

The Extent of the Atonement: A Brother, Biblically- Based Discussion and Disagreement sermonaudio.com

The Dividing Line 2019

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Dr. James White. And greetings and welcome to The Dividing Line. It is a Wednesday which is an unusual day for us to be on but it's a short week. I'm traveling tomorrow and as I have announced, we are going to have a discussion this afternoon with Dr. Michael Brown who's joining us, having already exhausted himself, I'm sure, in doing his own program. Pretty much every time Michael joins us, he's already had to do hours worth of radio and frequently interviews and things like that, so we always are thankful for the effort that is put out there. So Michael, thank you very much for being with us today and may I say, you look splendid.

Dr. Michael Brown. Let me say that this is the first time that I've had the occasion to wear this lovely sweater that you gave me last year.

James. I know. Well, we were going to do something, did you forget it or what had happened before?

Michael. I was on the air with you and I forgot to put it on, so this time I brought it from home, I put it on a hanger, brought it from home, got it here in my studio. I showed the guys, I said, "This is what I'm going to be wearing. Is this doable?" And for all those who despise the unity and friendship we have, just look at this. Take it in, critics. Look at this.

James. I love it. Oh yeah, I can see the blog articles firing up even now, even as we're circling along. I tried to wear one that was fairly close based on my memory of what I had sent you but was that one of your books that we were going to be talking about? I've forgotten what it was about now. But anyway, thank you very much for joining us and for doing so with such resplendent color but we've got a lot to get to here because, I believe it was somewhere in mid-December, why do I think the 15th? That sounds right, somewhere around there, I struggle a little bit to call it a debate but I guess that was what it was called because there was a moderator and at least there was a topic, but you did a debate with Sonny Hernandez. Tell us a little bit about how you thought that went.

Michael. Yes, so Sonny had approached me and wanted to discuss limited atonement and said, "Listen, what I want to do is we'll have a moderator and we'll go X period of time. You present verses and we'll discuss them. I'll present verses and we'll discuss them."

And that's the way we wanted to do it and I found out when he had invited me down to debate his colleague, Dr. Theodore Zachariades, this last year, I found out in advance that as a strict Dortian Calvinist, he didn't believe that I was a believer. And we had friendly dialog about that when I was down with him, so I wasn't going to bring that up unless he brought it up, but that was going to be the format. I said, well, why don't we at least, at least take two or three minutes at the beginning to lay out what we believe, and so he agreed to do that, thought it was a great idea. So in that sense, as you say, it wasn't really a debate as much as very briefly here are some fundamentals of our beliefs and then here's the back and forth, and when he mentioned at the outset to him this is an issue of the true gospel, then I wanted to pursue that and explore what he meant by that because I knew what he meant by it and he had the moderator, he and the moderator had agreed without letting me know to make sure it didn't go in the direction who's saved and who's not saved. I was just pursuing what he said for clarity's sake, so I was a little disappointed it didn't go in that direction because he broached the subject. At the end, though, he was quite clear in laying out what he believed which I think was eye-opening for folks.

But I, with all respect to him, I don't know that he's a theologian. I know he's very serious about his studies and things like that. I don't know that he was the best representative of his position. I expected more pushback on certain points that I made and maybe he was just being respectful. But to me the biggest issue is what came out at the end in terms of him, to him this is a matter of salvation, those who do not hold to limited atonement are therefore not saved because they're denying the gospel. That I found unfortunate and I think we've had a more robust debate about it in the midst of our Calvinist debate that we did at Southern Evangelical Seminary.

So yeah, but you know, we covered ground anyway. At least we got to lay out certain things.

James. Well, you did. It was obviously very frustrating for me to listen to it. I mean, obviously those of us who are Reformed would not necessarily interpret Dortian Calvinism the way that that particular group does, by any stretch of the imagination, but being as it may, it was primarily frustrating because of the format because I think you'll recall, I was still in the Denver airport to start listening to it and I texted you and said, "Three minutes? Who came up with that?" Because I was like, how do you lay anything out in three minutes and then do 45 minutes worth of examination? I was just like, wow, okay.

But of course, the most frustrating thing, well, the minor frustrating thing was the constant citation of and parsing of Greek. I mean, I love doing Greek on the program, a lot of our people love when I put accordances up on the screen and we go into the languages and stuff like that, that's lots of fun, but maybe once, maybe twice in the entire discussion the citation was actually relevant to what was being said, otherwise it was just simply window dressing. And I was like, you know, if you took all the Greek and parsing out, he only got to talk for five minutes. I mean, that's just, that's not a really good tactic when you only have so much time.

Michael. Do you know what? Yeah, I'm sorry. It was December 17, by the way, and I just saw someone tweeted us with a picture of both of us saying epic coogie. So just to know it's up there, or coozie, whatever.

James. Coogie.

Michael. Coogie, sorry. So Charles Spurgeon said something many years ago obviously, but when he was instructing young pastors and theologians, he said when you go to a restaurant, the cook doesn't come out and show you, "I used all these spoons and knives and plates and dishes," they just bring out the finished product. And that's what he encouraged folks to do, to not parse everything and, you know, so do your homework first and then just come with your final conclusions.

So obviously if we're having a debate, let's say Acts 13:48 came up and is it middle there, and so then the parsing becomes part of the debate and how should it be read and can it be read, etc. But otherwise, yeah, I don't know that it served a purpose and because he uses modern Greek pronunciation, I don't know how many New Testament Greek students even followed some of it.

James. Yeah, yeah, that was just really really distracting but obviously, for me, the big point was there were a couple of times you said some things and maybe if we have time toward the end I'd like to be able to get to them whereas like, well, there's a set-up, answer this, and it never got answered. But the main thing was, and I had expressed this to you even before the debate took place, my concern was that there would be a meaningful explication of what I think are the strongest arguments and the real issues, and I didn't feel like that came out. Even when I agreed with what was being said, it wasn't connected in a holistic fashion. And so I think even before the debate I had said, hey, if this goes a certain direction, what do you think, could we get together and have a conversation about this because it is a, I think a very important issue. It's rarely discussed without a tremendous amount of emotion. And you and I have obviously demonstrated that we have the ability to address some difficult subjects without all the fireworks and the throwing of acid and everything else, and you had said, "Yeah, sure, let's do it." We tried to right before I went to Germany and Russia and we had technical issues on our end. So here we are. I'm having to have a fan on me because, like I said, it's 75 degrees in Phoenix right now but...

Michael. It's getting warm here too.

James. Yeah, but I had to go with it so we could just drive everybody crazy.

So let's get to it because you, just for the audience's understanding, a certain period of time, what, approximately 4-5 years, you would identify yourself as having held at least a generally Reformed or at least Calvinistic view soteriologically speaking. I don't think you were ever involved with pedal baptism or a church that would have like a Reformed church government type thing; you were still in a fairly Evangelical church, weren't you?

Michael. It was a Congregational church but it was, you know, pastor as the chief elder, elders and deacons is how we operated. It was listed as a Congregational church but that was our government. We did practice believer baptism although we had a Presbyterian minister who was one of our elders and I do remember that we had folks coming to the church that wanted to sprinkle their babies so he was asked to come and sprinkle and we just, you know, weren't keen on it but we just agreed to it. Yeah, but otherwise I really gloried '77-'82 I really immersed myself. I mean, every Banner of Truth book I could get and the Puritans and the John Owen stuff and, you know, I remember teaching on TULIP and saying, you know, the Arminians, using the classic thing, had a wide bridge that only goes halfway across the river but Calvinists had a narrow bridge that went all the way across. You know, I was quite into it and, in that sense, can appreciate why someone is a Calvinist. That's why I've never been a Calvinist basher because I do understand how there is the viewpoint about this is for the glory of God and salvation is all of him, and a Warfield quote, you know, if there one stitch in the garment of salvation left to us, we'd be forever lost. So I appreciate those emphases, obviously I'm not a Calvinist but '77-'82 I really identified as a Calvinist, immersed myself in literature and theology and taught it quite passionately.

