

## VI. ATONEMENT HISTORY

1.54.07

*“The **payment model** of Jesus’ death on the cross, traditionally called ‘penal substitution,’ **is a recent development**. You can find little hints of it in the early church but it really came to the forefront a thousand years ago, halfway into the history of Christianity, and then it became amped up even more five hundred years ago **at the Reformation**.” Tony Jones*

*“The doctrine of penal substitution really came to its own in the reformation and post reformation era, but **that does not mean that it was not there** in seed form, in embryonic form, and even in a somewhat developed form earlier in the church. **Historical theology does properly develop over time** but we have to understand what we mean by that. **Everything is given to us in the scripture**, yet as the church **confronts various challenges** and false teaching, it has **to learn to become precise**. This happened in the doctrine of the Trinity; **the same thing is true in the atonement**. The atonement wasn’t attacked early on, but **as time went on there had to become more clarification and precision** given to the nature of the cross.” Stephen Wellum*

1. Mike Winger in the film provides the question you should ask when looking into history for a particular doctrine. In this case the doctrine in question is the atonement. What was the question he said must be asked to determine if we should find the atonement in the history of the church? What is the question Winger says that we should not ask? Can you summarize these questions in a way in which you could use them for other doctrines?

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*"In the early church there were **a couple other theories**, versions, understandings, interpretations of Jesus' death on the cross **that were really popular**. The most popular one in the first one thousand years was what I call **the victory theory**." Tony Jones*

*"There's **a dominant theme** in a lot of the church fathers about the cross of Christ and His resurrection, and that is what we sometimes call **Christus Victor**. Or at least that's what modern scholars call it." Mike Winger*

**2.** What verse is given to demonstrate the Christus Victor theory of the atonement? Does this give a full picture of what the atonement is in scripture? Why?

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**3.** Brian Zahnd claims the doctrine of penal substitutionary atonement began with Calvin and is 500 years old. Which church father is quoted to show that this is not true? What "penal" and "substitutionary" language is used?

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*"One of the **biblical words** to talk about the atonement is **ransom**. So, it **shouldn't surprise us** that we have the ransom theory of the atonement and in the early church **the ransom theory was very prominent**... Where the*

ransom theory **started to go wrong** was this idea that crept into the conversion that **the ransom was paid to Satan.**" Stephen Nichols

"There are **substitutionary themes** in various versions of the atonement. No question about it. It **doesn't mean**, however, **that God is demanding a payment.**" Tony Jones

"In the book and movie, **The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe**, the C. S. Lewis classic, **we have a picture of what may be that ransom to the Devil view.**" Mike Winger

4. In the ransom theory of the atonement, what are the problems which arise when the idea of Jesus dying as a ransom is made into an exclusive view that resembles much of what is seen in the *Narnia* movie clips displayed in the film? How does scripture demonstrate that the ransom theory on its own does not work? (see Job 1:8-12, 2:3-6; Luke 22:31)

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"[Faith healers] believe in what's called **the spiritual death of Jesus**. They believe that Jesus **died two deaths**: one physical on the cross and one spiritual." Justin Peters

"Jesus **goes to hell**. I believe he went to Hades. He went down and descended into the depths of the earth for three days and **He pays for the sin of mankind.**" Todd White

5. What is the single clearest verse that was displayed in the film that dismantles the idea that Jesus went to the depths of hell, was tormented by Satan and the demons, and died spiritually in order that He would be born again? What did Justin Peters say is a fundamental problem with this idea?

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6. Who is the historic theologian that Stephen Nichols names who has the title of Arch Bishop of Canterbury? And what did he contribute to the doctrine of the atonement which helps answer the ransom theory? What was the verse the film displayed and was spoken by John MacArthur, in addition to this historic theologian's answer, and what does it imply?

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*"There's another version that came along... I call it the magnet theory, others call it **the moral influence theory** and so what [Peter] Abelard argued is that when Jesus hangs on the cross **He's like a massive magnet.** It's **an act of such overwhelming sacrificial love that He draws people into Himself by that act** and it ties right back into Jesus' last supper where he washes the disciples feet and says, **'I've set an example for you... now go do this for others.'**" Tony Jones*

*"**His substitution** in our place **is essential** for all those other beautiful images in the New Testament **to have any meaning or coherence at all.**" Mark Dever*

**7.** Mark Dever provides an illustration in answering the moral influence theory of the atonement by James Denney. Can you reproduce the illustrations in your own words? What is the fundamental element from those illustrations that Dever says demonstrates substitutionary atonement as necessary for the atonement as a whole?

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**8.** The moral influence theory on its own simply makes Jesus' death an example which you are to follow, showing you how to be loving. First, if you merely hold to moral influence theory, how does this not only allow for, but consistently lead to a universalist or perennialist view? Second, describe what essential element of the gospel is abandoned when someone rejects the penal substitutionary view of the atonement and how that person must now view salvation.

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## RESOURCES ON THE ATONEMENT & RELATED WORKS

- *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* by John Murray
- *In My Place Condemned He Stood* by J. I. Packer, Mark Dever (an introductory work to the next book)
- *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* by John Owen
- *The Work of Christ* by Robert Letham

## RESOURCES ANSWERING THE “SPIRITUAL DEATH” THEORY

- ▶ *God the Son Incarnate* by Stephen Wellum
- ▶ *Defining Deception* by Costi Hinn

## CHALKBOARD ILLUSTRATIONS



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## The Spiritual Death of Jesus

1. Jesus suffered in hell for our sins

2. Jesus was tortured by demons

3. Jesus died spiritually & was born again

## Cur Deus Homo

(Why a God Man?)

By Anselm of Canterbury

