

Why Did Jesus Come to Earth?

Jesus' Mission

Over 2 billion people (1/3 of the earth's population) call themselves Christians. They believe that the son of God came to earth (Jesus of Nazareth) having been sent by His Father in heaven.

Why did Jesus come to earth? What was his mission?

Jesus' Mission: The Christian Answer

Christianity's answer to this question is that he ultimately came to offer himself up as a sacrifice to pay for the sins of humanity and thus provide a way for humans to be reconciled to God. This is referred to as the doctrine of atonement (or referred to as "atonement theology"). Here is a bit more detail about this doctrine:

- God is perfect and cannot tolerate the presence of sin
- God wants us to be in His presence
- A perfect (sinless) blood sacrifice had to be made in order to pay the penalty for our sins
- God sent His perfect son (Jesus) to pay this penalty
- anyone who believes in Jesus has their sins paid for and can come into God's presence

If we believe that Jesus died on the cross to atone for our sins, this becomes the climactic moment in God's story. It would reveal the true character and nature of God, and it would become the foundational view that drives the rest of our beliefs about God. It would also be true that the doctrine of atonement would dramatically influence how we read and interpret all of Scripture.

The doctrine of atonement, if true, will have a huge influence on how we interpret all of the events *leading up to Jesus' death*. And, it will influence how we interpret all of the events *after Jesus' death*. Essentially, atonement doctrine *would* influence our view of *every part of God's story*.

If there were ever a theology or doctrine to question– not for the sake of questioning itself, but for the sake of getting it right– *this* is the theology to question.

A Historical and Global Perspective

Before we dive into the Christian teachings on the atonement, let's step back and consider the atonement theology from a historical and global perspective.

For the sake of argument, let's take the "young earth" position on the age of the earth and humanity. This would put Adam and Eve at about 4000 BC.

According to the Old Testament (OT) the **first** time that God communicated to humans about the importance of sacrifice for sin was when he spoke to Moses around 1450 BC.

OK, some simple math. This means that God waited over 2500 years before He told anyone that sin needed to be paid for and that a blood sacrifice was the means by which to pay for sins. Think about that for a minute. TWO THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED YEARS of human history went by before God thought about mentioning this supposedly all-important concept of sin and the requirement for sacrifice to pay for sin. Really? TWO THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED YEARS? Does this seem to you to be a burning topic on God's heart that he would go that long before even bringing it up?

Here's another line of thought. The population of Israelites at the time of Moses is estimated to be around 3 million, out of an estimated world population of around 38 million. So, when God decided to make the world aware of the importance of sacrificing for sin, He only told 8% of the world's population (at the time). Actually, God only told Moses who then passed it along to the rest of the Israelites.

If sacrifice for sins is such a critical cornerstone of God's "solution" for sin, why didn't He introduce the topic as soon as Adam sinned and was banished from the garden of Eden?

Why did God wait over 2500 years before telling anyone about it?

And, when He did decide to communicate the importance of sacrifice for sins, why did He reveal it to only 8% of people on the planet? What about the other

30 million people on the planet? Too bad for them? And what about the people who lived and died before Moses' time? And what about the millions (even billions) of people who lived and died after Moses' time but never got exposed to God's message about the importance of paying for sin with sacrifices? Too bad for them too?

I don't know about you, but this really gives me pause to think.

Unbelievers Have a Point

Let's consider the viewpoint of some non-Christians. This may sound like an odd place to look, but 2/3rds of the world's current population is not Christian. They have not been raised on atonement theology. It can be helpful to consider an "outsider's" view as this can challenge us to consider things we would not have normally considered.

Here is a post from

<https://www.skepticink.com/tipling/2015/09/13/atonement-and-jesus/>:

"Firstly, let us assume the classical theistic notion of God who has perfect foreknowledge. He has knowledge of all future events and counterfactuals (if this, then that). So now we have this situation where God is creating and has full knowledge at exactly what he is creating. This actually means that God has at least some moral culpability for sins committed by humanity.

Analogy: I create a sentient lifeform in the lab. I design this from scratch. I could have done it otherwise but I choose to do it like this. I know this lifeform will escape from my lab and go and murder people in town. I know this utterly. They do this using the mechanisms which I have designed into them. Imagine one of these people they kill is your daughter. And yet, even knowing this destruction they will cause, I decide to create them anyway.

The police knock at my door. They say it is my fault.

But, using the Christian's logic, I deny this, arguing they used their own mechanisms to murder.

But the police say that I designed those mechanisms, knew what they would do, created them anyway, and then let them run amok.

The police laugh off my defense. They lock me up.

That's the end of the mad scientist who created evil beings.

Another analogy would be this. I am CEO of a car company. I design a car which I know is faulty. I know exactly when it will be faulty and crash to cause injury and death. I know this and create it anyway. The car fulfills its destiny and causes death. I, as CEO who also designed and manufactured the car, am rightfully held responsible.

