



For Whom Did Christ Die?

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Baptists in America descended from the Particular Baptists of Wales and England who arrived in this country as immigrants. They held to a Calvinistic soteriology including particular redemption from whence came their distinctive title.

Sadly, with the passing of time, many of the Baptists in America drifted into Arminianism. This, however, is not our present concern. Rather, we wish to consider a doctrinal scheme known as Amyraldism (named after Moses Amyraut, 1596-1664), commonly known as four-point Calvinism, which attempts to blend Calvinistic soteriology with universal redemption. This thinking has become popular today in some evangelical circles. Its attraction seems to be the following:

1. Amyraldism appears to justify the universal gospel call.
2. Amyraldism appears to soften the perceived harshness of historic Calvinism.
3. Amyraldism appears to safeguard from the errors of Hyper-Calvinism. Hyper-Calvinism misrepresents particular redemption as if it were the foundation of hardshellism. (By contrast, the Canons of Dort set forth doctrine that is at once thoroughly Calvinistic and evangelistic.)

Many see Amyraldism as a theological option with practical benefits and no real problems. But this is not the case. Amyraldism yields no real practical or doctrinal benefits and introduces great theological confusion.

THE REAL ISSUE

In studying matters of theological debate, it is wise to begin by making certain that we truly grasp the issue. We must get to the heart of the matter. What then is the real issue that separates Calvinism from Amyraldism?

Many wrongly assume that the issue is the value of Christ's death. This is a completely false assumption. No reasonable student would place a limit on the value of Christ's Person and work at Calvary. It is of infinite value.

The real issue at stake is not the value but the intent of Christ's redemptive work. It could have saved a thousand worlds had that been the decreed will of God.

Let us consider for a moment the question of intent. The universalist says that God intends to save all men. The Calvinist says that God intends to save all the elect. The Arminian says that God's intention at the cross was to make salvation merely a possibility for all. The Amyraldian says (though not always admittedly) that the Persons of the Godhead cannot agree as to their intent. The Father and the Spirit work to save the elect, while the Son works to make salvation possible for all. What confusion this introduces into the divine covenant of redemption!

THE BLOOD OF THE EVERLASTING COVENANT

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant." (Heb. 13:20).

Before God created the universe, the Persons of the glorious Trinity entered into a covenant or an accord concerning the salvation of sinners. Contrary to the confusion introduced by Amyraldism, each of the three Persons assumed a role in this saving purpose. Though

their works differed, each agreed to work to the same end and on behalf of the same individuals.

The great end of the covenant was the salvation of those who were the objects of God's redemptive love. The work carried out to achieve their goal may be simply expressed as:

Election by the Father,

Redemption by the Son,

Regeneration by the Holy Spirit.

This covenant was one of unconditional grace. No one had a claim on God's mercy.

"For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."
(Rom. 9:15)

Some ask, "Why were not more, or even all, included in the covenant?" But the question they should ponder is, "Why were any at all included?" The very nature of God's grace means that He is under no obligation to save any.

We mentioned in a previous paragraph the confusion that Amyraldism brings to the doctrine of the covenant. Let us pursue this a bit further. Amyraldian teaching removes Christ's blood and cross work from the covenant. The atonement is made to stand separate from the covenant purpose of the Godhead. This position leads to serious problems.

"First, it destroys the consistency of grace in the covenant. Christ, working outside the covenant of grace, dies to pay for the sins of all and purchases eternal life for them. At this point, the covenant work of the Father and the Spirit enters in. Out of the masses of humanity whose sins were atoned for by the Son, the Father chooses to save only some. From the generations of earthlings for whom Christ

purchased the benefits of new life, the Spirit brings only some to receive that life.

Does this sound like a covenant of grace? Is it not rather a restricting of grace? Christ endeavors to save a greater number than the Father and the Holy Spirit. If they had been as gracious as He, more would have been saved! This amounts to a denial of grace.

Second, Amyraldism's theory of the atonement reflects on the character of God. It was supposed to place the Calvinistic God in a better light. However, it ends up displaying the Trinity as incompetent, working at conflicting purposes.

Third, and worse yet, Amyraldism makes the Father demand payment for sin twice over. Christ, we are told, became surety for the non-elect and paid their sin debt. But then these same sins, already paid for by Christ, are punished again when the sinner is cast into everlasting perdition. What an outrage against the just character of God! The truth is, either Christ must die, or the sinner must die, or justice must die. Amyraldism takes the third option by requiring both of the first two.

We must never dismantle the covenant by teaching a disjointed purpose and goal on the part of the Trinity. Christ's work in the covenant pertains to the same number of persons and has the same goal as that of the Father and the Holy Spirit. Let us follow the Scripture and leave the blood of Christ in the covenant! His blood is covenant blood.

