

# THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

## INTRODUCTION

We are going to think about two questions first -

### What is Theology?

The word theology comes from two Greek words – theos and logos. The former means “God” and the latter means “Word”. Theology in its broadest sense speaks of all the truths (doctrines is another word) relevant to God and the revelation of Himself to the world we live in. That means, you and I.

Story - The famous theologian, Karl Barth, on a visit to the University of Chicago, was asked, “Doctor Barth, what is the most profound truth you have learned in your studies?” Without a moment’s hesitation he replied, “Jesus loves me, this I know, for the bible tells me so.”

### What is Doctrine?

Wayne Grudem (“Systematic Theology”) writes – “A doctrine is what the whole Bible teaches us today about some particular topic.” Today we will be looking at two doctrines, which are in the Bible. Other topics which you can find in the Bible include Man, the Church, and God Himself.

We start out today, agreeing about two things -

- That the God who is spoken about in the Bible exists and that He is who the Bible says He is.
- That the Bible is true and is our only standard of truth

## OUR BELIEF ABOUT WHO JESUS IS

We will examine the Biblical revelation about WHO JESUS IS in a few minutes but I thought it would be good, right at the start of this lecture, to make a firm statement on WHO JESUS IS. The following quotations describe what the evangelical, historic view of Jesus has been and continues to be -

McPherson – “Jesus is perfect God and perfect man perfectly united”. (The Faith Once Delivered by Ian McPherson)

Bonhoffer – “If Jesus Christ is not true God, how could he help us? If He is not true man, how could he help us?” (Hodder Book of Christian Quotations.)

Grudem – “Jesus Christ was fully God and fully man in one person, and will be so forever.”(Systematic Theology by Wayne Grudem)

The Nicene Creed AD325 – “I believe...in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was buried; and the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father; and he shall come again, with glory, to judge both the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.”(This creed was revised at Constantinople AD 381)

The Chalcedonian Creed AD 451 “We...teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable soul and body...only begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union....”

**This is a core belief of Christianity – get this wrong, and you will wrong everywhere else.**

Stuart Olyott, in his book “Jesus is Both God and Man” writes – “If Christ is not God, then we who worship him are idolaters. However, if he is God and we fail to worship him, we are the worst rebels of all...the eternal Son of God became a man. He continues to be a man to this day, and will always be one. He is both God and man, in two distinct natures.”

**1 Timothy 3:16 –**

**“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh.” NKJ**

**“And great and important and weighty, we confess, is the hidden truth of godliness. He (God) was made visible in human flesh.”**

Story – George Buttrick, former chaplain at Harvard, recalls that students would come into his office, plop down on a chair and declare, “I don’t believe in God.” Buttrick would give this disarming reply: “Sit down and tell me what kind of God you don’t believe in. I probably don’t believe in that God either.” And then he would talk about Jesus, the corrective to all our assumptions about God. (See Philip Yancy “The Jesus I Never Knew.”)

As someone has said – “Jesus presents a God with skin on whom we can take or leave, love or ignore.”

**The big question for this lecture is WHO IS JESUS?**

**ALTERNATIVE BELIEFS ABOUT WHO JESUS IS**

Over the centuries, right up to this present day, there have been many alternative views expressed about who Jesus is. These heresies fall into three basic groups. Firstly, there have been and continue to be teaching that deny the deity of Jesus and see Jesus as a mere man. Secondly, there have been and continue to be heresies which deny the reality and integrity of Jesus' human nature. Thirdly, there have been and continues to be teaching which deny the unity of his person embracing both natures.

Stuart Olyott writes – “.... all heresies.... arose because the simple statements of Scripture were not accepted, and a solution to the problems Scripture raises was sought in human reason.”

- ❑ **JESUS HAD ONLY ONE PARENT** – This is a modern error stemming from Mary Baker Eddy, founder of Christian Science. Mrs Eddy wrote – “The virgin mother conceived the idea of God, and gave her ideal the name of Jesus. Jesus is the offspring of Mary’s self-conscious communion with God.” Christian Science denies the reality of Christ’s body and the truth of his humanity. This isn’t a modern heresy but you can trace its roots back to the fourth century. It was dealt with at the Council of Constantinople in AD 381.

Remind you of what 1 John 4:3 says – “and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist”, which you have heard was coming and is now already in the world.”

The question that I ask you to think about is this – If Jesus did not take our humanity on himself, how could he have been the substitute for sin?

▶ Write out what Luke chp 1:34-35 –

- ❑ **JESUS HAD THREE PARENTS** - This is another modern error and is the belief of Mormonism. The core of this heresy is that they deny the deity of Jesus. John Ankerberg and John Weldon, in their book “Fast Facts on Mormonism”, write – “Mormonism blasphemously teaches that Jesus Christ is a created being by means of sexual intercourse. Mormonism teaches that every person has two births: first, birth as a spirit child in pre-existence, and second, much later, birth as a human being. According to Mormon theology, Christ was the first and foremost of subsequent billions of spirit children created through sexual intercourse between the male earth god (“Elohim” or “Adam”, depending on early or late Mormonism) and his celestial wife. Later, in order to produce the body for this special spirit child, the earth god again had sexual intercourse, this time with the “virgin” Mary, who then became Jesus’ earthly mother.” Also, Jesus is the elder brother of Lucifer.

The question that I ask you to think about is this – If Jesus is not God revealed in flesh, how do we know who God is and what God is like?

▶ Write out Hebrews chp 1:2-3–

- ❑ **JESUS WAS GOD BUT NOT MAN** – This false theory is known as the Gnostic or Docetic Heresy. When John wrote his first epistle, a heretical teaching was circulating in the church to the effect that Jesus was not a man. John called this teaching a doctrine of antichrist (see 1 John 4:2-3). The apostle John understood that to deny Jesus’ true humanity was to deny something at the very heart of Christianity, so that no one who denied that Jesus had come in the flesh was sent from God.

Gnostics believed that matter was evil and God could have no direct contact with matter. The humanity of Jesus, for a Gnostic, was just an illusion. He appeared to be a man but was not a man. Stuart Olyott writes – “He was not born and did not die.”

This heresy also denied the deity of Jesus. Gnostics believed that God was one person and from him came lesser divine beings, by which he maintained contact with the world. Jesus was one of these beings. Jesus was one of the greatest of these beings (called aeons) but was not God..

If Jesus was not a real, true man then what can we say in response to 1Tim 2:5?

If Jesus was not a real, true man than what can we say in response to Hebrews 4:14-16

▶ Find FOUR scriptures in the Gospels that speak of the humanity (e.g. sleeping, hungry, tiredness, crying) of Jesus –

- ❑ **JESUS WAS MAN BUT NOT GOD** – This has been a common heresy over the centuries. The earliest group that denied the deity of Jesus were called the Ebionites. They said that Jesus was an inspired prophet but only a man. They rejected

the virgin birth and said that Jesus was born normally of Joseph and Mary. Stuart Olyott writes – “.they...insisted that he was simply a man who was honoured by a special divine influence.”