So we have this scenario where God creates humanity knowingly to sin. He then sacrifices himself to himself (whilst also praying to himself) to sit on his own right hand in heaven for eternity.

Firstly, this is no big sacrifice. Indeed, this seems in reality a very small sacrifice. I can imagine far more noble and greater sacrifices from mere humans than this. Secondly the need for payment is pointless. Why God would need in any way to balance the books is beyond me; and why this sacrifice would balance the books at all is beyond me. There is nothing about the Atonement that makes any sense to me."

OK, this person is an unbeliever. But, hey, I am a believer and I must say that I agree with his assessment of the doctrine of atonement. It really makes no sense to me either.

Although I was born into a "Christian" home and have been a follower of Jesus all my life, I have spent a lot of time investigating other religions and multiple "varieties" of Christianity. I have spoken with many people of other faiths. When I got a chance to discuss the topic of the Christian message of sacrifice and atonement with non-Christians I got some very interesting perspectives. The following is an amalgamation of the perspectives on Christian theology that I have heard from non-Christians (many of them Muslim). If you are a Christian, don't get offended by this. This characterization is what many of the world's non-Christians think about what Christianity claims:

There is a God who created the universe. His crowning act of creation was mankind whom He created in His image. He desires for us to have some kind of relationship with Him. However, He is a perfect God who demands perfection from us in order to be in His presence. Of course, God knew ahead of time (after all, He is God) there was no way humans could be perfect, so from the beginning He knew He would have to figure out a solution to that problem. So, He set up a legal system whereby it would be permissible for a perfect being (if one could be found) to be sacrificed to pay for the sins of imperfect humans,

thus satisfying the requirements of perfection. Once our sins were "paid for", we could be declared perfect and then we would be able to come into His presence. This is what God wanted in the first place, but He just couldn't seem to make it work out that way in the beginning. Hence, the newly created legal system that was able to magically pronounce humans perfect (even though we really weren't). Under this newly invented legal system, the sacrifice had to involve the shedding of blood resulting in death. Not electrocution, not the breaking of a neck by falling off a cliff, not kidney failure or heart attack; it had to involve the shedding of blood. Since all humans were imperfect, the candidate had to be a non-human who was able to meet God's standards of perfection. The only candidate who met this qualification was the Creator's own son. So, God stuffed His son into a human body (Jesus) and allowed him to be sacrificed (murdered) in order to pay for our sins. The murder, of course, had to involve bleeding since that was an essential part of the legal system that God set up. But, a quick and relatively painless death didn't seem to be good enough. It had to be preceded by torture. Then, the actual death itself had to be a long, slow, painful death. (Never mind that the rules for sacrificing animals in the OT were very specific about how to "humanely" kill them; i.e. the death was quick and relatively painless.) As a result of this bloody, brutal death, God is now able to pretend that us imperfect humans are now perfect (even though, deep down, He really knows we are not) and we are permitted to come into His presence. Now, anyone who "accepts Jesus as their personal savior", is declared perfect in God's eyes and is guaranteed eternal life in God's presence regardless of how they actually live. Perfection and sin are not really relevant issues anymore. It doesn't matter anymore if these people continue to sin or not, since Jesus paid the price for their sins past, present and future. Of course, this doctrine doesn't address the issue of the billions of people who have lived and never heard about Jesus, but we are told by some Christians not to worry about it and by others that it's just too bad for them.

Again, if I had not been raised in a "Christian" environment, I can see how an outsider could come up with this assessment about Christian theology. And, again, I agree that this doctrine really makes no sense.

Over the years, I came to realize more and more that many of the core theologies of Christianity were inconsistent and, in fact, very muddled. Many will tell me that the ways of God are far above us and that we shouldn't expect to understand everything. While I acknowledge that this is true, I also know that Jesus said:

"I thank you, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for so it was well-pleasing in your sight." (Luke 10:21)

I don't have to be "wise and understanding" to understand Jesus' teachings, I simply have to believe what he said with childlike faith.

Digging Deeper Into the Christian Answer

The Source of Atonement Theology

Christians build their doctrines based on "the Bible". It consists of 66 "books" written over a period of 1500 years that are compiled into a single volume. It is divided into two major sections: the Old Testament and the New Testament which are purported to show how God interacted historically with mankind in two different ways.

Of course, the Bible is the same source used by a plethora of Christian "denominations" with widely varying beliefs. They all point to the same source to validate their beliefs and to "disprove" the beliefs of other Christians who don't agree with them.

How can so many belief systems arise from the same book? Ah, now that is an excellent question. Hold that thought in the back of your mind for now.

The interesting thing, however, is that the doctrine of atonement (with minor variations) is the one doctrine most all Christians agree on.