James. So one of the reasons I wanted to have this conversation, A) I want to have the opportunity at some point to, well, here at the beginning, to sort of lay out what I think is the strongest argumentation which was not presented; that was one of the things that concerned me, it was not presented in what happened back on my birthday, actually, on December 17th of last year. But also, two things that I've heard you do or say that makes me go, "I think I've got him!" And here's what it is. During the debate, you made the statement that you believe or accept the idea that God infallibly knew who would and who would not have true saving faith and persevere in that faith in Jesus Christ from eternity past. Did I understand that correctly?

Michael. Sure thing.

James. Okay. Then how long ago was it that you did the debate at IHOP?

Michael. Oh, the Monster God debate?

James. Sort of.

Michael. Monster God, yeah, with Brian Zahnd. That was September of 2014.

James. Oh wow. Time is going by fast. So coming up on five years, but part and parcel of that debate was that you defended – now I want to make sure that I get all this right – penal substitutionary atonement or just substitutionary atonement? Would you use both terms?

Michael. Well, I used both terms. The emphasis of my argument was substitutionary atonement but since I do believe that Jesus paid for our sins and satisfied the judgment due against us, then I was at home with the term penal substitutionary atonement. I know

it's often used as a terminus technicus with Calvinists that ties right in with limited atonement but to me that was part of the concept of substitutionary atonement.

James. Right. Right. And in fact, if I recall correctly, at one point during that debate you couldn't help yourself, you made a statement and you said, "Now as my friend James White would say, he sees an inconsistency there but I see it this way." And I was chuckling because I was just sitting there going, "Okay. Okay."

So those two positions obviously say to me, all right, we've got someplace we can go there, now the problem is in discussing this subject, you can't come to final conclusions without all the material about the sovereign decree of God, election, what's it based upon, does God have an elect people. I mean, they're all associated, we've discussed portions of this before, and so I recognize it's going to be really hard to just focus in on a relatively narrow spectrum and so we may get to some point to where it's like, well, obviously if you think there's an elect people, then you go this way, if you don't, then you don't maybe see why I would do that type of thing so on and so forth. But I just thought it would be extremely useful to, in light of the fact that you and I have debated on the same side in defense of the Trinity and therefore have utilized the same type of exegetical standards in pointing to the errors of our opponents. Just last year, we had the experience of debating two homosexuals, just barely debating as far as their being a real contest biblically speaking, but I think it was very useful because their perspective is very much what you'll encounter amongst a lot of people, and I'd be interested in what they have to say about what happened yesterday with the United Methodist church too, that would be interesting to find out where they came down on that. But anyway, we just worked hand-in-glove in dealing with the texts of Scripture and answering the questions, and it was a wonderful thing which means we have, we share a common commitment to exegesis and a common methodology of exegesis.

So with that in mind, if you'd like, even though you did at the beginning of the debate, if you'd like to just sort of lay out where you're coming from on this, certainly I want to give you that opportunity. I think most people probably know that we're talking about the difference between a particular redemption where the specific intention of the Father, Son and Spirit in the sacrifice of Christ is the redemption of the elect of God and therefore the substitutionary aspect of it would be limited to those who are united with Christ by the sovereign action of the Father in election, versus a universal atonement which, I think your phraseology is Christ dies to infallibly procure the salvation of every person who believes in him, and perseveres in that faith or continues in that faith, something along those lines. Would that be a proper designation?

Michael. Yeah, well, what I would emphasize is that God makes salvation possible to every human being by Jesus dying for the sins of each and every person who's ever lived and he infallibly saves those who put their trust in him and persevere in him. Yeah, so it's the object of God was 1) to demonstrate his love for the whole world by Jesus dying as our substitute, and 2) to infallibly save those who put their trust in him for salvation.

James. Okay, so you just used a specific terminology and I want to make sure that I've got this. Anyone who is currently alive, ever will be alive, ever was alive, in other words, the entire human family, would that be, is that correct?

Michael. Yes, sir. The world, the entire world, each one, everyone.

James. Okay. All right. So with that, let me just lay out what I believe because, again, this didn't really come out. I mean, you heard what Dr. Hernandez had to say but he did not make this aspect of the presentation and I was concerned that it wouldn't come out, and let me see if it makes any sense to you or difference in how you would respond as far as what texts you would refer to and things like that.

I emphasize very strongly the harmony of the Father, the Son and the Spirit in the self-glorification of the Trinity as the central reason why anything exists, why creation exists, and certainly in the gospel itself, I view the gospel as Trinitarian. It finds its origin and source in the Father. It always bothers me when I hear Christians talking about God the Father is the mean God of the Old Testament, and then Jesus comes along in the New Testament and makes God the Father a nice guy or something. I mean, that's just totally totally wrong. It's so clear in Ephesians 1 that the origin of the spiritual blessings and everything that God has done in Christ comes from the Father, it's accomplished in the Son in perfect obedience to the Father. He does what he sees the Father doing. He speaks the word given to him by the Father. There is perfect harmony, John 5, between the Father and the son. There is no disharmony. There could never be. I don't know if you've ever heard the debate I did with a fellow up in Denver, an open theist fellow, but one of the times I just about fell off my chair was when he said that the Son could have disobeyed the Father and not done what the Father wanted him to do, just to substantiate his perspective. That's a total denial of biblical revelation as far as I understand it. Then, of course, the Spirit makes application of the perfect work that has been accomplished by Christ in his death, burial and resurrection. The Spirit is the one who brings the spiritual life. The Spirit is the one who comforts. The Spirit is the one who seals us, Ephesians 1:14. He is the arrabon, the down payment for everyone who has faith in Christ, that God is going to continue that work within him.

So you have all three of the divine persons taking different roles, they're distinguished from one another, this is one of the ways we can distinguish between them in the economic Trinity, and yet they're unified and the focus is upon what God is doing. I very strongly emphasize that particular aspect of this and that there cannot be a diminishment of the centrality of God in all of this. It's all to the praise of his glorious grace, not to my faith or anything that I might do. I'm blessed but I'm not the reason for all of this. So I start there. Is there anything there that makes you raise an eyebrow or that you'd want to go, "Hm, not so sure about that"?

Michael. No. I would just ask if, in your thinking, if, let's say that you wanted people in a particular isolated village without medical care to know how much you cared for them, how much you loved them, how much you wanted to help them, so you set up a medical clinic with supplies adequate for all the people and said, "Hey, whoever wants it, it's free

medical help." Everyone comes and let's say half the people come and take advantage of it, the other half don't, can you see this as a valid expression of the heart of God saying, "I want everyone to know the depth of My love so I'm reaching out My hands to all of you even though I know ultimately only some of you are going to come; I'm making My love available to all of you." Does that strike you as somehow an inconsistency in divine economy?

James. There would be two aspects of that that I have a problem with. The first is what we debated before and that is, I believe very firmly that there is a divine decree that is directly related to divine knowledge. In other words, God knows all things that take place in time, not passively by observing them but because they flow from his sovereign decree. And so the idea there is that, well, there might be some that will take advantage, there might be some who will not, but God already knows that and has a purpose for that, but then the second part is the anthropology that flows from that. I don't believe in light of Romans 1 through 3 that there is anybody who outside of an efficacious work of the grace of God in their life is going to take advantage of those things because they're not morally neutral. They're the enemies of God. They are suppressing the knowledge of God. They are rebelling against God. And so though they may express that rebellion religiously or by scientism or atheism, whatever else it might be, the fact of the matter is there is none that seeks after God. There is none, according to Romans 8, who will even submit themselves to the law of God and repentance and faith is part of what God commands.

So I noticed I did think to myself a number of times during the debate that that particular discussion would have needed to go off into either some of the things that we covered briefly at SES in regards to God's sovereignty and decree and things like that, or even moreso which we didn't, well, we've touched on it in the radio programs we've done and maybe touched on a little bit in the debate, but specifically a biblical anthropology and especially a biblical anthropology of man in his fallen state, and the fact that man in his fallen state being dead in sin is not inactive, instead he's very active in rebellion against God and suppression of the knowledge of God. So with those two things, then you can see why the example which has just basically, you know, villagers who aren't rebels, they're not in rebellion against the doctor, or they're not expressing their hatred toward the doctor, or things like that, wouldn't quite fit with my understanding of the biblical parameters.

