

Atonement and the Cross of Christ Lesson 13 4Q 2008

Atonement and Universal Harmony

Thoughts about the title?

Was the death of Christ needed for more than the salvation of mankind? Any Bible texts to support this?

And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. ⁸ But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. ⁹ The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him. Revelation 12:7-9

Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. ¹² In a loud voice they sang: “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!” ¹³ Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!” Revelation 5:11-13

For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like men condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to men. 1 Cor 4:9

When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴ having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it

to the cross. ¹⁵ And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. Col 2:13-15

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Eph 6:10-12

Do we have a Biblical basis to understand that sin includes more than human beings? Do we have enough Biblical basis to understand that the loyal beings in the universe needed the Cross? But what did they need the Cross to accomplish for them? Did they need forgiveness of sins? What did they need?

We have a Biblical basis to understand that when Christ came to save mankind that He was also securing the rest of the universe from falling away into Satanic deception.

Do we see any examples in the Bible in which Satan battles with loyal heavenly beings and even tries to deceive them?

Job Chapter all the sons of God gathered before God and Satan came from roaming the earth and began to make allegations against God. Satan was attempting to press his case with heavenly beings, trying to gain more supporters, trying to spread the rebellion.

Daniel Chapter 10:

In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia, a revelation was given to Daniel (who was called Belteshazzar). Its message was true and it concerned a great war. The understanding of the message came to him in a vision.

² At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. ³ I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over.

⁴ On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river, the Tigris, ⁵ I looked up and there before me was a man dressed in linen, with a belt of the finest gold around his waist. ⁶ His body was like chrysolite, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude.

⁷ I, Daniel, was the only one who saw the vision; the men with me did not see it, but such terror overwhelmed them that they fled and hid themselves. ⁸ So I was left alone, gazing at this great vision; I had no strength left, my face turned deathly pale and I was helpless. ⁹ Then I heard him speaking, and as I listened to him, I fell into a deep sleep, my face to the ground.

¹⁰ A hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. ¹¹ He said, "Daniel, you who are highly esteemed, consider carefully the words I am about to speak to you, and stand up, for I have now been sent to you." And when he said this to me, I stood up trembling.

¹² Then he continued, "Do not be afraid, Daniel. **Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them.** ¹³ **But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days.** Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the **king of Persia.** ¹⁴ Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future, for the vision concerns a time yet to come...."

²⁰ So he said, "Do you know why I have come to you? Soon I will return to fight against the **prince of Persia, and when I go, the prince of Greece will come;** ²¹ but first I will tell you what is written in the Book of Truth. (No one supports me against them except Michael, your prince.

Thoughts? Who is the king of Persia? A human being Cyrus. Who is the prince of Persia that resisted the angel that came to Daniel for 21 days? Who is the “Prince of this world?” (John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11)? Satan, then would the prince of Persia be greater than the prince of the entire world? No, so it is not Satan, it is not one of God’s angels, and it is not a human being, then who is it? One of Satan’s angels that left heaven with Satan, and who would the “prince of Greece” be? Another of Satan’s angels.

Why do you think the angel from God says no one supports him against the fallen angels except Michael? Do you think the rest of the angels are in heaven idly watching and doing nothing?

Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation? Heb 1:14

Could it imply that there are angelic battles like this going on all over the earth with good angels working to hold back the power of evil angels and the other angels were currently busy with their own conflicts?

Or might it imply there are levels of angelic authority and power or ability and there were few angels with the skill and ability to contend with the prince of Persia? (Remember the Ephesians 6 text above).

We are asking the question do the beings of others worlds need the Cross? Notice what Jesus said about the Cross and the Prince of this world:

Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all to myself.” John 12:31, 32

What is this talking about? Many texts say draw all “men” but the word men is supplied by the translators it is not in the Greek. Jesus didn’t say He would draw all men but He would draw “all” to Himself.

From where is Satan cast out? How does the Cross of Christ accomplish this?

Satan is cast out of the hearts and minds of intelligent beings. At the Cross all the loyal beings in heaven saw Satan exposed for the liar and fraud he is and all sympathy, all question, all willingness to listen was erased and all the intelligences in the universe after the Cross closed their minds to Satan. He was cast out. Christ also, in His victory cast out the Satanic infection from humanity and restored God’s law of love into this species again.

