

THE WITNESS

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Eschatological Expectation and the Nature of the Atonement

By Dr. James E. Bordwine II

As I have studied the doctrine of eschatology, I have become convinced that one of the essential elements in developing a proper eschatology is a thoroughly biblical understanding of the atonement provided by Jesus Christ. That may not sound like news to some of you, but I think it is news to the majority of professing evangelicals today. Since the atonement has to do with what Jesus Christ accomplished for our race, it is not difficult to see how one's view of the atonement will affect one's expectation regarding the work of the church and the preaching of the gospel in history.

In this article, I am going to use the second chapter of Hebrews to talk about the nature of the atonement and eschatological expectation. The second chapter continues this general theme of Christ's eminence by explaining His work of atonement in detail. The writer concentrates on the Savior's role as the New Adam, the Head of a redeemed humanity. This emphasis is seen particularly in verses 5–18, where it is taught that Jesus Christ became a Man in order to redeem mankind and restore our race according to God's design. In this chapter, Jesus Christ is presented as the ultimate or last Man.

The Supremacy of Jesus Christ's Ministry as the Last Man

For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those

who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will. (Heb. 2:1–4)

The opening phrase of chapter 2, "For this reason," points back to the previous chapter, where the writer dealt with Christ's superiority over the prophets and angels. In light of the information contained in chapter 1, he exhorts his readers to show greater concern for their spiritual health. *Let me remind you that this epistle was written to Christians who were not persevering in the faith as they should. Spiritual*



maturity was lacking; zeal for learning was inadequate; destructive complacency and even apostasy threatened the well-being of these professing Christians. Therefore, the author states, "we must pay much closer attention" to what we've heard. The word translated "pay attention" (prosechein) means "hold to, attend to, turn to." This word, in turn, is modified by a term meaning "abundantly" (perissos). We might paraphrase in this manner: "We must give this gospel our absolute concentration; it's not something to be taken lightly. We must banish every doubt and reassert our original enthusiasm and determination."

The point being made is this: because Jesus Christ is who He is—God's final and perfect Prophet (Heb. 1:1, 2)—and because Jesus Christ did what He did—made purification of sins (1:3)—and because Jesus Christ sits where He sits—at the right hand of the Majesty on high, sovereignly ruling all of creation (1:13)—*then close attention must be given to His ministry.* Everything said about Jesus Christ in chapter 1 is a preface to the exhortation found at the opening of chapter 2: "We must pay closer attention to what we

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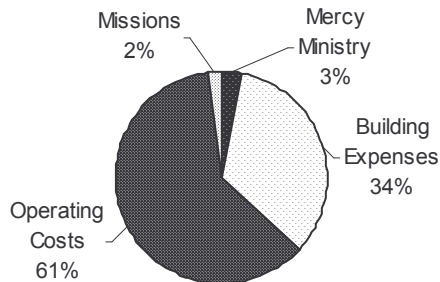
Update from the Deacons

By Brian Tuck and Larry Holt

Financial update prepared for WPC congregational meeting on January 23, 2005:

Main Checking Balance as of 12/31/04: \$141,637.13
(min. balance \$50,000)

2004 Giving: \$293,754.45
2004 Expenses: \$260,139.39



- Operating Costs (salaries, janitorial, fellowship, office expenses)
- Building Expenses (mortgage, facilities, utilities)
- Mercy Ministry (deacon activities)
- Missions (denominational support, missions committee outreach, missionary support)

The Deaconate asks that you pray for:

- The completion of building and grounds improvements required by the City of Vancouver
 - Estimated costs of \$50,000 to \$100,000
- The expansion of mercy ministries, as this is the principal occupation of deacons. We ask that God will:
 - Free up the deacons' time to be able to focus on ministry
 - Bring congregational needs to our attention
 - Give us wisdom in dealing with needs
 - Provide the means to address the needs

A PRAISE: Several members have stepped forward to serve on a building maintenance committee. They will oversee some of the matters involved in the day-to-day upkeep of our building, assisting the deacons in their duties.

Your family can help, too! You are asked to assist these members in their efforts to take care of our building. Please do what you can to pick up refuse (e.g., used bulletins, coffee cups) and lend a hand when you see a need.



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A PUBLICATION OF WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: JIM BORDWINE
CONTENT EDITOR: JULIE COLE
COPYEDITOR: KAREN MAGNUSON
LAYOUT & GRAPHICS: DEVIN BOWEN
 JULIE COLE
CONTRIBUTORS: JIM BORDWINE
 DEVIN BOWEN
 JULIE COLE
 SKIP ELFORD
 LARRY HOLT
 BRIAN TUCK
TECH SUPPORT: BRIAN COLE

Comments, corrections, criticism, and ideas may be directed to newsletter@solochristo.org. Since there is currently a small, underpaid, and over-worked staff, all those with criticism and ideas will be promptly awarded staff positions.

Welcome, Sarah!



Sarah, Conner, and Claudia Stiers

The elders and deacons are glad to welcome Sarah Stiers on staff at WPC. Sarah works as our secretary/administrative assistant and provides custodial services. Sarah will be answering the WPC office phone from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM, Monday through Friday. She may be reached by e-mail: secretary@solochristo.org.

Into All the World: Emma and Allen Kiwanuka

By Julie Cole



**The Kiwanuka Family:
Allen, Emma,
Joel, and Joshua**

The Kiwanukas live and serve in their home country. Uganda is slightly smaller than Oregon, located on the high plateau of equatorial Africa. The Nile River runs through this temperate area to fill Lake Victoria, the continent's largest lake. In the heart of Africa's Great Lakes, Uganda borders Kenya, Sudan, Rwanda, Tanzania, and the Congo.

Westminster Theological College

Emma is director of Westminster Theological College (WTC) in Uganda's capital, Kampala. He trains African men from Uganda and neighboring countries for ministry and church leadership, with a focus on Reformed teachings. Some students bring their families to join them in Zana, the community where the campus is located. So many students are attending WTC that housing has become a major concern of the ministry.

Zana Community Health Center

As an outreach, medical teams work to provide care to the people of Zana. They offer outpatient treatment, an inpatient labor and delivery ward, a counseling center for people with HIV/AIDS, a laboratory, and immunization clinics. Emma says of the health center, "What a blessing to have. It is a testimony to the love of God who not only deals with spiritual matters, but also cares for the physical aspect of his people."

The Church

Emma pastors Zana Community Presbyterian Church (ZCPC), a growing, mission-minded congregation. This past year, they ordained men into leadership. God continues to bless them with new members and opportunities for ministry.


Allen, who has been continuing her own education, teaches Bible and catechizes young children who come weekly to visit. Many are orphans. Some sources report that as many as 2.5 million Ugandan children are without parents, many due to the scourge of AIDS. This church is a bright light in an

extremely rough place to grow up. ZCPC, with the assistance of congregations in the States, sponsors many of these orphans so that they can attend school. One of these orphans, Dorcus, has become a part of the Kiwanuka home and is attending secondary school.

In December, tragedy struck this young congregation. The Saturday-morning trek was to be an introduction trip to Masaka, a town about 100 miles southwest of Kampala. A team of church members, WTC students, and college employees was on board the 28-passenger mission bus. Deacon Paul Kyobe, one of the two deacons of ZCPC, was driving, when about 70 miles into their trip they collided head-on in a violent crash with an out-of-control bus. Deacon Kyobe was killed instantly. Many, including Mrs. Kyobe, were seriously injured. Two others did not survive their injuries. The bus was a total loss.

Although weary and hurting, Emma and Allen are not discouraged as they minister to the congregation. Following is an excerpt from Emma's e-mail dated December 5: "The Lord has tested this ministry and when sufferings come we get sad. We mourn but not as those without hope. God loves Kyobe more than we do. HE gave us an opportunity to work with him (Kyobe) and see him grow in the grace of God . . . We live in a world of uncertainties yet there is hope for those in Christ."

Contact the Kiwanuka Family at P.O. Box 21312, Kampala, Uganda, or send an e-mail at zanpresb@infocom.co.ug.

You may receive updates from WPC's missions committee and get news from our mission contacts. Contact Brian or Julie Cole at colefam@safeaccess.com. 



Rediscovering the Early Church Fathers—Part 2

By Devin Bowen

In continuing our series on the fathers of the early church, we turn our attention to another of the so-called Greek Apologists, Irenaeus of Lyons. This group, as you may remember from our last article on Justin Martyr, wrote in defense of the Christian faith in the second century.

Referred to by some as the founder of Christian theology, Irenaeus was probably born in Smyrna in Asia Minor around 135. Irenaeus tells us in a letter to the Roman presbyter Florinus that he had been acquainted with Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, as a boy. Polycarp had been a contemporary of the apostle John. This acquaintance seems to have had an impact on Irenaeus and his teaching, for he states that Polycarp “departed this life, having always taught the things which he heard from the apostles, and which the Church handed down, and which alone are true.” Indeed, this would be Irenaeus’s own approach and appeal throughout his writings.

At some point in his early life, Irenaeus left Smyrna and settled in Lyons in Gaul (modern-day France). Just before the massacre at Lyons in 177 under Emperor Marcus Aurelius, he was dispatched by the local bishop Pothinus as an envoy of peace to Bishop Eleutherus in Rome, where he carried a letter urging tolerance toward a Christian sect known as the Montanists. He would maintain this reputation as a “peacemaker” through a later encounter with Pope Victor I in which he argued for an end to strife surrounding controversy on the proper dating of Easter celebrations. Irenaeus would return to Lyons to find that many in the church had been martyred, including his bishop. He was then elevated to the office of bishop in the place of Pothinus. Later traditions dating from the sixth century speak of Irenaeus himself as suffering death as a martyr (he is even depicted in a well-known drawing being consumed by lions), but because of these traditions’ late date and the lack of early confirming testimony, there are doubts about these claims’ authenticity. Beyond this, little additional personal and biographical information is known.

We have two extant works of Irenaeus as well as several other fragments from the quotations of other early writers. His major work is entitled *Against Heresies* and is the first catalogue and full-length treatise outlining and answering the heresies of the early church. The second work, entitled *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, shows how Christ is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies.

Heresies such as Marcionism and a new movement called Gnosticism were the dominant threats to the church of Jesus Christ in Irenaeus’s day. The various branches of Gnosticism differed somewhat in their teachings and emphasis but ultimately promoted a “salvation” not through the once-for-all sacrifice of God’s Son for sinners, but through knowledge (*gnosis*). The Scriptures were not the self-revelation of the God who had created everything from nothing. Salvation was not God’s rescuing from sin a people for Himself through the blood of His Incarnate Son. “Salvation” was the escape from the material world and a return, through secret knowledge, to the divine Being or Spirit. This Being was not the Creator of the world, but one who was totally unknowable—far removed from the imperfect world of matter and flesh. The flesh was viewed as the prison house from which the spark of the divine spiritual substance must escape and return to its source. Jesus, a special representative of the Divine Being,

only appeared to be man, and came to bring this *gnosis* or knowledge to mankind. The Gnostics denied that God had come in human flesh to rescue man, dead in his trespasses and sins.

Irenaeus catalogues the Gnostic heresies and provides the first substantial response to these errors. Book 1 of his *Against Heresies* represents an almost encyclopedic survey of the various strains of Gnostic heresy:

The first of them, Valentinus, who adapted the principles of the heresy called “Gnostic” to the peculiar character of his own school, taught as follows: He maintained that there is a certain Dyad (twofold being), of whom one part should be called Arrhetus (unspeakable), and the other Sige (silence). But of this Dyad a second was produced, one part of whom he names Pater, and the other Aletheia. From this Tetrad, again, arose Logos and Zoe,

Anthropos and Ecclesia. These constitute the primary Ogdoad. He next states that from Logos and Zoe ten powers were produced, as we have before mentioned. But from Anthropos and Ecclesia proceeded twelve, one of which separating from the rest, and falling from its original condition, produced the rest of the universe. He also supposed two beings of the name of Horos, the one of whom has his place between Bythus and the rest of the Pleroma, and divides the created Aeons from the uncreated Father, while the other separates their mother from the Pleroma. Christ also was not produced from the Aeons within the Pleroma, but was brought forth by the mother who had been ex-



cluded from it, in virtue of her remembrance of better things, but not without a kind of shadow. He, indeed, as being masculine, having severed the shadow from himself, returned to the Pleroma; but his mother being left with the shadow, and deprived of her spiritual substance, brought forth another son, namely, the Demiurge, whom he also styles the supreme ruler of all those things which are subject to him. Sometimes, again, he maintains that Jesus was produced from him who was separated from their mother, and united to the rest, that is, from Theletus, sometimes as springing from him who returned into the Pleroma, that is, from Christ; and at other times still as derived from Anthropos and Ecclesia. And he declares that the Holy Spirit was produced by Aletheia for the inspection and fructification of the Aeons, by entering invisibly into them, and that, in this way, the Aeons brought forth the plants of truth. (A.H. 1.11.2)

Irenaeus moves on in the later books of *Against Heresies* to refute the teachings of Valentinus and Marcion as unreasonable and inconsistent with Scripture. Both were active in the church around the middle of the second century; and both, despite being excommunicated for heresy, had substantial followings.

If . . . we leave some questions in the hands of God, we shall both preserve our faith uninjured, and shall continue without danger; and all Scripture, which has been given to us by God, shall be found by us perfectly consistent

Marcion seems to have been mostly concerned with textual matters and the radical discontinuity between the god of the Old Testament (a god of wrath and carnage) and the god of the New Testament (a god of perfect love). As a result of this thinking, Marcion rejected the entire Old Testament as the composition of an inferior god. He rejected most of the New Testament as well, retaining only a heavily edited gospel of Luke and some of Paul's letters. He rejected the resurrection and taught, as the Gnostics, that Jesus only appeared to be human. It was these heresies they held in common that caused them to be grouped and written against together:

For, prior to Valentinus, those who follow Valentinus had no existence; nor did those from Marcion exist before Marcion; nor, in short, had any of those malignant-minded people, whom I have above enumerated, any being previous to the initiators and inventors of their perversity. For Valentinus came to Rome in the time of Hyginus, flourished under Pius, and remained until Anicetus. Cerdon, too, Marcion's predecessor, himself arrived in the time of Hyginus, who was the ninth bishop. Coming frequently into the Church, and making public confession, he thus remained, one time teaching in secret, and then

again making public confession; but at last, having been denounced for corrupt teaching, he was excommunicated from the assembly of the brethren. Marcion, then, succeeding him, flourished under Anicetus, who held the tenth place of the episcopate. (A.H. 3.4.3)

In opposition to Valentinus and Marcion, Irenaeus affirms that one God (rather than many) has been known and proclaimed by the prophets, the apostles, and the Lord Jesus Himself:

This, therefore, having been clearly demonstrated here (and it shall yet be so still more clearly), that neither the prophets, nor the apostles, nor the Lord Christ in His own person, did acknowledge any other Lord or God, but the God and Lord supreme: the prophets and the apostles confessing the Father and the Son; but naming no other as God, and confessing no other as Lord: and the Lord Himself handing down to His disciples, that He, the Father, is the only God and Lord, who alone is God and ruler of all;—it is incumbent on us to follow, if we are their disciples indeed, their testimonies to this effect. (A.H. 3.9.1)

In addition to his response to Gnostic error, Irenaeus affirms the inspiration and authority of the Old and New Testament Scriptures and the principle that less clear passages are to be understood in the light of those more clear:

We have learned from none others the plan of our salvation, than from those through whom the Gospel has come down to us, which they did at one time proclaim in public, and, at a later period, by the will of God, handed down to us in the Scriptures, to be the ground and pillar of our faith. (A.H. 3.1.1)

If, therefore, according to the rule which I have stated, we leave some questions in the hands of God, we shall both preserve our faith uninjured, and shall continue without danger; and all Scripture, which has been given to us by God, shall be found by us perfectly consistent; and the parables shall harmonize with those passages which are perfectly plain; and those statements the meaning of which is clear, shall serve to explain the parables; and through the many diversified utterances [of Scripture] there shall be heard one harmonious melody in us, praising in hymns that God who created all things. (A.H. 2.28.3)

Perhaps Irenaeus's most important contribution is his doctrine of recapitulation or "summing up" of all things in Christ (Eph. 1:7–10; Col. 1:15–20). If Christ is not fully man, He cannot represent and bear the sins of man in His flesh. If Christ is not fully God and one who shares in the very essence of His Father, He cannot return us to God. What man in the flesh lost in disobedience, the Man *from* and *of* God has reclaimed, in the flesh, by His obedience:

He thus points out the recapitulation that should take place in his own person of the effusion of blood from the beginning, of all the righteous men and of the prophets, and that by means of Himself there should be a requisition of their blood. Now this [blood] could not be required
(Continued on page 9)

(*Eschatological Expectation, continued from page 1*)

have heard.” These readers are being urged to reconsider the importance of that gospel they had embraced; they are being reminded of the momentous significance of the Savior’s work of redemption.

The writer warns of the potentially horrible outcome of continued negligence: these readers were in danger of “drifting away” from the gospel that they had previously professed to believe. “Drift away” comes from a Greek word (*parareo*) meaning “to flow by.” The author seems to picture the gospel as an “anchor” for his audience. In our present verse, he implies that great care must be taken to maintain a firm “grasp” on the stabilizing gospel. Otherwise, the readers might simply “float away” on a sea of spiritual doubt, driven along by currents of doctrinal error.

“How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?” If every transgression of the law delivered through God’s servants, the angels, resulted in certain punishment, what should we conclude about the gospel delivered by God’s own Son?

As the writer indicates at points in this letter, the experience of these Christians had shown them that following Christ was not an easy road to travel. They knew hardship, heartache, uncertainty, and fright; their families had disowned them, and their belongings had been seized. But this writer knew what he was doing; he knew how to bolster courage and commitment. He presents Jesus Christ in all His glorious splendor in the first chapter and then asks, in essence, “What are you going to do? Are you going to fold your arms, close your eyes and ears, and continue toward destruction, or are you going to take your stand with the Savior?”

The writer underscores his point by drawing a comparison between the law delivered through the angels and the gospel delivered by Jesus Christ. “The word spoken through angels” (v. 2) refers to the law given to Israel on Mount Sinai. The Bible indicates that angels played a part in the delivery of God’s law to Moses. While Exodus 19 and 20 give no indication of the angels’ role, Deuteronomy 33:2, which is part of Moses’ recollection of that event, describes God as coming “from the midst of ten thousand holy ones.” Psalm 68:17 also speaks of the Lord’s being among “thousands upon thousands” of chariots when He visited Sinai.

The law that came through the mediation of these angels was nothing less than the very Word of God. Therefore, as the writer adds, it was “unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense.” God’s Word cannot be changed because it is His Word. The author of Hebrews is stressing that God spoke to the people using angelic intercession and that what was delivered by those angels was binding. But recall what the writer has already demonstrated in chapter 1: the angels and their ministry are *inferior* to Jesus Christ and His ministry. Therefore, if these

things can be said about a message delivered by angels, *what is to be said about a message delivered by the Son of God?* This is the theme that runs throughout this book.

The writer expresses this notion well in verse 3: “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?” If every transgression of the law delivered through God’s servants, the angels, resulted in certain punishment, what should we conclude about the gospel delivered by God’s own Son? He is not saying that there was anything wrong with the law that was given by God; but he is saying that something greater, something *superior* to the law, has come in Christ Jesus.

These verses, by the way, are preparation for a more detailed comparison between Moses and Jesus Christ found in chapter 3. For now, it is sufficient for us to note that the covenant document at the heart of Moses’ ministry, the law given on Sinai, is held up against the document of the new covenant, the gospel. The latter is clearly

superior to the former; that is, the former was the shadow, the latter the fulfillment. In our present passage, we are told that God spoke His law through the angels, but has spoken salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ. Because salvation is in view, not merely law, and because of all the wonderful things said about Jesus Christ in the previous chapter, His message should be embraced with eagerness.

The writer adds that what came from the mouth of the Lord “was confirmed to us by those who heard.” This indicates that these believers were “second-generation” Christians, we might say. That is, they had not received the gospel directly from Jesus, but had been instructed by those who heard Jesus speak. Notice, however, that the author indicates that the gospel “was at the first spoken through the Lord” in order to stress the reliability of the message in which these readers had placed their trust. Those from whom these Christians had received the gospel were merely communicating what Jesus Christ Himself had delivered to them. Their words were not “original”; they had not “invented” the gospel. Those who preached to these readers were conveying what they had received from the Lord.

The Purpose of Jesus Christ’s Ministry as the Last Man

For He did not subject to angels the world to come, concerning which we are speaking. But one has testified somewhere, saying, “WHAT IS MAN, THAT YOU REMEMBER HIM? OR THE SON OF MAN, THAT YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT HIM? YOU HAVE MADE HIM FOR A LITTLE WHILE LOWER THAN THE ANGELS; YOU HAVE CROWNED HIM WITH GLORY AND HONOR, AND HAVE APPOINTED HIM OVER THE WORKS OF YOUR HANDS; YOU HAVE PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET.” For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him. But we do

see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, "I WILL PROCLAIM YOUR NAME TO MY BRETHREN, IN THE MIDST OF THE CONGREGATION I WILL SING YOUR PRAISE." And again, "I WILL PUT MY TRUST IN HIM." And again, "BEHOLD, I AND THE CHILDREN WHOM GOD HAS GIVEN ME." (Heb. 2:5-13)

Having emphasized the supremacy of Jesus Christ's ministry by comparing His gospel to the inferior law delivered through inferior beings, the writer now turns to Christ's work of atonement. What did He intend to accomplish? One thing to keep in mind is this: unless we understand what purpose God assigned to man before his fall, we will not understand the design of the atonement. What was originally intended for the human race is what is *restored in the atonement of Jesus Christ*; the atonement is designed to undo man's ruination and enable him to realize the Creator's purpose. Notice that the writer of Hebrews, as he begins to describe Christ's work of atonement, refers to a portion of Scripture in which God specified what He intended for the human race. He quotes from Psalm 8, in which God's creation of man is extolled and man's purpose in this creation is announced.

Don't miss this fact. This is the beginning point for the writer of Hebrews when he takes up the subject of the atonement; he starts by refreshing the minds of his readers on the subject of *fallen man's original commission*. This duty to subdue the earth and rule over it for the Creator's glory was announced at the time of man's creation, and it was *reaffirmed after the fall*. That is the point where God introduced an eschatological perspective for fallen man. He was to labor in anticipation of his restoration in the Seed of the woman.

A question occurs at this point: why does the writer even introduce the subject of rule and authority in the world? What is the reason for making the statement that the world has not been made subject to angels? We know that God did not subject the world to angels, *but He did subject the world to mankind*. That this is precisely what is on the mind of the writer is obvious when he quotes from Psalm 8. There, mankind's destiny is specified. But remember what this section of Hebrews is about: *the atonement accomplished by Jesus Christ*. The writer is drawing a connection between what Jesus Christ did in His atonement and what God originally intended for mankind.

Man was the culmination of God's creative activity. God

told Adam and Eve, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (Gen. 1:28). Psalm 8, from which our writer quotes, says that as the bearer of God's image, man was "crowned . . . with glory and honor"; he was "appointed . . . over the works" of God's hands; all things were put in subjection under his feet. God created man to rule, to subdue, and to reign over creation; He made man to live in harmony with Himself, to care for and cultivate this world. But the Bible also says that "through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Rom. 5:12). Sin ruined man; it ruined man's relationship with his Creator. Sin disrupted the harmony of Eden and made it impossible for man to fulfill God's decree. Nevertheless, as we discovered in Genesis 3, the mandate for the human race was not revoked by the Creator. So fallen man was left with a dominion mandate that he could never accomplish. The connection between the task assigned to man and the atonement accomplished by Jesus Christ should become clearer as we consider what the writer of Hebrews has to say.

Notice that the writer reaffirms the teaching of Psalm 8: "For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him" (v. 8a). Man was made to reign over God's creation. "But," he adds, "we do not yet see all things subjected to him" (v. 8b). Man has not yet fulfilled the command of God to subdue and rule over everything. Man cannot fulfill God's command because he is dead in his trespasses and sins. Here is where a shift occurs in the writer's teaching; here is where he turns to Jesus Christ, the last Man. All things are not subject to man, because of sin. "But we do see Him who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, . . . crowned with glory and honor," following the accomplishment of atonement (v. 9). The writer makes a transition from what God intended for man, which was ruined by sin, to Jesus Christ, the last Man, who came to restore God's purpose for the human race by "tasting death for everyone." Jesus Christ became a man, died, and was raised again, to enable mankind to fulfill his destiny.

