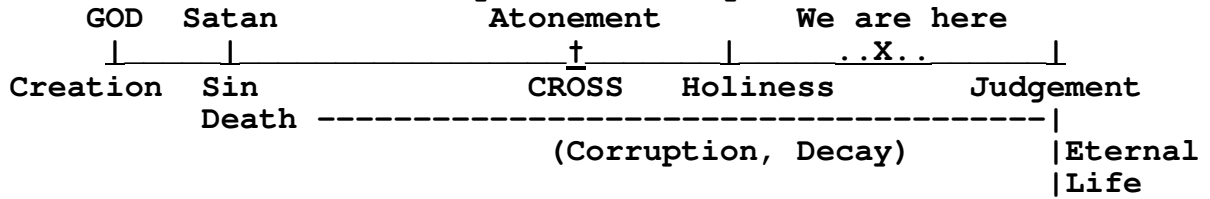


Understanding Christian Commitment 3
Sacred History: the Calvary Event Centre



Calvary is about Atonement and the defeat of the power of sin. To sin is to disobey God. Our serving of Self and the idolatry made by Self justification means that we are deeply involved in sin and the rejection of God. The human problem is sin. Sin has to be dealt with. Calvary is God's answer to Sin. By faith in the finished work of Christ at Calvary, the power of sin is confronted, the attachment to Self is broken and I can negotiate a new existence in Christ.

The Atonement Argument

1. **God is our Creator.**
2. **The Creation is good** (Gen 1:4,31).
3. **The Issue of Obedience.** There is in the Garden of Eden the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. They may eat of the Tree of Life (and live forever) but they must not eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, lest they die and not live forever (Gen 2:17; Rev 2:7).
4. **Satan (Lucifer) is a creation of God.** But Satan rebels against God and aspires to deity himself (Is 14:12-15; Ezek 28:12-19). Satan desires to rule over the creation and he asserts his power by deception (cunning, subtlety). The Devil is a liar (John 8:44).
5. This **subtlety and deception is portrayed as a serpent** in the Garden. Even in the Garden the deception moves: sometimes the Devil sometimes the snake. In Gen 3 there are moving shapes of speech and form.
6. **Eve is deceived.** By implication Adam is not deceived (which may be the greater sin). Eve is enticed by the Self considerations of: the fruit is good for food, it looks good (glamorous) and it is desired to make one wise (Gen 3:6). Wisdom is never a form of salvation (consider Solomon). Obedience is what is required.
7. **When Adam and Eve eat and disobey God** they are immediately aware of their nakedness (Gen 3:7). They are seeing what they are not supposed to see.
8. **With the awareness of nakedness comes shame and vulnerability.** With the sin of disobedience to God's direct command comes God's judgement on sin, which is Death.
9. **Satan's lie is to contradict God** by saying 'you shall not die' (Gen 3:4). It is true that they did not drop dead immediately but they were immediately subject to the fear of death and the shame and corruption that leads to death.
10. **Death is not an original part of life.** Death is the ending of physical life as we know it. Death is placed by God over His creation as His judgement on sin. God placed it there and only He can remove it. Ultimately Death will be removed from the creation (Rev 20:14).
11. **In fact, the creation is subjected to futility by God.** Death is necessary in the Theory of Evolution to remove the less evolved by extinction. But in the Theory of Creation death interferes with what God has already made and perfectly completed (Gen 1:31-2:3). The whole creation awaits liberation from the bondage of corruption (Rom 8:20-22).
12. **He who commits sin is the slave of sin** (Jn 8:34). Sin is not only an action, it is a lifestyle, a bondage and a destiny. Not

only are the wages of sin death, but death is the goal of sin. **'Let no one say when he is tempted "I am tempted by God", for God cannot be tempted by evil nor does He Himself tempt anyone. [God tests, Satan tempts.] But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin and sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death.'** (James 1:13-15) The process is as follows: I am tempted. I am shown things (not by God) in my spirit. This temptation starts to occur when desire loses its right centre in God and is enticed or lured away by the expectation, deception or excitement of something attractive and self-serving (Gen 3:6). Once our desire is fastened onto this object (now becoming an idol or rival to God) the desire begins to cultivate and conceive a behaviour to obtain the object. Once we choose the behaviour and perform it we commit sin. It is not a sin to be tempted (Jesus was tempted) but it is a sin to act out or do what the temptation specifies. Once the behaviour is locked into achieving the goal as idol, the process of corruption is at work. Corruption of behaviour and desire is the presence and out-working of death. Death and its associated destruction is the only outcome. The antidote to this is to set our affections and desires on God. We must break the power of Sin. All that we do should emanate from the desire for God and His glory. We have to strongly resist the subtle mechanisms of pride and shame which are usually bound up with self attachment. This is radical Christian obedience. Temptation shows object; object worshipped becomes idol; idol fixates desire; desire creates sin; sin matures into death. Sin (behaviour) plunges one into the destruction and corruption of death. Remember sin is a behaviour and is judged by God. Desire is not sin, it only cultivates or conceives (produces) the behaviour that is sin. We are not judged by God for our desires or feelings but by our behaviour (what we actually do). We judge ourselves by our feelings. Often we are beaten before we start because we listen to our feelings. Feelings are the presence (stir) of a spirit in our spirit. Rebuke (take spirit authority over) the spirit that is stirring you and which is not of the Spirit and intention of God. The state of the bondage and defeat of sin is expressed by Adam and Eve being cast out of the Garden (Gen 3:24).