Michael. Right. So interestingly, so there would be those two aspects of divine sovereignty and the state of man, the biblical anthropology, that would prevent you from seeing the analogy, and obviously the analogy was not meant to be precise on every line as much as could two things be accomplished at once, a demonstration of love as well as the full knowledge that only some will respond.

James. Right.

Michael. What about from the aspect of divine accountability, that God is going to hold every man guilty for rejecting the free offer of the gospel which is salvation through the

blood of Jesus, whereas in your viewpoint that offer is not real for all those to whom God has not granted faith because Jesus did not, in fact, die for them so the offer that's coming to them is not a bona fide offer because 1) you're saying whoever believes come but they don't have the power to believe so it's whoever God has determined to believe will come, but then also come and cry out to God for salvation through the blood of Jesus but you can cry out all day even if you could cry out, even if you're inclined to cry out it wouldn't do any good because Jesus didn't pay for your sins, only paid for the sins of the elect. So what about this from the aspect of divine accountability, that Jesus dies for the sins of the whole world so everyone is now accountable to believe, and yet man in his rebellion doesn't believe. Even if you wanted to hold to some doctrine of election that I don't hold to, what about that aspect of consistency?

James. Well, it's interesting because when we look at the situation with, you know, all the way up to the time of Jesus Christ, you have millions and millions of people being born upon earth to whom no prophets are sent, no law is given, no revelation is given. I would just simply in passing point out the idea of having Christ bear in himself the penalty of their sin and their wrath when they are already experiencing the wrath of God themselves and no positive effort was made to send them prophets and to send them revelation is, I think, one of the problems that we face when we recognize that the message of the Scriptures was given to a particular people to prepare them for a particular role.

And so that's historically looking backwards, but then when we say accountability, there were a couple of things that you said there that came out in the debate and I would have to take a different perspective maybe than what was being presented, especially because of the individual you were debating doesn't believe in, well, he does do street preaching but there is this idea of what salvation really is. I believe that God commands men everywhere to repent. I also believe that, according to Romans 5, you are either in Adam or you're in Christ. So I believe very strongly and I would think that you would probably have at least a tendency toward agreement on this because of the strong federal headship representation concepts in the Tanach. I mean, what happens at Ai? You know, why is the perpetrator and his wife, and his kids, and his cattle, and his doggie and kitty, stoned after Ai? Because he represents them.

And so there is this very strong concept of representational headship within the Jewish concept of the relationship to God and he holds men accountable in that way, and that's the only way I can understand Romans 5, is that we are all in Adam and we can only get from Adam what Adam can give to us, and that is a corrupted spiritual nature and spiritual death. Then we can either be in him or in Christ. Now obviously any person who is in Christ was first in Adam, and not everybody ends up in Christ. I think we obviously both reject the concept of Universalism, as popular as it might be in many circles today, we have to recognize that just simply doesn't fit with a harmonious view of biblical revelation.

So in Christ, then, I receive his righteousness, I receive all the actions of the Holy Spirit of God which includes the giving of faith and repentance, and so when you say, "Well, he asks men to do something that they can't do," it's because they are in Adam and have

fallen in him. So the greatest commandment, love the Lord your God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. Well, I don't think either one of us have ever done that for any lengthy period of time whatsoever because of the fact that we live in a fallen state. And so if that's the first commandment and we can't fulfill that, that's why we need the righteousness of Christ to be able to avail before a holy God. But the idea is, it did come up in the debate, when you say, "Well, he's demanding that we do things we can't do and then holding us accountable for those things," the reality is that the law gave that incredibly high standard and had to in and of itself provide for the sacrifices because no one's going to do that.

So when you say, "Well, what about someone who's crying out to God and Jesus didn't die for them?" I don't believe such a person exists and I don't know who the elect are, so I can only do what Scripture tells me to do, and that is God commands men everywhere to repent. And I can tell you this, Michael, I absolutely firmly believe that there has never ever been a single person who has cried out with true repentance and faith to God that found Jesus Christ to be anything else than a willing and powerful Savior. Where we disagree, I think, is that you would say that crying out to Jesus Christ in that way is within the capacity, well, would you say of all people or most people? Are there some people you would say that are given over, or how would you understand that?

Michael. Well, some are given over, those, for example, who blaspheme the Spirit, but in ourselves none of us can do it, but I do believe John 12:32 that through the cross God draws all men to himself, that the preaching of the gospel, Romans 1:16, is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, the Jew first, then to the Gentiles, so with that gospel call comes grace to respond. And yes, every human being when confronted with the gospel has the power to say, yes, or to say, no.

James. Okay.

Michael. That is not works. Faith is specifically we're told in Romans that if it's by faith, then it's not by works, and that one of the things that got me out of Calvinism was when I just went back to the overwhelming word through Scripture, choose, choose, choose, choose, choose, choose, and that God then responds based on how we chose, you know, well done versus a rejection, that I had to recognize there is human responsibility in the midst of this. And you quoted Acts 17:30 a couple of times, so God calls all men everywhere to repent and then, you know, to me, from John 3:16 and so many other verses, God so loved the world, and then John 17:6 and John 17:9 where Jesus distinguishes his people from the world, I never see anywhere in John where the world specifically means the elect. I see it means either all humanity or those hostile to God, those are the ones for whom Jesus dies.

So yeah, let's just say I'm in your camp and I don't know who the elect are and the same theology, and someone says, you know, John 3:16, "Are you telling me that God loved me so much that He sent His Son to die for me?" I can say, absolutely. I don't care who that person is. I can say, absolutely. You have to say... So remember, we're not debating whether they're crying out or not, we're not debating whether they have the power to

believe in themselves for this moment, simply someone says to you, all right, "I was reading John 3:16 and I'm trying to understand that. Does that mean because God so loved the world that He loved me enough to send His Son for me? Is that what the text is saying?" I can say, absolutely yes. You have to say, I don't know because I don't know if you're one of those who are elect or not.

James. No, I just don't stop at verse 16 because not only does verse 16 introduce a specific limitation, the limitation itself that is found there is do you believe in him? It says so that whoever believes in him shall not perish. So do you believe in him? And if you do, then, yes, the Son has been given to you because God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world but the world might be saved through him. He who believes in him is not judged. He who does not believe has been judged already because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

So there is, you know, I hear what you're saying and, as I said at the beginning, I haven't even gotten to my presentation on particular redemption yet because we...and I recognize, look, the foundational issues are very very important, the biblical anthropology is very very important. I would love to have more time to look at John 12:32, for example, because I just would honestly suggest to you that, and let me just throw this out there just for your own consideration, but John 12:32 not only comes six chapters after John 6 which has already defined what that drawing is and what it's based on, but John 12:32 is a very unique situation. The Greeks have come looking for Jesus and Jesus does not show himself to them. He does not meet with them. He rejects someone who's searching for him and he explains why, and obviously one of the key differences between us in our looking at these texts which is about, again, we're still on election here, and the "all the world, all people" stuff, is I very firmly believe that the only consistent way of putting together the texts that say that Jesus is able to save a specific people in and of himself and our response to him is a part of his work within us rather than we do something and then that enables him to keep us over time, that this goes back to the reality that, for example, when Paul says in 1 Timothy 2 when he's talking about Jesus Christ, the mediator between God and men, that he would have all men to be saved, that we have to recognize the utilization of categories. All kinds of men. Just in John 11 when the high priest is supernaturally forced by God to give prophecy, I'm not sure how you maybe might not agree with my understanding of that, but, I mean, the high priest prophesied that by his death Jesus would do what? He would gather all of God's children from all the nations. That's what ever tribe, tongue, people and nation is all about.

