

136. Q. What, fourthly, did God do through His Son Jesus Christ?
137. Q. What, fifthly, did God do through his Son Jesus Christ?
138. Q. What, finally, does God propose to do through His Son Jesus Christ?

Lesson Thirty-Nine
THE ATONEMENT

Scripture Reading: Heb. 7:26-28, 9:11-28.

Scriptures to Memorize: "But Christ having come a high priest of the good things to come, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; nor yet through the blood of goats and calves, but through his own blood, entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption" (Heb. 9:11-12). "For such a high priest became us, holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people: for this he did once for all, when he offered up himself" (Heb. 7:26-27).

139. Q. What was probably the most fundamental work that God wrought through His Son Jesus Christ?
- A. The most fundamental work that God wrought through Christ, was the Atonement.
140. Q. What is meant by the Atonement?
- A. By the Atonement is meant the Supreme Sacrifice of the Lamb of God Himself, offered by Himself acting in the capacity of our High Priest, for the sins of the world.

(1) 1 Cor. 15:3—"Christ died for our sins." Heb. 9:26—"but now once at the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." John 1:29—"Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." Note how the sins of all humanity are, in this text, bundled together and contemplated as a unit—"the sin of the world." This means that the Lamb of God Himself is the all-sufficient Atonement for all sin. (2) "The Scriptures teach that Christ obeyed and suffered in our stead, to satisfy an immanent demand of the Divine Holiness, and thus remove an obstacle in the Divine Mind to the pardon and restoration of the guilty" (A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology*, p. 713).

141. Q. What is the first great truth involved in the Atonement?

A. The truth that the Lamb of God is Himself our all-sufficient Propitiation.

It was never God's purpose to pass by any transgression of His law without a just and adequate satisfaction. As Watson says: "A government which admitted no forgiveness, would sink the guilty to despair; a government which never punishes offense, is a contradiction; it cannot exist. Not to punish the guilty, is to dissolve authority; to punish without mercy is to destroy, and where all are guilty, to make the destruction universal." Hence, in view of the fact that man was himself unable to provide an adequate atonement for his sins, God provided it for him. The first object of the incarnation and death of Christ was to meet and satisfy the demands of Justice upon the sinner. Rom. 3:24, 25—"Christ Jesus whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, in his blood." 1 John 2:1, 2—"Jesus Christ the righteous . . . he is the propitiation for our sins." The demands of Justice were met and satisfied more fully and perfectly by Christ's offering of Himself for us, than if all the penalties of violated law had been inflicted upon the offending parties.

142. Q. What is the second great truth involved in the Atonement?

A. The truth that the Lamb of God is our all-sufficient Reconciliation.

Another object of the incarnation and death of Christ was that God, by such a demonstration of His infinite love for man, might furnish the incentives sufficient to change the heart and disposition of the sinner and thus win him back into covenant intimacy with Himself. The problem before the Divine Government was not only that of satisfying the claims of Justice, but also that of subduing and overcoming the rebellion in man's heart. Obviously that could not have been done by any infliction of punishment, because punishment would merely have increased the spirit of rebellion and widened the breach. Hence the only course to pursue to attain the end in view, was for God to make a demonstration of His amazing love and mercy, sufficient to overcome the rebellion in the sinner's heart. To this end Christ gave Himself freely for us all, that He might woo and win us back to God. Eph. 2:15, 16—"that he might create in himself of the two one new man, so making peace; and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross." 2 Cor. 5:19—"God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself."

