

The “Infinite Price” Paid - Is it Legal & Is Christ still Omnipresent?

written by Tim Jennings, M.D. | January 16, 2011



I was told and have been taught since I joined the SDA Church that Jesus gave up his ‘Omnipresence’ for eternity as the cost for my Salvation. I do not and can not find this in the scriptures

or in the writings of Ellen White. When asked for proof, I have yet to receive any, but this is what is being taught. I believe that Jesus has his ‘omnipresence’ and that he only laid it down to become incarnate, he picked it up again when he presented Himself before His Father after the ascension. The question came up then, “What is the ‘infinite cost’ to the Father and Christ refer to? Sis White is clear that there was an ‘Infinite cost’ to both. It is insisted that this is a payment. In light of the Healing Model how would you answer this?

Your thoughts would be greatly appreciated.

Thanks for your questions. Regarding Christ’s limitation of omnipresence, one of the founders of the

SDA church makes a statement in the book *Desire of Ages*, which is supported by Christ's actions after his resurrection, that indicates Christ's assumption of humanity was not limited to 33 years but for all eternity and with this His omnipresence was limited. Notice this statement is in the context of His ascension and sending the Spirit to represent Him on earth:

The Holy Spirit is Christ's representative, but divested of the personality of humanity, and independent thereof. Cumbered with humanity, Christ could not be in every place personally. Therefore it was for their interest that He should go to the Father, and send the Spirit to be His successor on earth. No one could then have any advantage because of his location or his personal contact with Christ. By the Spirit the Saviour would be accessible to all. In this sense He would be nearer to them than if He had not ascended on high. — *Desire of Ages*, pg. 669

Regarding the "infinite price" question, many people have been so conditioned by penal substitution way of thinking that they can only "see" "legal payment" when they read certain texts. References like the one you quoted are presented quite often, but they never actually say penal substitution. I recently had a similar dialog with a penal substitution theologian and he quoted several such passages. Below I list the quotes he referenced in bold type followed by my explanation under them, demonstrating such language does not mean "legal penalty."

A) "it cost an infinite price to deliver the captives of Satan from the captivity of sin."

Agreed, but such language does not mean such a price is judicial in nature. In a recent movie a father had a son dying of heart failure and there was no donor. The father offered his own heart but no doctor would do the surgery so the father positioned to shoot himself in the ER so his son could have his heart. If such an event happened, would it be true that it "cost" the father? Or the father "paid a high price" to save his son? Would that be the same as saying the father had to pay a "legal" price? Likewise, our condition could not be remedied without Christ's sacrifice, and that cost the Godhead infinitely, however, that is not the same as saying they paid a "judicial or legally imposed" penalty.

B) "Christ died as a substitute for the sinner."

Agreed, the trust healing model already proclaims this. Just as the father in the analogy above died and his son lived with the donated heart. It was the son's heart that was bad, it was the son's condition that was terminal. But the father took the place of the son and died so that the son could live. Substitution does not automatically mean substitution to suffer a "legally imposed" penalty, one may project the "legal penalty" idea into their theology and create a legal belief system, but the inspired record does not require it. One can be honest with the inspired record, with the reality of God's law and can believe in Christ's substitutionary role, and remove the "legally imposed" concepts from their soteriology.

C) "Christ exhausted the penalty and provided a pardon."

Exhaust means "to consume entirely." Scripture tells us that, "The wages of sin is death," (Rom 6:23) and "by his death he destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light." (2Tim 1:9,10). What is the basis for death? Sin, and what is sin?

"Our only definition of sin is that given in the word of God; it is "the transgression of the law;" it is the outworking of a principle at war with the great law of love which is the foundation of the

divine government.” — Great Controversy, pg. 492.

Christ exhausted the penalty by destroying the very source of sin in mankind, when through His death He destroyed Satan’s principle, which entered mankind when Adam sinned. It is so much larger and more significant than paying some legal penalty. Thus, having become human and subject to like passions, and having destroyed this infection in His humanity “he became the source of salvation for all who obey him” (Heb 5:8). And it is by this He is able to pardon, because pardon is not some mere legal thing, it is regeneration: “God’s forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness for sin but reclaiming from sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart. David had the true conception of forgiveness when he prayed, “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.” Ps. 51:10. — Faith I Live By, pg. 129.

F) “The God of justice did not spare His Son... The whole debt for the transgression of God’s law was demanded from our Mediator. A full atonement was required. How appropriate are the words of Isaiah, “It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief.” His soul was made “an offering for sin.” “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities” (Isa. 53:10, 5). — Heavenly Places, pg. 15.

What is justice? Is it not always doing that which is just or right? What is the standard of right or justice? Is it not God’s very character, which is the basis of God’s law? With this in mind we understand why the God of justice didn’t spare His Son – because a God of love does what love demands, selfless giving “for God so loved the world He GAVE.” This is the justice of the Bible. Further, life is constructed upon the law of love. Once breeched, man’s condition was terminal and could not be remedied by violating the law (protocols, design for life). Only in harmony with God’s law could man be saved! Justice required that Christ destroy selfishness in mankind and restore God’s law of love. Therefore, Christ had to come to rewrite in mankind God’s principles for life (think new covenant write laws on hearts and minds). What is a full atonement other than a full reconciliation or fully restoring mankind to oneness with God? Only by removing Satan’s law of selfishness from humanity and putting humanity back into perfection could such be accomplished. Christ did this in His life, death and resurrection. Thus it pleased the Lord to put Christ into humanity, to put upon Him our iniquity (sinfulness) and to allow Christ to crush sin while Christ was bruised in the process (think Genesis 3).

G) “As man He [Christ] must suffer the consequences of man’s sin. As man He must endure the wrath of God against transgression.”

Excellent, quote, demonstrating He must gain the victory “as man” in a “human brain” and suffer what sin did to man. And, as demonstrated in Romans 1:18,24,26,28, 4;25 Christ did suffer God’s wrath when God “gave him up” or “delivered him up”. This again was no imposed penalty, or legal execution, or judicial penalty, but was the only means whereby God could destroy in humanity Satan’s principle of selfishness and restore the law of love, the law of God, back into a human brain. “As a man” Christ achieved this wonderful victory.