

PSA refers to Penal Substitutionary Atonement and has to do with how and why Jesus' death on the cross reconciles us to God.

- Penal means involving a legal penalty or punishment.
- Substitutionary means Jesus died for us or in our place.
- Atonement (a better word would be propitiation) refers to how we are reconciled or restored to God.

At its most basic level, PSA is the idea that Jesus bore the penalty of our sins when He died on the cross.

Can you describe your own understanding of atonement?

Eph 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. We were far from God, we cannot get near to God, so God comes close to us. At Christmas, Jesus would be known as Immanuel, GOD WITH US (Matt 1:23). All other world religions are about how to get close to God; Christianity is God coming close to us. God is building relationship with His people and it all becomes reality in the blood of Jesus—this is the cross!

Discuss the significance of God drawing near to us AND the weight of His glory. Why are both aspects important for us to understand?

In dying for us, Jesus took our sin and gave us His righteousness. He took our distance/separation from God and gave us His intimacy; by Jesus' blood we are now reconciled to God. Because Jesus didn't sin, death could not hold Him and He rose to bring us back to LIFE again. There was no *compromise*; law and love were both fulfilled at the cross. This is how we understand the doctrine of penal substitutionary atonement.

The temporary nature of human justice is a glimpse of God's final justice. Christians seeking justice must be guided by the cross. We know that God has *not* given us what we deserve; it is Jesus who received the full penalty for our sins.

What would it mean to get what you truly deserve? What does that reveal about God's mercy?

- ♦ **Penal substitution is Biblical.**

The earliest and most common summary of the Gospel is simply to say "Christ died for our sins."

- ♦ **Penal substitution is attested throughout church history. It is an ancient doctrine.**

Eusebius (300s) says of Isaiah 53, "In this he shows that Christ being apart from all sin, will receive the sins of men on himself. And therefore he will suffer the penalty of sinners..." Athanasius treats death itself as penal; death is the penalty for sin and transgression. We can relate to God in many ways, but one of them is that He is our judge that an account of our lives must be made to.

- ♦ **Penal substitution is "integrative."**

It is not mutually exclusive with other models of the atonement. Sin, guilt, and death, comprise a complex problem, meaning the solution is going to have to touch *all* aspects of the problem.

- ♦ **Penal substitution is Trinitarian. God has ONE WILL!**

No one forced Jesus to make the sacrifice for our sins. The cross is good news for us. Jesus has accomplished for us a perfect salvation. Anything we need, He has provided for.

How has your view of Christ's work changed after this message?

The Creator has come into human history—as Jesus—to be with us. We need to grasp the severity of who we are apart from Him and His work, because that will bring humility, joy, and deeper surrender of our lives to Him.