

IN MY PLACE CONDEMNED HE STOOD - The Biblical Pattern of the Atonement - Part eleven - Sunday, September 25th, 2022
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THE OUTWORKING OF THE CROSS - GOD'S AGGRESSIVE ATTACK ON THE KINGDOM OF SATAN

I am just itching to share a wonderful, neglected, powerful, hope-filled Biblical truth with you this morning. We're going to look at a group of texts around the theme of Christ's victory over Satan through the substitutionary atoning death on the cross.

And I hope you noticed how I worded that last sentence. I mean to demonstrate a link between Christ as **Victor** and Christ as **Substitute** - Christ as **defeater** of the kingdom of darkness with Christ as the sacrificial **Lamb of God**. And something happened recently to prod my mind to re-think how these two things are joined permanently together in the Scriptures.

I was sitting at a wedding reception a few years ago. Providence smiled upon me and I was actually sitting right beside a fellow pastor - a theologically minded friend - with whom those table moments could be shared. He's a very keen thinker around the things of God and I enjoy talking with him whenever I can. We bantered back and forth about what each of us was reading.

In the conversation I mentioned a slew of authors with whom I was growing weary. Most of them are harmless enough, dealing with the kind of trendy stuff that will soon pass (when was the last time you heard a discussion about The Shack or The Da Vinci Code?). Most of the big sellers these days major on quick money, current interest, and shallow theology.

But every once in a while a group of writers isn't quite as harmless. They wade into foundational core values of the Christian faith. And many times in recent years they have reinterpreted the atonement in ways that are, if not outright heretical, certainly undercut from their Biblical weight and majesty.

So I mentioned a few of these authors and told my friend that I had certainly had my fill of them. And he surprised me with his response - at least **sort of** surprised me. "I think they've served their purpose," he said. "We've gone overboard on the idea of substitutionary atonement. After all, there are **other** models of the atonement in the Bible. Christ suffered as our **example**, and as our **Victor over Satan**. It's not **all** about Christ bearing God's wrath as a substitute sacrifice for my sin."

Now don't misunderstand me. It's not that my friend doesn't **believe** in Christ Jesus as the atoning substitute Lamb of God. I know he believes this passionately. But I was left thinking, "Really? Are these other images **different** views of the atonement? Are they **stand-alone** concepts? Or are they rather the **logical outworkings** of the foundational conviction that Christ died bearing God's just punishment for my sin?"

That's what I want to study with you today. I think my friend's words can be very misleading. It's not that what he was saying was untrue. It's that his point could be very misleading, missing something very important.

True, there **are** different ways of **describing** the atonement in the New Testament (Christ as example, our victor over Satan, etc.). But these aren't theories **separate from** substitutionary atonement. They're the **outplaying** and the **effects** - the **glorious results** - of the central theme that Christ died as the Lamb of God, bearing divine wrath in my place, for my sins. That is **the** view of the atonement in the New Testament. The other descriptions **presume** and **rely** on this concept for their validity.

We've already studied Peter's reference to Christ suffering as our **example** and seen how Peter builds his whole call to follow Christ as our example and shepherd on the fact that Christ, though sinless, "**....bore our sins in his body on the tree....**"(1 Peter 2:24). The call to follow Christ as our example and shepherd rises out of the already established fact that we've been "**healed**" through the uniqueness of Christ's atoning death. In other words, the call to follow our Lord's example doesn't just hang in empty space. It grows out of the rich theology of substitutionary atonement.

So today I want to say exactly the same thing about those passages that so powerfully paint Jesus Christ as tearing down the strongholds of Satan through His cross. And I want to argue that **that** victory over Satan isn't just the result of a cosmic arm-wrestling match. The victory of Christ comes through the same theology of substitutionary atonement.

I have a cluster of texts around the theme of Christ defeating Satan. I hope you'll examine them closely with me. I've seen aspects of truth that are fresh to me and imminently joy producing. I think we should feel excitement as we soak our minds in them this morning.

- 1) **JESUS' FIRST ACT OF PUBLIC MINISTRY WAS TO STAND FIRM AND VICTORIOUS AT THE VERY POINT WHERE ADAM FELL TO SATAN IN DEFEAT**

IPAD TEXT - Luke 4:1-6 - "And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness [2] for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry. [3] The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." [4] And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.' " [5] And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, [6] and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will."

Here's what I think. It's very easy to miss the forest for the trees when we read of the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. There is obviously something of incredible importance happening here because all three synoptics labor to cover the account in detail.

Very significantly, Luke places the temptation account (chapter 4) immediately on the heels of that rather boring list of genealogies in the last half of chapter 3. These are the verses we usually skip over in our devotional readings. But think about it for a minute and you'll see something vitally important.

Why would Luke take all that time - he certainly didn't figure all of this detailed research as quickly as we can read it - just to show us the link between **Jesus** and **Adam** right before the account of Christ's temptation by Satan in the wilderness? And there's only **one** reason. He wants us all to have it in our head that Jesus faces temptation as the **second Adam**.