The Old Testament

Christianity points to the Old Testament (OT) as providing the essential truths and background for the atoning sacrifice of Jesus. There are certainly many OT scriptures that give painstaking detail about the sacrificial system and, in particular, the concept (and feast) of atonement.

However, there are also OT scriptures which directly contradict and oppose sacrificial/atonement doctrine.

What I propose to do is to reference some OT passages that are clearly opposed to atonement theology. And then, we'll ask the question "why is the OT itself so contradictory on this topic?"

The Sacrificial System

In the following verses, God rejects the sacrificial system insistently. He asks:

"What are the multitude of your sacrifices to me?", says Yahweh. "I have had enough of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed animals. I don't delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of male goats. When you come to appear before me, who has required this at your hand, to trample my courts?" ([Isaiah 1:11-12](#)).

Who, indeed, required it? It was Moses and not God. Jeremiah writes (relaying what God said):

"For I didn't speak to your fathers, nor command them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices:" ([Jeremiah 7:22](#)).

Here are some more verses:

"For you don't delight in sacrifice, or else I would give it. You have no pleasure in burnt offering." ([Psalm 51:16](#))

"For I desire mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings. " ([Hosea 6:6](#))

Human Sacrifice

Furthermore, human sacrifice is repeatedly condemned in the Old Testament. At one point it is called an abomination ([Deut 12:31](#)) and on another occasion saying such an action profaned the name of God ([Lev 18:21](#)).

So, why would God put Jesus in a human body and then demand that he be sacrificed?

Atonement theology necessitates a blood sacrifice be offered to God– but only a sinless one would do, thus Jesus. However, when we look at Scripture, we see many OT verses that show God didn't even like sacrifices to begin with– God

took no pleasure in the system! To compound that, God clearly *detested human sacrifice*.

Why the OT Contradiction?

Can OT scriptures be used to support atonement theology? Yes.

Can OT scriptures be used to refute atonement theology? Yes.

Why the contradiction? At this point I call the reader to note the contradiction and to consider this question:

"How can I determine what the right answer is?"

We're going to look at the OT foundations for atonement theology. If you're a Christian, you might not be very familiar with these details. If atonement theology is valid I encourage you to not skip this part. In fact, you must understand it since it is the foundation of all you believe about Christ!

The Day of Atonement

Let's look more in depth at atonement as taught in the OT.

From <https://www.hebcal.com/holidays/yom-kippur>:

"Yom Kippur, also known as Day of Atonement, is the holiest day of the year for the Jews. Its central themes are atonement and repentance. Jews traditionally observe this holy day with a 25-hour period of fasting and intensive prayer, often spending most of the day in synagogue services. Yom Kippur completes the annual period known in Judaism as the High Holy Days (or sometimes "the Days of Awe")."

Yom Kippur occurs in late September, after the start of the Jewish New Year.

The following description of the Day of Atonement in the OT was taken from: <https://bible.org/seriespage/day-atonement-leviticus-16>

(1) Aaron was to take off his normal priestly garments, wash, and then put on the special garments which were prescribed for the sacrifices which took him into the holy of holies(v. 4; cf. Exod. 28; 39).

(2) Aaron secured the necessary sacrificial animals: a bull for his own sin offering and two male goats for the people's sin offering; two rams, one for Aaron's and the other for the people's burnt offering (vv. 3, 5).

(3) Aaron slaughtered the bull for his own sin offering (vv. 6, 11).

(4) Before entering into the Holy of Holies with the blood of the bull, Aaron had to create a "cloud" of incense in the Holy of Holies, covering the mercy seat, to "veil" the glory of God so that he could enter in (vv. 12-13). The best approximation to this in my experience is what a bee-keeper does, smoking the hive of the bees, before he begins to remove the honey. In the case of Aaron, he was to offer only the prescribed incense so as to create an obscuring veil of smoke, thus dimming the glory of God's presence and sparing his life.

(5) Aaron then took some of the blood of the bull and sprinkled it on the mercy seat seven times (v. 14).

(6) Lots were then cast for the two goats, to determine which would be slaughtered and which would be driven away (vv. 7-8).

(7) The goat for slaughter, the goat of the people's sin offering, was sacrificed, and its blood was taken into the Holy of Holies and applied to the mercy seat, as the bull's blood had been (v. 15).

(8) Cleansing was then made for the holy place (v. 16), seemingly by the sprinkling of the blood of both the bull and the goat. The atonement of the holy place is done alone, without anyone present to help, or to watch (v. 17).

(9) Next, outside the tent, Aaron was to make atonement for the altar of burnt offering, using, it would seem, the blood of both the bull and the goat (vv. 18-19).

(10) Now the second goat, the one which was kept alive, had the sins of the nation symbolically laid on its head, and was driven from the camp to a desolate place, from which it must never return (vv. 20-22).