Then notice Colossians how the Cross of Christ is not only for our reconciliation but the universe as well:

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or **things in heaven**, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. Col 1:19,20

Thoughts about God’s plan to heal His universe?

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph “The restoration...” thoughts? What do you understand this to mean? I believe the lesson is correct the Day of Atonement ritual was teaching “the restoration of God’s creation to its original design.” If this is correct, where is such work taking place? Would it not be in the creation itself?

Read last paragraph “The cleansing...” thoughts? Where does much of our current understanding come from on this subject? Is it new Biblical insights that have been discovered in the last 75 years or are they perspectives which were

discovered and taught at least 120 years ago? Now, it doesn't mean something is incorrect because it has been taught for years, not at all, but isn't truth unfolding? Are we not to advance in truth? Should not our appreciation, comprehension and insight grow over time? Or is our understanding to stay stagnant?

What would you think about a physician who was using the same understanding and knowledge from 120 years ago? Or a dentist, contractor, plumber, physicist, mathematician? Don't we see knowledge increasing?

Doesn't the Bible specifically promise that Biblical knowledge will increase as we near the end of time?

But you, Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase." Daniel 12:4

Have we over the last 75 years been experiencing increasing knowledge in our Biblical understanding or are we stagnant holding to understanding that is over 100 years old?

The history of the reformation is one in which a reformer would discover new truth and then the reformer dies and his followers stagnate no longer growing or searching for new truth themselves. Then another Bible student comes along and uncovers new truth taking the reformation further until that person dies and further stagnation, while many refuse to follow new truth sticking instead to the old landmarks. Are we as a church in danger of doing this? Are we in danger of refusing to follow the unfolding of truth and instead are we stuck in the past?

One of the founders of our church, who was intimately involved in crafting our current understanding of the sanctuary doctrine said the following, in 1900, after our doctrinal position on this subject was formed:

“The significance of the Jewish economy is **not yet fully comprehended**. Truths vast and profound are shadowed forth in its rites and symbols. The gospel is the key that unlocks its mysteries. Through a knowledge of the plan of redemption, its truths are opened to the understanding. **Far more than we do**, it is our privilege to understand these wonderful themes.” COL 133, 1900

Is there more to discover on this topic? Should we rest with what has already been stated? Should we dig deeper?

What is the key to understanding the old symbolic system? The Gospel of Jesus Christ! Far too many make the mistake of studying the symbols of the OT and then form theories in which Jesus is forced to conform to their interpretation of the symbols rather than understanding the symbols in light of Jesus!

What are the Father, Son and Holy Spirit waiting on? Why have they not returned? Is there some legal battle going on in a court in heaven that is preventing them from returning? Is the devil such a good attorney that They haven't been able to finish all the cases in heaven?

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.
2Peter 3:9

What is the Lord waiting on? For people to be ready, for us to get well, for His children on earth to accept His remedy and be healed! For us to open the doors of the Spirit Temple to the Holy Spirit so He can cleanse us and prepare us for translation!

Does God need a heavenly court scene in order for Him to hear the evidence and figure out who should be saved and who should be lost?

Then what is going on?

Daniel 8:14 “unto 2300 days and the sanctuary will be cleansed” or “reconsecrated” or “set right” or “justified” or “put back right” or “restored to its right state”

What might this be referring to? Is it referring to refurbishing a building in heaven? Is it referring to changing the record books by erasing data, facts and evidence from the accounts of the saved? Is it referring to cleansing the hearts and minds of God’s people? One of the people involved in crafting our current sanctuary doctrine wrote:

“The coming of Christ as our high priest to the most holy place, for the cleansing of the sanctuary, brought to view in Daniel 8:14; the coming of the Son of man to the Ancient of Days, as presented in Daniel 7:13; and the coming of the Lord to His temple, foretold by Malachi[3:1-3], are descriptions of the same event; and this is also represented by the coming of the bridegroom to the marriage, described by Christ in the parable of the ten virgins, of Matthew 25.” Great Controversy 426

Do we take the evidence of all these texts to understand our position? Have we grown in our understanding?