So we could, you know, I think get into some of that. I just think the John 12 thing just on a consistency basis, does the cross actually draw all men or is it not the biblical teaching that the cross is repulsive to the natural man, that it's foolishness, that he finds it to be the stench of death? You see, I understand John 12:32 in light of what's going on with the Greeks to be an indication of the fact that when he is lifted up, he will draw all kinds of men including Greeks, including Gentiles, to himself. Not that it's a universal thing, especially in light of you've already got the Amorite high priest that was sacrificing to Molech who's been moldering in the grave for 400 years under the punishment of God, it

doesn't make any sense to say, "If I be lifted up, I'm going to draw those people to Myself." Obviously that can't be what it's referring to.

So, again, we're getting into all that stuff. I'll give you an opportunity to respond to that if you want to but I really, what I really want to do before we get too far because I know we're about, what, about 38 minutes in here, is I really want to get into what I think is the strongest arguments for particular redemption but, please, go ahead.

Michael. Yeah, so I'll just make three quick points in response, obviously I could expand on all of these. But I would point out when you say that John 12 is six chapters after John 6, well, John 6 is six chapters after John 1, "as many as received Him, to them He gave power to become the sons of God." And I don't read 1:13 as a strong election verse as much as natural birth versus spiritual birth. And we've had verse after verse leading up to John 6 where Jesus said, "You won't believe. You won't receive." He puts the culpability on them, "You reject. You reject." So I would say that's one.

The second thing is when you have to find categories, I don't know how God could say things. We have he loved the world, that Jesus is the propitiation for our sins, not for ours only but those of the whole world, 1 John 2:2, Hebrews 2:9, he tastes death for everyone, Acts 17:30, God commands all men everywhere to repent. So I don't know how else God could have said things beyond world, whole world, everyone, each one, not just us but the whole world, etc.. I don't know how God could have communicated that any further to say he's talking about all human beings.

Then lastly, and again, I could expand on all of these points but I'll answer then you can go over to your presentation. But when I go back to John 3:16 and someone says and you say, "Well, do you believe in Him?" I'm trying to understand who he is. I'm really studying the Bible and trying to understand who he is and, I mean, does God love me? Did he send his Son to die for me? I'm just trying to understand that. I want to know who I'm believing in and what kind of God this is.

So again, I have a very simple answer. Yes, God loves you and, yes, Jesus died for you. What are you going to do about that? And you're responsible before God and you're utterly lost outside of his grace and mercy whereas you couldn't give a direct answer to that person other than, "Well, do you believe?" Well, I want to find out who he is and I want to believe rightly and as I understand this, it says God loved me so much that he sent his Son to die for me, is that true? I can give a very simple answer. Yes, it's absolutely true.

James. Except it doesn't say he gave himself in that way. It says, "For God so loved the world He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." I mean, you can't take the first part and expand it out and then have the second part limited in that way. That's where I would think that we're going beyond the text. But I hear what you're saying, understand what you're saying and I would love to go back to 1 John 2:2 and point out some things there, but if we do that we're never going to actually get to what I really wanted to get to.

So let's, I believe and you're going to like some of this, I believe that the clearest, most in-depth discussion of the purpose of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ is found in the book of Hebrews, and I think that Hebrews is primarily misunderstood or considered to be too esoteric or too deep because of what I've called the fact that the Evangelical church today is canonically challenged. We may have 27 fully canonical books but then there is the 39 books that are good for stories like David and Goliath and stuff like that but, you know, really is that the same as John or Romans or things like that? And I think as a result, and I think you'd probably agree, we have a lot of people in a lot of churches that have never even read all of Leviticus, let alone invested even an hour's worth of time to try to understand anything about the context of Leviticus or Deuteronomy or what's behind the beauty of the Psalms or any of that stuff, and the problem is you go to the book of Hebrews and the writer assumes that he can just simply make reference to the items that were in the tabernacle and his audience is going to go, "I go that. Yup, I remember that. I know all about Yom Kippurim, the Day of Atonements because there were multiple offerings that day. And yeah, I've got all that stuff." And I think as a result down through the history of the church, especially because of the division between the church and the Jews that you've written about yourself, that book has languished in somewhat obscurity and yet as far as I can tell, given the discussion of the priesthood of Christ and the sacrifice of Christ and the new covenant that's contained therein, it's the longest extended discussion of the specific purpose of the Father and the Son in the atoning work of Christ in all the New Testament, and yet the majority of the theology of the cross takes very little notice of what is found in that book.

So I'll start with that. Are we pretty much in agreement there?

Michael. We're good. We're good. Absolutely.

James. Okay, good. I didn't figure you would have any problems with that.

Michael. No, sir.

James. With trying to get people to read more of the Old Testament to understand how the New Testament writers were deeply immersed in that. And in fact, just in passing, that's one of my arguments with my Muslim friends is the depth of the understanding of the New Testament writers in regards to the Tanach is so deep and so rich with fulfillment and, you know, obviously all the messianic prophesies and things like that, but there is soteriological richness in all of that as well, and yet the Koran comes along and the author of the Koran doesn't know anything in either the Tanach or in the New Testament and that, to me, is a clear indication that even what the Koran claims in Surah 5 is inappropriate. But anyway, that's neither here nor there, though it might be maybe later in the year, let's hope.

Michael. Hopefully.

James. Yeah, let's hope so. Anyway, so when I come to the discussion of Jesus' priesthood especially, let's start in Hebrews 7. You have, now my understanding of the book of Hebrews is that it's an apologetic work that is seeking to convince the Jewish believer in Jesus there is nothing to go back to. They're under tremendous pressure; you know about how in the early church tremendous pressure being placed upon them to go back, offer sacrifice, curse the name of Jesus. I think this was the great sin that 1 John talks about, trampling underfoot the blood of the Son of God, etc. etc. Tremendous pressure and I see it all the way through chapter 11 as one long apologetic saying there's nothing to go back to. He is the fulfillment of all these things. He's greater than Aaron. He's the great high priest. There is nothing to go back to and if we had just listened to the Scriptures, we would see these things all along.

So with that when I look at what Hebrews says about what Jesus accomplishes, I see a huge connection between what's in Hebrews 7 through 10 especially, and that signal passage in Romans 8, not just the Golden Chain of Redemption but what comes immediately afterwards which I think, in my perspective is absolutely in perfect harmony with the recognition of the existence of an elect people and the perfection of the work on their behalf. So Hebrews 7:23, "The former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing, but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently," or without successor and, "Therefore," because of his indestructible life, "He is able also to save," to the uttermost or, "forever," again, the term could be translated either way, "those who draw near to God through Him." Why? And here's what didn't come out in the debate, "since He always lives to make intercession for them." This, to me, Michael, is what I didn't hear discussed and what I'd like to discuss, and that is your understanding of the nature of the intercessory work of Christ in comparison to or in connection with his role as the high priest, because it seems to me that when you – and we could go to Hebrews 9 but I'm just going to put these two together for right now, we can expand on it if you want to, but there is an assertion made in verse 25 and I will use a Greek term here, *dynatai*, he is *dynatai*, he is able. Now that term is the very same term that's used so often about what man is not capable of doing, man is not able to come to Christ unless drawn by the Father, and not able to submit himself to the law of God, but in John 6:39, here in Hebrews 7:24, Jesus is said to be able to do something perfectly in and of himself because of the nature of who he is in contrast to the old priests who because they did not have continuation of life, were not able to accomplish the full salvation of those for whom they interceded. The high priest, he goes into the holy place but then he has to leave. There's no place for him to sit down. There is no offering that he can offer that would actually allow him to stay there. But Jesus enters into that holy place and he sits down at the right hand of the throne of God, his enemies are made a footstool for his feet. Why? Because of who he is and what he's accomplished.