This heresy is still around today and is promoted by a group called Unitarians. Liberal or modernist ministers who have found their way into some major denominations would also preach it.

**If this heresy is true, what about the following incidents in Jesus’ life (we could look at more examples) -**

**Mark 2:1-7 – Jesus forgiving sins.**

**Mark 15:39 – The confession of a centurion.**

**John 2:11 – The revealing of His glory (remember the transfiguration incident also).**

**Luke 4:34 – The confession of a demon.**

**John 2:19 - Jesus possessing resurrection power.**

**Matthew 8:2 – Jesus receiving worship from a leper (see also Matthew 9:18; 14:33;15:25)**

**Luke 3:22 – The confession of God the Father.**

**John 14:7-11 – The confession of Jesus.**

▶ Write out what Galatians chp 4:4-5 –

- ❑ **JESUS WAS GOD AND MAN IN CONFUSED INTERMIXTURE** – This is an old heresy dating back to a man called Eutyches. He is known in history as “the theologian who confused the Divine Persons”, declaring that “in our Lord the Manhood was lost in the Godhead like a drop of wine in the ocean.” McPherson writes – “Hence he denied both the true Deity and essential humanity of Jesus, and presented him as a sort of amorphous amalgam of both.”

The Council of Chalcedon AD451 condemned this heresy.

When I read the story of Jesus in the Gospels, I don’t find someone who is confused by who they are. We see clarity in both the relationship He was having with His Heavenly Father and with his own natural family. At the Cross, we see him showing care for his mother but also, we see Him talking to His Heavenly Father.

- ❑ **JESUS WAS A GOD NOT THE GOD** – This belief is taught by the Jehovah Witnesses. Their denominational version of the New Testament, entitled the New World Translation, renders John 1:1 – “In the beginning was the God, and the Word was a god.” This teaching goes back to the early 4<sup>th</sup> Century to a man called Arius and became known as Arianism. Stuart Olyott writes – “He (Arius) maintained that God was but one eternal person who, before anything else was made, created in his own image his highest creature. This was his only begotten Son. Arius held that the Son was divine in only a secondary sense. He was not eternally the Son of God, and was certainly not God in the same sense as the Father.”

The Council of Nicene outlawed this heresy in AD 325. The Council declared that the Lord Jesus Christ was “very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father;...” One writer wrote – “Had Arianism triumphed, biblical Christianity would have been destroyed.” Thank God for The Council of Nicene.

There are other heresies about the Person of Jesus we could look at e.g. Adoptionism, Nestorianism, Apollinarianism but we will now leave this section. Every heresy has this one thing in common – to undermine the Person of Jesus. Some of the ideas are more than fanciful they are plainly from Satan. In preparing this section of the lecture my mind went back to the Temptations of Jesus. We know the incident but, in the light of what we have said above, I now believe that the Temptations is Satan revealing a tactic he would continue to use against the uplifting and spreading of the Name Jesus – the tactic is to attack the Person of Jesus in the minds of people.

One further thing – the heresies that attack the deity of Jesus (Jesus being God the Son) are also attacking the revelation of God being Three Persons. Although the Trinity is not a biblical word, the truth is in the Bible – see Luke 3:21-22; Matthew 27:17-20; John 14:16-17. If Jesus isn’t the Son of God, there is no Trinity.

## A BIBILCAL DESCRIPTION ABOUT WHO JESUS IS

There are a few Bible passages we could look at to answer the question we asked at the beginning of this lecture – Who Is Jesus? We could look at Philippians 2:5-11 or Colossians 1:9-20 or Hebrews 1;1-4. I have decided to use John 1:1-18

### READ JOHN 1:1-18

- ❑ **“In the beginning was the Word...” (v 1)** -Peter Lewis in his book, “The Glory of Christ”, writes – “There is a title given to Jesus Christ in the New Testament which sounds strange to the modern ear and which, at first, may mean very little. Nevertheless, in the world of the first century, in religious debate and philosophical thinking, this term was repeatedly used. The term is “the Logos of God”, or as we translate it, “the Word of God”. In the first century the word “logos” was used e.g. to describe a power or a force. There were other ways in which the word was used but what interests us is the way John uses the word. – For John LOGOS IS A PERSON.

When we hear the expression “in the beginning” our minds immediately go back to Genesis chp 1. But John doesn’t want us to concentrate on creation yet because he has something else to tell us first. He speaks about creation in verse 3 but before that, John is telling us that there was somebody there before creation. This person, who John is calling “the Word”, is not part of creation. John is proclaiming the pre-existence of Jesus as the Word of God in eternity. John is telling us that he who was at the beginning of everything himself had no beginning (see also Jn 8:58; Col 1:17 and Heb 1:10).

In John 1:1 the word “was” appears three times. The word “was” comes from the verb “to be”. In the context of how the word “was” is used this verse, John speaks of the “Word” as someone who has been in continuous timeless existence. The “Word” says John did not at any point come into existence: “there never was when the Word was not”!

- **“....and the Word was with God.....” (v 1)** -John has told us that “the Word”, who is a person, was there before creation. Now John tells us that this person “was with God.” By this expression John opens up the truth that there is relationship between “the Word” and God. This relationship is face to face. It is a real relationship. There is something dynamic about it. As you read further into the Gospel of John, you will learn more about this relationship.
- **“....and the Word was God” (v 1)** -John now comes to the crowning thought – “..was God”. You can translate this expression as “God was the Word.” The Jehovah Witnesses translate this expression as “and the Word was a god.” This is an unacceptable translation of what is written here. (see Peter Lewis “The Glory of Christ” for further discussion on this point) John doesn’t use the word divine (theios) for God in this expression. He is making it clear that the Word, the Logos, is not divine in some lower sense than God’s uttermost deity.
- **“...all things were made through him” (v 3)** - John has established that the “Word” is a person, who was before creation and who didn’t have a beginning. John has also told us that the “Word” has been enjoying relationship “with God.” Finally, there is no lack of deity in Him – “he was God.” John now moves us to think about creation. We understand from verse 3 that creation is a work of God and that the “Word” had a particular role in this work. We cannot emphasize it enough – God created this world. We are not told that creation was made “by” Him but “through” Him. Creation wasn’t the solitary work of the “Word”. From how John writes we see that there was more than one person involved in this work of God. By referring to other books in the New Testament we get a fuller picture of how creation came about –

1 Corinthians 8:6 – “...for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.”

One further thing – we mustn’t think of Jesus as being just some deputy in this work. Remember what we have established from verse 1 – “the Word was God.” John wants his readers to see the “Word” not as some intermediary in the work of creation – some lesser spiritual being given a job by God. But creation was all a work of God and the “Word” was involved – “without Him nothing was made that was made.”

