

# **Belgic Confession 21 – Planned, Vicarious, Exclusive Atonement**

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: It is not sufficient to acknowledge the historicity(史实性) of Christ's death. That is easy enough to prove. There were many witnesses and many historical accounts from Jews, Romans, and Christians, of Christ's death. But you must also know the purpose of Christ's death and what was accomplished by it.

Why must we examine the purpose of Christ's death? One of the main reasons is that many people today follow a theory developed by German theologians (神学家) of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – a theory which says that Christ was historically real but man does not need historical Christ to change. Their theory is that man is able to change his own life by his own will, and if men treated others morally and with love, sin would disappear. **So to them, the death of Christ was not so important.** This is called neo-orthodoxy (新正统神学). We are orthodox. **Another reason** to examine the purpose of Christ death is that all other religions deny the necessity of the blood atonement. So learn today about the atonement 救赎.

Our headings are:

Christ's **Suffering was Planned**

Christ's **Suffering was Vicarious** (替代别人的, 代理的)

Christ's **Suffering was Exclusive** (排他性, 绝无仅有的)

Our goals are: That you **understand that Christ really had to die because of the inability of man to remedy (补救) his sin problem**, and that you are **then moved to work and worship better.**

## **Christ's suffering was Planned**

We believe that Jesus Christ is **ordained with an oath** to be an **everlasting High Priest**, after the order of Melchizedek; (我们相信耶稣基督按着麦基洗德的等次 1, 用起誓被立为永远的大祭司; )

**1. Before God made man he knew man would sin.** It was no surprise to God that man sinned.

a. **Why did God make man knowing that man would fall?** God did not make man to sin, **but God made man to glorify him.** Creation is not first about you. You are the means to an end. **That end is God's glory.**

b. **So in order for men to repent and then glorify him, God planned and chose his Son, before the world began, to save man from his sins.**

c. **But God's motive for the atonement is not limited only to his glory. God also chose man because of love.**

God can have pure multiple motives. The fact that God has 2 motives is not easy to accept because you know that if you helped someone move, for instance, you may want them to do something for you. Your motives are not pure. You mutually exploit each other. **But this is not the same with God.** God is not like you. He deserves all you do for him and much more, but love must never be directed toward you!

**2. God's Son could only save man and make peace between the two warring parties by becoming an eternal high priest and making the right sacrifices for man.** So God had to plan for this. The atonement was not an afterthought.

**3. From early in the Old Testament you could see the plan of Christ's coming materializing in promises –starting from Adam, in pictures – in all the signs and ceremonies, and through people—many, many prophets. One example:**

a. **Melchizedek was High Priest of God's people, making sacrifices for sin. Genesis 14.** Jesus is High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek (not Levi). Yet, Jesus was more. How? He did not make offering for His own sin because He had no sin (Hebrews 5:3). In fact, **Jesus made a sacrifice not of animals, but of himself.** Jesus Christ is the offerer and the offering. So he was like Melchizedek, but better.

b. **Melchizedek has no record of the beginning of his life nor of the end of his life.** Jesus is a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek who had neither beginning nor end. This means Jesus is a high priest forever. He is forever able to save His people and to intercede for them before God.

**Hebrews 7:15** And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest 16 who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life. 17 For He testifies: "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek."

## **Christ's Suffering was vicarious**

...and that He has presented Himself in our behalf before the Father, to appease His wrath by His full satisfaction, by offering Himself on the tree of the cross, and pouring out His precious blood to purge away our sins, as the prophets had foretold. For it is written: He was

wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and numbered with the transgressors; and condemned by Pontius Pilate as a malefactor (trouble-maker), though he had first declared Him innocent. Therefore, He restored that which he took not away, and suffered, the righteous for the unrighteous, as well in His body as in His soul, feeling the terrible punishment which our sins had merited;

(并为我们的缘故，在神面前被献上，借着他的补赎，挽回他的愤怒 2，借着他死在十字架上倾倒出他的宝血，为要洗除我们的罪；正如先知所预言的。因为经上记着说：“他为我们的过犯受害，为我们的罪孽压伤；因他受的刑罚我们得平安，因他受的鞭伤我们得医治。他如羊被带到宰杀之地，被列在罪犯之中 3。”彼拉多虽然首次声明他是无辜的 4，但却定他为罪犯。因此他担当了我们的刑罚 5，为我们受了苦，是义的代替不义的 6，身体灵魂受了为我们罪所应当受的可怕刑罚；)

**1. Christ, your eternal High Priest, presented himself as an offering to God on your behalf.** Isaiah explained how Jesus Christ would vicariously suffer for your sins. Look at one instance in Isaiah 53. He took up your infirmities, he carried your sorrows, he was pierced for your transgressions, he was crushed for your iniquities (罪过), he was punished for your peace, and by his wounds you are healed. Jesus had to be that unblemished **substitutionary** 替代性的 **sin offering** of Leviticus 4, that Israel brought for their sins – **even unintentional sins**. When the priest laid his hands on that animal before killing it, it pictured the transferal of that sin of the guilty person to the animal.

**2. Christ, your eternal High Priest, knowingly and willingly went to the cross as your substitute.**

John 10:15 - ... and I lay down My life for the sheep.

The OT animals might have been willing sacrifices, **but they were not knowingly (故意地) sacrifices.** Jesus had to knowingly become your scapegoat (替罪羊) – taking your place.