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant." (Heb. 13:20)

His work is a saving work.

"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." (Mat. 1:21)

"As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water." (Zec. 9:11).

The covenant brought into force by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ is a covenant of grace.

Before God created the universe, He loved a people and chose them unto salvation. This choice is said to be made in Christ. Bible students know that the expression in Christ is a common one in Scripture. It is most relevant to the present discussion.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." (Eph. 1:3-4)

1. Election is not conditioned on human goodness. God did not choose men because they were holy but that they might be holy. (It is the same with faith. "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed." Ac. 13:48.)

2. Thus, election took place in full recognition of the guilt and de-pravity of man.

3. Because God is just and righteous, He must honor His holy law and punish sin.

"For the wages of sin is death." (Rom. 6:23)

as their surety, that is, co-signer or responsible party.

2. Jesus willingly became our responsible party and thus we were chosen in Him.

Let me illustrate suretyship. A poor man who is a high risk asks a bank for a loan. The bank determines to lend money to the man only if a person of means agrees to co-sign the loan. Should the man default on the payments, the surety makes good the debt. In like

manner, God acts toward us in salvation by accepting Christ as our surety.

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

CHRIST OUR SURETY

1. Having chosen men unto salvation, God must appoint someone to act

Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." (Rom. 3:23-26)

"By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament" (Heb. 7:22)

This doctrine of Christ's suretyship is further taught in these passages:

"And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." (Rev. 13:8)

"The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is" (Rev. 17:8)

1. The book of life is the record of those for whom Christ would act as a surety.

2. Christ is called the lamb slain from the foundation of the world because God decreed to permit the fall of man, and thus Christ must die if salvation was to be.

3. With Christ as our surety, our salvation is sure. Christ died to pay for our sins. His resurrection proves the accomplishment of the payment.

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 6:23)

"Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." (Rom. 4:25)

Let us therefore rejoice in this great and certain salvation!

"And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." (Lk. 10:17-20)

As we mentioned previously, God will not demand payment for sin twice. If Christ suffered the penalty of our sin, we will never be required to do so.

"Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." (Rom. 8:33-34)

A hymn by Augustus Toplady expresses this truth beautifully:

From whence this fear and unbelief?

Hast thou, oh Father, put to grief

Thy spotless Son for me?

**And will the righteous Judge of men
Condemn me for that debt of sin Which,
Lord, was charged on thee?
If thou hast my discharge procured,
And freely in my room endured
The whole of wrath divine,
Payment God cannot twice demand,
First at my bleeding Surety's hand,
And then again at mine.**

If there were "double-jeopardy" in God's system of justice, we could have no assurance of salvation. How could we know that God would not require another satisfaction for our sins? Why not several more or an unlimited number?

It is also interesting to consider that Revelation 3:5 is a promise not a threat. "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels."

May eternal praises arise to the honor of Christ! He became surety for bankrupt sinners and made good on their debt!

THE INTERCESSION OF CHRIST

Like the Arminian, the Amyraldian believes that while Christ died for all men, He intercedes only for the people of God. This is a serious error, because the atoning work and the intercessory work of Christ cannot be separated.

Notice first that they are never separated in Scripture.

"Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." (Isa. 53:12)

"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." (Rom. 5:6-10)

"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." (Rom. 8:32-34)

"But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself." (Heb. 7:24-27)

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." (I Jn. 2:1-2)

"For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the

foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." (Heb. 9:24-28)

Christ's atonement and intercession are inseparable; they are one and the same. Christ's intercession is not a new work but is the ongoing presentation of His work at Calvary, as well as the Father's ongoing acceptance of it.

This is the meaning of Revelation 5:6, "And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain." The saving work of Christ on the cross is ever the center of attention in heaven.

We must beware of confusion here. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that Christ is offered over and over again in their sacrament of the mass. This is far from the clear teaching of the Word of God. Christ died and made sacrifice for our sins only once.

For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." (Heb. 9:24-28)

"For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;

Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself." (Heb. 7:26-27)

There is, however, an ongoing presentation of this redeeming work and an ongoing acceptance of it by the Father.

The fact that Christ's atonement and His intercession are one is also evident in that both are mentioned in Scripture as the cause of full salvation.

"But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Heb. 7:24-25)

"Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." (Heb. 9:12).

The symbolism of the Old Testament Tabernacle also demonstrates this truth. Outside in the courtyard stood a brazen altar on which burned a fire kindled by God. Brass in Scripture is a symbol of judgment. The sacrifice made at the brazen altar pictures Christ dying for our sins.

Inside the holy place was a golden altar upon which was a crown of gold. Upon this altar, the priest burned incense using coals from off the brazen altar. The rising smoke of the incense points to God's acceptance of us and our prayers because of the memory of Calvary, which is a sweet savor unto the Lord.

"Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour." (Eph. 5:1-2)

"And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. And

I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand." (Rev. 8:1-4).

THE SUCCESSFUL SAVIOR

God is just as successful in the work of salvation as He was in the work of creation. He spoke and it was done (Gen. 1:13). He surveyed the completed work and was pleased (Gen. 1:31). Likewise, in salvation we see the success of all three Persons of the Trinity. The Father's election and the Spirit's call accomplish their decreed end.

"What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." (Rom. 11:7)

"But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, And the wisdom of God." (I Cor. 1:23-24)

In the same way, as the Father surveys the work of the Son, He sees complete success. An example of this is found in Isaiah 53 where each paragraph reveals Christ as others see Him:

Isaiah 53:1-3 — Christ as the world sees Him.

Isaiah 53:4-9 — Christ as the believer sees Him.

Isaiah 53:10-12 — Christ as the Father sees Him.

Notice that the world sees Christ as a failure. The believer sees Christ as his substitute and hope. The Father sees Christ as the successful Savior.

Because Christ suffered according to the Father's will, He shall:

1. See His seed.

2. Prolong His day. The resurrection is a divine "paid in full" (Rom. 4:25).

3. See God's purpose or good pleasure ... prosper in His hand.

4. See of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied. Unlike a woman who delivers a stillborn child, Christ will not go home empty-handed. `Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider." (Isa. 52:13-15)

"Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law. Thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein: I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the

people, for a light of the Gentiles; To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house." (Isa. 42:1-7)

Christ's success in the covenant is celebrated in many passages of Scripture. Here is one more example:

"And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength. And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth." (Isa. 49:5-6)

Is not all this a contradiction of Amyraldism, in which salvation is merely a possibility? According to Isaiah, the Lord Jesus Christ is a grand success!

1. He shall be completely satisfied with the fruit of His suffering.
2. He shall see all those justified for whom He acted as a surety.
3. He shall see none of the fruit of His saving labor withheld from Him.

It is also noteworthy that in the passage above, and many others, the success of Christ in His covenant work is connected with the inclusion of the Gentiles in His great salvation.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Christ is called the good shepherd. The word good does not apply to His holiness, even though He is holy. As in the expression, "a good employee," the goodness is the success of the worker in pleasing

his employer and carrying out his task. Christ was made overseer of a flock. In this work, Christ enjoys complete success. None are lost. The needs of the sheep are wisely met. No sacrifice is too great for the shepherd as He personally cares for the flock. He is indeed the great shepherd (Heb. 13:20), the chief Shepherd (I Peter 5:4), and in every way, the good shepherd.

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. ... I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine." On. 10:11, 14)

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever." (Psa. 23).

Christ is the successful Shepherd.

THE LAST ADAM

Adam is the first "figure" or type (Gk. tupos in Rom. 5:14) of Christ in the Bible. Just as Adam represented all his race and by one act brought condemnation on them all, so Christ, the last Adam, represented all His people and by one act brought justification on them all. (Please note that the sin mentioned in Rom. 5:12 is not our personal act of sin, but our sin in Adam our federal head. This becomes obvious when we connect verse 12 with verse 18, understanding that verses 13-17 form a parenthesis.)

THE UNIVERSAL GOSPEL CALL

Many have embraced the Amyraldian view assuming it is the only system that makes possible the universal call of the gospel. "How," they demand, "can we preach to all if Christ did not die for all?"

Quite simply, the problem posed by the Amyraldian is not caused by the doctrine of particular redemption. Rather, it is the faulty preaching of the Amyraldian that creates the problem. If he would preach the gospel as the Apostles preached it, there would be no problem. The Apostles preached Christ's Person and work. They called on men to repent and believe. The promise was that all who repent and believe would receive the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. A careful reading of the evangelistic passages from the Book of Acts reveals how the Apostles preached the Gospel. Acts 2:14-40, Acts 3:12-26, Acts 4:5-12, Acts 7:1-53, Acts 8:35-37, Acts 10:34-43, Acts 13:14-41, Acts 17:22-34

You will notice that the Apostles never declared to their audiences what we often hear today: "God loves you," and "Christ died for you." Such specificity is nowhere in the apostolic preaching. These things are not made known to the sinner before he believes any more than is his election. Though Christ's purchase of pardon for sinners is particular and definite, He is pleased that the message of pardon save me" (Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, vol. 58, p. 584).

Amyraldian friend, study the apostolic evangelism. Preach as the apostles preached and your problems will cease.