143. Q. What is the third great truth involved in the Atonement?

A. The truth that the Lamb of God is our sufficient Expiation.

Isa. 53:5—"He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." Heb. 9:26—"Now once at the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." 1 John 3:5—"and ye know that he was manifested to take away sins." Heb. 9:14—"how much more shall the blood

of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

144. Q. What is the fourth great truth involved in the Atonement?

A. The truth that the Lamb of God is our all-sufficient Redemption.

His redemption is two fold, viz., the redemption of our spiritual nature from the bondage of sin (i. e., the guilt of sin), and the redemption of our fleshly nature from the bondage of death (i. e., the consequences of sin). This redemption includes also redemption from deformity. There will be no cripples in Heaven. Rom. 3:24—"being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Gal. 3:13—"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law." 1 Cor. 6:19, 20—"ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body." Acts 20:28—"to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood." Rom. 8:23—"even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for our adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." Cf. Heb. 2:14, 15; 1 John 3:3; 1 Cor. 15:25-26; Phil. 3:20-21; Rom. 8:11; Rev. 20:10, 14; 1 Cor. 15:35-57.

145. Q. Did Jesus die for us because He was under obligation of any kind to have done so?

A. No. He gave Himself voluntarily, willingly, and freely, for our sins.

1 Cor. 15:3—"Christ died for our sins." Gal. 1:3, 4—"our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins." 1 Pet. 2:24—"who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree." Rom. 5:8—"while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Tit. 3:13, 14—"Jesus Christ who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity." Eph. 5:25—"even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it." God gave His Son, and the Son

gave His life, not because either was under obligation to have done so, but because both Father and Son loved us too much to allow us to perish forever, without the opportunities and means of salvation.

146. Q. Are the provisions and benefits of Christ's death for all men, unconditionally?

A. No. They are for those only, who accept and appropriate them by faith.

(1) Rev. 22:17—"he that will, let him take the water of life freely." John 10:10—"I am come that they may have life, and may have it abundantly." John 5:40—"ye will not come to me, that ye may have life." Like 13:3—"Except ye repent, ye shall all in like manner perish." Heb. 5:9—"having been made perfect (i. e., through suffering), he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation." (2) While the Sacrifice which Christ provided is as universal as sin in its scope, the sins only of the obedient are expiated by it. "Its design, then, is necessarily limited to all who come to God by it; while its value and efficacy are equal to the salvation of the whole world, provided only they will put themselves under the covering of its propitiatory power" (Campbell, *Christian System*, p. 43). (See Question 46.)

147. Q. What, then, is the most fundamental fact of all time and eternity?

A. The most fundamental fact of all time and eternity is the Atonement.

(1) It is the only Sacrifice for sin—the all-sufficient and final demonstration to the world of God's love and mercy. All the animal sacrifices of preceding dispensations were related to it only as substitutes and types. Christ, we are told, officiated as our High Priest "once for all, when he offered up himself" (Heb. 7:27). He was "once offered to bear the sins of many" (Heb. 9:28). "Now once at the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin

by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. 9:26). He "suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God" (1 Pet. 3:18). "For the death that he died, he died unto sin once" (Rom. 6:10); and having thus "offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God" (Heb. 10:12). (2) We are told, furthermore, that all through the coming ages the moral splendors of God's character and work are to find their most vivid illustration in the works and wonders of redemption; "that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 3:7). (3) Finally, in order that we may understand, even though imperfectly, how closely related the Atonement stands to the whole moral universe, we need only read that it was God's eternal purpose "unto a dispensation of the fulness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth" (Eph. 1:10). "For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet" (1 Cor. 15:25). "Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 3:9-10). It will thus be seen that the Atonement is central, in the moral universe, in revelation, in redemption, in this world, and in the ages to come.

148. Q. What tragic implication is involved in the notion that the death of Jesus was only a martyrdom?

A. If the death of Jesus was a martyrdom and nothing more, it follows that mankind is still without an Atonement and consequently hopelessly lost in sin.

