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# **THE SINLESS CHRIST**

**Ed Nichols**



## The Sinless but True Humanity of Christ and His Deity.

The sinless but true humanity of Christ and His deity have been studied for many years. The basis of the study appears in different manuscripts in separate parts and as a whole. Christ's sinlessness is discussed. His true humanity is discussed, and His deity is discussed. At some juncture they are discussed together.

The true humanity of Christ goes without question for John A. Broadus. Broadus<sup>1</sup> contends that "whatever else many of us believe as to Jesus the Savior, all men believe in his thorough humanity." It is interesting to note Broadus' use of the word "all" in making his point about Jesus unquestionable humanity. According to Broadus Jesus Christ is today "one of the definite personages of human history."

The sinless Christ is supported in the Scriptures by many of the statements which Christ made during His ministry. He did not need a new birth (see John 3.7). He did not need forgiveness (see Luke 23.34). He was never convicted of sin (John 8.46). He knew no sin (see Luke 14.30). He was tempted, but yet without sin (Heb 4.15). He was without blemish or spot (1 Pet 1.19). Other Scriptures of note are John 5.30, 2 Cor 5.21, Heb 7.26, Heb 9.14, and 1 John 3.5-7 concerning the sinless Christ.

The great theologian Augustus Strong<sup>2</sup> describes the sinless Christ, using the Scriptures noted above, as

free, both from hereditary depravity, and from actual sin; as is shown by his never offering sacrifice, never praying for forgiveness, teaching that all but he needed the new birth, challenging all to convict him of a single sin.

The point here which Strong makes is that Christ's human nature found its personality "in union" with Christ's divine nature. One does not see two persons in Christ. One cannot see a human person and a divine person. One can only see in the sinless Christ as one person, and he possesses two natures. He possesses a human nature and a divine nature. Christ deity is noted in many texts in the following manner. His deity is addressed as having been by divine prediction. (See Ps 110.1; Isa 7.14; Gen 3.15; Jer 23.6; and Mic 5.2). Scriptures amply support the deity of Christ.

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<sup>1</sup>John A. Broadus, Jesus of Nazareth (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1890), 9-36.

<sup>2</sup>Augustus H. Strong, Systematic Theology (Tappan: Revell, 1970), 676.

He was given divine names. (See 1 John 5.20 and Heb 1.8). Thomas declared Christ to be "My Lord and my God" (John 20.28). He was not only declared God He was the "true God, and eternal life" (1 John 5.20).

He was equal with God. Christ was one with the Father "before the world was" (John 17.5). Christ said if you have seen me, you have seen the one who sent me (see John 12.45). The strongest biblical statement may well be represented by this Scripture, "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col 2.9).

Evidence of the deity of Christ is seen in the many attributes ascribed to Him. He is omnipotent, omniscience, omnipresent, to name a few. His omnipotence is found in Matt 28.18. One can find His omniscience in John 11.26, and His omnipresence is clearly declared by Matt 28.20.

Mark Cambron clears up the issue of how can Christ be man and God at the same time with this simple statement, "We try to make John 1.14 read, "The Word became a man"; but it says, "The Word was made flesh." This may be too simple but it was clear to Cambron, and it is clear to this author.<sup>3</sup>

John Bisagno puts the phrase "The Word was made flesh" in this light. Bisagno says "God was one of us for thirty-three years." Bisagno shared how in the past God would, on appointed occasions, walk with Adam, and visit priests in the tabernacle and make Himself known to selected individuals. Bisagno writes the following quote as if he is almost awe-struck. "God became one of us to share our problems, to be seen, touched, and felt (1 John 1.1)."<sup>4</sup> In the introduction of The Word Made Flesh, Bisagno makes his point.

The genius of Christianity is the condescension of God acting redemptively through a human body--that body, so perfect, so complete, that in it was contained all of the attributes of a perfect God."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Mark G. Cambron, Bible Doctrines (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 92.

<sup>4</sup>John Bisagno, The Word Made Flesh (Waco: Word Books, 1975), 83-4.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 9.

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WHAT WAS ACCOMPLISHED BY JESUS CHRIST  
IN THE VICARIOUS ATONEMENT?

Text: "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" 1 Cor 15.3.

