

A Basic Presentation of the MORAL GOVERNMENT ATONEMENT

Jesse Morrell

In his life Jesus obeyed God perfectly and so He qualified to make atonement. The sacrifice could not be a sinful offering, it had to be a sinless offering, without spot or blemish. So Jesus was not a sinner, but He bore our sin, that is, He died on behalf of our sins. In his death He substituted our punishment, vindicating the violated law before all the hosts of Heaven.

If God simply forgave mankind, without atonement, He would be telling the entire universe that you could sin and get away with it, that you could break God's law and He doesn't really care, His threats are empty. If God forgave without substituted our punishment, He would be telling the universe that He does not value the law and that He does not mean to uphold it and maintain it. This would encourage the entire universe (men, angels, and any other moral beings) to transgress the law of God. But God's law is designed to promote the well-being of all, and so as long as He loves, He must maintain the law of love, since He cares about His creation. God must maintain the authority, honor, and influence of His law throughout the universe, either by punishing disobedience, or by atoning for disobedience. The atonement was necessary for the same reason the punishment of sinners would have been necessary if no atonement was made – to vindicate and maintain the law that was violated, lest rebellion continues to spread.

So in order to maintain law and order, He took our place, and by His death He substituted our penalty. He did not suffer our penalty (eternal hell) but He substituted our penalty (the cross). And this substitute (the atonement) accomplishes exactly what our punishment would have - it maintains the honor, authority, and influence of the law throughout the universe, so that the law does not fall into concept, and moral creatures do not believe that they can sin with impunity. The entire universe of moral beings sees just how much God values His law, and how He means to maintain it.

Now that the honor, authority, and influence of the law has been maintained, not through the eternal punishment of the sinner, but through the blood atonement of Christ, God can grant the "remission of sins" (remission of the penalty of hell) for those who repent and believe. God is now justified in forgiving mankind, without damaging the rest of His Kingdom.

God is not obligated to forgive, but the atonement allows God to safely forgive, without damaging His government over the universe. The atonement makes forgiveness available, not automatic. Forgiveness is when God set's aside the punishment that men deserve and only Jesus Christ makes this forgiveness available. When we repent and believe, our punishment of eternal hell can be remitted, because Jesus Christ has made atonement for our disobedience. And God raised Jesus from the dead, as a testimony of His approval and acceptance of Him, and as a first fruit of many brethren that will be raised to life, conquering death and hell.

Answers to Questions

Question: Since the fall of the angels has already happened, and one third choose to rebel and two thirds choose to serve, doesn't that mean God doesn't have to worry about any future rebellion among the angels?

Answer: Angels are free will moral beings. This is obvious from the fact that some have rebelled and will be punished. Other angels decided to serve God, and they witnessed God cast the other angels down to hell. But they could always change their mind, especially if sin is encouraged in the universe by the lack of punishment.

After the angels sinned, mankind sinned. And how inconsistent would it be for God to simply forgive mankind after punishing the angels? Then the universe would be getting mixed signals from God. Does He uphold His law or not? If they choose to sin, do they have a 50/50% chance that they will get away with it? Besides, isn't God acting very partial and inconsistent? How can anyone have confidence in Him? He threatens judgment, but then arbitrarily executes it sometimes and withholds it at other times. So are His threats empty?

Obviously, if God forgave mankind without atonement, to substitute our punishment, His character would be questioned, sin would be encouraged, and His law would fall into contempt. From a governmental perspective, God cannot forgive without atonement, without a substitute. "Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins."