

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

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Limited Atonement, part 11

**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.)**

b. Father Furnished Son with Ability — The Father provided the Son with the necessary ability to accomplish the atonement.

i. The Son had a natural perfection as deity — The Father sent a savior who was not merely man, but also God. By sending his Son as the savior, he provided a savior with all the perfection natural to the Godhead.

“In the year of King Uzziah’s death, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy, is

the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory.’ And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. Then I said, ‘Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts’” (Isa. 6:1-5).

According to John, “These things Isaiah said, because he saw [Jesus’s] glory, and he spoke of [Jesus]” (John 12:41). That is, Isaiah saw Christ in this vision. The angels’ proclamation that Christ the Lord is “Holy, Holy, Holy” demonstrates that he is without imperfection, totally righteous, and wholly other than the created order. Thus, the Lord, perfect in and of himself, was sent as the Christ, meaning that Christ was “Holy, Holy, Holy” in and of himself.

Isaiah refers to the Lord by his covenant name Yahweh (Isa. 6:5). He also pronounces a woe on himself for having seen the Lord, which indicates that he understood the Lord he saw to be the same one that delivered the Law to Moses (Exod. 33:20). This indicates that Isaiah saw the almighty creator God himself. Thus, when John says that Isaiah actually saw Christ, he indicates that Jesus was God incarnate, and therefore had all the perfections of God.

“A voice is calling, ‘Clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness; make smooth in the desert a highway for our God’” (Isa. 40:3).

According to Matthew 3:1-3, John the Baptist was the voice:

“Now in those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ For this is the one

referred to by Isaiah the prophet, saying, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness, make ready the way of the Lord, make His paths straight!” (Matt. 3:1-3).

Further, the one whose way John prepared was Jesus. As John stated, “I am not the Christ . . . I have been sent before him” (John 3:28; cf. John 1:23-25). Since the voice was John the Baptist and the Lord whose way he prepared was Jesus, Jesus was God himself. Therefore, it necessarily follows that he was intrinsically perfect.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:1,14).

The Word was God, and the Word became flesh and dwelt among men. Clearly, Jesus was the Word, making him both God and Christ. Since the Christ was God incarnate, it follows that he was inherently perfect.

“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Phil. 2:5-8).

Christ existed in the form of God, that is, he was God himself. Since Christ was God, he was also absolutely perfect. By emptying himself, he did not divest himself of his perfections, but of his glory.

“God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power” (Heb. 1:1-3).

The Son is the radiance of the Father’s glory, and is the “exact representation of His nature.” Unlike created man, Christ does not just bear a reflection of God’s glory, but he actually is the very radiance of that glory. Since God is perfect, the radiance of his glory must be perfect also. So must be the “exact representation of his nature.” Thus, Christ, being the radiance and representation, was perfect in and of himself.

ii. The Son had a communicated fulness from the Father — The Father communicated a fulness of perfection and ability to redeem to the Son in his incarnate state.

“Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit. And the Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord” (Isa. 11:1-2).

This prophecy teaches that Christ, in his incarnation, was to receive wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge and fear from God. When Christ actually became incarnate, these things took place in order to fulfill all that was written about Christ in the prophets (Luke 24:44). All these virtues must have strengthened Christ in his life, passion and death.

“And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book, and found the place where it

was written, ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.’ And He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed upon Him. And He began to say to them, ‘Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing’” (Luke 4:17-21).

God put his Spirit upon Christ in order that Christ would be empowered to preach the gospel, and to set free the downtrodden. Of course, through the atonement, Christ set free the people downtrodden and held captive by sin. Moreover, he secured for his people all the covenant blessings in full, including the setting free of all his people from political tyranny and social oppression. Though these things have not yet been applied in full, they will be totally realized at his return. The Father put his Spirit on the incarnate Christ in order to prepare and enable Christ to render the atonement necessary to free the downtrodden.

“‘For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure. The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him’” (John 3:34-36).

The statement that the Father gave all things into the Son’s hand indicates both the authority which Christ received from the Father, the certainty that all things were indeed under the Son’s authority, and the certainty that the Son had the power to maintain his authority. Part of the empowering of the Son by the Father to perform the atonement included this bestowal of authority over all things,

particularly over those people for whom he died and over sin which held the power of death.

“These things Jesus spoke; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, ‘Father, the hour has come; glorify Thy Son, that the Son may glorify Thee, even as Thou gavest Him authority over all mankind, that to all whom Thou hast given Him, He may give eternal life’ (John 17:1-2).

The Father gave the Son the authority in order that the Son would be able to give eternal life to all those whom the Father had given him.

“He is also the head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to have first place in everything. For it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fulness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven” (Col. 1:18-20).

The Father determined that all the fulness should dwell in Christ, and that the atonement of the cross should reconcile all things to God. According to this passage, it was the Father who reconciled believers to himself through the death of Christ. Thus, the Father’s good pleasure and active reconciliation working through Christ resulted in Christ’s rendering himself as an offering for sin. Therefore, the atonement must be credited, not only to Christ, but also to the Father who was pleased to fill Christ in the manner necessary to redeem men, and who was pleased to use Christ to reconcile creation to himself.

“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. 2:10).

The Father perfected Christ, making him the author of the Son's perfection which the Son needed in order to be the atoning sacrifice. Further, all things are from and through the Father, which in this context include Christ's ability to perform his office of Christ.