Readings: Gen 3.15; Isa 53.4-8, 11-12; Matt 20.28; Luke 22.19-20; John 1.16, 29, 3.14-15, 5.24, 6.40, 47, 51, 10.27-28, 12.31-32, 14.2-3, 17.1-2; Acts 4.12; Rom 4.25, 5.20-21, 6.23, 8.3, 34; 1 Cor 1.4-7, 30, 5.7, 15.3-4; 2 Cor 5.21; Gal 3.13; Eph 1.3-4, 7, 2.7, 4.7, 5.2; Col 1.14; Col 2.9-10, 15; 1 Tim 2.5-6; 2 Tim 2.10; Heb 2.14-15, 5.9, 9.15, 9.22-28, 10.1-14; 1 Pet 2.24, 5.10; 1 John 1.7-9, 3.8, 4.9-10, 5.11; Jude 21; Rev 7.14-15.

INTRODUCTION

The Work of Christ

The prominent theme of Scripture speaks to the work of Jesus Christ starting with the fall of man and ending with the new heaven and the new earth. Christ was the One foretold to conquer Satan (Gen 3.15). In the Old Testament, Christ, as the servant of Jehovah, would bear the sins of the world (Isa 53.4-6). He would be the sacrifice for sin; He would die and suffer the judgment of the sin of the whole world (1 Cor 15.3-4). This was one of God's purposes -- that through Jesus Christ salvation would be offered to every person, everywhere, since the fall of man. Throughout the entire Bible, the only Savior offered by God is Jesus Christ (Acts 4.12). Christ was made incarnate in a body that He might be an appropriate, once-for-all, sacrifice for sin (Heb 10.1-10).

Definitions

For further understanding of the immensity of this study, definitions of the words vicarious and atonement are offered separately, and then together.

The definition of vicarious according to Lewis Sperry Chafer is that,

The words vicarious and substitutionary are identical in meaning and refer to the suffering of one in place of another in the sense that by that suffering on the part of one, the other is wholly relieved.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Lewis Sperry Chafer, Systematic Theology, 2 vols. (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1988), 2:86.

Christ died a substitutionary and vicarious death in the place of all men. Through one's acceptance of Christ's death for salvation, one is no longer required to bear his own condemnation. God has provided Jesus Christ to take the sinner's judgment.

The definitions of atonement of our fathers, according to Augustus Hopkins Strong<sup>7</sup> is that,

To our fathers the atonement was a mere historical fact, a sacrifice offered in a few brief hours upon the Cross. It was a literal substitution of Christ's suffering for ours, the payment of our debt by another, and upon the ground of that payment we are permitted to go free.

Strong is quick to add that in addition to that definition must be added this,

We must add to the idea of substitution the idea of sharing. Christ's doing and suffering is not that of one external and foreign to us. He is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; bearer of our humanity; yes the very life of the race.

The word atonement is used to express the entire "work" of Christ on the cross. The word work here is an important one, in that it was a necessary act which required completion. The word "atonement" is used in theology as an all-inclusive term, but there is differing opinion as to whether or not a word corresponding to it existed in either the Old Testament or New Testament. Some theologians translate kaphar as make an atonement, and kippurim as a covering. At any rate the words used in the New Testament states that the death of Christ takes away the sin of the world (John 1.29).

The two words used together as the vicarious atonement in its simplest definition is God's remedy for sin. Sin can be cured only on the ground of the shed blood of the Son of God. In the Old Testament, men anticipated the death of Christ by animal sacrifices. In the New Testament, men now look back to Christ's death by faith. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (see Col 1.14 and Eph 1.7). This statement from an unknown source puts all of the definitions into one act, and says it this way: "Whatever God does in grace, He is free to do because of the cross."

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<sup>7</sup>Augustus H. Strong, Systematic Theology (Tappan: Fleming H. Revell, 1970), 715.

## Sacrifice, Substitution, and the Savior

### I. Sacrifice

In the plan of God, only He could make a sacrifice that would meet the demands of His infinite holiness (Heb 10.5). It is in and through this sacrifice that Christians can experience sanctification and cleansing through the blood of Christ (1 John 1.7-9).