- **“In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it..... The true light that lightens every man was coming into the world” (vv 4-5, 9)** - One Bible commentator calls this verse “a masterpiece of planned ambiguity.” (ambiguity means having more than one meaning or obscure) What can we say that is not complicated and confusing? Let me mention a few things –
  1. I see these verses pointing out two of the names Jesus revealed about Himself on earth – I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD AND I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE. So we see here two attributes of God. Jesus is the life-bringer and the light-bearer for all men.
  2. I also think these verses help us to understand something that Jesus came to do when He came to earth. He came to expose the darkness of Satan’s Kingdom. We see that in the life and death of Jesus. He exposed the work of Satan in people’s lives. Also, the darkness of Satan’s Kingdom did not overcome Jesus’ mission. On the other side, we also see people coming to “see” who He was e.g. Samaritan woman.
  3. One further comment – it suggests to me the continuing work that Jesus has been involved in since creation came into being. The expression - “that lightens every man was coming” – took my attention. The question I asked myself was – is it Jesus the one that gives life to every conception within the womb of a woman?

“Ambiguity?” – I trust I haven’t complicated matters but given you some food for thought.

- **“And the Word became flesh....” (v 14)** - We are going to do a little exercise here – we are going to read John 1:1-3 and then John 1:14 to get the full impact of what John has written here. **All I can say is WOW!**

Peter Lewis writes – “What no Gentile philosopher would have believed, what no Jewish theologian had conceived, God had done. The Word became flesh: the highest being became a lowly creature; the source of life became a dying man..” John is confronting some of the heresies of the day who tried to “spiritualise” the incarnation because they were reluctant to admit that God, who was holy and pure, could taint himself with fallen flesh. John says “the Word became flesh.” While there is no beginning to the deity of Jesus, there is a beginning to the humanity of Jesus. This expression in verse 14 takes us to Nazareth and the angel answering Mary’s question “how can this be?” This expression also makes us look at the songs of Elizabeth and Mary in Luke chp 1. Mary sang “For He who is mighty has done great things for me..”

- **“...and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father” (v 14)**

This expression takes us into the stable in Bethlehem where this baby captured the hearts of shepherds. We can also go to the Temple at Jerusalem where people are again taken up with this baby. We wait some time and then wise men appear and spend time worshipping this baby. We read the few verses we have about the early life of Jesus and notice that he was a child who experienced grace from God and gained favour with men.

The “Word” tabernacled among men and women – the “Word” put on the coverings of humanity. But remember it was the God of all grace and of all truth who took on human flesh.

In some translations of the expression “the only Son from the Father” is translated as “the only begotten of the Father.” This simple means “the only one of its kind.” Lewis writes – “Jesus is not only the dwelling place of God, he is God dwelling among us...the form and the substance of God with us, and hence the revealer and the revelation of God (see John 1:18). His flesh is where God is, and his person is who God is: God the eternal Word (see John 1:14).”

- **“No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known” (v 18) -** Jesus reveals God – Lewis writes “Jesus is not simply a word about God, nor even only a word from God; he himself is the Word of God, and he himself is God the Word...He is God’s speaking and acting Word.” Jesus is unique, supreme and unrivalled as the One and Only Revealer of God. His revelation cannot be bettered or improved or overtaken or surpassed. He is the One and Only Revealer of God that is sufficient for all men and all women, for all time, in all places no matter what the cultural or national background is.

## THE MYSTERY OF THE GODMAN, THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

We are going to look at the thirty-three years that Jesus, the GODMAN, spent on this earth. Remember, he was always and will always be the Son of God. But Jesus humanity began in the womb of a young woman from Nazareth. Although his humanity had a beginning, HE will always now bear humanity. Paul talking about the Jesus post ascension writes – “For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Jesus Christ.” (1Timothy 2:5)

There is a heresy we must mention at this point. It is called “The Kenosis Theory.” Paul in Philippians 2:5-7 writes “...but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant..” From this verse some theologians have promoted the idea that Jesus gave up some of his divine attributes when he came to earth as a man e.g. omnipotence. The question we must ask is this – does Paul teach this in Philippians 2:7? Looking at the context of the verse we reject this idea that Jesus gave up some of his divine attributes when he came to earth. In regard to this expression “emptied himself” the NKJ Bible says Jesus “made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant” and the NIV Bible says “but made Himself of nothing, taking the very nature of a servant..”

Grudem writes – “..the best understanding of this passage is that it talks about Jesus giving up the status and privilege that was his in heaven: he “did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped” (or “clung to for his own advantage”), but “emptied himself” or “humbled himself” for our sake, and came to live as a man.” (see Grudem for more on why The Kenosis Theory is to be rejected).

Campbell Morgan in his book “The Crises of The Christ” says this about Philippians 2:7 – “He set aside one form of manifestation, in which all the facts of equality with God were evidently revealed, for another form of manifestation, in which the fact of equality with God must for a time be hidden.”

Thinking of the 33 years Jesus spent on this earth – what are the great contrasts we see? We are going to start right at the beginning of his life earth. He was truly God and truly man.

1. He is restricted to a manger – he is human. He developed as all babies do in the womb of its mother. He was born as all babies are born. All that happens with a baby – crying, sleeping, feeding etc all happened to Jesus. BUT although he was restricted to a manger He was still pre-eminent in Creation. The title he carried was “the firstborn over all creation.” (Col 1:15).
2. He is dependent on his parents – he is human. Like children today, Jesus was dependent on his mother and father for clothes, food, shelter, and security. BUT although he was dependent on his parents, but still “upholding all things by the word of His power.” (Hebrews 1:3) He didn’t stop being the sustainer of creation when he was a little boy playing in Nazareth.
3. He is natural in his development – he is human. He grew feet and inches and filled out as we say. We are told that he learned what obedience was but, as Paul writes in Colossians 1:19 “For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him.” (see also Colossians 2:9) The glory revealed on the Mount of Transfiguration was already there in the babe of Bethlehem and in the child of Nazareth.
4. He is anointed by the Holy Spirit – he is human. He is God’s servant and he is going to live and minister in the power of the Holy Spirit but as God he stilled the storm, calmed the sea and revealed his glory in the wedding at Cana (John 2:11) and on the Mount of Transfiguration (Mark 9:3).

5. He is someone “without reputation” – he is human. Think of the names he was called and the mocking he experienced before and on the cross. But we see Him holding conversations with Elijah and Moses because they all knew each other; we are told that King David called Him Lord (Matthew 22:43); we are told that He was the I AM (Jehovah) for Abraham (John 8:55-58); an angel came to strengthen him in the Garden of Gethsemane and Jesus tells his captors that there were 72000 angels at his disposal (Matthew 26:53). He was a man “without reputation” but as God Abraham, David, Moses, Elijah and the heavenly hosts knew him.
6. He died in pain, shedding blood - he is human but death didn't take Him but he took death. It was Jesus who “bowing His head....gave up His spirit.” (John 19:30). He laid down his own life of his own accord – it was Jesus who determined the when and the where and the how of His death. Paul describing our Saviour to Titus says “looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us (Titus 2:13-14).”
7. He was buried – he is human but read Ephesians 1:20; Romans 1:4; John 10:18; John 2:19 and there you will see that the resurrection of Jesus from the dead was a God thing – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Jesus was truly man and truly God when he walked this earth.

