

*Redemption  
Accomplished  
and Applied*

*by John Murray*

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Fourth Lecture

Presented by Dr. Richard Spencer

# *Review*

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- The Bible reveals that the atonement was necessary
- Murray persuasively argues further that it was a consequent absolute necessity
- Murray says that the specific categories the Bible uses to describe the atonement can all be classified under the rubric of Christ's obedience

# Review

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- Christ's obedience can be classified as active and passive
  - His active obedience refers to his keeping the positive demands of God's law
  - His passive obedience refers to his satisfying the penal sanctions of the law on our behalf
- But, in both, Jesus was fully active and willing
- It is through union with Christ that we are saved – our sins are imputed to him and his righteousness is imputed to us (2 Cor 5:21)

# Review

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- Murray calls union and communion with Christ “*the central truth of all soteriology*”
- The specific categories that Scripture uses to describe the atonement are:
  - Sacrifice
  - Propitiation
  - Reconciliation
  - Redemption

# Review

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- Sacrifice has to be understood in the context of the Old Testament sacrificial system
- Sacrifice has to do with expiation – the removal of guilt
- Christ's sacrifice was unique, he was:
  - The priest
  - An efficacious sacrifice to cleanse the conscience
  - The once-for-all sacrifice to which the Old Testament sacrificial system pointed

# *Now on to Propitiation*

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- Propitiation is “a sacrifice that turns away the wrath of God – and thereby makes God propitious (or favorable) toward us”

Wayne Grudem, *Syst. Theol.*, pg. 575

- Propitiation presupposes the wrath of God, which is “the inevitable reaction of the divine holiness against sin” RA&A, pg. 32
- Our culture, and many modern churches are offended by talk of God’s wrath, so we will take a look at this essential Biblical idea
- This is a major theological point!

# Who is Reconciled?

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- For example, consider Romans 3:25,  
All have sinned and

*are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. (ESV)*

*are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. (NIV)*

*are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith. (RSV)*

# God's Wrath

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- People often think of wrath in terms of human emotions, perhaps as out-of-control anger, and they think of all anger as sin
- But this view is unbiblical
  - Even human anger is not always sin; both Psalm 4:4 & Eph 4:26 tell us to not sin in our anger
  - The Bible does present God as having what we can rightly call emotions (e.g., love, hate, anger, grief, jealousy), but we must understand these in light of his perfection and immutability – God does not “react” to situations, he is immutable in his being, purpose and will



# God's Wrath

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- So God's anger is not like ours, it is holy, just and well considered, never petulant or rash
- Wrath is a "strong vengeful anger"
  - Vengeance is punishment inflicted as repayment for an injury or offense, it is retributive justice
- James Boice points out that

*A God who does not have wrath against sin is a deformed or crippled God. He lacks something. God is perfect in his love. That is true. But God is also perfect in his wrath ...*

J. Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith*, pg. 34

# God's Wrath

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- Wayne Grudem writes,  
*God's wrath means that he intensely hates all sin*
- It necessarily follows that God is very angry and wrathful toward sinners
- Grudem goes on to note that,  
*It is helpful for us to ask what God would be like if he were a God that did not hate sin. He would then be a God who either delighted in sin or at least was not troubled by it. Such a God would not be worthy of our worship, for sin is hateful it is worthy of being hated.*

W. Grudem, *Syst. Theol.*, pg 206

# God's Wrath

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- Some people think that wrath is incompatible with love
  - But, this is simply not true – you can be properly angry with and discipline someone you love
- Murray also writes,  
*the essence of sin is to be against God. ... God cannot be indifferent to or complacent towards that which is the contradiction of himself. His very perfection requires the recoil of righteous indignation. And that is God's wrath.* RA&A, pg. 117
- God's wrath is one of his attributes, which are all perfect and praiseworthy

# *God's Wrath Revealed Against Man*

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- Because Adam rebelled against God by disobeying his command, we all inherit a sinful nature and are, therefore, sinners
- Our sin is rebellion against God and justly incurs his wrath

*The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness ... For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.*

Romans 1:18, 21

# Propitiation

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- Because of God's just and holy wrath against sinners, removing our guilt (expiation) is not enough, God's wrath must be appeased
  - Expiation's primary reference is to man
  - Propitiation's primary reference is to God
- Murray writes:

*the idea of propitiation is so woven into the fabric of the Old Testament ritual that it would be impossible to regard that ritual as a pattern of the sacrifice of Christ if propitiation did not occupy a similar place in the one great sacrifice offered.*

# Propitiation

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- Murray explains:

*what does propitiation mean? In the Hebrew of the Old Testament it is expressed by a word which means to “cover” ... sin creates a situation in relation to the Lord, a situation that makes the covering necessary.*

RA&A, pg 30

- We spoke about this in terms of the atonement cover, or mercy seat (ἱλαστήριον in Greek) – Christ himself is our covering; when God looks at us, he sees Christ, not our sin (look at Jer 31:34c and Jer 50:20)

# *Conflict or Harmony in the Godhead?*

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- The most common objection to the need for propitiation as an aspect of the atonement is that people think it puts the Father and Son at odds with each other; Murray writes:

*It has been charged that this doctrine represents the Son as winning over the incensed Father to clemency and love, a supposition wholly inconsistent with the fact that the love of God is the very fount from which the atonement springs.*