(11) Aaron then entered the tent of meeting, removed his linen garments, washed, and put on his normal priestly garments

(12) The burnt offerings of rams, one for Aaron and his family and the other for the people, was now offered (v. 24)

(13) The earlier sacrifices of the bull and the goat were completed. The fat of the sin offering was burned on the altar (v. 25), and the remains of the bull and the goat were taken outside the camp, where they were burned (v. 27).

(14) Those who had been rendered unclean by handling the animals on which the sins of Aaron or the people were laid were to wash themselves and then return to camp (vv. 26, 28).

Note that there are 5 animals involved in this process: a bull, 2 rams and 2 goats. Christians refer to Jesus as the "sacrificial lamb", but there is no lamb involved in the Day of Atonement. And, Jesus is never referred to as a bull, a goat or a ram.

Passover

Now, let us consider the Jewish feast of the Passover, during which Jesus was crucified.

From <https://www.hebcal.com/holidays/pesach>:

"Passover commemorates the story of the Exodus, in which the ancient Israelites were freed from slavery in Egypt. Passover begins on the 15th day of the month of Nisan in the Jewish calendar, which is in spring in the Northern Hemisphere, and is celebrated for seven or eight days. It is one of the most widely observed Jewish holidays."

This feast is celebrated in the Spring, roughly 6 months after Yom Kippur (day of atonement).

Christianity teaches that Jesus is our "Passover lamb". However, the passover lamb is never referred to as a sacrifice that paid for sins. It was eaten as a meal and its blood was sprinkled on the door posts to avoid having the angel of death kill the first born male of the household. Sacrifice and sin are not involved in this feast.

The New Testament

Christianity has plenty of New Testament (NT) material to point to which discuss the atonement theology, just as they have plenty of OT material to point to.

However, just as the OT contains conflicting concepts about sacrifice vs. mercy (forgiveness), so also the NT contains the same conflicts.

For example, Jesus reiterated the OT teachings which teach that mercy (forgiveness), **not** sacrifice is what the Father desires:

“But you go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,’ for I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” ([Matthew 9:13](#))

Other NT material (in non-Gospel writings) teaches the atonement theology which is in direct conflict with what Jesus taught.

Why the NT Contradiction?

The same question about the contradiction in the OT can be asked about the NT.

Can NT scriptures be used to support atonement theology? Yes.

Can NT scriptures be used to refute atonement theology? Yes.

Why the contradiction? Again, I call the reader to note the contradiction and to consider this question:

“How can I determine what the right answer is?”

Jesus' Mission: Jesus' Answer

The Preeminence of Jesus' Teachings

The typical approach to Christian doctrine is to consider all the teachings of the Bible in a chronological fashion. It goes something like this:

1. read the Old Testament to see what was foretold about Jesus and his teachings

2. read the Gospels and see what Jesus had to say
3. read the post-Gospel NT writings and allow them to add to or explain what Jesus taught

There is a problem with this approach and it was clearly demonstrated by the Pharisees reaction to Jesus' teachings. They were experts in the OT. They knew the history and the prophecies. However, in spite of all their knowledge, the conclusions they drew were dead wrong. When the Messiah appeared, they didn't recognize him. Jesus pointed this out:

"You search the Scriptures (the Old Testament), because you think that in them you have eternal life; and these are they which testify about me. Yet you will not come to me, that you may have life." (Joh 5:39-40)

The thing that **really** got them upset was when Jesus said:

"Most certainly, I tell you, before Abraham came into existence, I AM." (John 8:58)

You see, Jesus did not come on to the human scene when he was born in Bethlehem. He preexisted humanity! The universe and all of humanity was created through him (John 1). His teachings are **not** to be "stuck in the middle" of a book that humans assembled. He is the Word of God; he came from the presence of the Father to show us what the Father is like and to bring us the Father's words directly from the source.

We have been taught that in order to understand Jesus, we need to first read the OT. This is **absolutely backwards!** In we would understand the OT, we need to first read the words of Jesus! He is the absolute authority on God and we must give his teachings the preeminence they deserve!

Jesus was constantly teaching and clearing up false conclusions from the OT. For example, when the Sadducees (who didn't believe in the resurrection, and who based their doctrine on the OT) tried to trap Jesus, he replied:

But Jesus answered them, "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God. (Matthew 22:29)

and explained the OT scriptures to them.

Jesus did the same thing with the Pharisees. For example, when they asked him about divorce (in which Moses said it was OK), Jesus made it clear to them that what Moses said was a compromise that was not at all what God intended:

“Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it has not been so.” ([Matthew 19:8](#))

Jesus gave multiple examples of what was taught in the OT and stated that these teachings were clearly inadequate:

“You have heard that it was said to the ancient ones, ‘You shall not murder;’ and ‘Whoever shall murder shall be in danger of the judgment.’ But I tell you, that everyone who is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment; and whoever shall say to his brother, ‘Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council; and whoever shall say, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of the fire of Gehenna.” ([Matthew 5:21-22](#))

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery;’ but I tell you that everyone who gazes at a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart.” ([Matthew 5:27-28](#))

“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I tell you, don’t resist him who is evil; but whoever strikes you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. If anyone sues you to take away your coat, let him have your cloak also. Whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and don’t turn away him who desires to borrow from you.” ([Matthew 5:38-42](#))

After Jesus’ resurrection, he appeared to the disciples and they were quite simply having a hard time believing it was him. After he convinced them he was real (and they were not seeing a ghost), we read:

Then he opened their minds, that they might understand the Scriptures (the OT). ([Luke 24:45](#))

This is what we must do: let Jesus open our minds to understand the OT (and the rest of the NT for that matter). We must not think that the OT will help us to understand Jesus. That is backward thinking.

Jesus said:

“The words that I speak to you are spirit, and are life.” ([John 6:63](#))

I cannot emphasize this enough! We should look to the son of God to understand the OT, not the other way around!

If there are verses in the OT or the rest of the NT that seem to conflict with each other, we should see what Jesus had to say and make our determination based on that.

This is what I propose to do in this section. We will look at Jesus' teachings and let **him** tell us why he came to earth. We will use his words as our Rosetta Stone, the lens through which we will examine OT scriptures and other NT scriptures.

The Ultimate Endorsement

There is an account in the life of Jesus whose real significance has been missed. I know I missed it until I began to take Jesus' teachings seriously and gave them the preeminence that they deserved. This event is commonly referred to as "the Transfiguration" and is found in [Matt 17:5ff](#) and [Mark 9:7ff](#). In this event, Moses and Elijah (from the OT) appeared and conversed with Jesus. Peter, James and John witnessed this spectacle. They must really have been in awe of this situation. Here they were in the presence of two of the greatest OT figures plus the miracle-working Messiah! They suggested the idea of building a shelter for each of the three. At that time, they still hadn't fully realized how superior Jesus was to these OT figures. God, Himself, took charge of the situation and cleared this up for them. This is what happened:

A cloud came, overshadowing them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is my beloved Son. Listen to him." Suddenly looking around, they saw no one with them any more, except Jesus only. ([Mark 9:7-8](#))

God removed Moses and Elijah from the scene and made a clear statement that His son was the **only** one they should listen to.

Moses and Elijah had been used by God in the past as early imperfect messengers. However, the time was now at hand when God sent His own son to tell us what our Father wanted us to know. From that point on, according to God, Jesus became the preeminent, authoritative voice of the Father to humanity.

That is when I truly came to realize that the teachings of the OT needed to be viewed from the perspective of what the son of God taught, not the other way around.

Jesus' Mission

So why, according to Jesus' own words, did Jesus come to earth? Who better to answer that question than Jesus himself:

a) because the Father sent him

"I haven't come of myself, but he sent me." ([John 8:42](#))

b) to preach

He said to them, "Let's go elsewhere into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because I came out for this reason." ([Mark 1:38](#))

c) to preach several messages

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to heal the broken hearted, to proclaim release to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind, to deliver those who are crushed, and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began to tell them,

"Today, this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." ([Luke 4:18-21](#))

d) to call sinners to repentance

"I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." ([Luke 5:32](#))

e) to bring division, not peace

Do you think that I have come to give peace in the earth? I tell you, no, but rather division. ([Luke 12:51](#))

f) to seek and save the lost

"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost." ([Luke 19:10](#))

g) to bring people out of darkness and into the light

I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in me may not remain in the darkness. ([John 12:46](#))

h) to testify to the truth

"For this reason I have been born, and for this reason I have come into the

world, that I should testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice." ([John 18:37](#))

i) to serve

"the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve" ([Matthew 20:28](#))

j) to bring abundant life

I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly. ([John 10:10](#))

These are all direct quotes from Jesus' own teaching about why he came to earth.

Notice the missing "reason", the one thing he did **not** say was a reason for coming to earth: to be a sacrifice for sin. If being the sacrifice for all humanity's sins was the primary reason Jesus came to earth why didn't he say so? If you're a Christian, this might come as a shock to you that Jesus himself never said he came to be a sacrifice for sins. You might want to take a few moments and review his teachings to verify this.

Jesus Teaching On Atonement

Jesus said **nothing** about atonement in any of his teachings. He also said **nothing** about his coming to earth as a sacrifice for sins.

So, here's a question for you:

If Jesus' primary purpose for coming to earth was to be a sacrifice for our sins, why did he not say anything about it?

Think about this; IT IS IMPORTANT!!! Jesus lived in the presence of his Father in heaven. The Father appointed Jesus to come to earth to fulfill a very specific task.