So the nature of the intercessory work and how it relates to the sacrifice is for me the strongest biblical argument for particular redemption because it emphasizes Christ's ability to save and that intercessory work can only be based upon the completed sacrifice. And if you, I just mentioned in passing and I'll close with this and we can start discussing it, but the connection that I see here, and this is one of the reasons, I don't know what

your theory on the authorship of Hebrews is but you may find this interesting, I'm not sure if we've ever discussed it, but I think that Hebrews is a sermon by Paul that was originally preached in Hebrew or Aramaic and it was meant to encourage Jewish Christians and maybe Luke just came along and said, "I think other people need to hear that," or Paul said, "I want you to write this down," one way or the other. I think it was written by Luke because the style is Luke and the theology is Paul. And so that's why I see the connection between the assertion in Hebrews 7 that Jesus is able to save because he always lives to make intercession, that intercession therefore being connected to his sacrifice, and the words of Paul in Romans 8, "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son but delivered Him over for us all." Who is the "us"? "How will He not also with Him freely give us all things." Whoever the "us" is, they're given all things and then it's defined for us in verse 33, "Who will bring a charge against," who? "God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died," there's the sacrifice, "yes, rather who was raised," and here it is, "who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us."

There, to me, is in the words of Scripture this exalted recognition of the intimate, unbreakable relationship between the sacrifice and intercession because as you know, the high priest, he offers the sacrifice but he's not done. He then takes that blood and sprinkles the hilasterion, the place of mercy, and that intercessory act in the holy place has to take place, and that's what Jesus has done except he's now the hilasterion himself. He has become the mercy seat in the presence of the Father so that the Father can look upon us, we are in him, therefore we have his righteousness, therefore we have peace with God. It's all one awesomely beautiful reality but it doesn't make any sense to me if the intercession becomes separated from the sacrifice, and I don't see how a universal atonement perspective can avoid separating the intercession from the sacrifice. Okay?

Michael. Yup, yup, got it.

James. Now would you agree that wasn't what came up in the debate?

Michael. Yeah, yeah, absolutely it was not a focus of Dr. Hernandez in the debate. For sure.

James. Okay.

Michael. I imagine he'd agree with your point but it wasn't a focus.

James. I'm not sure. I'm honestly not sure about that 100% but I don't know. But you go ahead.

Michael. So let me respond in large print and then in small. As for Jesus dying for the elect. Yes, he did. I say he didn't only die for the elect but, of course, he died for the elect. We agree. I could pay for your meal and there be five other people at other tables when I say, "Yeah, I covered you. I paid for you." It doesn't mean I didn't pay for anyone else. I

mean, that's self-evident. But if I look at Hebrews at a larger level from the same viewpoint that you're talking about, what can I learn? What I learn, for example, in Hebrews 2:9 that Jesus tasted death for every, you know the Greek is quite wide there, everyone, it seems to be all humanity based on the context, but then more specifically Israel is constantly being used, now this was the Israel for whom atonement was made every year for the entire nation, that God keeps saying that they all had the opportunity but then they hardened their heart and make sure you don't do the same. Now you don't harden your heart. You don't harden your heart. You don't harden your heart. Which means I have the capability of hardening my heart and so I'm being warned.

So I'm warned in the second chapter not to drift. I'm warned in the third chapter not to allow hardness of heart to come in. In the fourth chapter it says something very interesting, that all Israel received the good news but not all made it. So once again there's that same thing just like the love of God being extended towards all, just like atonement being made for the whole nation every year on the Day of Atonement, but not all received that. So I look at that as part of the consistent pattern here, hence the constant warnings because there is the genuine possibility of falling away whereas you holding to perseverance of the saints and actually it's not possible that, it is utterly impossible for anyone who is truly elect to ultimately fall away so all of these warnings serve as a purpose, God uses the warnings to keep us from falling away, it's actually impossible for us to fall away hence the warnings are real only in a sense. And we have the ones repeated again even if we leave out Hebrews 6:4-6, repeated again in the 10th chapter, repeated again in the 12th chapter. I take them as very real warnings.

So how do I understand Hebrews 7:25? Well, Jesus is interceding for who? Those who draw near to God through him. Now you can, if you want to parse the Greek here, *proserchomai* in 7:25, but it is not saying it is not passive those who have been drawn, but those who draw near or come near, every translation seems to understand it that way. So there is the human responsibility even participation, responding to the gospel, not hardening our hearts, coming to him, so he's interceding for us who are saved. It doesn't say he's interceding for the lost whether he is or not, God knows, but he is interceding for the saved, and I have abundant promises in Scripture that he will keep us, that he who began a good work will bring it to completion, that his work will be utterly perfect and that he has the ability, right? That's what it says, he is able to save us to the uttermost.

So we have to be those who draw near to him, there's that condition, and then Hebrews has already told us in the second chapter, the third chapter, the fourth chapter, then in the 10th and the 12th, that it's those who persevere to the end. So he is praying for our perseverance but he's not forcing us to stay in the house. He will absolutely keep us but he's not forcing anyone to stand in his family, to stay in the house, and the example of Israel is that even though the nation as a whole was chosen by God and called his son, *bene bekor Yisrael*, I'm not quoting that to parse it just because I love the Hebrew, you know, "Israel is My son, My firstborn."

James. I had actually, Mike, I wish you had actually broken into some Hebrew during the debate just simply, I don't know, just to make it more fun.

Michael. I know.

James. Why didn't you do that? I mean, it's like, come on.

Michael. I was tempted to do it. I was tempted to do it more actually but in any case, so, "Israel is My son, My firstborn," and God says it about the nation as a whole even though he says disobedient, rebellious, etc. So here we have the whole nation redeemed by God's love, called out by God's love, the same acts of redemption performed for the nation as a whole, the same sacrifices performed for the nation as a whole, but many turned away, many that were of that nation turned away and didn't follow. So it's the same with us.

I also see in terms of the intercession of Jesus that there is our participation. You know, the prayer of Jesus in John 17 for the unity of the body is one that has still not been answered. That means generation in and generation out it is in the process of being answered but it's still not been fully answered, so Jesus interceding for us, he is perfect in his intercession and there is no excuse ever for me to fall away except my choice, my rebellion, my sin, because he absolutely has the power to keep me through the end, hence the warnings don't play games with this, don't depart.

So there is nothing...I always use the analogy of the plane. You know, I get on the plane and I don't have the power to go across the ocean or whatever, I choose to sit on that plane and when I wake up or stop reading or whatever I'll be in another country, however I do have the power, I could open an emergency door and jump out. So I see it the same way. I don't see anywhere where Scripture says I am unable to apostatize but I do see God as perfect in his power to keep. And to me and I'd be curious to know your response, how real are the warnings? Was there the possibility that any elect person reading the warnings in Hebrews could actually fall away? Was that ever a possibility at any time for any of the elect readers of Hebrews that all the warnings about falling away and apostatizing, was it possible that any of them ever could? And if they knew it wasn't possible, would that affect how they read the words?

James. The function of the warning passages in light of Jesus' own statement that, "Of all that the Father gives Me, I will lose none but raise them up on the last day," those are uncategorical statements. The function of the warning passages is, well, just like anything else in Scripture, the Spirit of God takes the words of God and applies them to Christ's sheep and utilizes them as the means by which he accomplishes his ends. There's always, I know I sound like a broken record but it's because it needs to be emphasized, God ordains the ends as well as the means. He utilizes warnings. He utilizes the history of Israel. He utilizes, well, you and I both know, I'll use this because we're...I'm a little bit younger than you but we're both born at the second half of a century, sadly you and I can both remember people, names come up in front of my eyes when I start thinking about this, who were once a part of the fellowship of the church and they're not anymore and so I recognize the reality of apostasy. The question is was that Christ losing one of his sheep that he knew? And I find that impossible. Jesus says to those that he says, "Depart from Me, I never knew you." He says to his sheep, "I know you and you know Me." There is a

personal intimate relationship that is the result of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit of God.

