

What We Believe: Knowing and Loving our Doctrines
 Adult Sunday Studies 2023-24
 15 | The Work of Christ

The Work of Christ

Considering Two Overall Distinctions:

1. The Work of Christ AND the Person of Christ - they both inform the other and they both need to remain our focus. What are dangers of losing the incarnation or the crucifixion, emphasizing one to the exclusion of the other?
2. Redemption Accomplished AND Redemption Applied
 1. The key distinction - something historically happened in Christ and *then* it needs to be applied by the Holy Spirit to God's people.

How does Christ execute the office of a Mediator?

See Heb. 1.1-4

Christ Fulfills Three Offices in "Two Estates"

... to execute the offices of prophet, priest, and king of his church, **in the estate both of his humiliation and exaltation.**" - WLC 42

Humiliation:

Q. 47. How did Christ humble himself in his conception and birth? A. Christ humbled himself in his conception and birth, in that, being from all eternity the Son of God, in the bosom of the Father, he was pleased in the fullness of time to become the son of man, made of a woman of low estate, and to be born of her; with divers circumstances of more than ordinary abasement.

Q. 48. How did Christ humble himself in his life? A. Christ humbled himself in his life, by subjecting himself to the law, which he perfectly fulfilled; and by conflicting with the indignities of the world, temptations of Satan, and infirmities in his flesh, whether common to the nature of man, or particularly accompanying that his low condition.

Q. 49. How did Christ humble himself in his death? A. Christ humbled himself in his death, in that having been betrayed by Judas, forsaken by his disciples, scorned and rejected by the world, condemned by Pilate, and tormented by his persecutors; having also conflicted with the terrors of death, and the powers of darkness, felt and borne the weight of God's wrath, he laid

down his life an offering for sin, enduring the painful, shameful, and cursed death of the cross.

Q. 50. Wherein consisted Christ's humiliation after his death? A. Christ's humiliation after his death consisted in his being buried, and continuing in the state of the dead, and under the power of death till the third day; which hath been otherwise expressed in these words, He descended into hell.

What Happened on the Cross?

Rom. 3.21-6 - "But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. 26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."

1. Father's Love - The Father sent the Son - v. 25 (also John 3.16, etc.)

1. Jesus does not have to "twist the arm" of the Father to convince him to love us; it was the Father's idea in the first place!

2. Son's Voluntary Obedience

1. Jesus wanted to do it and had the authority to do it

3. God's Wrath is poured out upon sin

1. "God did not sit down, deliberate carefully, and then decide that on balance he should hate evil. Nor is his freedom circumscribed by some law of retribution external to himself, like some human judge bound, even when he disapproves of them, by the laws passed by his national legislature. 'Just' is what God *is*. "Angry with sin" is what he *is*. It is his whole nature, his very being, to recoil from it and condemn it. It is unimaginable that he should place idolatry, blasphemy, murder, rape, child abuse, greed, deceit, and exploitation outside the law, ignoring the pain they cause and the havoc they wreak. No human society places evil outside the law, and it is one of the paradoxes of this whole discourse that

those who cry out most loudly for justice are often the very ones who deny the Almighty any judicial function." - D. Macleod

4. **Punishment - Sin is Punished - v. 25 - the Cross is "penal"**

1. God no longer counts our sin! So the cross was directed to God, not just humanity - 2Cor. 5.19-21; Rom. 5.6-11
2. *"the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. . . Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief."* - Isa. 53.6, 10
3. "Propitiation" - in Rom. 3.25, it's actually "mercy seat", such that Jesus is seen as the bloodied mercy seat where sin is punished

5. **Justice - The Righteousness/Justice of God Satisfied by Punishing Sin**

1. **We are justified by "works" ;)**

1. Remember the covenant of creation - or the demand of God's holiness to dwell in His presence - must still be fulfilled! Jesus fulfills it in his "humiliation" in our place, which we receive as participants in the covenant of grace, by faith.

6. **Substitution - The Second Adam takes our place**

1. Importance of Substitution: "The concept of substitution may be said, then, to lie at the heart of both sin and salvation. For the essence of sin is man substituting himself for God, while the essence of salvation is God substituting himself for man. Man asserts himself against God and puts himself where only God deserves to be; God sacrifices himself for man and puts himself where only man deserves to be. Man claims prerogatives which belong to God alone; God accepts penalties which belong to man alone." - John Stott

7. **Forgiveness & Redemption - ransomed from the wrath we deserve**

8. **Human Evil at work and unmasked**

1. *"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know— 23 this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men."* - Acts 2.22-23

9. **Satanic Evil at work and unmasked**

1. *"He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him."* - Col. 2.15

How the Bible describes Christ's work on the cross - objective and subjective benefits (from Tim Keller)

- **Sacrifice** - removing the shame barrier
 - Sin is impurity, a defilement that makes us unfit for community. This creates shame and a sense of being unacceptable.
 - But on the cross Jesus was shamed and excluded (Matt 27:46; Heb 13:11-13) so that we could be purified and cleansed from sin (Heb 1:3, 9:13-14).
- **Debt** - removing the debt-barrier
 - Sin is a broken obligation (cf. Matt 6:12). When we cannot pay our debts this entails slavery (in ancient cultures) or bankruptcy (today).
 - But on the cross Jesus paid a ransom (Mark 10:45) so that we could be redeemed out of bondage (1 Tim 2:6; 1 Cor 6:20).
- **Battle** - removing the power of evil over us
 - Sin is an evil force of self-centeredness and power-accrual that works in the world and in our hearts.
 - But on the cross Jesus unmasks and disarms evil powers (Col.1:12-14, 2:14-15; Jn 12:31-33) by a complete reversal, through self-sacrifice and service (1 Cor 1:18-31).
- **Relationship** - removing the hostility-barrier
 - Sin is a broken relationship, refusing God his rightful centrality in our hearts. God is alienated from us and us from him (Rom 5:10).
 - But on the cross Jesus removes God's anger from us (Heb 9:5; Eph 2:3-5; 1 Jn 2:1-2) and turns our hearts to him as Mediator and Advocate.
- **Law** - removing the guilt-barrier
 - Sin is a violation of God's righteous character and law. This creates guilt.
 - But on the cross Jesus stood in our legal place (Is 53:11, 12; cf. Lk 22:37) and took the judgment we deserved (1 Pet 3:18; Rom 3:21-26; Gal 3:13) so we can get the treatment he deserved (2 Cor 5:21).

Niebuhr's caricature of the liberal Protestant church is still a warning for us - "A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross."