that hell is our own doing.

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Extent of the Atonement

- “Limited” verses can be explained in context.
 - The church is the subject of discussion.
 - Christ did die for believers; the verses don’t say for believers *only*.
 - “Some” is a subset of “all.”



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Extent of the Atonement

- Universal atonement makes the best sense of the biblical data.
- This is the point of TULIP that is rejected by “four-point” Calvinists.
- But four-point Calvinism is logically inconsistent. Why would Christ die for those he intended not to save?
- Significance for counseling?

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Jackie has been referred to you by her pastor. She often comes to him to talk about small sins she has committed, asking him if God will forgive her. After she becomes aware of a sin, she always prays for forgiveness. At first she feels relieved, but the feeling doesn't last. She's grateful to Jesus for accepting the punishment for her sins on the cross. She knows that God hates sin, and she's glad that God took out his anger on Jesus instead of on her. But she's still afraid that someday she may face God's wrath. She is very active in the church, and she tries to live a good Christian life, but she's never sure she has done enough to please God. She knows that she provokes God's anger every day because of her sins. She keeps messing up, and she doesn't know how long God will put up with her. What theological framework will you need in order to address her situation?

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Case Study

- Theological issues?
- What does Jackie need to understand about God?
- About the atonement?
- About forgiveness?

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