Unless we understand what purpose God assigned to man before his fall, we will not understand the design of the atonement. What was originally intended for the human race is what is *restored in the atonement of Jesus Christ*

The church, *the redeemed humanity*, is that "instrument" by which Jesus Christ is bringing to pass what God promised in the Garden of Eden. The purpose of Jesus Christ's ministry was to become a Man, restore mankind, and make it possible for mankind to fulfill his destiny, a destiny assigned in Genesis 1:28, a duty reaffirmed after the fall and given in considerable detail in Psalm 8. In Christ, all things are being subjected to the redeemed humanity. The New Testament makes it clear that we are no longer talking

about man subduing only the physical world. In His atonement, Jesus Christ “disarmed the rulers and authorities” and “made a public display of them” (Col. 2:15). Through the church, the redeemed humanity, the purposes of God are being made known “to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places” (Eph. 3:10). The target of redeemed man’s rule has been translated to a different realm: “Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12).

The church, the new humanity, is asserting its God-given right to rule against the evil forces that have infested God’s creation; the church is fulfilling the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18–20) by taking the message of man’s redemption in Christ to the whole world. Christ’s purpose as the last Man was to restore harmony between God and man and to enable man to subdue all things for God’s glory. In union with Christ, man can be what God made him to be; God’s design is restored and brought to completion in Christ.

The writer elaborates on the atonement: many sons were brought to glory through the sufferings of Jesus Christ, the “author of their salvation” (v. 10). To avoid a misunderstanding of how man was restored to pursue his destiny, the author specifies that the last Man suffered so that we could become sons of God. The identity between the Redeemer and the redeemed is emphasized when the writer says that “He who sanctifies [Christ] and those who are sanctified [Christians] are all from one Father” (v. 11). This statement describes the bond between the Savior and those saved. We have been “sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (cf. 10:10).

The atonement required that Jesus Christ share our humanity; consequently, we are His “brethren.” As our saving Brother, Jesus Christ proclaimed to us the name of God and enabled us to put our trust in Him. This time, the writer of Hebrews quotes from Psalm 22 and Isaiah 8 (vv. 12, 13). In their respective contexts, each verse describes some aspect of the Messiah’s work. The first quotation, from Psalm 22, describes Christ’s communication of salvation to His people; the second and third quotations, from Isaiah 8, refer to a dependence on God exhibited by the Messiah and His people. Therefore, in verses 5–13, the writer describes the purpose of Jesus Christ’s ministry as the last Man. Christ became a Man in order to redeem mankind and enable us to be and do what God intended.

The Manner of Jesus Christ’s Ministry as the Last Man

Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham. Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful

high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted. (Heb. 2:14–18)

In these verses, the writer explains how Jesus, the last Man, accomplished our redemption and restoration. The only way for us to be rescued was for one like us to do what the first man, Adam, failed to do: obey God perfectly. There was an additional problem, however. Not only was perfect obedience by a representative man required, but something had to be done about the sin we inherited from Adam and the sins we commit as fallen individuals. Man could be restored if, under the same circumstances, another man did what Adam failed to do and if, having rendered perfect obedience to God, this representative man could then, in some manner, pay for our sin. One of us, a representative man, would have to give God perfect obedience and payment for sin. This is the doctrine of the atonement; this is what Jesus Christ did. “Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same . . .” (v. 14). The word translated “partook” (*metecho*) refers to “identifying with” something or someone in the sense of sharing characteristics (cf. 1 Cor. 10:17, 21).

The Son of God became one of us that we might be delivered from our lost state. Jesus did not just sympathize with us, He became one of us; He did not just look down on us from heaven, He came down to us from heaven! Notice the rest of verse 14: “Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, *that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.*” Because of what the last Man, Jesus Christ, did, because He obeyed perfectly and died for us, our adversary, by whose treachery the human race was plunged into misery, has been disarmed. When Jesus Christ became a Man, obeyed for us, died for us, and rose from the dead for us, we were delivered from the slavery of our fallen natures (v. 15). To be sure, death is still here, but those who are in Christ have conquered death! It no longer threatens us because even if we die, we will live again (John 11:25)! This is what Jesus did for us by sharing in our flesh and blood; this is what He did for us when He partook of our nature.

The writer continues and says: “He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham” (v. 16). It was not the angels who needed help, and it was not the angels who were being prevented from realizing their destinies because of sin. The writer continues and notes that Christ “had to be made like His brethren in all things” so that He could become their “merciful and faithful high priest” (v. 17). It was because Jesus Christ identified with us completely (i.e., “in all things”) that He was able to serve as our High Priest. A priest is one who represents others before God. Jesus Christ became a Man, He shared the nature of those to whom a promise of redemption had been made, and in that capacity He offered a sacrifice for the sins of those under His care. The text says that Jesus Christ made “propitiation for the sins of

the people.” Jesus Christ, as the High Priest of His people, offered a sacrifice to satisfy God’s demand for justice in light of our sin (cf. Rom. 3:25; 1 John 2:2; 4:10). That sacrifice, of course, was Himself (cf. Heb. 9:26; 10:12).

The chapter concludes with an encouraging statement about Christ’s ability to identify with His people in their ongoing struggles because of His own experience (v. 18). He was tempted and He suffered; therefore, He is able to come to our aid as we make our journeys upon this earth.

