

Atonement: Who Did Christ Die For?

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Integration Question: *For whom did Christ die? Practically, does the death of Christ relate to physical or emotional healings for God's people?*

Theological Statement

Jesus provides the propitiatory price for all people of all times, but its effects are only for those who believe. The Apostle Paul writes to his pupil, Timothy, the pastor over the churches in Ephesus, encouraging Timothy to never stop praying for all people, including oppositional government officials. Paul warrants this kind of posture because God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4). Surely, God would not want all people to be saved if He did not make a way for that to happen. But Jesus did make a way, He died for all people. Paul immediately reminded Timothy of this, continuing that Jesus "gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time" (1 Tim. 2:6). Similarly, Paul is recorded writing to his other pupil, Titus, a pastor of the churches in Crete, encouraging him to ensure that the people were keeping sound doctrine of Jesus and his work, which Paul explained was able to bring "salvation to all men" (Titus 2:11). The author of Hebrews also testifies of the same. Reminding his audience that Jesus humbled himself by becoming a man and dying on the cross "so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone" (Heb. 2:9). John makes the same case in a multitude of writings, defending that Jesus' atonement was for all people. In his letter to the home churches that he was a father figure to, he reminded them that "Jesus is the propitiation for all sins; and not for [theirs] only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2). Scripture is clear that Jesus' death was the propitiation for all people.

While Jesus did die for all people of all times, its effects are only for those who believe. In other words, Jesus' atonement is for all people, but only those who believe in Him will experience the reality of His work. In Peter's letter, he warns his readers of false prophets who

were leading followers of Jesus stray. Peter describes these false prophets as “denying the Master who bought them” and choosing their destructive behavior (1 Pet. 2:1). Peter reveals that these false teacher were bought at a price of their Master, but they choose to reject Him. Likewise, Jesus’ death bought the freedom of all people, those who believe and those for do not, but only those who chose to place their faith in Him live in the reality of that freedom. Even the Day of Atonement, arguably the single most important day of the year for an Israelite, reveals this concept to be true (Lev. 16-18). Two goats were chosen for the propitiation of the people. One goat was killed and the blood sprinkled in the Holy of Holies as a sign of purification and cleansing of the people, and the second goat carried the sins of the people upon it and was driven outside the camp never to be seen again. This was done for all of the Israelites (Lev. 16:34), even the ones who rejected Yahweh and, consequently, did not experience the effects of the propitiation. Similarly, Jesus, the antitype and ultimate propitiation, died for all the humanity, even for those who rejected, but it is only lived into and experienced by those who choose Him.

Ministry Application

Oh, the comfort and joy knowing that Jesus’ blood is truly for all people. The first application is for people to believe this truth, let this truth shape their identity, and share this truth with the world. No person ever needs to wonder if they are the chosen one’s who Jesus’ blood atones for, even if it is just a fleeting thought in the back of their mind. Rather, every person can be assured that, even if they reject Him, the Creator of the universe counted them worthy enough to sacrifice His very life. Not because they did anything that made them worthy, but because God loves unconditionally and made all humanity in His image, to live in relationship with Him. And that is not limited to a select group. Christians should be on the front lines, sharing and telling everyone that God has made a way for them to experience true life,

from the carlines at Starbucks, to the drive throughs at Chik-Fil-A, there is not one person on this planet who God would withhold his life and love from.

Secondly, for those who believe in the blood of Jesus, His propitiation means they can forever walk in spiritual freedom, cleanliness, and holiness. Christians can expect, through an abiding life in His Spirit, to live with a clean conscious and make decisions that serve others above themselves. Anyone that needs spiritual cleansing and healing, Jesus' blood has been offered in full for the complete removing of old life and cleansing with the new life indwelling them through His Spirit. Christians should be leading the charge, offering the newness of His life to their neighbors, co-workers, friends, and teammates on sports teams. While Christ's atonement does mean people can walk like Jesus, it does not guarantee physical healing while this world is still under the reign of the evil one. To be sure, God is the healer and His followers are to be conduits of His miraculous works on earth, but the raging spiritual war in this world still impairs the physical realities for humans, even those who are washed in the blood of Jesus. Practically, followers of Jesus should always be the hands and feet of Jesus, especially through the manifestation of physical and emotional healings. In other words, we should be on the forefront of praying and offering intercessions to Holy Spirit to heal our sick family members, people experiencing physical pains or disabilities, or dying neighbors. To live as co-rulers with God, we are expected to utilize the authority given to us to advance His kingdom in this world, both physically and spiritually. At the same time, Christians must never get discouraged or fall prey to the idea they do not have enough faith if they do not see physical healings come to pass.