13. **God provides a way back.** The way back to God and the Garden (Rev 2:7) after being cast out, is provided in the Tabernacle worship. The Tabernacle architecture creating the separation of Holiness provides for the Atonement by blood sacrifice. The Atonement is the way back in the OT provision. In Lev 17 the importance of blood and the blood sacrifice are emphasised. All blood that is shed must be done at the front of the Tabernacle to avoid the possibility of sacrificing to demons (Lev 17:5-7). Paganism is the offering of blood sacrifice to demons and not to God. The reason for the importance of the blood is that the life of the flesh is in the blood (Lev 17:11). God says, **'I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul'**.

It is important that this is not seen to be magic nor is there something magical about blood. The blood contains the life of the sacrifice. It is the life in the blood that 'pays the price' (atones) for the death in the sin. The sacrifice of the life in the blood 'rolls back' the corruption in the sin that leads to death. In the NT, Calvary is the God-instituted sacrifice that meets Tabernacle requirements for atonement. God obeys His own rules. The price of atonement is the life in the blood of the sacrifice. As death comes to all because all have sinned (Rom 5:12)

so life comes to all who have faith in (appropriate) the blood sacrifice of Calvary.

14. **God provides His own sacrifice in Christ.** The rules of the Tabernacle have not changed. Jesus has not come to change the Law; He has come to fulfil it (Mtt 5:17). Jesus Christ is the complete fulfilment of the OT requirements. This is described in Heb 9.

15. **Hebrews 9.**

9:1-5 This describes the furniture of the Tabernacle. This sets the scene for the right processes of atonement.

9:6-10 This describes the limitations of the earthly service. The major difficulty being that the priest who performs the ritual service cannot be made perfect in regard to conscience by means of ordinances such as washings and food and drink regulations.

9:11-15 However there is a 'time of reformation' (9:10) to come. This occurs when Jesus Christ appears as the Chief Priest. Christ appears not with the blood of goats and calves but with His own blood. He enters the heavenly tabernacle (Rev 15:5) once only obtaining an eternal redemption (9:12). **If the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer when sprinkled on the unclean could purify the flesh, how much more could the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse our conscience from dead works that we may serve the living God** (9:14). The sacrifice of Christ has the deepest power against sin. [It is interesting to notice that in a resurrection speech Jesus refers to Himself as flesh and bones, not flesh and blood (Lk 24:39). His resurrected existence did not appear to be blood based.]

9:16-22 The shedding of blood was necessary for the ratification of the Tabernacle and the old covenant. Even so the ratifying of the new covenant was done by the shedding of Christ's blood. **For without the shedding of blood, there is no remission** [pardon, forgiveness of sins] (9:22).

9:23-28 Christ has entered into the true Tabernacle not just the copy on earth made with hands (Ex 26:30). Christ entered once at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (9:26). This means that the sacrifice of Christ is not repeatable. Jesus Christ cannot be re-sacrificed in the Mass or Holy Communion. Also it is appointed that Man shall die once and then the judgement. This means that there is no reincarnation. Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. He will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to bring final deliverance and salvation (9:28).

So through the Atonement we have the mechanism for victory over sin. Disobedience brings death; obedience brings life (Rom 5:18).

Ephesians 4:22-24.

Now, through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on Calvary, we have the possibility of a new life free from corruption. This is described in Eph 4:22-24.

4:22 Concerning your former manner of life, put off the old man, the one being corrupted according to deceitful lusts

Paul is saying that with respect to the way you used to live, put off the old man, your previous person and the way you used to be. This does not take years to do: you simply put it off! It is a choice. It is like taking off old clothes. This is repentance and the key to it is the choice. We can always go back to the old ways. As Peter says 'the dog goes back to its vomit' and 'the pig is washed only to wallow in the mire' (2Pet 2:22). This attachment to the old ways of the Self requires radical treatment. Consider Rom 12:1-2 which recommends offering our bodies as a living sacrifice (which is our rational service), refusing to conform (our bodies)

to this worldview and being transformed by the renewing of our minds. In this way we prove the will of God.

The Self which we build for ourselves (note: Self building Self) is described as being corrupted by deceitful lusts. Strong desires (lusts) which are the pursuit of feelings, reinforce themselves in an intensity that cannot be satisfied. We are deceived. Our attempts to satisfy create broken character. We are a collection and a history of our various attempts to find, gratify and know ourselves. We lose integrity. We appear to be going in various directions. We capitulate before the scene of our broken and intermittent attempts at life.

4:23 be renewed in the spirit of your mind

Spirits determine what we see in our spirit. I choose to follow a spirit influence in my behaviour. My behaviour is spirit driven. Which spirit am I of? What image, spirit force is driving me? The old man is driven by spirits not of God. These spirits only lead to human despair. My mind, which is driven by the spirit(s) of my choice, needs a new spirit source. I choose the Holy Spirit. I choose to be a person of one (dominant) spirit, the Holy Spirit.

4:24 put on the new man, the one created according to God in righteousness and true holiness.

The old man was in the process of being corrupted (broken) by unfulfillable desires. But with a change (by choice) in the spirit of our mind, we put on a Self created by God and already finished. This must be the Person of Christ in us 'which is Christ in you, the hope of glory' (Col 1:27). This new image that we have in Christ has been created by God to fulfil all righteousness and it is crafted in the true spirit of holiness. This new Self/ image/ purpose we put on by faith in Jesus Christ and we abide in Him and His words abide in us (John 15:7).