## OUR RESPONSE TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

- DEFEND HIM – there is only One Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 4:5). Throughout Church History there have been attacks on who He is and they continue today. We are called to stand up for the Person of Jesus.
- DELIGHT IN HIM – Paul tells the church in Corinth to glory in Jesus Christ because of the blessings that they have received because of Jesus (1Corinthians 1:31).
- DECLARE HIM – The message we have been called to preach and teach is Jesus centred. Follow the example of Paul who preached the “unsearchable riches” (Ephesians 3:8).
- BE DEVOTED TO HIM – Separate yourself from the world around and be devoted in your seeking after Jesus. Be like Paul in desiring to be like Jesus in his death but also like him in his resurrection (Philippians 3:10)
- DISCIPLE FOR HIM – We all know the command of Matthew 27:18-20 “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations..”

## YOUR ASSIGNMENTS

First Question – Where and when in the life of Jesus on earth do you see revealed the attributes of God? E.g. omnipotence Please give some explanation with your answer.

Second Question – What blessings do Christians enjoy because Jesus was and still is human?

In you answers to these questions, give details of any books, Bible dictionaries used.

# THE DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT

## INTRODUCTION

John Wesley once claimed that nothing in Christian teaching “is of greater importance than the doctrine of the atonement.” I don’t know what John Wesley said in regard to the importance of doctrine of Christ but, we can be certain of this, without the truths of Christ that we looked at earlier today, the atonement would not be what it has been and continues to be for men, women and children worldwide.

Story from Alpha News March-June 2004

Linda Price – “About four years ago my husband and I were searching to find a bit more meaning to our lives. We both had previously broken marriages and a lot of baggage. He saw an advert in the local paper “Explore the Meaning of Life.” It was an Alpha advert by three local churches who had come together to run an Alpha course. My husband said “This is what we need.”

Linda wasn’t sure but her husband forced her to go along to one of the churches running the Alpha course.

Linda continues the story – “We went on the Alpha course. On the fourth week, I asked Jesus into my life and my life has never been the same since. It has been absolutely fabulous. He’s been a friend that’s walked with me through ups and downs, which I still have. He’s with me all the time and he gives me so much comfort that I had never ever experienced before. It’s been absolutely wonderful.”

We are not discussing a theory or a philosophy today but a message that changes people from the inside out and gives them a relationship with God, through Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit. A relationship which is real, true and life changing.

**Peter writes, “You must know (recognise) that you were redeemed (ransomed) from the useless (fruitless) way of living inherited by tradition from (your) forefathers, not with corruptible things (such as) silver and gold, but (you were purchased) with the precious blood of Christ (the Messiah), like that of a (sacrificial) lamb without blemish or spot.” (1 Peter 1:18-19) (The Amplified Bible)**

The word “atonement” first appears in the Bible in Exodus 29:33. This chapter is about Aaron and his sons being set apart for the service of God. There are a number of sacrifices involved in this ceremony, which lasted for more than one day. As you read the chapter these are the main thoughts that come out in regard to the truth of Atonement –

- Before we can serve God, there must be both confession and repentance of sin.
- The guilt and penalty of personal sin must be carried by a substitute.
- The substitute must be without sin.

### What have Bible Commentators and Teachers said about the word “atonement”?

William Wilson (see “Old Testament Word Studies”) - “.. the word conveys the idea both **of pacification** (appease, to cause to be at peace) **of wrath** (anger, furious), and **of the covering** (overspread) **of transgression** (to overstep a limit, to violate a law).” From this statement we can say that atonement touches on something with God and meets the need in man.

Jack Hayford (see “Hayford’s Bible Handbook”) – “The word can be broken into three parts which express this great truth in simple but profound terms: “at-one-ment.” Through God’s atoning grace and forgiveness, we are reinstated to a relationship of restored unity with God, in spite of our sin.”

David Pawson ( see “Unlocking The Bible”) – “The word “atonement”.....means compensation....so if you atone for something, you offer something as compensation.” Let me quote David Pawson as he applies that meaning in regard to the offerings that Jews were required to offer to God – “They offered God compensation for what the person had done wrong...for the bad life the offerer had lived.” The sacrifices that were made to God were in compensation for the sin they had committed and the sinful life they had lived. The sacrifices that were given to God were animals without blemish and without spot. These offerings represented a life without sin and free from the guilt of sin. They were given to God.”

The story is told of a tourist, who while visiting a church in Germany, was surprised to see the carved figure of a lamb near the top of the church’s tower. The tourist asked why it was there and was told that when the church was being built, a workman fell from a high scaffold. His co-workers rushed down, expecting to find him dead. But to their surprise and joy, he was alive and only slightly injured. How did he survive? A flock of sheep was passing beneath the tower at the time, and he landed on top of a lamb. The lamb broke his fall and was crushed to death, but the man was saved. To commemorate that miraculous escape, someone carved a lamb on the tower at the exact height from which the workman fell

## WHY ATONEMENT

In seeking to understand the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ we must first answer the following question – Why was atonement necessary between God and Man? The Christian message has a particular viewpoint about the world and the people who are born, live and die in this world.

Let me quote Ian Coffey, "Christianity & Renewal" Magazine April 2004 – "Sin may not score many points on a Scrabble board but it is indispensable in any accurate diagnosis of life....No serious study of the Bible can avoid the fact that it has a great deal to say on the subject of sin."

**Psalm 51:3-5 – "For I am conscious of my transgressions and I acknowledge them; my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only have I sinned and done that which is evil in Your sight, so that You are justified in Your sentence and faultless in Your judgement. Behold, I was brought forth in (a state of) iniquity; my mother was sinful who conceived me (and I too am sinful)." (Amplified Bible)**

**Romans 3:23 – "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (New King James)**

Story – "It's all this stuff about original sin that I can't swallow," said a skeptic to Seth Jooshua, a famous Welsh preacher. "You don't have to swallow it," he answered. "It's already inside you." (Selwyn Hughes "Christ Empowered Living")

**(a) HOW DOES THE BIBLE DESCRIBE SIN?**

Without going back to the Garden of Eden, I want us now to look at some words that the Bible uses to describe sin. There are four words I want to mention (there are others e.g. missing the mark, unbelief). Each deals with a particular truth about sin.

Billy Graham in his book "Peace with God" writes "We may try to take a light view of sin and to refer to it as "human weakness." We may try to call it a trifle, but God calls it a tragedy. We would pass it off as an accident, but God declares it is an abomination. Man seeks to excuse himself of sin, but God seeks to convict him of it and to save him from it. Sin is no amusing toy – it is a terror to be shunned."

The four words for sin are -

- **Transgression** – We defy God with our constant stepping over the boundaries that he has set. We are law breakers. Billy Graham writes – "Whenever we fail to live up to the Ten Commandments, whenever we go contrary to the precepts of the Sermon of the Mount, we have transgressed the law of God and are guilty of sin."

**BUT JESUS was " \_\_\_\_\_ " (Isaiah 53:5a)**

Greg Haslam "...suffering wounds of confusion (bruised with rods and fists), laceration (tearing of skin), penetration (his body pierced by thorns), perforation (nailed through hands and feet), and incision (gashes opening his flesh). These are our just deserts and Christ willingly took them." (Christianity and Renewal" Magazine November 2004)

- **Iniquity** – this tells us about our characters: what we are like, what we are on the inside. Jesus described our inner sinfulness in Mark 7: 21-23. We are corrupt and are full sinful motivations, sinful thoughts, sinful desires and sinful ideas. We may try to hide this inner world from people with out masks but God knows us through and through. From this inner corruptness come evil actions and sinful behaviours.

**BUT JESUS was " \_\_\_\_\_ " (Isaiah 53:5b)**

**BUT the LORD has " \_\_\_\_\_ " (Isaiah 53:6)**

- **Enmity** - this speaks to us about a constant, consistent attitude of wilful rebellion and hostility to God. We hate God. We treat God as irrelevant. We disobey God's commands, distrust his words and reject His authority. As Frank Sinatra sang, and I don't think he will mind me changing one word – "I do it my way." We chose self over God every time. Billy Graham writes "Egoism and selfishness are the marks of sin as surely as are theft and murder."

In a national newspaper in the UK in December 2007 there was this headline – "Clegg gives God the boot (but Eno makes the team). This was the story of how one of our national political leaders has brought in an ageing rocker called Brian Eno to advise him about how to engage with young people. In the news item this national leader was pleased to announce that he didn't believe in God. What an act of rebellion.

**BUT JESUS was " \_\_\_\_\_ " (Isaiah 53:5c)**

Greg Haslam " So Christ was chastened (inflicted with pain, punished) by God for our alienation (hatred)." (Christianity and Renewal" Magazine November 2004)

- **Disease** – this tells us that sin is incurable and is spread throughout our lives. That is why leprosy can be used as a picture of sin. Although the word leprosy covered a wide range of skin problems in the Bible, there was a leprosy which was incurable and caused deformity and disability. What a picture of sin.

**BUT JESUS was " \_\_\_\_\_ " (Isaiah 53:5d)**

**(b) WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF BEING SINNERS IN GOD'S EYES AND LIVING AS SINNERS IN THIS WORLD?**

I am going to mention what the consequences are of being a sinner in God's sight. Remember, we are not sinners because we sin, but we sin because we are sinners.

- Slaves to Sin – Let me quote something that Brian Edwards and Ian Shaw write in their book "The Divine Substitute."

"The Fall has locked the human race into the slavery of sin. For all its religious activity, humanity cannot clear itself of sin. It has been well expressed in the phrase: "man is free to sin but not free not to sin."

Write out John 8:34

- Slaves under Satan – Satan is the author sin and the Bible is very clear on who rules and reigns in the lives of sinners. Paul told the Christians in Rome that they "used to be slaves to sin" and that they were "slaves to the one" whom they obeyed (Romans 5:16-17), and he wrote to those at Corinth that Satan is the "god of this age" who has "blinded the minds of unbelievers" (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Write out Ephesians 2:2

- We are Dead – We all know the famous verse in Romans 6:23: "For the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." What happened in the Garden of Eden brought physical death but also spiritual death. Humanity was left dead in "transgressions and sins" (Ephesians 2:1), that is, cut off from contact with God or a desire for him (read Romans 5:12).

- We stand Condemned before God – Let me quote two verses of scripture to establish this point –

John 3:18 – "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

Hebrews 9:27 – "...it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgement."

### (c) THE GOD WHO PLANNED THE ATONEMENT AND PROVIDED THE ATONEMENT

There is a truth here, which I think, is the greatest wonder of the spiritual world. It all revolves around a question – How could God be both Holy and Love when it came to the work of Atonement? We know that God is Holy (see Leviticus 11:44-45); that God hates sin (see Proverbs 6:16-18); that God is just and must punish sin (see Leviticus 26:14-19); that God is Love (see 1 John 4:8); that God is merciful and forgiving (see Micah 7:18-19). From these scriptures we can draw two main thoughts -

His Holiness requires all sin must be judged and punished.

His Love seeks to show mercy and pardon to those who have sinned.

How did THE GOD WHO IS BOTH HOLY AND LOVE remain true and honest to Himself in the Atonement that God Himself provided in His Son, Jesus?

Let us clear away immediately any thought that God suspended some of His Holiness and allowed a greater measure of His Love to be revealed in the Atonement that was provided by His Son. It is wrong to think that God acts sometimes in Holiness and then, at other times, in Love. Don't think that somehow, when it came to the Cross, there was a conflict between God's Holiness and Love. God is never at odds with Himself. He is consistently and constantly Love and Holiness. You and I change like the weather. We are up and down but God is always Holy and always Love. One attribute never overtakes the other or forces the other into submission.

John Stott writes – "We must picture Him (God) neither as an indulgent God who compromises His Holiness in order to spare and spoil us, nor as a harsh, vindictive God who suppresses His Love in order to crush and destroy us. How then can God express His Holiness without consuming us, and His Love without condoning our sins? How can God satisfy His Holy Love? How can He save us and satisfy Himself simultaneously?"

**THE ANSWER IS THIS – GOD SACRIFICED AND SUBSTITUTED HIMSELF FOR US IN THE ATONEMENT.** As one writer (John Stott) has said – "For in giving His Son He was giving Himself." The very nature of sin is man substituting himself for God. The central truth about salvation is that God substituted Himself for man. It is wrong to see the work of salvation as just about Jesus who was sent on some trip from Heaven with orders to die for men and women and come back to Heaven when it was all achieved. The work of salvation was a God thing – "For God loved the world ... For God was in Christ ... But God demonstrates His love toward us... God was manifested in the flesh... He (God) who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all."

The results are –

**The Satisfaction of God** – The word "satisfaction" is not in the Bible but the idea of God having to be satisfied is in the work of atonement is in the Bible. In Church History many angles have been taken on this truth of satisfaction. I do not intend to cover the history of this truth in this lecture. The one thing I will highlight is this - the death of Jesus met every attribute of God and God was satisfied. Satisfied that, at the Cross - there was a revelation of love for sinners; there was a full and proper judgement on human sin;

there was a demonstration of holy anger and wrath against sin; there was an expression of mercy to sinners; there was a substitutionary sacrifice for sin that honoured God and fully represented Man.

