

**Why did Jesus die?**  
*Haddington Rd Conversations*  
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**Welcome**

- Current context
- “Models” of salvation
- Challenges
- Where to from here?

**Current context**

- Social and cultural context
- Church context
- We used to have...but no longer
- Test: what did your preacher talk about last Easter?

**Models of Salvation**

- Using models to understand
- Models to understand the Reformation
- Models of the church, for example
- A lot depends on which model to use
- John XXIII: the faith is one thing, the way we understand it is another.
  
- Recapitulation
- Satisfaction (leading to “Penal Substitution”)
- Moral example

*Recapitulation*

- Originated with Irenaeus (125-202 AD).
- He sees Christ as the new Adam, who systematically undoes what Adam did. Thus, where Adam was disobedient concerning God's edict concerning the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, Christ was obedient even to death on the wood of a tree.
- Irenaeus is the first to draw comparisons between Eve and Mary, contrasting the faithlessness of the former with the faithfulness of the latter.
- In addition to reversing the wrongs done by Adam, Irenaeus thinks of Christ as “recapitulating” or “summing up” human life.

*Satisfaction*

- The Satisfaction (or Commercial) Theory
- The formulator of this theory was the medieval theologian Anselm of Canterbury (1034-1109), in his book, *Cur Deus Homo* (Why the God Man?).
- In his view, God's offended honour and dignity could only be satisfied by the sacrifice of the God-man, Jesus Christ.
- Anselm offered some biblical evidence that the atonement was not a ransom paid by God to the devil but rather a debt paid to God on behalf of sinners.
- Anselm's work established a foundation for the Western understanding of redemption and, more specifically, the Catholic understanding of Calvary, the Mass and the priesthood.
- Anselm's work established a foundation for the Protestant Reformation, specifically the understanding of justification by faith.

*Penal substitution*

- This view was formulated by the 16th century Reformers as an extension of Anselm's Satisfaction theory.
- According to the Reformers: Anselm's theory was correct in introducing the satisfaction aspect of Christ's work and its necessity, however the Reformers saw it as insufficient because it was referenced to God's honour rather than his justice and

holiness and was couched more in terms of a commercial transaction than a penal substitution.

- This Reformed view says simply that Christ died for man, in man's place, taking his sins and bearing them for him.
- The bearing of man's sins takes the punishment for them and sets the believer free from the penal demands of the law: The righteousness of the law and the holiness of God are satisfied by this substitution.
- In Catholicism, this further understanding is found in the Jansenist tradition and in a great deal of popular piety.

#### *Moral example*

- Christ died to influence mankind toward moral improvement.
- This theory denies that Christ died to satisfy any principle of divine justice, but teaches instead that His death was designed to greatly impress mankind with a sense of God's love, resulting in softening their hearts and leading them to repentance.
- Thus, the Atonement is not directed towards God with the purpose of maintaining His justice, but towards man with the purpose of persuading him to right action.
- Formulated by Peter Abelard (1079-1142), partially in reaction against Anselm's Satisfaction theory.

#### **Challenges**

- Depends on the historicity of Genesis 2-3
- Depends on a feudal idea of God
- Redemption (buying back) requires a price (punishment)
- Redemption is completed with the death of Jesus
- The resurrection has no place (the best miracle etc.)
- It has no connection with the life and ministry of Jesus
- The picture of God who cannot be merciful until he receives legal satisfaction is unappealing and unconvincing

#### **Where to from here?**

- Centre: the great events that gave us new life in Christ
- Quandary: in the absence of a culturally adequate understanding, we must be silent about the central teaching of Christianity
- Challenge: the old understanding is embedded in the Roman Missal and in the Book of Common Prayer
- Taking seriously evil, sin and death
- Joining up the incarnation, ministry, teaching and the events of salvation
- Offering a consistent picture of God acting on our behalf
- Uniting the death and the resurrection as "constitutive" of salvation
- Rooted in the teaching of the New Testament
- Rooted in Jesus' own understanding of his destiny
- Recapitulation
- Satisfaction (leading to "Penal Substitution")
- Moral example
- Historical Jesus: the Kingdom of God
- Paul: compassionate solidarity
- Hebrews: he can help us because he is like us
- John: Jesus' death as God's healing gift

#### **Conversation**