

**BIBLICAL SOTERIOLOGY:
An Overview and Defense of the
Reformed Doctrines of Salvation**

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Limited Atonement, part 9

**ARGUMENTS SUPPORTING THE DOCTRINE OF
LIMITED ATONEMENT**

**IV. MEANS BY WHICH ATONEMENT WAS ACCOMPLISHED: AGENTS
(cont.)**

A. God the Father (cont.)

1. Sent God the Son — God the Father sent God the Son into the world to accomplish the atonement that he purposed beforehand. (cont.)

a. Father made Son Christ/mediator/savior — The Father made the Son the mediator between the elect, who are sinful beings, and God, who punishes sinful beings. The act of mediation is the interposing of Christ between God and the elect in order to reconcile the two parties. Christ’s act of mediation includes both his atonement and priesthood, and results in the salvation of the elect. (cont.)

ii. The Father inaugurated Jesus the Son as the Christ/mediator.

“For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes. For not even the Father judges any one, but He has given all judgment to the Son” (John 5:21-22).

The Father delegated to the Son the authority to judge and to show compassion toward men. In

this act, the Father gave the Son the authority to be merciful to those to whom the Son wished to be merciful. By so doing, he authoritatively inaugurated the Son as the Christ of those people to whom the Son would grant mercy.

“For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet.”’ Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ — this Jesus whom you crucified” (Acts 2:34-36).

The Father made the Son to be Christ, that is, the messiah. When the Son took on flesh, becoming Jesus, the Father inaugurated Jesus the Son of God as Lord and Christ. As Christ, Jesus was and is God’s anointed king representing his people before God, and was and is the savior of his people (Luke 2:11; 23:35). Thus, God the Father inaugurated the Son as Christ, the mediatorial representative and savior of his people

“But of the Son He says, ‘Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the righteous scepter is the scepter of His kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy companions’” (Heb. 1:8-9).

The Father is the one that anoints, or inaugurates, the Son to his positions of authority, such as his role as king. As king, the Son mediates between God and his covenant people, bringing them salvation (Zech. 9:9 [with Matt. 21:2-7; John 12:14-15]; Matt. 27:35-37; Luke 23:35-42; 2 Pet. 1:11; compare Isa. 33:22).

“Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of

our confession. He was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was in all His house” (Heb. 3:1-2).

God the Father himself appointed Christ as the high priest of the people of God, just as he also appointed Moses (Num. 12:6-8; 1 Sam. 12:6). As high priest, the Son offered himself as a mediatorial sacrifice to God, thereby obtaining eternal redemption for those for whom he mediated and interceded (Heb. 9:11-15).

a) The Father proclaimed Jesus as the Christ/mediator.

“While [Peter] was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and behold, a voice out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; hear Him!’” (Matt. 17:5).

In its context, this verse indicates that Jesus is supreme over the Old Testament prophets and intercessors/mediators. The voice from the cloud clearly represents the words of the Father who here proclaims the supremacy of Christ in this role.

“And the angel said to [the shepherds], ‘Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which shall be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord’” (Luke 2:10-11).

Through his messenger the angel, the Father proclaimed to the world Jesus as the Christ and savior. These titles indicate his saving work of intercessory mediation (e.g. Rom. 8:34; 1 Tim. 2:5).

b) The Father sent his spirit visibly upon Christ

“And after being baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased’” (Matt. 3:16-17).

By the descending and remaining of the dove on Jesus, the Father visibly demonstrated that Jesus was the Christ. (compare John 1:29-34).

c) The Father crowned Christ with glory, honor and authority.

“I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven one like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed” (Dan. 7:13-14).

Without debating the merits of various eschatological systems, it can at least be stated that this prophecy refers to the Father crowning Christ with dominion, glory and a kingdom, whether past, present or future. That this prophecy exists demonstrates the promise of God with respect to Christ being crowned with glory, honor and authority.

“All things have been handed over to Me by the Father.” (Matt. 11:27).

The “all things” which have been handed over to Christ by the Father clearly include authority, particularly with regard to dispensing judgment and mercy (see Matt. 11:20-30). Such great authority necessarily carries glory and honor (compare Heb. 2:7-10; 3:3). Thus, the Father also gave glory and honor to Christ with the authority. Since, in its context, this verse is followed by Jesus’s statement that he will give rest to the souls of those who come to him, a reference to Christ’s atonement, the passage indicates that the Father’s handing all things over to the Son has to do with the Son’s mediatorial and intercessory role in the atonement.

“But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him, ‘I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God.’ Jesus said to him, ‘You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven’” (Matt. 26:63-64).

Christ promised that he would be seated at the right hand of power, and that the high priest would observe this, indicating that this event has already come to pass. In fact, it took place when Jesus ascended (Acts 2:34-35). Further, since this statement comes in Jesus’s reply that he is the Christ, the context indicates that this power will be given to him *because* he is the Christ, the mediator and intercessor.

“And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth’” (Matt. 28:18).

This authority can only have been given to Christ by the Father, who already possessed it. This verse appears in the context of the Great Commission, the resurrection, and the preaching of the gospel of Christ crucified. In this context, the passage indicates that Jesus received authority by obeying the Father, and that this obedience consisted of interceding and mediating on behalf of those for whom the atonement was offered.

“These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church” (Eph. 1:20-22).

Certainly the Father’s placing the Son at his right hand, far above all rule, authority, power and dominion of every age, and the Father’s putting all things in subjection under the Son’s feet, constitute a bestowal of authority, glory and honor to the Son. Further, the context suggests that this bestowal was based on Christ’s willingness to be crucified and raised, his obedience to the Father by being a mediator and intercessor.

“And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of

those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:8-11).

The Father highly exalted the Son, that is, he bestowed on him glory, honor and authority, specifically because the Son obeyed the Father by dying on the cross. The Father gave the Son glory, honor and authority because the Son obeyed the Father by acting as a mediator and intercessor.

“When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high; having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they” (Heb. 1:3-4).

Because he mediated and interceded in the atonement, Christ was permitted to sit down at the right hand of Majesty. Sitting down at the right hand of Majesty certainly carries much glory, honor, and authority. The Son received this position by inheritance, meaning that it could only have been given to him by the Father.

“But we do see Him who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings” (Heb. 2:9-10).

Christ was crowned with glory and honor because he mediated and interceded by

tasting death for everyone, that is, because he atoned on the cross. Hebrews 2:7-8 indicate that it was the Father who granted Christ glory and honor through this means.

“For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, ‘This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased’ — and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain” (2 Pet. 1:17-18).

Peter here refers to the Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-8; Mark 9:1-8). At this time, the Father bestowed honor and glory on Christ in preparation for his atonement (Matt. 17:9; Mark 9:9).