

Introduction

- What actually happened when Christ died on the cross?
- How are we to think about His atonement for our sins?
- Is there only one proper way/theory of atonement?
- “Know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” 1 Cor 2:2

Ransom

- Jesus died to pay the ransom to Satan in order to free humanity.
- Aslan’s death to ransom Edward is a great picture of the gospel.
- Some view this as Jesus deceiving Satan with the resurrection.
- “to give his life as a ransom for many” Mark 10:45
- We have been ransomed from slavery to sin, but not from someone.

Recapitulation

- Christ became as we are so that we could become like He is.
- Primarily follows the imagery of Christ as the new Adam, Israel, and David.
- Romans 5 & 1 Cor 15:22 “For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive”
- I love this image, but it doesn’t show why the cross is necessary.

Satisfaction

- This view tries to explain why God could not just forgive sins with words.
- Mankind owes God a debt of honor and sin is the failure to pay it to God.
- “He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.” 1 John 2:2
- Helpful view, but it does not explain how Christ’s righteousness is given to us.

Substitutionary Atonement

- Christ dies in our place as a sacrifice for our sins.
- “Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed” 1 Cor 5:7
- “Christ became a curse for us” Gal 3:13
- This is usually criticized as “cosmic child abuse.”
- Great explanation for what Christ does, but not the whole story.

Christus Victor

- Christ’s death and resurrection are not just about sin, but defeating the kingdom of Satan, darkness, and death.
- Christ’s ministry is a cosmic battle against evil, which culminates on the cross event.
- This helps provide a big picture view of what Christ does for humanity.
- This is a powerful and needed image, but it does need more explanation.

Example Atonement

- Christ's death shows how we as Christians are supposed to live.
- "Take up his cross daily and follow me." Luke 9:23
- Mainline Protestantism usually emphasizes this view.
- This is definitely true and needed, but cannot be the only picture of the cross.
- We can forget this dimension, while others overemphasize it.

Moral Influence

- Christ's death does not cure us, but it awakens us to true love.
- Salvation is a restorative process that brings us back to how God made us to be.
- Eastern Orthodox view of sin as a spiritual sickness and disease.
- "God's love has been poured out into our hearts" Romans 5:8
- This ignores God's justice, but does point to how God restores.

Wrong Way

- Some will believe the gospel must only be preached as one of these in order to be proper.
- Others will preach an insufficient gospel, i.e. exemplar theory only.
- Some take the death of Christ as a reason to fight and argue.

Putting Together

- I do not think we have to think about the atonement in exclusive terms.
- These are all correct in what they affirm and miss the mark when taken alone.
- The Bible seems to present each of these in different ways.
- I prefer Christus Victor as an overarching view, substitutionary atonement is the explanation of how, and the rest are various dimensions of the cross.
- I will often present the gospel in one or multiple of these views.

Application

- We should recognize the unending depth of the gospel of Christ.
- Studying the different dimensions of the cross can aid our faith.
- We do not need to choose as long as we are being faithful to Scripture.