The lesson specifically cites in paragraph two Daniel 7:9,10,22 and states this means we have a legal foundation or judicial process going on in heaven, do we?

⁹ “As I looked,
 “thrones were set in place,
 and the Ancient of Days took his seat.
 His clothing was as white as snow;
 the hair of his head was white like wool.
 His throne was flaming with fire,
 and its wheels were all ablaze.

¹⁰ A river of fire was flowing,

coming out from before him.
 Thousands upon thousands attended him;
 ten thousand times ten thousand stood before
 him.

The court was seated,
 and the books were opened...

¹³ “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. ¹⁴ He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. Daniel 7:9,10,13,-14

What is being described? “The court was seated” does it mean a judicial court or a royal court? In context what is happening a judicial review or something else? The text is describing a coronation, a crowning, a time in the universe in which God is on His throne and all the intelligences of the universe have gathered and Christ is brought into God’s presence and given all power and authority, crowned as Sovereign!

The texts do not tell us what books are opened or the purpose of the books, but we do know Christ is receiving power and authority. Is it possible the books are the books of Christ’s accomplishments, of the achievements He has made demonstrating all the evidence of His right to be Sovereign?

Then, if we keep reading in Daniel seven, we are taken back and told that an evil power will arise and will war against the saints until something happens? What?

Our lesson authors would have us believe that it is until God and Christ in heaven make a judgment in our favor, a judicial act, a legal pronouncement. They get this idea from Daniel 7:22.

As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, ²² until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom. Daniel 7:21,22

Does the Biblical evidence support this as a judicial act, a legal pronouncement by God in our favor?

First, this evil power wages war against the saints but what kind of war?

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. ⁴ The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵ We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. 2 Cor 10:3-5

What kind of war? Where is it being fought? In our minds!

Second, these passages have something to do with cleansing the Temple – how might the Temple be connected to this war going on in our minds?

Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, ² not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. ³ Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. ⁴ He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's **temple**, proclaiming himself to be God.

Paul is describing the exact same events as Daniel 7 in which evil powers war against the saints and oppose God. In the aftermath of Christ death and resurrection and ascension into heaven, did this man of lawlessness ride into heaven overthrow God, set himself up in God's temple in heaven and proclaim himself to be God? No, where did this happen? In the Spirit Temple! In our minds!

Then what is Daniel 7:21,22 talking about?

The Hebrew word translated "pronounced" actually means "to give" or "to impart" and thus the KJV states:

Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. Daniel 7:22

Daniel is told in vision that an evil power would arise that would lie, distort, misrepresent God and defile the Spirit Temple by getting humans to accept, worship and teach a false picture of God. That it would be 2300 years before enough truth would be recovered for Christ to empower His people on earth with judgment to break free from the lies and be cleansed in their minds and characters.

In Daniel 7 we see symbolically taught that Jesus comes to His Father and is empowered to go forward with all the agencies of heaven to enlighten, cleanse and purify His people on earth. This evil power is able to succeed against the saints until we are given "judgment" or "discernment" or "ability" to see through the lies and have our minds cleansed by the truth. Thus we read in Malachi 3:1-3, another passage describing the same event:

Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the LORD Almighty.

² But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire

or a launderer's soap. ³ He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver.

We are living in the time in earth's history where Christ is working to cleanse our minds, hearts and characters from all the lies, distortions and misrepresentations of God. This wins us to trust and in trust we open the heart, experience the indwelling of His Spirit and real transformation where we love others more than ourselves!

Questions?

TQ 151 states "God's plan will ultimately wipe out sin." My question is how? How do you understand God does this? What models have you heard?

What is sin made out of? Lies and selfishness, what is it that wipes out lies and selfishness? Truth and love, can lies and selfishness be destroyed by the use of might and power? Remember the war is occurring in our minds and the weapons we use destroy everything that sets itself up against the knowledge of God!