"I haven't come of myself, but he sent me." ([John 8:42](#))

Atonement theology states that Jesus' task was to come to earth, take on a human body and die as a sacrifice for the sins of the world.

So, what actually happened? Jesus takes on a human body and at the appropriate time (around 30 years of age) he spends 3 ½ years teaching, healing and loving people. Then he is crucified. But please notice that that time he **never once** told people that his primary mission was to die as a sacrifice for

our sins. **NOT ONCE!!!** He didn't even hint at it. You don't believe me? Look it up for yourself. Search all of Jesus' teachings. It's not there.

A Ransom?

Some will point to the occasion where Jesus talked about being a "ransom": **"the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many"** ([Matthew 20:28](#), [Mark 10:45](#))

The word "ransom" does **not** mean sacrifice. It literally means "something to loosen with". In other words, to set free. This is consistent with his many other teachings about his coming to "proclaim release to the captives" and "if the son sets you free you are free indeed". ([Luke 4:18](#), [John 8:36](#))

Our common day use of the word "ransom" is typically in the context of paying a ransom for a hostage. However, we cannot apply this concept to the word "ransom" in the NT because that is **not** what it means.

If you are out hiking in the woods and step into a bear trap, you are painfully trapped. It's likely you will be in too much pain and quickly lose too much blood to release the trap. If I come along and I release the trap I have set you free. I have "ransomed" you.

Even if you do want to follow the notion of a ransom "paying for the release of a hostage", one has to ask "who is holding the hostage?" Is it Satan? If so, are we saying that the Creator of the universe is using Jesus to pay off Satan by dying? Just because we sin, how does that make Satan the hostage holder who has to be paid off? Does that really make any sense?

If the captor is not Satan, that leaves God holding the hostage. Again, does that make any sense that God is holding us hostage and Jesus is paying off God to set us free? Again, does that really make any sense?

The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world?

Some will point to John the Baptizer's statement:

"Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)

They would claim that this reinforces the idea that Jesus' sacrifice paid for the sins of the world. But, that's not what it says. It simply says that Jesus has the

ability to take away the sins of the world; it doesn't say **how** Jesus would do this.

Again, let's let Jesus' own words answer that question for us:

Jesus came to them and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth." (Matthew 28:18)

"Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little." He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." (Luke 7:47-48)

Seeing their faith, he said to him, "Man, your sins are forgiven you." (Luke 5:20)

Jesus was given authority to forgive sins by his Father in heaven. And he did so freely. He did not forgive sins based on his supposed upcoming sacrificial death but because of his mercy. He was demonstrating the true character of his Father:

"But you go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' for I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (Matthew 9:13)

Some will say that it was because of Jesus' mercy that he sacrificed himself. But, that's **not** what it says. Notice the word "not": "mercy **not** sacrifice".

Jesus told parables about how sins are forgiven, for example the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:3ff). Notice that the Father accepted the repentant son back with no sacrifice required! It was pure love and mercy!

He taught clearly about what was required before God:

"But the tax collector, standing far away, wouldn't even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 18:13-14)

Yes, Jesus can take away the sins of the world. He has been given the authority to do that. Forgiveness of sins is an act of the son of God toward a repentant sinner. The basis of that forgiveness is mercy, **not** sacrifice.

Passover Vs. Day of Atonement

Recall that Passover and the Day of Atonement are two separate feasts, focus on different concepts and are roughly 6 months apart. Atonement focuses on sacrifice for sin. The Passover focuses on a celebration of freedom from slavery.

Christianity has muddled the Day of Atonement and the Passover in order to come up with the doctrine of Jesus' atoning sacrifice for sin.

Jesus did not choose the Day of Atonement on which to die. This is significant. Those who would teach that Jesus' death was an atonement for our sin would do well to wrestle with this fact.

Instead, Jesus died on the Passover which is a celebration of God's mercy and deliverance from slavery (as Jesus taught, slavery to sin).

Why did Jesus choose Passover to Die?

In the narrative of the Exodus, the Bible tells that God helped the Children of Israel escape from their slavery in Egypt by inflicting ten plagues upon the ancient Egyptians before the Pharaoh would release his Israelite slaves; the tenth and worst of the plagues was the death of the Egyptian firstborn.

The Israelites were instructed to mark the door posts of their homes with the blood of a slaughtered spring lamb and, upon seeing this, the spirit of the Lord knew to pass over the firstborn in these homes, hence the English name of the holiday.

Notice that the Passover is **not** a remembrance of a "sacrificing for sin". Yes, there was a lamb slaughtered. But, it was not for the purpose of "paying for sins". They used the blood to show that they were trusting in God to show His mercy by not inflicting death on the firstborn of the house.

