

Made Holy by Christ

Lesson #4

⁹ But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. ¹⁰ In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. ¹¹ Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. ¹² He says, "I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises." ¹³ And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again he says, "Here am I, and the children God has given me." ¹⁴ Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death--that is, the devil-- ¹⁵ and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. (Heb 2:9-15 NIV)

1. What was the reason that Jesus suffered death?
2. In what sense is Jesus the author of our salvation?
3. Why is it "fitting" that Jesus, God's own Son who created the universe, be the savior?
4. Why is it right that Jesus, who shared human flesh and blood, be the savior?

How have Christians in the past understood the work of Christ on the cross? Anselm, the Archbishop of Canterbury, lived from 1033 – 1109. He developed the doctrine of "vicarious atonement." The word "atone" means to make a payment. There are many verses in the New Testament that indicate that Christ "paid" for our sins, or atoned for our sins.¹ Anselm wrote a book titled, *Why God Became Man* to answer questions about why Jesus had to die on the cross. A key word he used to answer these questions was the word "satisfaction." When humans sin they dishonor God. This doesn't hurt God, but the result is that when humans sin they owe God a debt of infinite magnitude. There are only two ways this debt can be paid: (1) The human can spend eternity in Hell (Matthew 25:46; Revelation 20:15), or (2) The debt owed to God could be paid. No human being is able to pay this infinite debt, but God can (Colossians 2:13-14). On the other hand, no one but a human being owes this debt to God for sin.

Anselm makes some claims about atonement. He says that Christ's death on the cross is a "satisfactory" payment for humanity's sin (Rom 5:8-11; 1John 4:10; 2 Cor 5:18-21). Jesus Christ was both God and man. As a man, descended from Adam, he owed the debt. As God, He was big enough to make the payment in full. No one other than God in human flesh could have made this payment. Only Jesus could do it.

Anselm also answers some questions about God's justice and mercy. In theory God could forgive us without any payment being made, but this would be merciful in a way that cancels out justice. King David tried to forgive his son, "Since the debt owed by human beings is infinite a payment of infinite magnitude was the only payment that would be able to satisfy the debt that was owed."

One last thing, Anselm believed that Jesus made an infinite payment for our sins. He made the payment in our place. That is the meaning of "vicarious," He did it on our behalf even though we owed the debt, not Him.²

¹ ¹¹ And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. (Rom 5:10-11 KJG);

²⁷ Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. ²⁸ But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow servants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. ²⁹ And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. ³⁰ And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. ³¹ So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. ³² Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: ³³ Shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? ³⁴ And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. ³⁵ So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses. (Mat 18:27-1 KJG)

² I am greatly indebted to Dr. Phillip Cary in his lecture #15 from The History of Christian Theology for helping me to better explain the teaching of vicarious atonement as developed by Anselm.

1. If we think of Anselm as our brother in Christ, how can we use his ideas about the atonement?
2. Assuming that Anselm's ideas are based on the correct interpretation of scripture how can they help us to better understand what the scripture teaches us?
3. If we ignore what Anselm said can you think of a better way to answer the question of why Jesus had to die on the cross?

²¹ And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in *your* mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled ²² **In the body of his flesh through death**, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight: ²³ If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and *be* not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, *and* which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister; (Col 1:21-23 KJG)

1. When we were God's enemies who reconciled us to God? How?
2. In what sense is the fact that Jesus had a physical body an essential part of the Gospel?
3. Could another human being have accomplished the same thing if he or she died on a cross? Why or why not?

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14 KJG)

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (1 John 1:1 KJG)

1. How is Jesus different from every other human being?
2. How did Jesus' uniqueness cause Him to be better suited as a savior?

⁷ Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; ⁸ Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; ⁹ And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; (Heb 5:7-9 KJG)

1. How was Jesus "made perfect" if He was already perfect? (a tough question)
2. What does it mean "in the days of his flesh"?
3. How did Jesus learn obedience? Does this mean before this he didn't know how to obey the Heavenly Father?
4. What one event in the history of the world can cause a person to become holy? (And **by that will**, we **have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ** once for all. (Hebrews 10:10 NIV)