

ISAIAH 52:13-53:12

Lesson 43: "Jesus, Our Suffering Servant"

Mike Taylor

www.MondayNightBible.Org

MAIN IDEA

Jesus Christ is presented as our Suffering Servant whose substitutionary death and vicarious atonement are predicted seven centuries in advance.

KEY WORDS



Atonement (Gk. *hilasmos*; H. *kapporet*): The work Christ did in his life and death to earn salvation. Symbolically, it was foreshadowed by the blood of a sacrificed animal which was poured out on the mercy seat of the tabernacle in the OT to make atonement for the sins of Israel.

Propitiation (Gk. *hilaskomai*): The atoning work of Christ whereby he satisfied God's wrath against sin by his sacrifice on the cross.

Vicarious (substitutionary) atonement: The work Christ did to earn our salvation by standing *in our place* in his life and death.

UNDERSTANDING ATONEMENT

In Christianity, atonement refers to the needed reconciliation between sinful mankind and the holy God. This reconciliation is possible through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, (Romans 3:25; 5:11, 19). Atonement is the Bible's primary message.

A. Vicarious Atonement

Vicarious means "done in place of or instead of someone else." So, in literal terms, the Christian concept of "vicarious atonement" is that Jesus was substituted for humanity and was punished for the sins we had committed and to reconcile us to God. Vicarious atonement is also referred to as "substitutionary atonement" or "penal substitution."

In general terms, human beings are hopelessly lost and unable to be reconciled to God on their own. This is because of our sin, which no amount of good works can undo. Since God is perfect and holy, we can never hope to pay for our own sins in order to be with Him. So, Jesus Christ was offered as our substitute. Instead of our trying—and failing—to cover the penalty for our own sins, Jesus became the vicarious object of God's justice. With this exchange our sin was paid for, and we can be declared righteous in Christ (Romans 4:5; 8:1).

B. The Cause of the Atonement

What was the ultimate cause that led Christ's coming to earth and dying for our sins? It was God's incredible love (John 3:16). Jesus died for the sins of the world because the love of the Father. God's love was not the result of Christ's death but rather its cause. God himself is love (1 John 4:8)

and the sending of Jesus, his only begotten Son, to be a propitiation for man's sins is the ultimate demonstration of God's love.

But the justice of God also required that God find a way so that the penalty we deserve for our sins would be paid (for he could not accept us into fellowship with himself unless the penalty was paid). Paul explains that this was why God sent Christ to be a "propitiation" (Rom. 3:25 NASB/NKJ) (that is, a sacrifice that satisfies God's wrath so that God becomes "propitious" or favorably disposed toward us). This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins" (Rom. 3:25). Here Paul says that God had been forgiving sins in the Old Testament but no penalty had been paid; a fact that would make people wonder whether God was indeed just and ask how he could forgive sins without a penalty. No God who was truly just could do that, could he? Yet when God sent Christ to die and pay the penalty for our sins, "it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies him who has faith in Jesus (Rom. 3:26).

Therefore, both the love and the justice of God were the ultimate cause of the atonement.

C. The Necessity of the Atonement

Was the sacrificial work of Christ on the cross necessary? Couldn't God, who is Sovereign, simply pardon everyone for their sins? Why was the atonement necessary? God has graciously chosen to rescue anyone is a free act of the good pleasure of his will (Eph. 1:5). However, once God had determined to save man, the cross of Christ was, consequently necessary.

Hebrews 2:10 states that it was fitting, that is, it was consistent with the nature of God to make Christ bear the penalty for man's sins because of his justice. No other way, including the Levitical sacrifices could atone for man's sins. The Mosaic Law served as a tutor to lead us to Christ, whose righteousness is credited as a gift through faith in his atoning work (Gal. 3:22-27).

Furthermore, Jesus Christ himself makes it plain that unless God had loved the world by sending his only Son to be sacrificed for sin, all humanity would have perished in their sins (John 3:14-16).

D. The Nature of the Atonement

The work of Christ was a work of substitutionary sacrifice, in which Jesus Christ bore the penalty of sin in the place of sinners (1 Pet. 2:24).

1. It is a work of _____ in which God's wrath against sin is fully satisfied in the person of our substitute (Rom. 3:25).
2. It is a work of _____ in which alienation between God and man is overcome and peace is made (Col. 1:20, 22).
3. It is a work of _____, in which those enslaved to sin are ransomed by the price of Jesus Christ's precious blood (1 Pet. 1:18-19).
4. It is a work of _____, in which sin, death, and Satan are defeated by the power of the victorious Savior, Jesus Christ (Heb. 2:14-15).