**3. What are the results of his vicarious offering?** Your high priest's vicarious offering does 2 things.

**a. Your High Priest's vicarious offering expiates 赎 (罪) the guilt of your sin.** Expiation means that your high priest's vicarious offering cleanses you, and washes you. It makes you so clean it is as if you had never sinned nor had ever been a sinner. **He expiated for cosmic treason (背叛)!**

**b. Your High Priest's vicarious offering propitiates (调解, 使息怒) God's anger against you.** Christ death was a legal transaction which satisfied God's justice on your behalf. Christ suffered the wrath of God which you should have suffered yourself. You see, removing guilt (expiation) was not enough to remove God's anger.

**So when you think of your guilt and sin, do you see how this makes you indebted to Jesus?** And when you think about what you deserved for treason against his holy majesty, but you don't get what you deserved, **will you shout "hallelujah," and "praise the Lord?"** You should!

...insomuch that **his sweat became as it were great drops of blood** falling down upon the ground. He called out: **My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?** and has suffered all this for the remission of our sins. (因此他汗流如血点滴在地上 7。他喊道：“我的神，我的神，你为什么离弃我 8？”) Translated by Rev. Charles Chao D.D.

**4. Christ's suffering vicariously was much more than his physical suffering for you. He suffered intense emotional and psychological pain for you, so much so that his sweat became like "big drops of blood falling on the ground."** His friends could not even stay awake to support him. Who likes suffering and especially dying alone? And yet he determinedly set his face like stone to go to the cross for you. **He had to leave the Garden (symbolic of Eden) and head to the cross (symbolic of hell), just like the scapegoat had to leave the comforts of the fold (Eden) and head out of to the desert (symbolic of being cast into hell).**

**Imagine being sentenced to life in prison for a crime you never committed** and then imagine that feeling in your conscience for the rest of your life. And imagine your wife, your family, and your friends thinking you are guilty. Your name becomes mud. You lose your status in society. You lose your freedom. Did you imagine that? Then that is nothing to what a perfect Savior felt for you! You should have been sent for eternity to hell – with a guilty conscience – the worm that does not die. But your Savior endured it for you.

Doesn't it make your heart melt in sadness... that he was all alone for you? And yet, doesn't this also make you jubilant that he endured this emotional and psychological suffering for you?

**5. Christ's suffering vicariously was much more than physical and emotional pain. He suffered spiritual torture for you.** Remember how he cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mt 27:46). His Father turned from him because he was guilty with your sins. This was the worse torture of all. Added to this, there was the **abandonment by his friends, disbelief of his own family, betrayal of Judas, perverse judgment of the Pharisees(法利赛人), innocent condemnation (定罪) by the Romans, shame of being on a cross, and being mocked...**

## Christ's Suffering is Exclusive

Wherefore we justly say with the apostle Paul that we know nothing save Jesus Christ, and him crucified; we **count all things but loss and refuse** for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord, in whose wounds we find all manner of consolation. **Neither is it necessary to seek or invent any other means of being reconciled to God** than this only sacrifice, once offered, by which he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified. This is also the reason why He was called by the angel of God, JESUS, that is to say, SAVIOR, because He would save his people from their sins.

(他忍受了这些苦，完全是为了要赦免我们的罪。所以我们应当跟保罗一起说：“我们不知道别的，只知道耶稣基督并他钉十字架 9”；“我们把万事看作粪土，为要得着基督为至宝 10”，因他受的伤害我们得到安慰。我们无须去寻求或发明其他任何方法来与神和好；只有借着基督一次献上的赎罪祭，信徒就得以永远完全 11。这就是天使称他为耶稣的缘故了，因他要将他的百姓从罪恶里救出来 12。)

**1. Only the saving sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and nothing else, has any real value to you.** You don't need any other sacrifices. Sacrifices in the OT were pictures of Jesus with no saving benefits. Further, **every other religions or philosophy is “loss and refuse”** (garbage, sewage 污物). No other religion provides any means of truly appeasing God. **They either lie about how good man is, or they lie about how ordinary God is!**

**2. Christ's substitutionary atonement never needs to be repeated, regardless of what Roman Catholics teach.**

Hebrews 10:11 And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 12 But this Man, **after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down** at the right hand of God,

And with his work completed, Jesus sat down in heaven. A good man only sits down when his work is done.

**3. Therefore, no one is to preach any other means of salvation, and no one is to believe in any other means of salvation.** You do so to your own detriment (损害) and death. To treat any such belief as even tolerable is to distort man's only hope of deliverance, and you will ultimately leave man in despair.

### Conclusion:

Christ was chosen to be your High Priest before the world began – for the glory of God and because of love for you. As your High Priest, Christ, willingly and knowingly, vicariously suffered for you to remove (expiate) your sins, and calm (propitiate) God's anger against you. There is no other way of making peace with God. There will be no other way of making peace with God. Through Christ, God accepts you as his child and makes you joint heirs with Christ. Adam lost the Tree of Life, **Jesus earned it back for you when he died on the tree of life.**

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. The only way you can appreciate the necessity of the vicarious suffering of Christ is to **get a full sense of the seriousness of your sins and what you lost in Adam.** **To get a full sense of your sins you have to properly know the Bible.**

2. **Then you can work to teach your family so they can know their sin and come to meet the Savior.** And you will also work to **teach the seriousness of sins to the lost so they can be saved.**

**3. Then you will worship better.** (Rejoice, there is therefore no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.) People who are careless about worship – and you can watch this- are often people who have a little sense of their sins.

If you are not a Christian, you are missing the greatest gift any one could ever give...eternal life. Eternal life only comes through Jesus. He is offering this gift to you...and it is a gift that you absolutely need. Would you stretch out your hand to God and say: “Yes, I want that gift today! Expiate my sins and propitiate God's anger for me through Jesus.”