

Belgic Confession 21 – Christ’s Planned, Vicarious, Exclusive Sacrifice

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

You learned **who Christ is.**

You learned about **Christ’s two natures and why those natures were necessary.**

You learned **how Christ saved you by his two natures.**

We will get more focused today and learn the details of Christ’s work as your atoning sacrifice.

But why is examining the details of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus so important, didn’t we learn enough? Two reasons:

a. Neo-orthodoxy has crept into the church. Neo-orthodoxy is a theory developed by German theologians of the 19th century—which says Christ was historically real but man does not need historical Christ to change. Man is able to change his own life by his own will, and if men treated others morally and with love, sin would disappear. To the neo-orthodox, the death of Christ was not so important.

b. Every other religion teaches (so most people in the world believe) that the substitutionary blood sacrifice of Jesus was not essential.

So you must see why it is essential to learn of Christ’s atoning sacrifice for sinners.

Our headings are:

Christ’s **Sacrifice was Planned**

Christ’s **Sacrifice was Vicarious**

Christ’s **Sacrifice was Exclusive**

Our goals are: That you **understand that Christ really had to be sacrificed in man’s place because of man’s inability to remedy his sin problem,** and that you are **then moved to work and worship the Lord better.**

Christ’s sacrifice was Planned

We believe that Jesus Christ is **ordained with an oath** to be an **everlasting High Priest,** after the order of Melchizedek;

1. Before God made man he knew man would sin; God was not surprised by man’s sin.

Why did God make man knowing that man would fall? God did not make man to sin, **but God made man to bring glory to himself.** You are the means to an end, which is **God’s glory.** So **God planned, before the world began, to send his Son to save man from his sins by being a sacrifice for him.** As a result, men would glorify God!

But God’s motive for the atonement is not limited only to his glory. God also chose to save man because of love. God can have pure multiple motives.

2. The only way God’s Son could save man and make peace between the two warring parties was by becoming an eternal high priest and making the right sacrifices for man.

So God planned this sacrifice. The atonement was not an afterthought in God's mind.

3. From early in the OT you could continue to see the plan of Christ's coming materializing in promises –starting from Adam, in pictures–in all the signs and ceremonies, in priests, and through prophets–many, many prophets.

Consider two examples of Melchizedek.

Melchizedek was High Priest of God's people, making sacrifices for sin. Genesis 14. **Jesus is High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek** (not Levi). Yet, Jesus was more. How? **He did not make offering for His own sin** because He had no sin (Hebrews 5:3). And **Jesus made a sacrifice not of animals, but of himself**. Jesus is the offerer and the offering. So he was like Melchizedek, but better.

Melchizedek has no record of the beginning of his life nor of the end of his life. Jesus is a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek who had neither beginning nor end. This means Jesus is a high priest forever. He is forever able to save His people and to intercede for them before God.

Hebrews 7:15 And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest 16 who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, **but according to the power of an endless life.** 17 For He testifies: "**You are a priest forever** According to the order of Melchizedek."

Christ's Sacrifice was vicarious

...and that He has presented Himself in our behalf before the Father, to appease His wrath by His full satisfaction, by **offering Himself on the tree of the cross, and pouring out His precious blood to purge away our sins**, as the prophets had foretold. For it is written: He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and numbered with the transgressors; and condemned by Pontius Pilate as a malefactor, though he had first declared Him innocent. **Therefore, He restored that which he took not away, and suffered, the righteous for the unrighteous, as well in His body as in His soul, feeling the terrible punishment which our sins had merited;**

1. Christ, your eternal High Priest, presented himself as an offering to God on your behalf.

Isaiah explained how Jesus Christ would vicariously suffer for your sins. He took up your infirmities, he carried your sorrows, he was pierced for your transgressions, he was crushed for your iniquities, he was punished for your peace, and by his wounds you are healed. Jesus had to be that unblemished **substitutionary sin offering** of Leviticus 4, that Israel brought for their sins – **even unintentional sins**. When the priest laid his hands on that animal before killing it, it pictured the transferal of that sin of the guilty person to the animal.

2. Christ, your eternal High Priest, knowingly and willingly went to the cross as your substitute.

John 10:15 - ... and **I lay down My life for the sheep.**

The Old Testament animals might have been willing sacrifices, **but they were not knowingly sacrifices.** Jesus had to knowingly become your scapegoat – taking your place.

3. What are the results of his vicarious offering?

Your high priest's vicarious offering does 2 things.

a. Your High Priest's vicarious offering expiates the guilt of your sin. Expiation means that your high priest's vicarious offering cleanses you, and washes you. It makes you so clean it is as if you had never sinned nor had ever been a sinner. **He expiated for cosmic treason!** Can you imagine how wonderful this is? Which religion offers this real solution?

b. Your High Priest's vicarious offering propitiates God's anger against you. Christ death was **a legal transaction** which satisfied God's justice on your behalf. Christ suffered the wrath of God which you should have suffered. Covering over sins (expiation) was not enough. God's anger had to be pacified!