Christianity has muddled up the OT concepts of Atonement and Passover in creating its theology of Atonement. Again, I reiterate:

Jesus said nothing about atonement in any of his teachings. This is plain fact. He also said nothing about his coming to earth as a sacrifice for sins. This is also plain fact. He did teach that he came to "set the captives free", which is what Passover is all about. And this is why

Jesus chose to die during Passover and not during the feast of atonement!

When Was Jesus' Mission Completed?

Christendom points to this verse to indicate that Jesus' mission of sacrificing his life for our sins was completed when he died:

After this, Jesus, seeing that all things were now finished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I am thirsty." Now a vessel full of vinegar was set there; so they put a sponge full of the vinegar on hyssop, and held it at his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, "It is finished." He bowed his head, and gave up his spirit. (John 19:28-30)

However, Jesus himself told us when his mission was complete:

Jesus said these things, and lifting up his eyes to heaven, he said, "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may also glorify you; even as you gave him authority over all flesh, he will give eternal life to all whom you have given him. This is eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God, and him whom you sent, Jesus Christ. I glorified you on the earth. I have accomplished the work which you have given me to do." (John 17:1-4)

Jesus said he had "accomplished the work" at this point (before he was crucified). All that now remained was for him to return to the Father. This would be accomplished after his death. He was born into a human body and in order to return to the Father that body had to die. The fact that it was a horrible death had no bearing on the mission given to him by the Father. Remember the section above where we talked about Jesus' mission, in his own words. His mission was accomplished before he died, not because he died.

Jesus' words on the cross expressed his relief that, at last, his suffering was over. He wasn't talking about dying for our sins. Again, nowhere did Jesus ever say that he came to earth to die for our sins.

Summary

So back to the original question: Why did Jesus come to earth? What was his mission?

The Christian Answer

In order to arrive at the Christian answer to the question about Jesus' mission, here is what one has to do:

- a) hand pick verses from the OT that highlight the legalistic/sacrificial system
- b) ignore the fact that God waited at least 2500 years before He decided to tell anyone about the importance of sacrifice for sin
- c) ignore or dismiss the fact that God only revealed information about the sacrificial system to only 8% of the worlds population (at the time)
- d) ignore verses from the OT that highlight God's focus on mercy and that describe God's disdain for sacrifices and His absolute abhorrence of human sacrifices
- e) ignore the fact that the son of God himself reiterated God's desire for mercy, not sacrifice
- a) ignore the fact that the son of God, who proclaimed that he came to bring us the words of the Father, never spoke about atonement nor about his death being the sacrifice for sin
- b) ignore the actual words of Jesus in which he did describe why he came to earth; what his real mission was
- c) hand pick verses from the rest of the NT (which were not Jesus' direct teachings) that claim Jesus' death paid for our sins

Jesus' Answer

In short, the reason Jesus came to earth was to show us the real character of the Father and to bring us His words.

"He who has seen me has seen the Father." ([John 14:9](#))

"The word which you hear isn't mine, but the Father's who sent me." ([John 14:24](#))

Jesus said:

"everyone who hears from the Father, and has learned, comes to me." ([Joh 6:45](#))

After considering all this I do not see how anyone could possibly come to the Christian conclusion that Jesus' mission was to give his life as a sacrifice for our sins.

Some Miscellaneous Thoughts

Sacrifice Or Forgiveness?

Jesus very clearly taught that mercy is in God's nature. He does **not** desire sacrifice.

"But you go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' for I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." ([Matthew 9:13](#))

Let's examine the concepts of sacrifice vs. mercy (or forgiveness).

Sacrifice and Forgiveness Are Opposing Concepts

The **sacrificial system** is a legal system in which debts must be paid. The concept of **forgiveness** is motivated by **mercy**. It does not demand that debts be paid. These two concepts are opposed to each other.

Let's illustrate with an example. If I borrow \$1000 from you and I cannot repay it there are two possible outcomes. Under the legal system I can be penalized (go to jail, have my assets seized, etc.). The ultimate aim is to "satisfy" the debt. If the debt cannot be satisfied, then a penalty is invoked. However, if another person repays my debt, then I get to go free. The legal requirements have been met. I might be very grateful to this person for paying my debt, but the truth is that the debt was not "forgiven"; it was still paid, albeit by someone else. There is **no forgiveness** involved in the legal system.

On the other hand if the person that I borrowed the money from decided to completely cancel my debt out of the goodness of his heart, then we can accurately say that my debt was forgiven. The debt was not paid off, by myself

or anyone else. It was simply canceled. The legal system is not involved.
Therefore,

Sacrifice and forgiveness are opposing concepts!

Christendom has confused and tried to blend these two opposing concepts. This is like trying to mix oil and water. It doesn't work! It is common to hear this sort of explanation: "Christ paid for our sins, therefore we are forgiven". However, it is impossible to blend the two concepts of sacrifice and forgiveness.

