

Beholding the Son part 4

The Crucified God: The Center of the Christian Faith

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- I. **1 Cor 1:1-2 And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. ² For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.**
 - A. Paul expresses that the cross is the center of his message to the Corinthian church. He is saying, in this portion of his letter, if you're looking for some other fountain from which to drink in the Christian faith: wisdom for its own sake or for the next big sign, look instead to the cross.
- II. The cross is the center of the Christian faith for at least 3 reasons
 - A. It is the better sacrifice to which the Old Covenant repeatedly exposed its need.
 - 1. Hebrews 10:11-28 But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) ¹² he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. ¹³ For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, ¹⁴ 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.
 - ¹⁵ Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them

from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.¹⁶ For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established.¹⁷ For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive.¹⁸ Therefore not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood.¹⁹ For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people,²⁰ saying, "This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you."²¹ And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship.²² Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.²³ Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.²⁴ **For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.**²⁵ Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own,²⁶ for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.²⁷ And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment,²⁸ so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

B. The cross is the center of Christology

1. The Incarnation is the bridge to the Christian Faith

- a) **Matt 1:23 “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us).**
- 2. The Resurrection is the ground or the reason for the Christian Faith
 - a) **1 Cor 15:14 “And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.”**
- 3. The Ascension is the power of the Christian Faith
 - a) **Acts 2:32-35 This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, “ ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.”**
- 4. The Second Coming is the hope of the Christian Faith
 - a) **Titus 2:13 “waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,”**
- 5. But the Crucifixion... it is the Center of the Christian Faith
 - a) **1 Cor 1:1-2 And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. ² For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.**
 - (1) “The crucifixion is the touchstone of Christian authenticity, the unique feature by which everything else, including the resurrection, is given its true significance. The resurrection is not a set piece. It is not an isolated demonstration of divine dazzlement. It is not to be detached from its abhorrent first act. The resurrection is, precisely, the vindication of a man who was crucified. Without the cross at the center of the

Christian proclamation, the Jesus story can be treated as just another story about a charismatic spiritual figure. It is the crucifixion that marks out Christianity as something definitively different in the history of religion. It is in the crucifixion that the nature of God is truly revealed. Since the resurrection is God's mighty transhistorical Yes to the historically crucified Son, we can assert that the crucifixion is the most important historical event that has ever happened. The resurrection, being a transhistorical event planted within history, does not cancel out the contradiction and shame of the cross in this present life; rather, the resurrection ratifies the cross as the way 'until he comes.'” — Fleming Rutledge

- C. Christ's intercession is still mediating and advocating for us in heaven (Hebrews 7), and He continues to be pictured as the Lamb in the throne room of heaven (Rev 4-5).
- III. At the center of the Cross is the doctrine of penal substitutionary atonement.
 - A. This, in short, means that Jesus' death was a satisfaction of God's justice, and a satisfaction of God's wrath against sin made as a substitute on account of anyone who believes.
 - B. Every other aspect of the atonement is true because penal substitution is true.
 - C. Penal substitution is an uncomfortable truth.
 - 1. “The Lord Jesus Christ did not come into the world to meet with his friends. He came to die for his enemies. He came to a people who had rejected his law and killed his prophets, who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, trampling his courts in the hypocrisy of their self-righteous religious observances. He came to nations that had exchanged the truth of the living God for a lie, the glory of

the immortal God for man-made images, and the fountain of living water for cracked and broken cisterns. He came to a world stained with violence, to a people whose hands were full of blood and whose righteous deeds were like filthy rags, to a complacent humanity who proclaimed ‘Peace, Peace!’ while they waged war with God.

This is the biblical portrait of the people for whom Christ died. We were objects of wrath, rightly facing the unmitigated, everlasting fury of an incensed God, but now in Christ we have found mercy. We have been brought from death to life, from corruption to glory. We were slaves to sin, the world and the devil, but are now pardoned and forgiven, standing blameless before him as a pure bride, clothed in the clean, white robes of Christ’s righteousness.

Now contemplate the blistering holiness of our God, the Holy One of Israel, the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity. His eyes are too pure to look on evil; his voice shakes the heavens; the angels in glory hide their faces. Who can dwell with this consuming fire, with this everlasting burning? Who can ascend the hill of the Lord? Who can stand in his holy place? Yet this God took pity on us. This God stooped down to us lifted us up to enjoy the blessings of restored relationship with him, that we may gaze upon his face for all eternity.

What love it is, that this holy God should give his Son-his only Son, his beloved- to suffer and die in the place of rebels. He gave him, not hoping that he might be spared, but knowing that he would be despised, rejected, and killed. And as he turned his face away from his Son in the blackness of Golgatha, he turned toward us- a people loaded with guilt, children given to corruption- and fulfilled those precious words ‘God so loved the world that he gave his only Son.’

A penal substitutionary understanding of the cross helps us to understand God’s love, and to appreciate its intensity and

beauty. Scripture magnifies God's love by its refusal to diminish our plight as sinners deserving of God's wrath, and by its uncompromising portrayal of the cross as the place where Christ bore that punishment in the place of his people. If we dull the sharp edges of the cross, we dull the glittering diamond of God's love." - Jeffery, Ovey, Sach.