

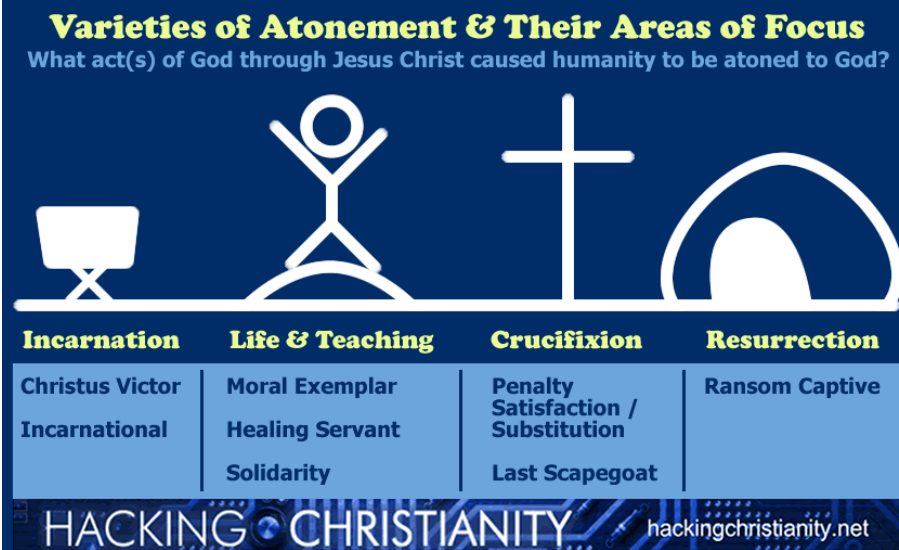
AT+ONE

Christian Theories of Atonement

WHAT IS ATONEMENT?

- ◉ Atonement comes from 16th century English - literally means at-one-ment.
- ◉ God's act of dealing with the primary human problem of sin; process of reconciliation between God and human beings with the goal of righting a wrong (sin).
- ◉ In Christianity: how we talk about the salvific work of Jesus Christ.
- ◉ When does God's saving work occur:
 - Incarnation?
 - Life & Ministry of Jesus?
 - Crucifixion?
 - Resurrection?

Varieties of Atonement & Their Areas of Focus
 What act(s) of God through Jesus Christ caused humanity to be atoned to God?



Incarnation	Life & Teaching	Crucifixion	Resurrection
Christus Victor Incarnational	Moral Exemplar Healing Servant Solidarity	Penalty Satisfaction / Substitution Last Scapegoat	Ransom Captive

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GOALS OF OUR STUDY

- ◉ NOT to pick one atonement theory over the others
- ◉ But to have open hearts and minds, to see if one resonates with us more than others, and to explore why that may be.
- ◉ To deepen our understanding of what the Bible says about atonement and reconciliation between God and humanity, along with theologians, our creeds, and our hymns.
- ◉ To understand the importance of the entirety of the work in the person of Jesus Christ - from Bethlehem to Pentecost and beyond!

1 JOHN 2:1-2

¹My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; ²**and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.**

HEALING SERVANT ATONEMENT THEORY

We are sick with the disease of sin that we cannot cure. We are healed through the suffering of Jesus Christ. It is curative in that it removes our fundamental human predicament of sin. It is restorative because it returns us to wholeness:

- to the wholeness of our person,
- to the wholeness of our relation to God,
- to the wholeness of God's community.

God is the **great healer**, addressing not merely the symptoms but also the **root causes** of the human predicament.

HEALING SERVANT ATONEMENT THEORY

◉ Read Isaiah 52:13-53:12

HEALING SERVANT ATONEMENT THEORY

Isaiah 53 connects with Leviticus 16.

Healing Servant does work of both goats: His suffering and death create the symbolic purification necessary for the healing of those who have strayed. And he bears away the sins, as the goat takes them into the desert. But since sin is connected with sickness, the Servant's atonement also connects symbolically with healing. Healers remove the cause of the illness from the sufferer and bring it into themselves for disposal. **The Servant bears our sins and heals us with his wounds.**

HEALING SERVANT ATONEMENT THEORY

Diagnosis: We are diseased, suffering from our sins. We find ourselves unable to cure ourselves.

Healing act: the Servant-Healer, in his voluntary suffering and ultimate death, takes up our human predicament, removing the illness and resulting judgment of uncleanness.

HEALING SERVANT ATONEMENT THEORY

The Servant is in turn judged unclean and separated, even in death, from the community. His atonement is both a guilt offering signifying our healing and a taking of our illness on himself. He restores us cured to God and the community.

NEW COVENANT ATONEMENT THEORY

- ◉ Christ is the Paschal lamb, who makes the angel of death pass over us because of our covenant relationship.
- ◉ Jesus is the sacrifice for the covenant. The cross allows us to bind together in a new community.
- ◉ Cares less about mechanics of atonement, and more about its ultimate purpose: to create a transformed, Spirit-filled people of God. The New Testament's various atonement metaphors are part of a remarkably coherent picture of Jesus' death as that which brings about the new covenant (and thus the new community) promised by the prophets, which is also the covenant of peace.