**The Expiation of Sin** – The word “expiation” is not a Bible word but the truth that it teaches is loud and clear in the Bible. The word simply means that through Jesus the guilt of our sin, the defilement of sin, the punishment for sin, the penalty of sin has all be taken away from us because it was all laid on Jesus.

John Calvin defined a sacrifice of “expiation” as one “upon which our stain and punishment might somehow be cast, and cease to be imputed to us.” As such a sacrifice, “Christ “interposed”, and “took upon Himself and suffered the punishment that, from God’s righteous judgement, threatened all sinners.”

Ian Shaw and Brian Edwards writes – “To elevate one aspect of God above all others is both unbalanced and dangerous. Unlike us, who can be sometimes one thing and sometimes another, God is all that He is all the time; He is never one thing or another, He is always everything that He is (see Malachi 3:6; James 1:17). Many false theologies today stem from this basic misunderstanding by allowing one characteristic of God to usurp all others. Thus, to declare the awesome holiness of God and His implacable hatred of sin in all its forms, does not in any way deny the overwhelming mercy and compassion of that same God.”

Story – In the movie The Last Emperor, the young child anointed as the last emperor of China lives a magical life of luxury with a thousand eunuch servants to command. “What happens when you do wrong?” his brother asks. “When I do wrong, someone else is punished,” the boy emperor replies. To demonstrate, he breaks a jar, and one of the servants is beaten. In Christian theology, Jesus reversed that ancient pattern: when the servants erred, the King was punished. Grace is free only because the giver himself has borne the cost. Philip Yancy What’s So Amazing About Grace

**Rejoice in this great truth – the Atonement that God provided in His Son, meets every demand of God’s Holiness and expresses every thought of God’s Love. There is a hymn which has this line in it – “Love found a way to redeem my soul.” Thank God that he found a way that fully revealed Himself and atoned for sin in the One substitutionary sacrifice.**

Write out 1 John 1:9

## ATONEMENT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

There are a number of Old Testament stories and practices which we could look at to understand something of the truths of Atonement. But, in this lecture I only want to look at the annual Jewish feast called THE DAY OF ATONEMENT .

Warren Wiersbe writes – “The most important day of the year for the Old Testament Jew was the Day of Atonement – Yom Kippur – when God graciously atoned for all the sins of all the people and gave the nation a new beginning.”

I am not going to go into all the details of the Day - you can read it for yourself Atonement in Leviticus 16. I just want to highlight a few things – Leviticus 16:5- 21 tells us that two goats were to be taken and together they represented one offering for sin. Both goats were presented to God and the casting of lots determined their role in this act of atonement. One goat had its throat cut and its blood was literally splattered before God in the Holy of Holies. The other goat was taken and the priest laid his hands on its head and confessed over it all the transgression, iniquities and sins of the nation. This goat was called the scapegoat. After all the transgressions etc of Israel were confessed over the goat, it was taken into the wilderness and set free. This goat carried away all the nations transgressions and sins and iniquities.

**What about the goat that died a bloody death?** This goat was a substitute for the people and was sacrificed on their behalf. This sacrifice showed how serious sin was in God’s eyes. The only way that Israel could avoid the judgement of God falling on them because of their sin was through the sacrifice of the life of this goat. The life of this goat was a substitute for their lives. This sacrifice turned away the just anger of God against the sins of the nation

**What about the goat that was the scapegoat?** Lewis writes – “These two goats were not two separate sacrifices, but each was part of the one sacrifice, and this second goat, the “scapegoat”, would have had no efficacy (force, potency) without its slain counterpart (“without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins” Heb 9:22). In this way the message was illustrated, that by atoning sacrifice the sins of the nation had been effectively removed: “The goat shall bear all their iniquities upon them to a solitary land” (Lev 16:22). The sin of the nation had been borne by an ordained substitute, and borne away forever. Israel was clean..” This goat took away from Israel the guilt of their sin, which had been confessed over its head. The releasing of the goat in the wilderness told Israel that their sins would be remembered no more. It brought Israel forgiveness from all their transgressions, iniquities and sins.

Jesus is our Substitute – see Romans 8:8

Jesus is our Scapegoat – see John 1:29

Because of this ONE SACRIFICE we have forgiveness of sins. By identifying with God’s Saviour; by confessing and repenting of our sin, the guilt and penalty of sin is removed from us – they are dismissed “as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.” (Ps 103:12)

The hymnist writes – “Bearing shame and scoffing rude, in my place condemned He stood...Hallelujah, what a Saviour.”

Story - In his book “Miracle on the River Kwai” Ernest Gordon tells the true story of a group of POWs working on the Burma Railway during World War 2. At the end of each day the tools were collected from the work party. On one occasion a Japanese guard shouted that a shovel was missing and demanded to know which man had taken it. He began to rant and rave, working himself up into a fury and ordered whoever was guilty to step forward. No one moved. “All die! All die!” he shrieked, cocking and aiming his rifle at the prisoners. At that moment one man stepped forward and the guard clubbed him to death with his rifle, while he stood silently to attention. When they returned to the camp, the tools were counted again and no shovel was missing. That one man had gone forward as a substitute to save the others.

## ATONEMENT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The word “atonement” only appears once in the New Testament but, if you don’t use an Authorised Version of the Bible, you will not find the word “atonement” at all in your New Testament.

Romans 5:11 in the AV it says this - “but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.” This verse in other translations of Bible reads as follows -

“.....we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.” (NKJ)

“.....we also rejoice and exultingly glory in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom we have now received and enjoy reconciliation.” (Amp Bible)

“.....we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.” (NIV)

**The word “atonement” may only appear once in the New Testament** but the work of atonement is clearly set forth in both the Gospels and the Epistles. It all centres on the life, death and resurrection Jesus Christ, God’s One and Only Son. All through the lecture I have been trying to drop in some of the key words of the truth of “atonement” e.g. sin, sacrifice, substitution. Let me quote you some Scripture verses from the New Testament which speak about the work of atonement -

- ❑ Matthew 1:21 an angel speaking to Joseph says - “..you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”
- ❑ John 1:29 “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”
- ❑ Matthew 26:28 Jesus speaking - “For this is my blood...which is shed for many for the remission (forgiveness) of sins.”
- ❑ Mark 10:45 Jesus speaking - “.. the Son of Man...(came)...to give His life a ransom for many.”
- ❑ Titus 2:13-14 “..our...Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us..”
- ❑ 1Peter 2:24 “..who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we...might live for righteousness..”
- ❑ 1 John 1:7 “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”

John Stott, in his book “The Cross of Christ”, asks this question - what did Jesus accomplish by his sacrificial, substitutionary death on the Cross? John Stott gives three answers to the question. They are -

- **REVELATION** – Stott says “the Cross was a word as well as a work.” The Cross reveals something of the Character of God. Not only can we look at Creation to see something of the Character of God but we can also look at the Cross.
- **CONQUEST** – we only have to read Scriptures like 1 Corinthians 15:57; Romans 8:37; 2 Corinthians 2:14 and Colossians 2:15 to understand something of the victory that Jesus won at the Cross. Stott writes “There was no defeatism about the early Christians; they spoke rather of victory.”
- **SALVATION** – the Cross was a work of God. We are now going to look at how the work of God at the Cross is described for us in the New Testament. This will mean looking at four words – REDEMPTION, JUSTIFICATION, PROPITIATION AND RECONCILIATION.