# Harmony in the Godhead

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- Murray points out that such a view fails to appreciate or understand three things:
  - *First of all, to love and to be propitious are not convertible terms. It is false to suppose that the doctrine of propitiation regards propitiation as that which causes or constrains the divine love.*  
RA&A, pg 31
  - *Secondly, propitiation is not a turning of the wrath of God into love.*  
RA&A, pg 31
  - *Thirdly, propitiation does not detract from the love and mercy of God; rather it enhances the marvel of his love.*  
RA&A, pg 32



# *Harmony in the Godhead*

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- The Father, Son and Holy Spirit work together in accomplishing redemption for God's chosen people:
  - The Father loves us (not just the Son):

*This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.*

1 John 4:10

# Harmony in the Godhead

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- The Father, Son and Holy Spirit work together in accomplishing redemption for God's chosen people:
  - The Son is wrathful (not just the Father):

*everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves ... calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb ...*

Revelation 6:15-16

# *Harmony in the Godhead*

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- The Father, Son and Holy Spirit work together in accomplishing redemption for God's chosen people:
  - The Holy Spirit is involved (not just Father & Son):

*how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.*

Hebrews 9:14

# One Last Objection

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- Some cite Christ's cry "**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?**" as evidence of conflict between the Father and Son
- But this ignores:
  - Christ cries "My God, my God"
  - He is quoting from Psalm 22, which speaks of his agony on the cross, but also of confidence in God and praise for what he has done
  - Grudem points out it is really a cry meaning "Why have you left me for so long?" — brought on because bearing God's wrath was so terrible

# God is Love

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- Murray states:

*God is love. But the supreme object of that love is himself. And because he loves himself supremely he cannot suffer what belongs to the integrity of his character and glory to be compromised or curtailed. That is the reason for the propitiation. God appeases his own holy wrath in the cross of Christ in order that the purpose of his love to lost men may be accomplished in accordance with and to the vindication of all the perfections that constitute his glory. ... The atonement is that which meets the exigencies of holiness and justice.*

RA&A, pg 32

# Now on to Reconciliation

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- Murray begins:

*Propitiation places in the focus of attention the wrath of God and the divine provision for the removal of that wrath. Reconciliation places in the focus of attention our alienation from God and the divine method of restoring us to his favour. ...*

*Reconciliation presupposes disrupted relations between God and men. It implies enmity and alienation. This alienation is twofold, our alienation from God and God's alienation from us.*

# Who is Reconciled?

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- The question is then, when the Scriptures speak of us being reconciled to God; for example,

*when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son* Romans 5:10

- Is it our enmity toward God that is being removed, or God's enmity toward us, or both?

# Who is Reconciled?

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- Murray first examines passages dealing with men being reconciled to men as examples
  - Consider:
    - if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.*
- Matthew 5:23-24
- Who is it in this case that needs to have his attitude changed? Obviously the brother!



# Who is Reconciled?

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- Murray then examines two Scriptures that deal directly with our being reconciled to God:  
*when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son*      Romans 5:10

*All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them.*                      2 Corinthians 5:18-19

- Let's look at each of these ...

# Who is Reconciled?

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- First look at *when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son* Romans 5:10
- Notice:
  - Christ is our representative
  - As our representative he offered himself as a sacrifice of atonement while we were enemies
  - In so doing, he reconciled man to God
- The meaning must be that God's attitude toward us is changed (but *God himself* does not change)

# Who is Reconciled?

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- Now consider:

*All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them.*

2 Corinthians 5:18-19

- Murray points out from this passage:
  - It was God's work, it does not include a change in us
  - It was accomplished in the past and is finished
  - God doesn't count sin against us (his act, not ours)

# Reconciliation

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- Murray closes this section with the following:  
*The reconciliation of which the Scripture speaks, as accomplished by the death of Christ, contemplates, therefore, the relation of God to us. It presupposes a relation of alienation and it effects a relation of favour and peace. This new relation is constituted by the removal of the ground for the alienation. The ground is sin and guilt. The removal is wrought in the vicarious work of Christ, when he was made sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in him.*

# Finally, Redemption

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- The final “specific category” the Scriptures use to describe the atonement is redemption

*Just as sacrifice is directed to the need created by our guilt, propitiation to the need that arises from the wrath of God, and reconciliation to the need arising from our alienation from God, so redemption is directed to the bondage to which our sin has consigned us.*

RA&A, pg 43

# Scriptural Basis

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- Jesus himself indicated that his sacrifice was, in some sense, like the payment of a ransom:  
*the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

Matt 20:28

- From what did Christ redeem his people?
  - From the curse of the law (not the law itself)
  - From the ceremonial law
  - From the law of works
  - From the guilt of sin
  - From the power of sin

# *Not Redeemed from the Law*

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- We are not redeemed from our obligation to obey God's law!

*go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.* Matt 28:19-20

*We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.* Acts 5:32

*We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands.* 1 John 2:3

*This is love for God: to obey his commands.* 1 Jn 5:3

# *The Curse of the Law*

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- We are redeemed from the curse:

*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.” Gal 3:13*

- What is the curse of the law?
- It is the penal sanctions, which Christ himself paid for his people on the cross (his passive obedience)



# Application

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- We need to get rid of all idolatrous notions of who God is and replace them with a true Biblical view
  - In Isaiah’s glorious vision, the Seraphs were calling to each other “*Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty*” Isaiah 6:3
  - God is holy, righteous, just *and* merciful & loving
  - He is *not* “nice” (the Latin root means “ignorant”)
- We are to put on Christ (Eph 4:22-24) or be clothed with Christ (Gal 3:27), so we must know who he is; Be holy!

# *Prepare for Next Session*

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- You should read Chapter Three on the Perfection of the Atonement to prepare for our next session