Conclusion

Surely we can agree that this view of the work of Christ, the view presented by the writer of Hebrews, leads to an understanding of the atonement that regards it as *the redemption of our race*. And surely we all can see how this view of the atonement *must* affect the way we look at the future and *must* affect what we believe to be the destiny of the church as she preaches the gospel. As the gospel is preached down through the ages, our fallen race is being restored, not in the sense that a handful of people will be found in heaven while the overwhelming majority will be found in hell, but restored in the sense required in this passage, restored to the point that it may truthfully be said that Jesus Christ saved the world. This should be our eschatological expectation.

I submit that the misery of the fall will be surpassed by the glory of the restoration and that if this is true, then we are not talking about the redemption of a handful of human beings while the vast majority of our race is consigned to hell forever. Given the eschatological perspective currently held by most Christians, you would think that Jesus Christ just barely accomplished anything at all; you would think that, at best, He saved a thankful minority even as unthinkable numbers of our race were lost

forever. To speak to the average evangelical today about the salvation of our *race* in Christ Jesus is to speak in terms completely unfamiliar. So many seem convinced that hell will be full and heaven nearly empty. I say that the very opposite will be true, and I say that this is the view of the Bible.

Have you ever considered some of the statements in the New Testament that describe the atonement? What about John the Baptist’s declaration: “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away *the sin of the world!*” (John 1:29)? And what about John the apostle, who wrote: “[Christ] Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but *also for those of the whole world*” (1 John 2:2)? Is this universalism? No, Christ died for the elect and only the elect; but where is it written that the elect are few? Where is it written that the world can be saved by redeeming a tiny minority of the human race? The view of the atonement represented in these two verses and in Hebrews 2 is a view that is as grand and glorious and hopeful and inspiring as what God promised in Genesis 3:15 and what Jesus Christ, the last Man, actually accomplished.

On that last great day, we will stand with our blessed Savior and will be able to say in all truthfulness, “Behold, the Lamb *did* take away the sin of the world” and “Yes, Christ was the propitiation for our sins, yet not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.”



(Early Church Fathers, continued from page 5)

unless it also had the capability of being saved; nor would the Lord have summed up these things in Himself, unless He had Himself been made flesh and blood after the way of the original formation [of man], saving in his own person at the end that which had in the beginning perished in Adam. (A.H. 5.14.1)

Seeing all of mankind as having “perished” in Adam, its first head, Irenaeus sees that the work of Christ, the second and last Adam, is to resurrect mankind in new life to God:

For the Creator of the world is truly the Word of God: and this is our Lord, who in the last times was made man, existing in this world, and who in an invisible manner contains all things created, and is inherent in the entire creation, since the Word of God governs and arranges all things; and therefore He came to His own in a visible manner, and was made flesh, and hung upon the tree, that He might sum up all things in Himself. (A.H. 5.18.3)

Over against the Gnostic heretics of his day, Irenaeus echoes the apostolic proclamation of the Word made flesh, the eternal Son of God, born truly man by the virgin—this one has redeemed him, once a child of Adam, now a child of God:

For it was for this end that the Word of God was made man, and He who was the Son of God became the Son of man, that man, having been taken into the Word, and receiving the adoption, might become the son of God. For by no other means could we have attained to incorruptibility and immortality, unless we had been united to incorruptibility and immortality. But how could we be joined to incorruptibility and immortality, unless, first, incorruptibility and immortality had become that which we also are, so that the corruptible might be swallowed up by incorruptibility, and the mortal by immortality, that we might receive the adoption of sons? (A.H. 3.19.1)



Under His Authority: From Your Session

“Shorter Catechids” by Skip Elford

I once knew a man who often boasted concerning his superior method of teaching his children to “think and make decisions for themselves.” According to him, children should be given no religious instruction until they were old enough to “objectively” process it. That way, they could weigh the various arguments and exercise calculating rationality in a “spiritually neutral” environment.

Though his thinking was repeatedly challenged by his fresh and idealistic young pastor (yes, I was young once), this man succeeded in launching at least three moral and spiritual “shipwrecks.” I haven’t seen him for years . . . I wonder if he’d still dispense the same kind of wisdom.


The big news is this: “There is no neutrality in the world of knowledge and ideas.” Either God and His wisdom are embraced or they are opposed. When we fail to provide for God’s instruction of these little minds, we invite the world (and its gods) to fill that vacuum.

One of God’s primary means of instruction is known as “catechism.” Luke and Paul both used the term to speak of the collection of data that was generally passed orally. The essence of the word *katekeuo* is to “sound down upon.” In time, that word began to identify the process of questioning and answering that is more in line with what we know as catechism. The church, particularly since the Reformation, has used cate-

chisms to provide a systematic presentation of sound doctrine.

When our little ones sweat and perform all kinds of facial gymnastics while they struggle to recite answers to the various questions of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, they are carrying on with a tradition that goes back to the mid-seventeenth century. It’s not hard to imagine that countless contortions, grimaces, and stares into that “out there somewhere” (where the answers reside) have been invested since that first catechumen took on the great questions (and answers) of our Christian faith.