#### a. Dying for Sinners.

The Scripture is clear that Christ did not come to be ministered to, but to minister. More than a minister He came to give his life for those who would accept His sacrifice (Matt 20.28). It should be remembered that His body and blood were given for mankind (Luke 22.19-20).

#### b. Suffering for Sins.

The testimony of the Old Testament describes Christ suffering for man's sin. Christ was wounded, bruised, chastised, and beaten for us (Isa 53.5). He was judged, stricken, and cut off from the living (Isa 53.8). In the New Testament it is written that He "was delivered for our offenses" (Rom 4.25). God sent His "Son made in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom 8.3).

#### c. Bearing Our Sins

The Bible make clear that all have sinned and that someone had to bear the burden of all of man's iniquity. It is eloquently stated in the Book of Isaiah: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa 53.6). Isaiah described Christ as the bearer of our sins, "made intercession for the transgressors" (Isa 53.11). The whole text is even more poignant than intercessor for transgressors. The intercessor had to suffer and die for the transgressors. It states, "He shall see the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities." The succeeding verse provides more on the bearing our sins. "Because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Isa 53.11-12). The descriptive words "poured out his soul unto death" and "he bare the sin of many" are not just words. These words are graphic displays of what literally occurred in bearing our sins by the Righteous Son of God.

### II. Substitution

The substitution of Christ as a sacrifice for man's sin to the Holy God was the only substitution which could have been presented and determined to be acceptable. No other sinless substitute has or



will ever be available. Only God, in Christ Jesus, can provide the required Sacrificial Lamb without spot or blemish for the sins of the world. For this reason, God sent to this earth His only begotten Son, so that any and all who believe might be saved.

a. Vicarious suffering

Vicarious suffering is a matter of satisfying God's requirement for perfect justice. Someone who was an acceptable sacrifice must be slain. Christ's vicarious suffering and death make it clear that the means by which God provided His Son as an atonement for sin was the only way that God could save mankind and at the same time provide the perfect justice He required. Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures (1 Cor 15.3).

b. Vicarious death

The vicarious death of Christ in the sinner's place was an acceptable sacrifice to God. When one believes on Christ's vicarious death for his salvation, the satisfaction is vicarious in that God has provided Christ to take the sinner's place. The Bible declares that Christ, "his own self bare our sins in his own body" and "by His stripes we are healed" (1 Pet 2.24).

c. Sufficient substitution

God had foreknown and predetermined that Christ would die on the cross for the sins of mankind. For God, His Son's death on the cross would provide a sufficient substitution. Because God would make Christ to be sin for us (2 Cor 5.21), He was free to show His love toward us even though we were sinners (see Eph 2.7). The sufficient substitution for our sin on the cross by Christ allows God to provide His grace toward us which is greater than all our sins. If ever a guarantee for the security of the believer existed, it is absolutely guaranteed by the work of Christ upon the cross and Christ's death conquers the condemning power of sin (see Rom 8.34 and Gal 3.13).

### III. Savior

The love of God is manifested toward us because God sent a Savior to be the propitiation for our sins. God sent His only begotten Son into the world that through Him we might live. The Bible says, "herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us" (1 John 4.9-10).

a. Saved from Satan

Christ declared that the judgment of this world had come and likewise the casting out of the prince of this world. He further declared that His death on the cross would rescue men from the grasp of Satan. He explicitly declared in His being lifted up from the earth, that all men will be drawn to Him (John 12.31-32).

When lifted up as Savior, He spoiled principalities and powers and triumphed over them (Col 2.15). He conquered Satan who used the

fear of death to make people subject to bondage. He "destroyed him that had the power of death" (Heb 2.14,15). The Bible declares that the Savior was "manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3.8).

b. Eternal life extended

Eternal life was extended to man when Christ was lifted up for man's sins. By man's belief in Christ's sacrifice, man does not need to perish but may have eternal life. The assurance of this eternal life is declared by Christ in that no man can take the believer out of His or His Father's hand (see John 3.14-15; 5.24; 6.40; 6.47; 10.27-28).

c. Gift of grace

Acceptance of the Savior and the substitutionary atonement is a gift from God. God provides grace to those in Christ Jesus. Christians should accept the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace (Acts 20.24). Christ provided grace through redemption in that,

God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished -- he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus (Rom 3.25-26, NIV).