(1) If the death of Jesus was merely that of a human being,

it had no more efficacy in satisfying the demands of Justice upon a sinful race, than the death of Socrates, or Abraham Lincoln, or of any other man who has given his life for the betterment of the race, would have. (2) If Jesus died merely as a martyr, and not as the Atonement for the sins of the world, then the whole human race is back where it was two thousand years ago, floundering in the mire of Natural Religion and Philosophy. (3) The death of Jesus was a Perfect Sacrifice for sin, because He was the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14); because He was divine as well as human, God as well as man, the God-man, the Divine-human Person (Matt. 1:23), the One who "hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15), the One who was "holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (Heb. 9:26). The Divine nature which He offered up was self-existent and holy. The human nature which He offered up was equally unstained by human corruption and depravity. Therefore in giving Himself He offered up a Divine gift which was amply sufficient to satisfy the demands of Justice with regard to the transgression of Divine law. In short, His was the Perfect Atonement for sin; and so we sing, with Isaac Watts:

"Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
 Save in the death of Christ, my God;
 All the vain things that charm me most,
 I sacrifice them to His blood.
 "Were the whole realm of nature mine,
 That were a present far too small;
 Love so amazing, so divine,
 Demands my soul, my life, my all."

149. Q. What, then, is our Altar under the Christian Dispensation?
 A. Our Altar is Calvary.
150. Q. What is our Sacrifice?

A. Our Sacrifice is Christ who, as our High Priest, offered Himself, as the Lamb of God, for the sins of the world.

151. Q. Who is our High Priest under the Christian Dispensation?

A. Christ Himself.

Heb. 7:17—"Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek" (Psa. 110:4); that is, like Melchizedek who was both "king of Salem" and "priest of God Most High" (Gen. 17:18), Christ is our High Priest and also our King. 1 Tim. 1:17—"Now unto the King eternal." 1 Tim. 6:15, Rev. 17:14, 19:16—"the King of kings, and Lord of lords." See also Heb. 7:26-27, 9:11-12.

152. Q. What is our Priesthood under the Christian Dispensation?

A. It is a priesthood of all believers.

1 Pet. 2:5—"ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." 1 Pet. 2:9—"ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood," etc. Rev. 1:5, 6—"Unto him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood; and he made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto his God and Father." Cf. Rev. 5:10, 20:6. Rom. 12:1—"I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service." Heb. 13:15—"through him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise continually, that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to his name."

153. Q. Is there any authority in the New Testament for a special human priesthood under the Christian Dispensation?

A. There is not.

There is neither command nor precedent for a special order

of priests under the Covenant of Grace. Jesus says: "Call no man your father on the earth; for one is your Father, even he who is in heaven" (Matt. 23:9).

154. Q. What is our privilege as priests unto God?

A. It is our privilege, and should be our greatest joy, to offer up to God spiritual sacrifices of prayer, praise, thanksgiving, devotion and service.

The following chart will serve as a summarization of the development of true religion through the ages:

Dispensation	Altar	Sacrifice	Priesthood
Patriarchal	Family Altar	Animal Sacrifice	Patriarchal Priesthood
Jewish	National Altar	Animal Sacrifice	Levitical Priesthood
Christian	Calvary—the Universal Altar	The Lamb of God	The Priesthood of all Believers

REVIEW EXAMINATION OVER LESSON THIRTY-NINE

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SPECIAL STUDY: ON THE WORD "RELIGION"

A few remarks are in order here about the etymology of the word, "religion."

Cicero (*De Natura Deorum*, 2, 28, 72) derives it from the Latin third-conjugation verb *relego*, *relegere*, meaning "to go over again," that is, in reading, in speech, or in thought, "to consider carefully," and hence, as used by him—Cicero—to mean "reverent observance" (of duties to the gods). Although this may have been the pagan notion of the word, certainly it is not the Biblical meaning of it.

According to Lactantius (*Divina Instituta*, 4, 28) and Augustine (*Retractiones*, 1, 13), "religion" derives from the first-conjugation Latin verb, *religo*, *religare*, meaning "to bind back," "to bind anew," etc. Harper's Latin Dictionary (Andrews' Freund, revised by Lewis and Short) has this