

The Atonement Considered: Part 1



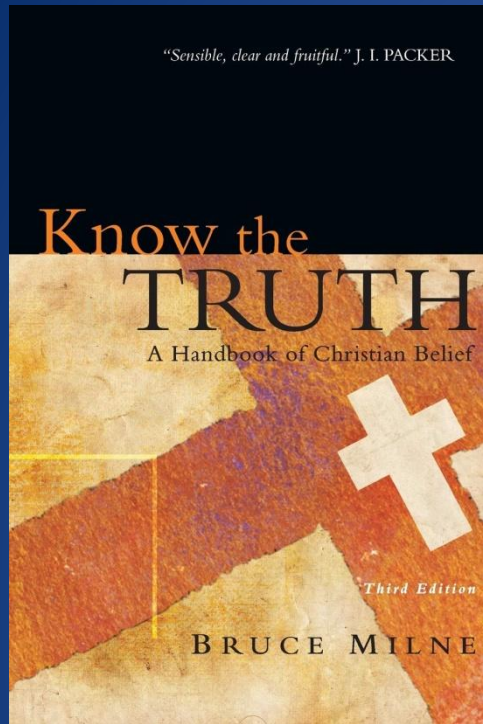
By Bill Smith

I. Important Questions to Consider

- **What do we mean by atonement?**
- **Why do we need atonement?**
- **How is atonement accomplished?**
- **How should we assess some of the models of the atonement”**
- **What are the benefits of the atonement?**
- **How do we receive the benefits of the atonement?**

II. What Do We Mean By Atonement?

- “divine child abuse” (Stephen Chalke)
- **Baxter Kruger:** “The death of Jesus Christ is not punishment from the hands of an angry God; it is the Son’s ultimate identification with fallen Adam, and the supreme expression of faithfulness to his own identity as the One who lives in fellowship with the Father in the Spirit.”
- **Brian McClaren:** “My suspicion is that there is a relationship between church-dropouts and atonement theory (among other things).”



Bruce Milne writes that atonement refers to “the reconciliation of humanity and God, it points to the means whereby estrangement between the two is overcome and God and humanity made at one.”





- Rom. 5:8: “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, **Christ died for us**”
- 1 Cor. 15:3: “For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died **for our sins** according to the Scriptures”

Various Metaphors and Models

- temple (sacrifice)
- battle (victory)
- commerce (redemption)
- law court (penal substitution)

III. Why Is There a Need For Atonement?

- **Atonement is necessary in order for human beings to fully realize the goal for which God made us; participation in fellowship with the triune God (union and communion).**
- **The problem is that our sinful state has resulted in (1) alienation from God (2) the experience of God's wrath (3) objective guilt, and (4) bondage to sin, death, and Satan.**



- **Mt. 16:21:** “From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that **he must go to Jerusalem** and **suffer many things** at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that **he must be killed** and on the third day be raised to life.”
- **Jn. 3:14-15:** “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man **must be lifted up**, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”



Acts 17:2-3: “As was his custom, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead.”

The Necessity of the Atonement

Our greatest need, according to Scripture, is to reconciliation with God, and other human beings which will result in peace for the entire created order.