### Conclusion

The Scriptures adequately report the accomplishment by Jesus Christ in the vicarious atonement. That which was accomplished in the vicarious atonement was justice in the sight of God. Justice was accomplished in that someone had to pay the price for man's sins. God's only begotten Son, the only perfect and acceptable offering, was made sin for mankind. God's acceptance of Christ's sacrifice justified man in the sight of God and provided a way for sinful man to find a Savior. In Christ's death and resurrection, He conquered death and Satan and freely offered His vicarious atonement for the sins of the world. The finished work of the atonement provided pardon for sin according to God's grace and love.

## PREDESTINATION AND CHRIST'S ATONEMENT

This view of predestination and of the extent of Christ's atonement will preclude discussions concerning any view which is contrary to the presented. To this extent it should be noted that this view of predestination has been established by reading of the Scriptures which pertain to this topic. Seemingly controversial passages, are explained by other passages which are more to the point and which leave little room or latitude for any interpretation than that which is literally stated in the passage.

Predestination is not a word that describes exclusion, rather inclusion. Predestination is not a word for the action of being pre-assigned but is the word for being aware a priori of a given set of circumstances. Neither does the word mean arbitrary pre-assignment of classification based on the possession of a certain endowed attribute. Predestination is best defined as an "if, then" scenario. If this occurs, then this will happen. For example, in God's decree concerning salvation, He has placed an "if, then" scenario. God said, all who believe in the atoning work of Christ will be saved. To say this using a faulty definition of predestination, one might interpret this as saying God has decided that some of the all will be saved and not all of all will be saved. The sentence is as awkward as is the logic of such an in error definition of predestination.

The extent the atonement plays in connection with the definition of predestination is to believe that what the Scriptures say concerning the atonement is clear and irrefutable. The Bible declares that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures (1 Cor 15.3). One's definition of predestination is inextricably linked to their interpretation of the question, "For whom did Christ die?" The word elect is often used in connection with predestination and atonement and needs to be defined. Election is a word which describes a conscious decision. It is not a word of exclusion but a word again describing an "if, then" scenario. An example of this definition is that God said, if anyone believes that Christ died for his sins, then he will be saved. God's election in this example was one of inclusion. An example of an exclusion definition of the word election would read like this: If God chooses some to believe, then some will be saved. The Scripture does not support an exclusion election definition.

What does the Scripture say so plainly about predestination and the extent of the atonement? One who chooses to read the following Scriptures as given by God who would exclude some from the gift of atonement must surely wonder, and constantly be in agony concerning whether or not he himself is excluded. On the contrary, if one chooses to read the Scriptures concerning the atonement as including himself, he will know the truth, and truth will him free.

Anyone who believes that some people are elected to be saved and that some people are elected to be lost needs only replace the all inclusive words of God (i.e., all, we, us, world, lost, and everyone) with their own belief (i.e., some and chosen). Those who believe God's Word to mean what it says may read the following Scriptures concerning predestination and the atonement as they are written. As a final note, the Scriptures given are from a King James Version translation and have not been paraphrased in any manner. God's word speaks for itself.

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestined us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace (Eph 1.4-7).

In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will (Eph 1.11).

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man (Heb 2.9).

"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost" (Luke 19.10).

(The non-elect as some define predestination are lost. God has elected to save the lost whereby, saving the non-elect).

For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life (Rom 5.10).

"And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2.2).

"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom 5.6).

For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again (2 Cor 5.14-15).

To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation (2 Cor 5.19).

"Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time" (1 Tim 2.6).

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men" (Titus 2.11).

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa 53.6).

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word" (John 17.20).

To summarize, predestination as not a decision to exclude anyone from the atoning blood of Christ. To the contrary it was a decision to include everyone who believed in Christ's work on the cross for their redemption from sin. The extent of the atonement in conjunction with this definition of predestination is that it was an unlimited atonement and given freely to the lost who will receive it by faith. Some of the Scriptures which support that premise are,

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me (Gal 2.20).

"Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification" (Rom 4.25).

"For therefore we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, specially of those that believe" (1 Tim 4.10).

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**The Dilemma of Sin.**

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