**Defending the Atonement of Jesus Christ**

This session will defend the biblical view of the work of Christ as our substitute and sin-bearer. It will then defend this account against several charges that it is either impossible or unjust.

**Douglas Groothuis**, Ph.D., is Professor of Philosophy at Denver Seminary, where he has served since 1993. He is the author or co-author of fourteen books, including *Christian Apologetics*and *Walking through Twilight: A Wife's Illness--A Philosopher's Lament.* He has published 29 peer-review articles in journals such as *Religious Studies, Sophia, Philosophia Christi,* and *Academic Questions,*as well as publishing in magazines such as *The Christian Research Journal, Christianity Today, Philosophy Now, Think,*and*The Philosopher's Magazine.*His comments on religion and society have appeared in *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times.*

He alone had to produce a great people, elect, holy and chosen, lead them, feed them, bring them into the place of rest and holiness, make them holy for God, make them the temple of God, reconcile them to God, save them from God’s anger, redeem them from the bondage of sin which visibly reigns in man, give laws to his people, write these laws in their hearts, offer himself to God for them, sacrifice himself for them, be a spotless sacrifice, and himself the sacrificer, having himself to offer up his body and blood, and yet offer up bread and wine to God (608/766).

Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*.

1. **Jesus Christ at the Center of Christianity**
   1. Creation (John 1:1-3)
   2. Fall (Genesis 3; Mark 7:21-23)
   3. Redemption (John 3:16; 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Timothy 2:5)
   4. The life of Christ: The Word became flesh full of grace and truth (John 1:14)
   5. The death of Christ to make us right with God (atonement)
   6. The resurrection, ascension, and Second Coming of Christ (Matthew 25:31-46: Acts 1)
2. **The Atoning Death of Christ** 
   1. The life of Christ unto death: Obeyed the law for us offered God what was due God on behalf of humans.
   2. Atonement: to cleanse, make right, and restore (Isaiah 53)

Surely he took up our pain  
    and bore our suffering,  
yet we considered him punished by God,  
    stricken by him, and afflicted.  
**5**But he was pierced for our transgressions,  
    he was crushed for our iniquities;  
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,  
    and by his wounds we are healed.  
**6**We all, like sheep, have gone astray,  
    each of us has turned to our own way;  
and the Lord has laid on him  
    the iniquity of us all.

* 1. Substitution (vicariousness)
     1. Propitiation (satisfied divine justice through sacrifice): shrine

**23**For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; **24**Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: **25**Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; **26**To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus (Romans 3:23-26, KJV; see also 1 John 4:10, KJV).

* + - 1. Made by God for God’s sake and for our sake
      2. Enmity between God and us taken away; God’s wrath is assuaged (Romans 5:1-2)
      3. Jesus bore our sins and takes our punishment

He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed (1 Peter 2:24; see Isaiah 53)

* + 1. Expiation: disinfects us of the results of sin, our uncleanliness is taken away

Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29).

* + 1. Redemption of buying back: marketplace

**13**Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.” **14**He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit (Galatians 3:13-15).

* + 1. Justification (make right with God; given a new standing, position): courtroom

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, wehave peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, **2**through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God (Romans 5:1-2).

* + 1. Christus victor, Christ delivers us from evil (Col. 2:14; 1 John 3:8)

1. **Defending the Atonement**
   1. It leads to antinomianism (lawlessness)

**8**For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— **9**not by works, so that no one can boast. **10**For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Same grace that saves us also sanctifies us

* 1. The payment of the cross would not be sufficient to cover sins

It was the quality of the sacrifice that counts, not the duration of time suffering

* 1. It was “divine child abuse”
     1. Jesus was not a child when he died
     2. The cross was an inter-trinitarian decision and action: The Father and Son agree (John 3:16; Philippians 2:5-11)
     3. God, the Father, did not hate Jesus when he died for us
  2. One person cannot be punished for another; would be unfair
     1. Christ represents as us God and man (in God’s image)

* + 1. Only God could bring salvation; only man could pay the price

1. **Applying the Atonement**
   1. Confess Christ as Savior and Lord and know he has atoned for your sins (Romans 10:9)
   2. Tell others about this matchless good news of atonement (evangelism) (Matthew 28:18-20).
   3. Teach the church the depth of the wisdom of atonement

**Bibliography**

1. William Lane Craig, *Atonement and the Death of Christ* (Baylor, 2020).
2. Francis Turretin, *The Atonement of Christ* (Counted Faithful, 2017). By the great Protestant scholastic who lived from 1623-1687. See his *Elenctic Theology*.
3. John Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (InterVarsity, 1986). A modern classic.
4. Thomas McCall, *Forsaken: The Trinity and the Cross and Why it Matters* (InterVarsity, 2012).
5. McNall, *The Mosaic of Atonement: An Integrated Approach to Christ’s Work* (InterVarsity, 2019).
6. Leon Morris, *The Atonement: It’s Meaning and Significance* (InterVarsity, 1984).