Some barriers include: Sin, Wrath, Judgment, Death, Satan

God's character requires atonement if reconciliation is to take place

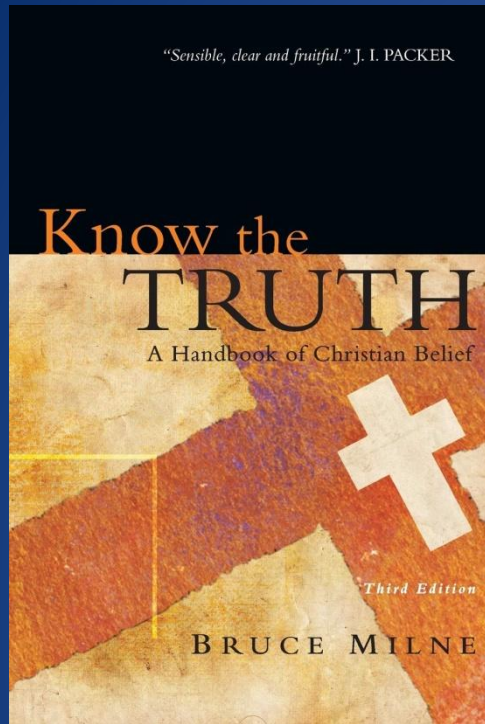
- **God's word reveals to us that the triune God is holy, righteous, merciful, and loving.**
- **Sin is a violation of God's word (disobedience, rebellion, treason, etc.) resulting in the God's judgment and wrath.**
- **In order for reconciliation to take place between God and human beings, his actions must be consistent with his character (holy, righteous, merciful, and love).**

God is holy and righteous

God is “**the Holy One of Israel**” (Ps. 71:22; 78:41; 89:18). “The Holy One of Israel” is used **twenty-nine times** in Isaiah. Isaiah’s vision was characterized by insight into the holiness of God (Is. 6:3).

“Our God is a **consuming fire**” (Heb. 12:29).

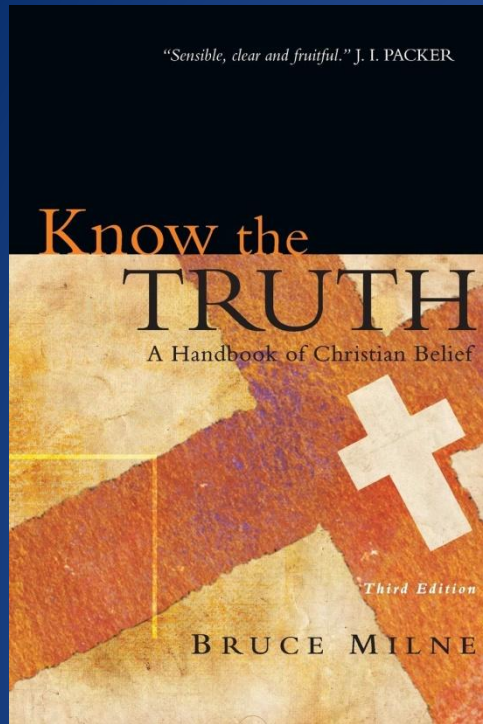
All three persons of the Trinity are referred to as **holy** (the Father, Jn. 17:11; the Son, Acts



Bruce Milne:

“God’s holiness means that he is utterly pure and perfect, without any sin or evil; his very being is the outshining and outpouring of purity, truth, righteousness, justice, goodness, and every moral





Bruce Milne:

“Failure to ground God’s holiness in his essential nature is a primary cause of people’s mistaken severance of the holiness from the love of God. If holiness is God’s will, his acts of love and pardon



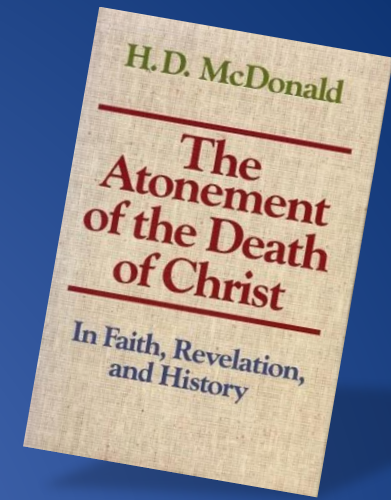
God is love

- The act of atonement is often connected to God's love
 - Jn. 3:16-18: “For God so **loved** the world that **he gave** his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

God is love

- Rom. 5:8: “But God demonstrates his own **love** for us in this: While we were still sinners, **Christ died for us.**”
- 1 Jn. 4:10: “This is **love**: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an **atoning sacrifice for our sins.**”

H.D. McDonald:



“It is the act of **atonement** itself as God’s judgment of our sin on Christ that is the **chief reason** for the announcement God is **love**. The **death of Christ**, by which he **bore sin’s condemnation** as an **essential** of the divine **forgiveness**, is at the same time a **demonstration** of the immensity and the **holiness of God’s love**. The fact that God has himself **met** in the death of his Son the **requirement of his holy judgment on sin** is

Our sin makes atonement necessary for reconciliation to take place

- Rom. 5:12: “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because **all sinned**—.”
- Rom. 3:22b-23: “There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for **all have sinned** and fall short of the glory of God.”

IV. How Is Atonement Accomplished

★ Sacrifice as a means of atonement in the Old Testament

Gen. 22:13-14: “Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and **took the ram and sacrificed it** as a **burnt offering instead of his son**. So Abraham called that place **The LORD Will Provide**. And to this day it is said, “On the mountain of the LORD **it will be provided.**”

- **Ex. 12:13: The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you.**
- **Is.53:7: “. . . .like a lamb led to the slaughter,” “guilt offering,” (vs.10)**

- **Sin and guilt offerings** are offered to make atonement (kipper) for the sins of the people of Israel (Lev. 4:1-35; 5:14-6:7).
- **Burnt offerings** were made according to God's prescriptions as well (Lev. 9:7-17).
- **Peace offerings** were made to symbolize fully restored fellowship between God and the people (Lev. 9:18-21).
- **Yom Kippur** (Day of Atonement) – a bull, and two goats (Lev. 16)

The shedding of blood was required for each of these offerings.

★ Sacrifice as a means of atonement in the New Testament

David L. Allen: “Whereas the OT provides the prophetic and symbolic foundation for the concept of atonement as a substitutionary sacrifice, the NT authors build on that foundation, demonstrating the prophetic fulfillment in the Gospels and doctrinal development in the letters. As in the OT, the NT writers treat the atonement as sacrificial, substitutionary, and representative.”

- Lk. 22:19-20: “And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, **“This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.”**”
- In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the **new covenant in my blood,** which is poured out for you.
- John 1:29: “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, **“Look, the Lamb of God,** who takes away the sin of the world!”
- **Acts** – many references to the death and resurrection (Acts 2:23; 8:32-35)
- Acts 20:28: “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he **bought with his own blood.**”

- 1 Cor. 5:7b: “For Christ, our **Passover lamb**, has been **sacrificed**.”
- 1 Pt. 1:18-19: “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were **redeemed** from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious **blood of Christ, a lamb** without blemish or defect.
- Heb. 9:27-28: “Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so **Christ was sacrificed** once to **take away the sins** of many. . . .”
- Rev. 5:9: “And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were **slain**, and with your **blood** you

Atonement is Accomplished by Jesus, Our Great High Priest

- **Jesus is the mediator between God and man**
 - **1 Tim. 2:3-6:** “This is good, and pleases **God our Savior**, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is **one God and one mediator between God and men**, the man **Christ Jesus**, who gave himself as a **ransom** for all men. . . .”
 - **Heb. 2:14:** “Since the children have flesh and blood, **he too shared in their humanity** so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil”

Jesus is the great High Priest

- Heb. 5:1-2: “Every high priest is selected from **among the people** and is appointed to **represent the people** in matters related to God, to offer gifts and **sacrifices for sins.**”
- Heb. 9:12: “He did not enter by means of **the blood** of goats and calves; but he entered **the Most Holy Place** once for all **by his own blood**, thus obtaining eternal redemption.”
- Heb. 10:10: “And by that will, we have been made holy through the **sacrifice of the body** of Jesus Christ once for all.”

V. Some Conclusions

- **We need a carefully thought through view of the atonement.**
- **We must grasp how the love, holiness, and the atonement are interrelated.**
- **We should seek to understand how the person and work of Jesus Christ are at the center of the doctrine of the atonement.**