As a result of such labors, “Shorter Catechism” kids have grown up with a clear sense of who they are and why they’re here. They understand Who God is and how He has chosen to operate in covenant with His children. In a world of moral relativism, they recognize that God has a moral law. In a world where the modern evangelical church puzzles over prayer and faith, the SC kids are humbly confident before the face of God as they face the various tests that He has designed for their good.

Some would say that we’re “indoctrinating and dogmatizing” our kids and that such a process will influence their thinking throughout their lives. As to the first count (indoctrination): **Guilty as charged.** As to the second (influencing): **We pray that it will be so!** 

Session News by Jim Bordwine

Elder Clancy Boyer is continuing work on creation of a **Counseling Manual** for the session. We are particularly interested in establishing a greater degree of accountability between the elder and the counselee once the crisis point has passed and long-term attention to the problem is necessary.

We continue to be involved in **the Corvallis Project**, which consists of our limited contact with a group of believers in Corvallis who are hoping to plant a new Reformed congregation. At the request of our presbytery’s Mission to the Northwest Committee, our elders agreed to offer advice as opportunities arise.

Household visitation. We are currently working on a geographical plan so that we can better pair families with the elder who lives closest to them for times of visitation.


Elder/family gatherings will resume in February. We are starting with a “get to know your elders” lunch designed specifically for new families. This lunch will take place at the church after the morning service on February 27. Thereafter, families will have an opportunity to sign up for the in-home format that has been followed in the past.

Again, beginning on July 3, we will have **after-church picnics** every other Sunday (through August 28). The elders believe

this has been a beneficial practice in the past, so we are glad to continue these times of fellowship.

Soon, you’ll notice a **new look in the sanctuary.** We plan to paint the wall directly behind the pulpit, to brighten up that portion of the room. The work may be done, in fact, by the time you read this.

Coming Friday, March 25, will be an **expanded Good Friday service** at WPC. Beginning this year, we will be making use of adult and youth choirs as we commemorate the death of the Savior and look forward to Easter Sunday morning.

A recent decision by the session to **encourage the arts at WPC** represents an exciting development. We are particularly interested in training our children to understand that God gives various abilities to His people and that those abilities are to be used for the edification of the covenant community for His glory. The session has asked Sabrina Harding to serve as Director of Arts at Westminster, and she has agreed. Along with others who have an interest in this endeavor, Sabrina will be working with the pastor and elders to provide instruction in the theology of creativity, as well as opportunities for artistic expression within the congregation. One of our first projects will be a mini-Arts Festival this summer on the grounds of the church. 

WPC Calendar & Events

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
6 February Worship 10 AM Bible Study 6 PM	7	8 Literature Class 12:45 PM Gileskirk Class 2 PM	9	10	11	12 Men's Breakfast 8 AM
13 Worship 10 AM Bible Study 6 PM	14	15	16 Session Meeting 6:30 PM	17	18	19
20 Worship 10 AM Bible Study 6 PM	21	22 Literature Class 12:45 PM Gileskirk Class 2 PM	23	24	25	26 Ladies' Breakfast 8:30 AM
27 Worship 10 AM Elder Lunch Noon Song Service 6 PM	28	1 March Deacons' Meeting 7 PM	2	3	4	5
6 Worship 10 AM Bible Study 6 PM	7	8 Literature Class 12:45 PM Gileskirk Class 2 PM	9	10	11	12 Men's Breakfast 8 AM
13 Worship 10 AM Bible Study 6 PM	14	15	16 Session Meeting 6:30 PM	17	18	19
20 Worship 10 AM Bible Study 6 PM	21	22 Literature Class 12:45 PM Gileskirk Class 2 PM	23	24	25 Good Friday Service 7 PM	26
27 Easter Sunday Worship 10 AM Song Service 6 PM	28	29	30	31	1 April	2
3 Worship 10 AM Bible Study 6 PM	4	5 Literature Class 12:45 PM Gileskirk 2 PM Deacons' Meeting 7PM	6	7	8	9 Men's Breakfast 8 AM

Updates may be given to Sarah Stiers or e-mailed to secretary@solochristo.org



Poetry & Prose

Psalm 18:1–19: An Adaptation *By Anonymous*

The LORD is my Rock and my Fortress;
In Him refuge I find.
The LORD alone is worthy to be praised;
From my enemies He does save.

Though the cords of death surrounded me,
And the floods of ungodly men raged on,
I raised my voice and cried to God for help;
Out of His temple He heard me.

The LORD has put me in a safe place
Where my enemies cannot come.
I have been set on high;
And He takes delight in me.

By His anger the earth shook and quaked.
Fire from His mouth consumed them all.
In the heavens, the voice of God was heard;
At His rebuke, the earth was laid bare.

The LORD my God has rescued me;
From the strength of my foes I am free.
Those who hated me are turned back,
For the LORD has become my stay.



The LORD has put me in a safe place
Where my enemies cannot come.
I have been set on high;
And He takes delight in me.

Yes, the LORD takes delight in me.