NEW COVENANT ATONEMENT THEORY

- ◉ The crucifixion (and resurrection) usher in the new covenant, and that the blessings promised by Jeremiah and Ezekiel came from the shedding of Jesus' blood.
- ◉ Forgiveness cleanses us so that we may receive the other promised blessings – the Spirit, fellowship with God, community, etc. It's not *just* forgiveness. You enter my house through the door, and the door is part of my house, but the house is much, much more than the door! You should be very thankful for the door, as there is no other way in, but you really need to get past the door to experience the house.

NEW COVENANT ATONEMENT THEORY

- ◉ Jeremiah 31:31-34
- ◉ Ezekiel 11:17-20; 36:23-28
- ◉ Matthew 26:27-28
- ◉ 1 Corinthians 11:25-26
- ◉ 2 Corinthians 3:3-6

NEW COVENANT ATONEMENT THEORY

8 characteristics of God's covenant community:

- ◉ 1. Liberated (having experienced a new Exodus)
- ◉ 2. Restored and unified (Israel and Judah together; having one heart)
- ◉ 3. Forgiven, cleansed from unholiness and idolatry/ unfaithfulness to God
- ◉ 4. Sanctified
- ◉ 5. Existing in mutual covenant relationship with God characterized by community-wide faithfulness, intimacy, and knowledge.
- ◉ 6. Internally empowered and enlivened to keep the covenant.
- ◉ 7. Bearing witness of God's holiness.
- ◉ 8. Permanent or everlasting.

NEW COVENANT ATONEMENT THEORY

Gorman: it is God's aim "to create a liberated and forgiven community, a faithful and loving people empowered by the Spirit to bear witness to the holy character of God. That is, God wants to form a people in his own image. The new covenant will mean a new creation; the image of God will be restored, not just in individuals but in a people."

NEW COVENANT ATONEMENT THEORY

Michael Gorman: "Christ's death effected the new covenant, meaning specifically the creation of a covenant community of forgiven and reconciled disciples, inhabited and empowered by the Spirit to embody a new covenant spirituality of cruciform loyalty to God and love for others, thereby participating in the life of God and in God's forgiving, reconciling, and covenanting mission to the world."

NEW COVENANT ATONEMENT THEORY

The atonement – the sacrifice of Jesus – does much more than merely justify us. It does more than wash away our sins. It brings us the Spirit, who transforms us and gives us understanding.

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- ◉ 2 Corinthians 5:17-21
- ◉ C-67 succeeds in giving place and expression to diverse theological positions and interests from both the past and present and yet maintains a harmony and unity of perspective. At the same time, it clearly excludes the extreme forms of these positions.
- ◉ What does this say about reconciliation?

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Part I - God's Work of Reconciliation

- ◉ What atonement theories stand out to you? (aka how does Jesus Christ reconcile us with God?)
- ◉ What is God's purpose for us?
- ◉ What part does the Holy Spirit play? What gift does the Holy Spirit bring us?

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Part II - The Ministry of Reconciliation

- ◉ Is reconciliation to God individual or corporate? Why?
- ◉ What pattern does the life, death, and resurrection of Christ set for us?
- ◉ How should the church live out this reconciliation in society?

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Part III - The Fulfillment of Reconciliation

- ◉ Does God's reconciliation in our lives only affect church? Why or why not?
- ◉ What message does 9.55 have for us today?
- ◉ 50 years later, is this confession still relevant? Is that a good or bad thing?

ATONEMENT: WHAT HAPPENED?

- ◉ **Forgiveness:** Through, Jesus' death on the cross, God has forgiven our sins.
- ◉ **Inspiration:** Jesus' violent death was an enactment of God's unrelenting love for undeserving humanity; inspiring followers to live lives of similar consistency, courage, and sacrifice, in the face of oppression and injustice.
- ◉ **Revelation:** The cross discloses the heart of God. Through Jesus' death we see a God that suffers with us and is present with us, even in death.

O, FOR A THOUSAND TONGUES TO SING

1 O for a thousand tongues to sing
my great Redeemer's praise,
the glories of my God and King,
the triumphs of his grace!

4 He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
he sets the prisoner free;
his blood can make the foulest clean;
his blood availed for me.

ATONEMENT

How is our world different
because of atonement?

What have you heard that has
changed the way you viewed
things?

ATONEMENT

Rev. Michael Lindvall: “Somehow the death of Jesus, an event that might have been just another installment in the sorry human epic of torture, injustice, and death come too soon, is transformed by resurrection and becomes a death with meaning. Somehow this death bears forgiveness; somehow this death inspires; somehow this death discloses the boundless love of God, a love so unbounded that it willingly suffers with us. Somehow on the cross, the love of God reaches across the chasm gouged between humanity and the divine and pulls us across into eternally outstretched arms. Somehow.”