In other words, Jesus, in His very first public role after His baptism and Holy Spirit anointing for ministry, desires to pick up the baton that Adam dropped. Only He won't drop it. Where Adam failed and was defeated by Satan, Jesus won and defeated Satan.

Hear it church. The chain of failure and defeat **ended** with Jesus' temptation in the wilderness. There is absolutely no doubt that Satan saw himself as the ruler of this planet right up to this time - **"To you I [Satan] will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will" (4:6).** Those are powerful words.

Think about what's happening here. Satan has good reason for confidence. He has had an absolutely flawless record for thousands of years. He has pitched nothing but no-hitters. No defeats. And he comes now with the very same plan of attack that has given him the most successful record on planet earth. There is no idea in Satan's mind other than the continuation of his unblemished, unquestioned record. **Everyone** has fallen.

But things will be different with Jesus right from the start. Matthew includes a wonderful little detail that Luke leaves out. It has to do with how this session with Satan finishes. Luke just has Satan leaving Jesus. Matthew has something more powerful and definitive. In Matthew's account Jesus sends Satan packing - **Matthew 4:10 - "Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.' "** - **IPAD TEXT**

"Be gone, Satan!" There is no escaping who is in charge. Yes, Jesus is the one being tempted. But He's also the one calling the shots. Adam's tumble in the Garden of Eden is being reversed right off the bat.

I can't leave this account without pausing over one more thing. It's something I had missed the impact of for years. I have actually preached sermons on how Christians should meet temptation following lessons from Christ in this account. And I'm sure there's some merit in that. But I don't think that's the main point anymore. There are some very striking and blessed distinctions in this account that are absolutely unrepeatable.

And here's the chief one. For you and me temptation comes ***seeking us***. We're not looking for it. We're, hopefully, avoiding it. We've even been taught to pray, "***Lead us not into temptation.***" And that's how we ***should*** pray. But that's totally different from what's happening in our text. All the synoptics are careful to point out that Jesus is being taken, not ***away*** from temptation, but right ***into the thick of it!*** In fact, in very striking language, Mark actually says Jesus was "***driven***" by the Spirit into the wilderness encounter with Satan (**Mark 1:12**).

This stark language is precious. This temptation didn't just ***happen*** to Jesus. Satan didn't ***come*** to Jesus. Behold our Victor ***attacking*** temptation. Behold our representative, the ***second Adam*** (Luke's genealogies?) immediately going on the offensive to overturn all that Adam lost. The very first act of Jesus in ministry is an act of aggression. It's an act of ***war*** against the tempter's chief weapon.

But what about our subject? What does all of this talk of Jesus as Victor have to do with the substitutionary atonement on the cross? Everything. Do you remember the lamb killed at the passover in Egypt? Do you remember the one killed on the day of atonement? These lambs had to be "***without blemish***" for the sacrifice to be effective. Follow this all the way through. ***If Jesus hadn't been victorious over Satan in the wilderness, He could never conquer him through the cross.***

All of this the Apostle John makes compellingly clear in our next point:

2) **MORE THAN ANY GOSPEL WRITER, JOHN LINKS TOGETHER JESUS' SINLESS DEATH WITH HIS VICTORY OVER THE POWERS OF DARKNESS**

IPAD TEXT - John 14:27-31 - "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. [28] You heard me say to you, 'I am going away, and I will come to you.' If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. [29] And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe. [30] I will no longer talk much with you, *for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me,* [31] but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. *Rise, let us go from here.*"

Read these words slowly and carefully. Jesus is talking about His coming death in guarded terms. He tells them He is ***"going away"***(28), and is ***"going to the Father"***(28). Then He talks about doing ***"as the Father has commanded me"***(31), an event that will be so public and visible that the whole ***"world may know that I love the Father"***(31).

So the peace Jesus is going to give His disciples (27) isn't just ***peace of mind***. It's the ***peace with God*** that only His death can purchase and sustain. It will come as a result of the Spirit's work as Jesus continues the whole distance of His ***obedience to the Father***.

But there are still **two very strange details** in this text. First, I hadn't noticed before the strange way in which Jesus talks about **"the ruler of this world coming"**(30). It's hard to know what to make of that. Jesus had already had many direct encounters with Satan and the demonic realm. Satan was already **present** in so many ways. In what sensible way can we interpret those words about Satan **coming**?

I think the answer to this **first** strange detail is found in a **second** detail. Notice how this account wraps up. **"Rise, let us go from here"**(31). There's the command from Jesus. Only nobody moves an inch. I had never noticed this before. They all just sat there. Jesus keeps teaching. Trace your finger quickly down over the paragraphs and see for yourself. Turn the pages through chapter 15, 16, and 17. Jesus is still talking and nobody's going anywhere.