So I cannot possibly see how one can affirm that a person can be truly united with Christ, one of his sheep, and then no longer be one of his sheep because Jesus would never be able to say to them, "I never knew you," because he says, "I know My sheep and My sheep know Me." So there is an inherent contradiction there and Christ's direct assertion, "I am able to raise them up on the last day." Here in Hebrews 7:25, able to save, eis ta panteles, to the uttermost, completely. And so but how does he do that? I know that when I think of those who have left the faith over my years in ministry, God uses that to cause me to examine my own heart, to search for evidence of pride or arrogance in my heart, to see if I'm just skating along apathetically thinking, "Well, I'm not like that person." God uses those things, he uses them as warnings in my life.

So I believe God ordains the ends as well as the means and so, yeah, I believe those warnings very strongly speak to the people at that time, "Do not in any way underestimate the power of the enemy or believe that there's anything you can go back to because there isn't anything to go back to" And if you trample underfoot the blood of the Son of God, obviously I believe that means you're demonstrating you never had it within your heart to begin with. Maybe you're saying that you did and then you lose it, I'm not sure exactly how that goes there, but once again, we wander from...

Michael. Let me just push back on one thing for clarity, though, okay?

James. Okay.

Michael. So I genuinely mean this for clarity. On two different occasions I asked the question about whether you were sure that you are elect etc. The first time was when we exegeted key passages and went back and forth, John 6 being one that we went back and forth on. The second time at SES, and at SES, Southern Evangelical Seminary, you distinguished between God's knowing which is perfect and our knowing which is imperfect because my question was if you know, I mean, John says, "I'm writing these things," in John's gospel, emphasized in 1 John, "that you may know that you have eternal life," and Paul says in Romans 8 that "the Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we're the children of God," and Galatians 4, "God has put the Spirit in our hearts by which we cry out, Abba, Father," and I note, you know, 1 Timothy 1, "I know who I believe." So the know so faith, that I know that I know that I'm saved, I know that I know I'm a child of God, I know that I know if I were to die I'd go be with the Lord, my sins are forgiven, therefore that same knowledge tells me that I'm one of God's elect therefore it's impossible for me to fall away because Jesus will infallibly keep me to the end. So in my days as a Calvinist because I was not going to give place to false assurance or complacency, I examined myself regularly and looked at my own life to see whether I was in the faith, and I said to myself, I rested with much more assurance as an Arminian than I am now as a Calvinist. That's one thing that struck me as ironic and just, you know, raised a question for me.

So I never worry for a split second about my relationship with the Lord, I know I'm saved, I know I'm forgiven, and I know he will infallibly keep me. If there was disobedience or sin in my heart, you'd better believe or, you know, I recognize a negative trait, I'm on my face crying out to God about it, I'm diligent. But can you say that you...and again I'm not trying to be polemical, I'm genuinely trying to understand this and then flesh it out for everyone else that's watching and listening. Do you rest with the absolute assurance that you know that you know that you know beyond any shadow of a doubt that you're a believer, that you're a child of God, that if you were to die right now you'd be with him forever, that when you're debating a Muslim that you know that you know that you know that you can talk to them about the assurance of eternal life, or is there always something in the back of your mind, "Well, that's knowing from my viewpoint. I can't speak for God that I am one of the elect."

James. You know, I'm concerned about the focus upon my knowledge rather than upon the ability of Christ that I see there. We both said Christ is able to save completely but it's interesting you went to 1 John 5 because, as you know, 1 John 5 says, "I've written you these things that you may know that you have eternal life." What things? The rest of 1 John. What's the rest of 1 John talk about? Loving your brother. Having orthodox faith in the resurrection of Christ. And the fact that he had a physical body. Walking in the light as he is in the light. All these other things are, again, God ordains the ends as well as the means. These are means by which I grow in my knowledge of Jesus Christ and hence in my knowledge of my relationship to him. So in other words, if after 50 years of walking with Christ, if my assurance is not greater now than it was 40 years ago, I would consider that to be strange. And so do you understand that? I mean, can you see?

Michael. Yeah, yeah, oh, absolutely. No, I'm not arguing with that at all but then to me if I rest in that knowledge he saved me, he chose me before the foundation of the world, you know, I sing "Rock of Ages" and I make it personal, you know? I sing "Amazing Grace" and I make it personal and I'm reveling in the depth of God's grace that saved me. Now I come to these warnings, persevere, don't let an evil heart of unbelief, part of me is going to say, well, how could there be an evil heart of unbelief because Jesus is my perfect intercessor. He died for me and is going to keep me.

James. And that's where my seeing, back to Hebrews 7 and Romans 8, seeing that the death of Christ and then his intercession and, of course, I see a direct relationship between the intercessory work of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit. I mean, this is Trinitarian. Again, let's be honest, this is rarely what's preached in most churches today but there is a direct relationship between the Father and the Son sending the Holy Spirit and the intercessory work of the Holy Spirit based upon his accomplished work which is based upon God the Father having decreed all this. It's beautiful that the gospel is so deeply Trinitarian but the point is that as long as I recognize that my focus does not need to be upon myself, I think gazing at, I think navel gazing will always lead you to finding reasons to question your faithfulness. I look away from myself to Christ and to his promises and that assurance is something that I grow in naturally by exposure to the word of God, by experience of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit of God, and I think I

should have greater assurance now than I had 40 years ago because of all that I've experienced over that period of time.

That's how...I need to know Jesus better now than I did 40 years ago and if I don't, you know, what's the other....? Now Michael, what's the other side of this? You are a strong believer in holiness. You're a strong believer in repentance. And you know how the anti-Lordship and you fought against this in the hyper-grace stuff which is sort of more of the Charismatic aspect of it, we call it the anti-Lordship movement amongst Evangelicals, but you know how destructive shake a preacher's hand, sign a card, and go live your life as you want to live stuff has been, and how difficult it is to reach somebody who thinks that just because they got their ticket punched, they're going to heaven when they've never, they don't know what repentance is, they have no desire for holiness, they do not know what it is to seek after God. So you have to have a balance between those two perspectives and I think, obviously, that the best balance there is found in recognizing that he who endures to the end shall be saved. Why do I endure to the end? Because the faith that saves is the gift of God given to his elect people. That's the only way that I can see to avoid falling into the traps of works salvation and everything else that comes along with it.

So why is it that no matter how hard we try to stay focused on this particular thing, we keep going...? I know, it's all related. I get it. I understand but you'll notice that it's going in that direction. But before everybody forgets what we were talking about and we are running out of time, believe it or not, I did want to go back just briefly, well, not just briefly, I want to go back. The sacrifice that was offered, was it for the Assyrians, Babylonians, Egyptians? It wasn't.

Michael. Well, the Day of Atonement was for the people of Israel. The other sacrifices that were offered that are often understood to be for the nations, hence God calling Nineveh to repent without Nineveh having to offer sacrifices, but let's just focus on Leviticus 16 and the Day of Atonement, all right?

James. Right. Okay, right, so I see two ways of understanding that and I don't want to get into it right now but I just wanted to point out that there is a distinction that is made in the text as to this is not a universal offering. It is not meant for those who are not drawing near. And even then I would raise the question of the lemma, the remnant, and how the New Testament understands that, but that's getting, again, we just keep going off in other directions. But when you responded to Hebrews 7, I would love to talk about Hebrews 2, I would love to walk through the rest of chapter 2 with you because I think I can make an extremely strong case that Hebrews 2 actually supports particular redemption because the rest of the discussion in Hebrews 2 limits exactly what is being said there. I would love to have time to do that. Maybe we'll get to do that sometime before or after a debate, or whatever else. But I would love to be able to do that because I really think that's important.

But when we go back to what is specifically said, here's where I want to push back on, you know, you said, "Well, you've got all this stuff coming up to Hebrews." Okay, but

the specific statement that is made, you said at one point and you went by it quickly and I need to press on this, you said, "Does Jesus intercede for those who would be lost, we don't know." And that's where I want to go, "I think we do and I think we have to know because of the nature of the relationship between the sacrifice and the act of intercession." So in other words, from my perspective as I understand what happened in Leviticus 16 when the high priest goes through the veil into the holy place, he sprinkles the blood upon the mercy seat and there is no distinction that is made.