MONDAY

Vindication of God's People

What do you understand this to mean? The lesson cites 1 Cor 15:51-54

Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— ⁵² in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³ For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. ⁵⁴ When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is

written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

What is it talking about in this text? Recreation, regeneration, transformation, renewal! Exactly, this is what God is working to do to restore us back to His original design specifications, to undo the damage of sin!

The lesson also cites Hebrews 9:27,28

Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

How do you understand this passage?

Paul is saying man’s natural destiny is terminal. Without the intervention of Christ we are destined to be born and die and face ultimate eternal separation from God. The Greek translated “face judgment” can mean experience separation. But because of Jesus He resolved the sickness that separates us and thus is returning to fully reconcile all those who have had their hearts and minds reunited to Him!

TUESDAY

What is going on during the 1000 years?

Read second paragraph “The millennium...” thoughts? Of all the beings in the universe who wouldn’t be ready for the final annihilation of the unrepentant, besides maybe the unrepentant? Wouldn’t it be the saved from earth? Then what would be going on during the 1000 years to get the saved from earth ready for this? Does this mean during the 1000 years the saved from earth are changing, growing, maturing, developing?

Will anyone on earth when Christ appears know 100% correctly everything in the Bible? Will we all have a lot to learn? Will the thief on the cross have much to learn?

Could it be that the idea of “judgment” during this time is not about us passing down penalties or determining outcomes or meting out punitive sentences of appropriate retribution as has often been suggested, but about the saved developing their judgment as to what is happening? Is it about the saved maturing in their ability to think so they can accurately judge or comprehend or draw appropriate conclusions about what is transpiring?

What about these Bible texts suggested by the quarterly?

Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men’s hearts.
1Cor 4:5

Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life! 1Cor 6:3

I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. Rev 20:4

Do these say the righteous pass sentence upon and hand out penalties to be imposed upon the wicked or does it say we make judgments about the wicked? Could it mean we make judgments about the reasons why they are where they are and about God’s role in all of this?

“Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized

by its fruit. ³⁴ You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. ³⁵ The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. ³⁶ But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. ³⁷ For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.” Matthew 12:33-37

What is this text saying? Is it not saying that the condition of the person determines the destiny of the person? If the heart is evil it brings forth evil and condemns itself? If a person is terminal and refuses the remedy that person will get sick and die, by their own condition they are condemned? Those watching will judge why they die. Do the unrepentant die because the doctor gets mad at their refusal to accept his treatment and then executes them or does the doctor cry as he watches his patient die?

What about these passages?

Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son. John 5:22

You judge by human standards; I pass judgment on no one. But if I do judge, my decisions are right, because I am not alone. I stand with the Father, who sent me. John 8:15,16

What do these texts mean? Was Jesus lying when He said this? Will Jesus have to back track and say, “Well I actually didn’t mean exactly that, the Father is going to judge everyone and I am going to be there to be your defense attorney to protect you from His harsh judgments”? Of course not, God does not have to pass judgments on the wicked who refuse His remedy because their very, unhealed, terminal condition is self-revealing, self-determining, self-terminating.

WEDNESDAY

First paragraph states, “Biblical hope embraces the universe, and it anticipates the moment when the reconciliation obtained through the blood of the Lamb will reach universal dimensions.” How do you understand this? What does this mean?

The lesson states “the enemies of God will be confronted with the record of their sin and rebellion.” How does this happen?

The lesson points out that the wicked, Satan, and his angels all at some point acknowledge they were wrong and God and Christ are right. Then the lesson states “thus admitting that they deserve to die.” Why do they deserve to die if they admit they were wrong and God and Christ are righteous?

Last paragraph states “Satan sees that his voluntary rebellion has unfitted him for heaven. He has trained his powers to war against God; the purity, peace, and harmony of heaven would be to him supreme torture.” Does this sound like he is lost because of an imposed penalty or by natural result of how sin has transformed his nature and character?

THURSDAY

The lesson states in last paragraph, “The glorious subject of the atonement will keep on challenging our deepest intellectual and spiritual capacities throughout eternity as we attempt to gain a more complete understanding of the love of God revealed on the cross.” Do you think the Cross would be the focus of Satan’s distortions and misrepresentations such that people draw the wrong lessons of what Christ has done?

How has this happened?