Then, in chapter 18:1 they finally leave. Jesus takes his disciples out en route to the Garden. The details gain momentum from that point. Jesus knows Judas is coming with a guard of soldiers. But, just as He faced Satan in the wilderness, Jesus doesn't sit and wait with His disciples. He takes initiative. He goes **first** to the garden so He will already be there when Judas arrives.

Now, stay with me. Back to strange detail number one - Jesus telling His disciples that Satan was **coming** (31). Somehow Satan was **coming** and Jesus told His disciples they were to **"arise and go"** to meet him, just as Jesus was Spirit-driven to initiate attack upon Satan in the wilderness temptation.

Here's what I think. John takes great care to build this account properly. He told us earlier that Satan had already entered into Judas - **John 13:27 - "Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, 'What you are going to do, do quickly.'" - IPAD TEXT**

This is the sense in which Jesus knew Satan was **coming** specifically at this crucial moment of betrayal and crucifixion. So Jesus tells His disciples that Satan is coming and they must arise and go to meet him - **John 14:30-31** - **“I will no longer talk much with you, for *the ruler of this world is coming*. He has no claim on me, [31] but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here.”**

Then nobody moves for the next three chapters. Finally, they arise and go out to meet Satan - precisely at the moment when Judas arrives in the Garden to hand Jesus over for betrayal and crucifixion - **John 18:1**. In this way, just as with the wilderness temptation, Jesus doesn't **wait** for Satan to reach him. He takes initiative. He goes out to meet Judas in the Garden.

Again, there will be confrontation. The disciples are confused. They mistakenly think their victory depends on the use of the sword. Peter will try to take one of their heads off and just end up with an ear.

But that's not how victory will come. Jesus will conquer Satan, not by hand to hand combat. He will conquer him by dying as the sinless sacrifice for our sins. That's why Jesus stresses again that, even as Satan comes, **“he has no claim on me”**(**John 14:30**). Jesus isn't dying with any personal sins on His record. This emphasizes the **substitutionary nature** of His death.

This point is absolutely central and crucial. The picture of Christ's death as a victory over Satan isn't a separate idea from His death as our substitute, bearing our sins and the wrath of God. Christ's victory is **won** only as He dies in our place. This is finally explained most fully in our final text:

3) **WE STILL NEED A FULL EXPLANATION AS TO HOW THE ATONEMENT IS THE PATH TO CHRIST'S VICTORY AND OURS OVER THE KINGDOM OF SATAN**

IPAD TEXT - Hebrews 2:14-15 - "Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that *through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, [15] and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.*"

This text underscores the general truth that it is Christ's **death** that destroys the power of the devil. That much, at least, is stated in **verse 14**. But **how** does Christ's death do this? We need more specifics. In explanation, **verse 15** tells us that when Christ, by His death, destroyed the power of the devil, He did it by **delivering** us from something - the **"fear of death"** that held us all in **"lifelong slavery."** So Christ, by His death, delivered us from the power of Satan by delivering us from the fear of death that somehow held us in lifelong slavery.

But **why** were we so afraid of death? We need to look at the rest of the book of Hebrews to get to the bottom of this. We know that when Christ died He was **".....offered once for the sins of many"**(Hebrews 9:28). And we know that in His death Jesus made **"....purification for our sins"**(Hebrews 1:3). And we know that by dying Jesus made **"....propitiation for the sins of the people"**(Hebrews 2:17). - IPAD

So by removing the guilt of our sins and the just wrath of God against those sins, Jesus took the fear out of death. And that fear was a very genuine fear because we *all* have to die. And we know the Bible says that “....it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment....”(Hebrews 9:27).

That’s what Satan held over our heads. That’s what kept us from experiencing peace with God. And that fear and condemnation and guilt and estrangement from God and divine judgment is what Jesus removed as an instrument of attack from the hand of Satan. Satan was, you’ll recall, the “***accuser of the brothers.***”

But Jesus fulfilled the law perfectly in my place. Remember, Jesus said Satan had ***nothing on Him.*** And Jesus also took the punishment my sin deserved.

That means there is no judgment left for me in Christ Jesus. Satan has been disarmed already. Christ defeated him through his atoning, perfect sacrifice. And that means Satan now lives on borrowed time. Jesus is ***already*** Victor through the cross.

So the conclusion of the matter is it is the ***substitutionary atoning death of Christ Jesus on the cross that accomplishes the victory over Satan.*** Satan’s power to condemn is gone. We no longer fear the consequences of our failure before God. God’s just wrath has terminated in Christ Jesus on the cross. We have a new Lord and Master in Christ Jesus. So Christ as ***Victor*** and Christ as ***Sacrifice*** aren’t ***two*** different pictures of the cross, but one and the same. The ***sacrifice*** is what accomplishes the ***victory.*** And the ***sacrifice*** is what empowers for the ***example*** (1 Peter 2:21-25 - as we studied last week).

So you don’t ***ignore*** Christ’s divine wrath defeating sacrifice to shift focus to His victory over Satan. Victory comes ***via*** atonement. Truly, in all these ideas, we glory in the atoning sacrifice of the cross.