So when you think of your guilt and sin, do you see how this makes you indebted to Jesus? And when you think about what you deserved for treason against his holy majesty, but you don't get what you deserved, **will you shout "hallelujah," and "praise the Lord?"** You should! And you should **tell the whole world what the Lord has done for you.**

...insomuch that **his sweat became as it were great drops of blood** falling down upon the ground. He called out: **My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?** and has suffered all this for the remission of our sins.

4. Christ's suffered intense emotional and psychological pain for you, so much so that his sweat became like "big drops of blood falling on the ground."

Who likes suffering and dying alone? Yet Jesus determinedly set his face like stone to go to the cross for you.

He had to leave the Garden (symbolic of Eden) and head to the cross (symbolic of hell).

He had to be like the scapegoat and leave the comforts of the fold (Eden) and head out of to the desert (symbolic of being cast into hell).

Imagine being sentenced to life in prison for a crime you never committed and then imagine that feeling in your conscience for the rest of your life. And imagine your wife, your family, and your friends thinking you are guilty. Your name becomes mud. You lose your status in society. You lose your freedom. Imagine all this and then know that these suffering are nothing to what a perfect Savior felt for you! You should have been sent for eternity to hell – with a guilty conscience – the worm that does not die. But your Savior

endured it for you.

Doesn't it make your heart melt in sadness...that he did this all alone for you?

Doesn't this also make you jubilant that he endured this emotional and psychological suffering for you?

5. Christ's suffering vicariously was more than physical and emotional pain; he was spiritually tortured.

Remember how he cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mt 27:46). His Father turned from him because he was guilty with your sins. This was the worse torture of all. Added to this was the **abandonment by his friends, the disbelief of his own family, the betrayal of Judas, the perverse judgment of the Pharisees, the innocent condemnation by the Romans, the shame of being on a cross, and then being mocked.**

Christ's Sacrifice was Exclusive

Wherefore we justly say with the apostle Paul that we know nothing **save Jesus Christ**, and him crucified; we count all things but loss and refuse for the excellency of the **knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord**, in whose wounds we find all manner of consolation. **Neither is it necessary to seek or invent any other means of being reconciled to God than this only sacrifice**, once offered, by which he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified. This is also the reason why He was called by the angel of God, JESUS, that is to say, SAVIOR, because He would save his people from their sins.

1. Only the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and nothing else, could save you.

Not only that, you don't need any other sacrifices after you are saved to help you.

None of the sacrifices in the OT had any saving benefits. They were mere pictures of Jesus' sacrifices.

None of the **religions or philosophies has any saving benefits. The Bible describes them as "loss and refuse"** (garbage, sewage). They have nothing with which they could please God. **The religions and philosophies either lie about how good man is, or they lie about how ordinary God is!**

Remember this when your professor in university starts promoting the equality of all faiths!

2. Christ's substitutionary atonement never needs to be repeated, regardless of what Roman Catholics teach and practice in the mass.

Hebrews 10:11 And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 12 But this Man, **after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down** at the

right hand of God...

And with his work completed, Jesus sat down in heaven. A good man only sits when his work is done.

3. No one is to preach any other means of salvation, and no one is to believe in any other means of salvation.

You do so to your own detriment and death. To treat any such belief as even tolerable is to distort man's only hope of deliverance, and you will ultimately leave man in despair.

Conclusion:

Christ was chosen to be your High Priest before the world began – for the glory of God and because of love for you. **That was God's plan.** As your High Priest, **Christ vicariously suffered for you** to cover (expiate) your sins, and calm (propitiate) God's anger against you. **There is no other way of making peace with God.** Through Christ, God accepts you as his child and makes you joint heirs with Christ. Adam lost the Tree of Life, **Jesus earned it back for you when he died on the tree of life.**

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. The only way you can appreciate the necessity of the vicarious suffering of Christ is to get a full sense of the seriousness of your sins and what you lost in Adam. To get a full sense of your sins you have to properly know the Bible.

2. Then teach your family, your friends, your co-workers, your fellow students... so they can know their sin and come to meet the Savior – the only Savior - who took their place.

3. Then worship better. People who are careless about worship – and you can watch this in the lives of others- are often people who have a little sense of their sins.

If you are not a Christian, you are missing the greatest gift any one could ever give...eternal life. Eternal life only comes through Jesus. He is offering this gift to you...a gift you absolutely need. Would you stretch out your hand to God and say: "Yes, I want that gift. Expiate my sins and propitiate God's anger for me through Jesus?"