**These three answers help us to understand what Jesus meant when He said – “It is finished.”**

### 1. Redemption -

**Galatians 3:13 “Christ has redeemed us”**

In the New Testament, three different Greek words are used to translate redemption, and without an understanding of these words we will not fully grasp the tremendous work of redemption that God undertook at the Cross. The basic idea of redemption in the NT is the setting free of captives by the payment of a price (ransom).

Story – A pastor of a church in Boston met a young boy in front of the sanctuary carrying a rusty cage in which several birds fluttered nervously. The pastor inquired, “Son, where did you get those birds?” “I trapped them out in the field,” the boy replied. “What are you going to do with them?” “I’m going to play with them, and then I guess I’ll just feed them to an old cat we have at home.” When the pastor offered to buy them, the lad exclaimed, “Mister, you don’t want them, they’re just little old wild birds and can’t sing very well.” The pastor replied, “I’ll give you two dollars for the cage and the birds.” “Okay, it’s a deal, but you’re making a bad bargain.” The exchange was made, and the boy went away whistling, happy with his shiny coins. The pastor walked around to the back of the church property,

opened the door of the small wire cage, and let the struggling creatures soar into the blue. The birds were redeemed by the payment of a price. (Illustrations for Biblical Preaching – Michael Green)

I am not going to give you the Greek words but I will give you the meanings.

- ❑ TO PURCHASE IN THE MARKET – the scene is of a slave market and we are in slavery (see Romans 7:14; Ephesians 2:2; John 3:18; Romans 6:23). Jesus has come into the market; he became a man (see Hebrews 2:14) and through the shedding of his blood, the ransom price for our redemption was paid (see Matthew 20:28). As one writer has said – redemption is free “only because the giver Himself has borne the cost.”
- ❑ TO PURCHASE OUT OF THE MARKET – the price has been paid but we have been taken out of the market never to be for sale again or exposed to the life of a slave under sin. The word for purchasing out of the market is used at least four times in the New Testament.
- ❑ TO LOOSEN AND SET FREE – the disciples, on the way to Emmaus, said, “We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed (loosened, set free) Israel.” (Luke 24:21). They thought Jesus would have redeemed Israel from Roman tyranny. Jesus paid the price for you and I to be set free from the tyranny of sin and Satan. We have been freed but the challenge is to become slaves to God (Revelation 5:9) – voluntarily yielding our lives to God out of love and as an act of worship for the great work of redemption.

The Christian’s experience of redemption is three fold -

- Our Lord Jesus Christ gave Himself to redeem us from the penalty of sin (see Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14) – we have redemption now. Redemption from sin’s penalty is a present possession for every Christian.
- The work of the Cross has a present application in our lives – the death of Jesus delivers us from the power of sin (see Titus 2:11-14). Christ died to deliver us from things that are unholy. We are saved for good works (see Ephesians 1:13-14). We have been redeemed from the penalty of sin and, daily, we are being delivered from the power of sin.
- Finally, there is a future aspect to the work of redemption – read Ephesians 1:13-14; Romans 8:23; Philippians 3:20-21; 1 John 3:2.

*The hymnist wrote – “Redeemed how I love to proclaim it, Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, Redeemed by His infinite mercy, His child and forever I am.”*

## **2. Justification –**

**Romans 5:9 – “Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.”**

Justification is a legal term and it draws our attention to a law court where an accused person stands. The evidence of guilt is stacked against the person. There can only be one verdict – by the law of the land he is guilty of every charge. There are no extenuating circumstances. There is no suspect evidence. All the evidence points to only one conclusion – guilty.

Before we go any further there is a story –

Story -Two people went through school and university together and developed a close friendship. Life went on and they went their own ways and lost contact. One went on to become a judge, while other one went down and down and ended up a criminal. One day the criminal appeared before the judge. He had committed a crime to which he pleaded guilty. The judge recognised his old friend, and faced a dilemma. He was a judge so he had to be just; he couldn’t let the man off. On the other hand, he didn’t want to punish the man, because he loved him. So he told his friend that he would fine him the correct penalty for the offence. That is justice. Then he came down from his position as judge and he wrote a cheque for the amount of the fine. He gave it to his friend, saying that he would pay the penalty for him. That is love.”

Nicky Gumbel tells this story in the Alpha Talk “Why Did Jesus Die?” when teaching on the truth of Justification but he adds this –

“The illustration I have used is not an exact one for three reasons. First, our plight is worse. The penalty we are facing is not just a fine, but death. Secondly, the relationship is closer. This is not just two friends: it is our Father in Heaven who loves us more than any earthly parent loves their own child. Thirdly, the cost was greater: it cost God not money, but His One and Only Son – who paid the penalty of sin.”

God judges us to be guilty of sin but, in love, comes in the person of His Son and takes the guilt upon Himself. It wasn’t an innocent third party that came but God Himself took the rap of our sins on Himself.

Douglas Moo in his commentary on Romans writes this about Justification – to justify “means to declare righteous. No legal fiction, but a legal reality of the utmost significance, “to be justified” means to be acquitted by God from all charges that could be brought against a person because of his sins....This judicial verdict, for which one had to wait according to Jewish theology until the last judgement, is according to Paul rendered the moment a person believes – hence the present tense of justified.”

### **3. Propitiation -**

**1 John 2:2 – “And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only but also for the whole world.”**

This is perhaps the most intricate and controversial of all the truths in regard to the work of atonement. I do not claim to be fully on top of this aspect of the atonement. The one thing we do know is that propitiation is a word that is used to describe the death of Jesus on the Cross (see also Romans 3:24-25; 1 John 4:10).

To “propitiate” somebody means to appease or pacify their anger. This was a common idea in when it came to the gods of pagan religion. The question is – Did God need to be appeased? Was God angry? We cannot allow our ideas of anger and our own experience of anger to influence us when it comes to this truth of propitiation.

John Stott writes “What is revealed to us in Scripture is a pure doctrine of God’s holy wrath, his loving self sacrifice in Christ and his initiative to avert his own anger.” We are going to cover this truth of propitiation by making three statements.

**STATEMENT ONE** – the reason why a propitiation is necessary is that sin arouses the wrath of God. God’s wrath and anger is not like our wrath and anger. God is never spiteful, vindictive, irrational, unpredictable. God never loses his temper. He never flies off the handle with the least of things. God never loses his temper for no apparent reason. We are talking here about God’s uncompromising antagonism to sin and evil in all its shapes and manifestations. God’s anger is poles apart from ours.