If Christ paid for our sins, then from God's perspective the debt was **paid**. Therefore there was no debt remaining for God to forgive. From our perspective our debt was no longer our responsibility. We could certainly be grateful for that, but we could never claim that we were forgiven. How can you say that a debt was forgiven when it has actually been "paid for"? If Jesus paid the price for our sins, there is nothing for God to forgive.

Jesus tried really hard to clear this up for us. He repeatedly taught that God desires mercy, **not** sacrifice. He gave us direct teachings as well as illustrating with multiple parables.

Does this sound familiar?

"Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors." ([Matthew 6:12](#))

Do we forgive others because a sacrifice had been paid? No! Jesus told us to forgive others for the same reason that God forgives us: because the one in debt asks for forgiveness and the debtor shows mercy and forgives!

"For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you don't forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." ([Matthew 6:14-15](#))

Notice that Jesus did **not** teach that we will be forgiven by Jesus' sacrifice. He **did** teach that our forgiveness is based on our willingness to emulate our Father and forgive others. He also told a parable about this (Matt 21:18-35).

If, after reading Jesus' teachings, you still believe that he came to sacrifice himself to pay for our sins then you are simply not listening to Jesus; you're listening to men.

Why Was Jesus Crucified?

When I present the idea that Jesus did not die as a sacrifice for our sins, I have frequently been asked: "Then why was Jesus crucified?"

The answer is very simple: Because evil men killed him and that was the method that they chose.

A follow up question is typically: "Wasn't it prophesied that Jesus would be crucified?". Again, the answer is simple: "Yes, this was prophesied."

But, it must be clarified that knowing something would happen ahead of time (foreknowledge) is not the same as mandating something would happen ahead of time (predestination). The Father (as well as Jesus) knew ahead of time how he would be murdered. In no way, however, can this be construed as indicating his death would be a sacrifice for sins.

God Cannot Tolerate the Presence of Sin?

Atonement theology states that God cannot tolerate the presence of sin. If this is so, how could Jesus (who they claim was God in the flesh) spend so much time with sinners? In fact, he seemed to prefer spending time with them rather than "religious" people.

Jesus forgave when people asked for forgiveness. He didn't tell them they needed to go offer a sacrifice.

Salvation / Eternal Life

The topic of salvation, or eternal life, is of utmost concern to believers. Since atonement theology is not the basis for salvation, we are forced to revisit this topic anew, looking for Jesus' answer (not Christianity's answer).

The correct way to view the topic of salvation, or eternal life, is of course to see what Jesus had to say. So, you have the privilege and joy of revisiting Jesus' teachings with a fresh perspective and let him tell you what you need to know about this vital topic. It's really pretty simple.

"For everyone who asks receives. He who seeks finds. To him who knocks it will be opened." ([Matthew 7:8](#))

Why Did God Wait So Long?

Earlier, I asked the questions: "If sacrifice for sins is such a critical cornerstone of God's "solution" for sin, why did He wait over 2500 years before telling anyone about it? And, why did He reveal it to only 8% of people on the planet?"

One might ask similar questions about Jesus: "Why did God wait over 4000 years before sending His son to bring us to a full revelation of Himself? And, why did He reveal it to such a small population of the planet?"

These are fair questions. I will start off by humbly admitting "I don't know."

However, it is important to realize that these questions have significantly different implications when asked about the revelation of atonement theology as opposed to the revelations brought to us by the son of God.

Regarding atonement theology there is a huge implication concerning the salvation or eternal life of individuals. If one must believe in Jesus and his atoning death in order to receive eternal life, that poses a real concern about all the people throughout history who never had the chance to hear and respond to this information.

On the other hand, if we abandon atonement theology then the whole question of salvation/eternal life has an entirely different answer and the implications of God's delay in sending His son to earth are entirely different.

Previously, I challenged the reader to rethink the whole issue of salvation/eternal life. My own conclusion (based on Jesus' teachings) is that all people have the opportunity to enter eternal life whether they have ever been exposed to Jesus' teachings or not. I have written a monograph on this topic, but for now I challenge the reader to seek out Jesus' answer to the question about salvation/eternal life for yourself.

Abandon Christianity - Follow Christ

There are many theologians who state that without the atonement Christianity has no foundation. I wholeheartedly agree with that statement. And since the doctrine of the atonement is false, Christianity is false.

You may ask: "What? Are you saying that you don't believe in Christianity?" That is exactly what I am saying. Christianity is a human-devised institution that has perverted the teachings of the Christ. Any true follower of Christ who takes the time to study his teachings and give them the preeminence they deserve **must** abandon Christianity if they would follow Christ.

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give eternal life to them. They will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ([John 10:27-28](#))

Unless otherwise noted, all quotes from the Bible come from the World English Bible translation (<https://worldenglishbible.org>).