

QUEST 52

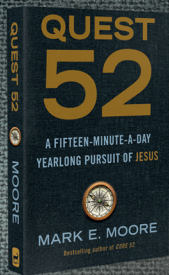
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Arguments in Favor of Substitutionary Atonement

By Mark E. Moore, Ph.D.

1. **Jesus is our substitute.** Jesus gave himself ‘on our behalf’ [ὑπὲρ] (2 Cor 5:15; Gal 2:20; 3:13; Eph 5:2; 1 Tim 2:5–6; Titus 2:14). In addition, Jesus said he would lay down his life for [ὑπὲρ] his sheep (John 10:11, 15). Mark 10:45/Matt 20:28 is even more specific, Jesus gives his life as a ransom ‘for’ [ἀντὶ] many. Romans 4:25, using the word διὰ, clearly states that Jesus died ‘because of’ our sins and rose for our justification.
2. **The NT presupposes Lev 17:11**, ‘Life is in the blood’ and thus blood death grants atonement [כַּפָּר] through the altar sacrifice. Romans 5:9 says Jesus’ blood makes us righteousness (δικαιοῶ) and allows us to be saved from God’s wrath. Hebrews 10:19 asserts that the blood of Jesus is our sacrifice which grants us access to God. In fact, Hebrews 9:22 avers, “Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins.” Such forgiveness cleanses Christ’s church (Eph 1:7; 5:25–27; Titus 2:14), and by extension, purifies the world (2 Cor 5:19). Hence, it is the sacrifice motif, not merely the Exodus motif that controls much of the NT interpretation of the death of Jesus.
3. **Jesus’ ‘redemption’ is described in terms of the Passover Lamb.** We were redeemed (λυτρόω) by Jesus’ life (Mark 10:45/Matt 20:28), specifically his blood as the Passover Lamb (1 Cor 5:7; 1 Pet 1:18–19). Though λυτρόω implies especially ransom from the Exodus (cf. Exod 6:6–7a; 15:13; Deut 7:8; 15:15; 2 Sam 7:23), this was accomplished through a blood sacrifice of the Passover Lamb, a consistent theme for Jesus. This is the background of the Eucharist (Mark 14:22–25/Matt 26:26–29/Luke 22:15–20; 1 Cor 11:23–29; cf. John 6:53–55). John articulated Jesus as the Passover Lamb at the inception of Jesus’ ministry (John 1:29), at the cross (John 19:36), and again during the Throne Room vision of Revelation (5:6, 9). Luke highlights the national implications this redemption has (Luke 1:68; 2:38; 24:21; cf. John 11:49–52) while Paul relates it specifically to the forgiveness of sins (Eph 1:7; Col 1:13–14). This ‘redemption’ was yet future for both Jesus (Luke 21:28) and Paul (Rom 8:23; Eph 1:14; 4:30).
4. **Jesus is portrayed as the scapegoats.** The silent lamb (Isa 53:4–7, 10–12) is a ‘guilt offering’ (חֹטֵאת) in our stead, an image applied directly to Jesus in Hebrews 13:11–12. While the scapegoat, technically, is the one released into the wilderness, Jesus is portrayed as both goats at once, being both killed *and* sent outside.
5. **Jesus is the sin offering.** Hebrew 9:26–28 (cf. vv. 13–14) asserts that Jesus did away with all other sacrifices through his own which removed the “sins of many”. Thus, his death must be viewed in light of OT sacrifices. He is the atonement (ἱλασμός) for the sins of the world (1 John 2:2; 4:10) as well as the ‘place of atonement’ (ἱλαστήριον = mercy seat; Rom 3:25; cf. Heb 9:5), and paradoxically the High Priest that offers himself as the sacrifice (Heb 2:17) offering atonement (ἱλάσκομαι) for sins.



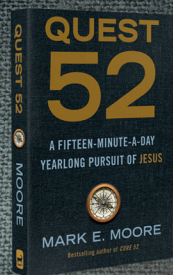
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Problems with Substitutionary Atonement theory:

1. It creates an image of a blood-thirsty, vindictive Father vs. a gracious Son. [*But it is the Father who gave the son. Moreover, one must not minimize judgment as an expression of God's Holiness.*]
2. One person's guilt cannot be paid by the suffering of another (Psa 49:7-8; Ezek 18:20). [*Precisely. This is why Jesus, the sinless son, is the only acceptable substitute.*]
3. It was not clearly articulated until Anselm in the 11th century and that under a legal feudal system which functioned as an anachronistic lens for interpreting the Bible. [*It derives from the NT.*]
4. It deals only with Jesus' death without taking a holistic account of his incarnate life. [*This is why the theory of substitution must be augmented with the 'moral influence' and 'Christus Victor' theories.*]
5. Did Satan receive the ransom? [*No, God did—his own justice. Though this is illogical, metaphors are slippery.*]
6. It reduces Jesus' national political agenda to an individualistic and moralistic agenda that perpetuates oppression of the dispossessed that Jesus came to liberate. Paradoxically, this reduces the ethical demands on the recipient of responding in meaningful moral ways in society. [*See #4.*]



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SUBSTITUTIONARY & UNLIMITED ATONEMENT TEXTS

Lev 17:11, “For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life.”

Isaiah 53:4–6, “Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

Mark 10:45, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

John 11:49–52, “Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, “You know nothing at all! You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.” He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one.”

Acts 20:28, “Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God that he obtained with the blood of his own Son.”

Romans 3:23–25, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood.” (cf. vv. 21–22)

2 Cor 5:14–15, “For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.”

Gal 3:13–14, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.’ He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.”

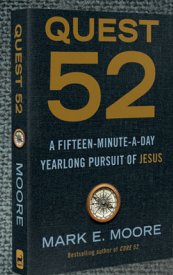
1 Tim 2:5–6, “For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time.”

Titus 2:14, “Who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.”

Hebrews 9:22, “In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.” (cf. vv. 19–21)

1 Peter 1:18–19, “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.”

1 John 2:2, “He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.”



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UNLIMITED ATONEMENT

Ezekiel 18:23, "Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? declares the Sovereign LORD. Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?"

Ezekiel 18:32, "For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent and live!"

Ezekiel 33:11, "Say to them, 'As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?'"

John 1:29, "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

Romans 5:6–8, "You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

Romans 5:15–19, "But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous."

2 Cor 5:14–15, "For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again."

1 Tim 2:4, "Who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."

Titus 2:11, "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men."

2 Peter 3:9, "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."

1 John 2:2, "He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world."