**STATEMENT TWO** – it is God who does the propitiating not you and I. In the pagan religions it was the human being who had to appease the gods either with rituals or sacrifices. The pagan god had been offended and was angry and the human person had to follow rites and formulas to appease the particular god or gods. But, and it is a big but, God has appeased Himself – it was God who sent “His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” (1 John 4:10) There was nothing we could do to appease God. There was nothing we could say, offer or even contribute to compensate for our sins and turn God’s anger away. BUT GOD “loved us and sent His Son to be a the propitiation for our sins.” (1 John 4:10).

John Stott writes “God does not love us because Christ died for us; Christ died for us because God loved us.”

**STATEMENT THREE** – what was the sacrifice which appeased God? It wasn’t an animal. It wasn’t a thing. It wasn’t some angel. It wasn’t somebody else. GOD GAVE HIMSELF IN THE PERSON OF HIS SON TO BE THE SACRIFICE. We are now free from all the divine judgement and anger that was upon us because of our sin. Let me quote from P.T.Forsyth –

“The distinction I ask you to observe is between a change of feeling and a change of treatment... God’s feelings toward us never needed to be changed. But God’s treatment of us, God’s practical relation to us – that had to change.” He has forgiven us; we are now part of the family of God; we have an inheritance; we have an eternal home.

One final quote from John Stott – “Thus God took His own loving initiative to appease His own righteous anger by bearing it His own self in His own Son when he took our place and died for us.”

### **4. Reconciliation –**

What picture is behind this word? Redemption took us into the slave market; Justification took us into the court room and Propitiation took us into the pagan world of the gods, who had to be appeased when they were offended. Reconciliation takes us into a home where a relationship has broken down. There has been a quarrel, even “enmity”, but the relationship has been restored

Philip Yancy writes – “In a nutshell, the Bible from Genesis chp 3 to Revelation chp 22 tells the story of a God reckless with desire to get his family back. God struck the decisive blow of reconciliation when he sent the Son on the long journey to planet earth. (see “The Jesus I Never Knew.”)

Scriptures where the truth of Reconciliation is taught is in Romans 5:9-11 and 2 Corinthians 5:14-21.

What was the state of the relationship between God and Man? We know that men and women are at enmity with God – alienated and enemies of God. There was no relationship between with God. It had broken down completely but what about God in all this? Although the Bible doesn’t say that God needed to be reconciled to men and women, the fact that God’s wrath and anger was upon men and women because of sin (see Romans 1:18; 2:5) does suggest that God was not “on best terms with us.”

Stott writes – “For if we were right to say that God propitiated his own wrath through Christ, we could certainly say that He reconciled Himself to us through Christ.” There was a barrier to stop the relationship between men and women and God being restored. From our side it was our rebellion against him. From God’s side it was his wrath upon us on account of our rebellion.

What happened? As with every aspect of salvation we have looked at, again we find God takes the initiative for the relationship to be restored. We only need to read 2 Corinthians 5:18 and 19 – “God reconciled us to himself through Christ” and “God was reconciling the world to Himself through Christ.” God took the initiative to reconcile and he did it in and through Christ.

How did this reconciliation take place? Two things took place and I will mention them briefly.

1. God decided not to count our sins against us or require any of us to bear the penalty of them (2 Corinthians 5:19).
2. God decided to count our sins against Jesus and lay the penalty of our sin on him (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Because of this truth of reconciliation we now have peace with God, access to God and are adopted by God. What needed to happen has happened. The work has been completed and finished. It is now up to each man and woman in this world to turn from their sin and turn to God, through Jesus.

We have looked at four key words in regard to the message of Atonement in the New Testament. How can we sum up?

1. Each picture highlighted something our need before God. Stott writes – “Propitiation underscores the wrath of God upon us, redemption our captivity to sin, justification our guilt, and reconciliation our enmity against God and our alienation from him.”
2. Each picture tells us that to meet all those needs it was God who took the initiative. Salvation is all about God stepping in and reaching down to men and women and providing the way for men and women to be restored to Him. It was “God who loved the world..” It was God “who sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”
3. Each picture is built around the substitutionary death of God’s Son, Jesus Christ. Remember what we said earlier – **GOD SACRIFICED AND SUBSTITUTED HIMSELF FOR US IN THE ATONEMENT**

## THE POWER OF THE ATONEMENT IN OUR PERSONAL LIVES

What impact does the Atonement have on our lives? We have a new personal relationship with God – we have been redeemed, we have been justified, we have been reconciled and our sin has been propitiated. In light of all that, how can we describe this new relationship. Let me give you some thoughts -

|  |                                     |   |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|
| Slaves of God Romans 6:22                | Cleansing from God 1 John 1:9       | Fellowship with God 1 John 1:7          |
| Boldness before God Hebrews 4:16; 10:19  | Separated for God 1 Corinthians 1:2 | Sons of God Romans 8:14-17              |
| Transformed by God 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 | Help from God Romans 8:26           | Overcoming with God Romans 8:37-39      |
| Hope in God Romans 8:10-11               | Armed by God Ephesians 6:10-20      | Seated with God Ephesians 2:6           |
| Power from God Acts 2:38-39              | Works for God Mark 16:15-18         | Representation with God Hebrews 4:14-15 |

I am sure there is much more we could say but the above is just a start. Because of the Atonement we have been and are being blessed by each person of the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Write a prayer of thanks to God for his work of Atonement in your life –

## THE POWER OF THE ATONEMENT IN OUR LOCAL CHURCH

What culture and values should the New Testament message of the “atonement” promote within the local church? Paul instructions to local churches in the New Testament were to preach the Cross. Please remember, you will find a strategy for Church Growth in the New Testament. We have the Grace Triangle and you also have instructions about preaching and living the Gospel. Coming back to our question What values should the Atonement birth in the community of the local church -

Heart for People John 3:16  
 Attitude of Love Ephesians 5:1  
 Spirit of Generosity Matthew 10:8  
 Absence of Legalism Galatians 5:1  
 Willingness to Serve Mark 10:45

All these values are based upon the sacrificial, substitutionary death of God’s Son, Jesus.

## YOUR ASSIGNMENTS

First Assignment – Bernard Shaw, a British playwright said on one occasion, “I detest the doctrine of the Atonement.” You have decided to write a letter to Bernard Shaw to tell him why you love the doctrine of the Atonement. The letter cannot be more than 350 words.

Second Assignment – Give a brief (100 words) statement on “The Moral Influence Theory” of the Cross. In another statement (100 words also) state why you think that “The Moral Influence Theory” is not Biblical. Please use Bible references in your answer. For information on “The Moral Influence Theory” see [www.religioustolerance.org](http://www.religioustolerance.org) and [www.theopedia.com](http://www.theopedia.com)

In your answers to these assignments give details of any books, Bible dictionaries used.