Now let me just drop back a second. Would you agree with me that the picture of the application of the blood is a necessary aspect, that the high priest would not be doing his job if he only made the sacrifice but didn't present the blood? Would you agree with me?

Michael. Yeah, absolutely. I mean, the blood is the life and the shedding of the blood is the taking of the life and the blood has to be applied to the altar. So it's all very important.

James. Okay, so the connection that both Paul in Romans 8 and even more explicitly, I think Paul via Luke, in Hebrews 7 and then 9 and then 10 makes is that he even connects it to the most, as you know, the most commonly cited text from the Old Testament, he connects it to Psalm 110 because he has entered into the holy place, he sat down at the right hand of God which means God has accepted his work, and so it seems that the writer to the Hebrews' understanding is, is that that intercession, he's gone through the veil where we have an anchor for our soul, that's where the intercession takes place.

And so how can you have a different audience of this sacrifice than you have for the intercession? And I'm not asking you to push back if you don't want to push back, I'm just simply asking and hoping in light of our relationship and our friendship for you to at least hear clearly why I find this so incredibly compelling and forceful is that if you've heard my heart as to the power of the Scriptures to testify to the deity of Christ, to the resurrection of Christ, to the Messiahship of Christ, and the unity of Scripture in doing that, this is the same thing that I'm experiencing here. I see that intercessory work, which is ongoing and yet complete both at the same time, it's a both/and type thing, Romans 8 etc. etc., I see that as having, shining the brightest light upon the purpose of the Father and the Son in the atonement of anything in all of Scripture because that's specifically what's being discussed is why did Christ die, what is the nature of intercession, and when it says that he is able, why?

Now you focused upon two proserchomenous which I think is just descriptive there, but what is the fulfillment of that infinitive to save, "He is able to save"? Why? Because he always lives to make intercession, hyper auto, substitutionary. This is where I go, "Aha! You went into IHOP and you stood in that place and I cheered you on despite the cost, although some people thinking I shouldn't do that, but you were speaking the truth, you saw the need, I appreciated you doing that." Hyper auton, on behalf of them, that substitution right there, but here it's substitution in intercession. And so if you have a universal substitution in atonement, then you have to have a universal substitution in intercession.

But here then becomes the question: what is Jesus interceding for? You said, and this is why I said at the beginning, I think, I'm just asking you to think these things through and as a brother that I hope you recognize loves you deeply, I'm just simply saying here's where I see an inconsistency and I want to push this on you and I want you to think about it, and I'm not asking you, I'm not doing this to make points or anything. I hope you realize that. I would almost rather do this part just in private. But if God knew from eternity who was going to be saved and who was not, and if he does operate on the basis of substitutionary atonement, then there has to be a substitutionary intercession, and therefore you have this amazing situation where you have Jesus interceding for the Amorite high priest that died a thousand years before his death who's been experiencing the wrath of God upon his sins for all that time period, and yet now Jesus is not only going to die for those sins that God the Father and God the Son know are never going to be forgiven by his bearing them, you call that a demonstration of his love, okay, but he's now going to intercede before the Father for that same individual? What is the accomplishment in that intercession? Do you at least see the forest of where I'm coming from?

Michael. Yeah, yeah, I do. So let me give my reflection coming back, not to push back but also out of a sincere love with the hope that you'll see and understand this. Hebrews 7 is saying something very intimate and very personal for us as believers, namely that Jesus intercedes for us. So he's interceding specifically for those who draw near through him and he's praying for us to be kept, and to me we have the pattern of that already in John, the 17th chapter. Interestingly, he said he hasn't lost any except the son of perdition there that the Scripture might be fulfilled in John 17:12, but interesting he mentions that in light of your comment about John 6. But then we also know that he's defining the world for us in John 17:6 and John 17:9 as being not the elect and yet the objects of God's love in John's gospel, repeatedly the world being spoken of. And then the objects of his death in 1 John 2:2, the whole world, 1 John 5:19, the whole world is in the power of the evil one, 1 John 2:2 that he died, he's the propitiation for our sins, not for us only but those of the whole world.

So, I mean, John is self-defining, the gospel of John is self-defining who the world is, so I see two things: God pours out his extraordinary love and throughout the Bible you read of his heart breaking over human sin, and his heart grieving over human sin, and him distancing himself saying that, "My desire was this but you chose this." So for the Amorite high priest, his desire was that man's repentance but he chose evil. But we now come to the atonement and I look at Leviticus 23:28, "You shall not do any work on this same day, for it is a day of atonement, to make atonement on your behalf before the LORD your God. For whoever is not afflicted on that very day shall be cut off from his people and whoever does any work on that very day, that person I will destroy from among his people." So even though a complete atonement was made, those who didn't participate among the people of Israel in what God required did not experience the benefits of it, they were cut off and came under divine judgment.

So I see the intercession of Jesus as something very precious and very wonderful as he's praying for the Father to keep us and strengthen us. And I'm where I am today because of

the grace of God; after 47 years now following the Lord, my confidence is in Jesus, not in Mike Brown. So in that, that's where I look. I look to the cross. I examine my life in accordance with Scripture but I look to the cross in terms of my salvation and assurance and why that I know that I know I'm forgiven. Again, I don't want to go beyond Scripture. I know that Paul expressed a desire that everyone who heard him was like he was except for those chains in Acts 26, so he was wishing everyone there would be saved. I believe I share God's heart in having a desire that everyone would know him and believe and yet I don't pray God saved the whole world because I know the whole world won't be saved, but I ask God to give people ears to hear, I ask God to turn hearts, and if I had perfect knowledge as Jesus does, then I would specifically intercede for those that draw near.

So that makes sense to me on a consistent level and every bit reflects God's heart, the beauty of the sacrifice and the beauty of the intercession, and I don't see why Jesus would pray for someone to be saved with his perfect knowledge that that person never will be. At the same time, I see why, like Romans 10 quoting Isaiah 65, "All day long I've stretched out My hands to a disobedient rebellious people." So God's continually going to stretch out his hands, offer his love, and point to the sacrifice on the cross, therefore we are all the more accountable for rejecting that love when we stand before him.

James. Okay, so you just said, it sounded...okay, I'm trying to understand. You just said, "I don't see why Jesus given his, I guess, foreknowledge of human actions would intercede for someone who is going to remain in their sins." Is that, am I understanding what you said?

Michael. Yeah, he would extend his love to all as a demonstration of God's heart and in his perfect justice saying, "I paid for your sins like everyone else and you chose to scorn what I did." So he's going to die for them and that's a part of his heart to display his love and to make it available to every human being and to heighten our accountability in terms of rejecting that love. But in terms of who he called, he called those that were designated to be his, in other words, he didn't call everyone to be an apostle, right, and when he draws people to himself, we give the free offer of the gospel to all just like he died for all, but with perfect knowledge, he's not going to pray for, "God, save Joe," even though he sees that Joe will reject him forever. So he'll say, "God, keep James," because he sees James has come to faith and now he's praying for James to be kept safe.

James. Why couldn't I insist that the audience of intercession and the audience of sacrifice are identical based upon Leviticus 16, and then make the same argument, if he knows in totality that, we keep picking on this same poor Amorite priest, but the Amorites were not exactly the nicest guys on the planet so I guess it's okay. But you've got the Amorite priest who has been involved in child sacrifice and giving offerings to Molech, who has been justly under God's punishment for a thousand years since the time of Christ, wouldn't the same argument hold to say why would the perfect, sinless, Lamb of God shed his blood to redeem an individual that God the Father and he both know will never be redeemed and will never know that it was the signal of God's love in the first

place? And in fact, I would challenge that that's the central aspect of what the sacrifice is at all. But why couldn't I make that argument?

Michael. Well, you could. I mean, I'm a little uncomfortable with it because now we're asking the purpose of the cross from the viewpoint of a heathen that died 1,500 years earlier or something like that, as opposed to what God states the purpose of the cross is, and to me, I would be overthinking that question. But in harmony with it, let me first emphasize again that the sacrifices were made for all Israel and for your Calvinistic viewpoint, God knew that there were those among the Israelites that were absolutely not elect and for whom the sacrifice would not be efficacious because they would not participate, and yet the sacrifice was made for them. That's one thing.

The other thing is, I believe that anyone that God ever drew to himself he was going to forgive based on the cross. So Jesus does die for all human beings so that anyone at any time who did believe, right, theoretically there is the possibility for anyone, Romans 1, no one has an excuse and it has been laid bare, but if anyone will turn. Again, you'd say the ones who turn are the elect but the fact is anyone that was ever forgiven, to me it wasn't because of the animal sacrifices, it was because of what Jesus did on the cross even though that wasn't fully revealed to the people until it happened.

But just to press back on you from what is clear in the text, is that Leviticus 16 is explicit that these sacrifices and the goat sent out to the wilderness fully paid for the sins of the entire nation and carried off their guilt, and yet the person who didn't afflict themselves that day, who did work, would not benefit from that. It would not be efficacious for them. So isn't that the same picture that I'm painting with why Jesus died on the cross or the parallel that he died for people for whom the sacrifice is not efficacious?

James. Yeah, I'd have to go back to Paul's distinction in regards to the remnant, those who had a circumcised heart, those who did not. I think the whole point of Romans 9 is that God exercised his sovereignty in having an elect people all the way through the history of Israel and that the vast majority of the Israelite kings, they bore the sign of the covenant but they were not of the elect, they did not have a circumcised heart, and it wasn't just because of...that would be the case of everybody outside of the exercise of God's grace in the salvation of his elect people.

But we're out of time almost other than just simply saying some good-byes here but I just want the last thing here, though, is in what you just said about Leviticus 16, the intercession that the high priest makes is the same audience as the sacrifice, and yet it sounds like what you had said earlier was why would Christ intercede for someone like that? And when you say, "Well, I'm uncomfortable talking about, you know, the Amorite high priest," that's why I asked at the beginning when you say the whole world, do you mean everyone who has ever lived? Because I've had people who've said, "Well, I mean the whole world since the time of Christ, or after the cross," or something like that. That's why I was asking that question, and that's why I think it's relevant to go back there because we know there's very little chance of that Amorite high priest who was offering

to Molech or something like that, is going to be somebody who was, you know, a Gentile convert or a proselyte or something along those lines.

Michael. Right, but I would say that God...but that's the whole thing. Yes, the whole world for all time. So God did give that person a chance because Jesus did die for him because without Jesus dying for him, that person could not possibly have a chance. They could exercise whatever faith but it wouldn't be saving faith because there wasn't a sacrifice made for them.

James. And that takes us back to Adam, and that takes us back to where when you say "didn't ever have a chance," if you were in Adam, everybody had a chance in Adam, and it's only by grace that you get transferred from Adam into Christ, and that's where there are foundational issues.

Well, I realize that in an hour and a half now of conversation, we have talked about a bunch of different Scriptures and we've taken different viewpoints on stuff, and we've tried to listen to what the other one was saying and interact properly, and as a result have given hives to dozens and dozens of people on the internet who right now are absolutely furious that, once again, that Michael Brown and James White guy have had a theological conversation where they disagree with one another and they didn't insult each other, and they didn't yell at each other, and they didn't condemn each other to the flames of hell. We did it again and I just, I'm not sure the internet can take much more of this.

Michael. Especially with the coogie.

James. It's coogie. It's Australian, coogie, coogie, coogie.

Michael. Well, let me just say this last thing. You know, I was in California and a guy came up to me very respectfully, I was at a book signing for "Real Kosher Jesus" after I had preached, and he just said, "How can you defend James White for what he did with that Imam and letting him speak at a church and not refute him?" And I said, "Actually, it was a great opportunity for the gospel and it wasn't just a church service, you had to have a ticket to come in, and they did it at the mosque the next night." I said, "There was back and forth but the whole goal was thus and such." And, look, obviously you came under attack for that, I came under attack for standing with you knowing your heart to win the lost and knowing the non-compromise in your nature so, look, whether folks were persuaded of where you're coming from or I'm coming from or my whole coming into this because we said we weren't going to debate, was that at least people better understand our position, they may more readily accept it or reject it. That was the whole goal. But this world is so terribly messed up, people are so horrifically lost that if we as brothers can't stand together as witnesses to reach this lost confused world, at such critical times like this if we can't unite in the midst of very real differences that we're open about, I don't know how we're ever going to be adequate witnesses as this world is falling apart.

James. I don't know, Michael, but I will say this and we have not had the opportunity discussing this since it happened, but what you and I experienced during the rebuttal period in the debate in September in Florida was simply supernatural. We both looked at each other afterwards, we had people come up to us afterwards and say, "You guys memorized that, right?" And we didn't. We hadn't even discussed it. It happened when we defended the Trinity but it really happened in a special way, I would say a sentence, I'd sort of stop halfway through the sentence, you'd pick it up from there. I'd do the same thing with you. We just flowed so much so that the poor folks sitting across from us are just sort of sitting there staring at us, like, "How did they do that?" And I just remember afterwards we were both inundated by people that wanted to, you know, talk and stuff like that but we just started looking at each other, like, "Wow, that was amazing."

And if people can't see that we were focused upon speaking God's truth to those people in grace and in love, yet with clarity, and that we could do that even though we disagree on other issues, and if they think that it's more important for us to beat each other up on other issues than it is to be clear in calling people to faith in Christ and out of homosexuality, letting them know that "such were some of you" and so and so forth, I don't even know what to say in those situations but it breaks my heart. It breaks my heart.

Michael. Yeah, well, thankfully we constantly hear from folks who are blessed by the unity that we have, so it is a good example, and I run into folks constantly that say, "Hey, I learned about your ministry through Dr. White," so I know that we, in that sense, cross pollinate. But yeah, it was extraordinary in Florida in that debate. It really was like one brain with two mouths because it was... And I knew when I stopped, I knew where you were going to take the thing next, and then so amen to that.

James. Yeah, that was exciting and we can't give details but we're really hoping that later this year we might get to do that in another country, right?

Michael. Yeah, another country on another subject.

James. On another, yes, that's right, that's right. We're hoping that's going to happen. So, Michael, thank you very very much. I think it has been helpful to folks and we've done it again and we'll just have to weather the next week or so of all the nastiness that will come out but that's okay, it's worthwhile. And like I said, you look great, brother.

Michael. I'm striving and I'm feeling, I think I'm going to, probably my staff is going to love this, this will just become the sweater because it's so, it doesn't distract anything, it's just so basic. In fact, though, on tonight I've got another broadcast tonight, Real Messiah, my Jewish outreach show and we're going to demolish some horrific scriptural interpretations that are brought by Tovia Singer.

James. Oh, really!

Michael. So to those, yeah, so that's two hours from now so 9 o'clock eastern standard but we'll be airing that on our Facebook page, Ask Dr. Brown, and our YouTube page, Ask

Dr. Brown. So if folks want to watch that, it should be a very interesting show with some clips and a lot of graphics I'm going to put up. So that's coming soon.

James. That'll be very very useful. So we thank you for joining us. You need to get something to eat so your blood sugar levels are doing good because you're working hard today. Thank you, brother, for joining us today.

Michael. My joy. God bless you.

James. All right. God bless. Thanks.

Okay, folks, there you go, a little over 90 minutes. But for those of you who want blood and gore on the floor, sorry, that's not what happened, but I think despite all the other stuff that keeps coming up, that thing right at the end, I think, is really where the issue comes down to and I think it's, you know, we want to push each other for consistency. We're not always going to get it in this life but we want to push ourselves for consistency. That's an act of love toward a brother. So there you go.

All right. Thank you very much for joining us. As I said, there aren't going to be any programs for the rest of the week. I'm going to Virginia for the Trinity seminar and, Lord willing, we'll be back next week. Lots of stuff to talk about. See you then. God bless.