

“The World’s Solution, Part One” William And Joanna: An Analogy¹

Sweat poured down the dry, once-soft skin of Joanna as she stacked the tobacco leaves in the curing barn. The Virginia sun was beating down upon her like sticks on a drum. She paused to look over at her husband, William, who was also working frantically to get the valuable cash crop put up before their master’s fury was unleashed upon them. The thought made the ex-citizen of Leicester, England cringe, but also think wistfully of the freedom that she and her husband would have at the end of the month. They would have their own plot of land to farm, their own home, and the opportunity of the new life of which they had dreamed for so long.

The dream began nine long years ago in their home town. They had been married for less than a year and work was scarce. A friend told them about the opportunity of going to the new world, America. All they would have to do is work off their passage once there, put in a little more time in addition, and a plot of land would be theirs. They could build a home, raise crops, start a family, and never again return to the hand-to-mouth existence they now had.

Seven long hard years had now passed since they first stepped off of the ship and on to the harsh Virginia soil. Five years was to be the amount they must work to pay for their passage and another four years to pay for their land. Nine years altogether would satisfy their master.

Four years into their indentured servitude they met up with two young teen brothers, Robert and John. The two orphans were indentured to the same master and also working that they might gain land, a home, and future. William and Joanna had quickly taken the boys under their care. Joanna wanted children more than anything in the world, but her lack of health had so far left her barren.

The boys soon learned to love the older couple as their parents and wanted so much to get Joanna out of the tobacco fields and on to her own land as soon as possible. They went to the master and told him that they would like to substitute their labor for two years of William and Joanna’s. This would mean that the

Westminster Shorter Catechism Q. 20. Did God leave all mankind to perish in the estate of sin and misery?
A. God, having out of his mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a Redeemer.

WSC Q. 24. How does Christ execute the office of a prophet?
A. Christ executes the office of a prophet, in revealing to us, by his Word and Spirit, the will of God for our salvation.

¹ The following analogy is taken from Tom Barnes, Declare These Things (Evangelical Press, Forthcoming), ch. 4.

married couple would be free two years earlier and the boys would work two years longer. But it didn't matter to the young men. They were strong and they loved William and Joanna.

This is why Joanna was now daydreaming by the tobacco barn about their freedom in less than thirty days. Though their master had been harsh at times, he always kept his word when it came to indentures. When other plantations had unfairly kept servants longer, he had let his own go on the very day to which he had agreed.

One month later William and Joanna walked out of the master's house with a piece of paper that not only served as their freedom, but also as a deed to land. Though they had not put in the full nine years themselves, the paper nevertheless read: "Satisfied," because the nine year requirement had been met—all because love had prompted two young men to be their substitutes. The master knew the debt had been paid in full and it would not be right to have them pay again for what had already been satisfied!

This analogy helps us to grasp what Jesus Christ accomplished in His death upon the cross for sinners. Jesus Christ took the place of sinners and paid the penalty for their sins, i.e. He became their satisfaction. What this means is that the debt owed was met and therefore nothing else needed to be paid. Those for whom Christ died will be free.

Look at the following biblical passages which teach this principle.

(1) Sin separates us from God and brings the penalty of spiritual death:

Isaiah 59:2: "but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear."

Romans 6:23a: "For the wages of sin is death...."

2 Thes. 1:8-9: "...those who do not know God...will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might...."

(2) Jesus died to pay the penalty for sins.

Isaiah 53:6, 10, 12: "...All we like sheep gave gone astray...and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.... His soul makes an offering for sin.... Yet he bore the sin of many...."

WSC Q. 25. How does Christ execute the office of a priest?
A. Christ executes the office of a priest, in his once offering up of himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and reconcile us to God, and in making continual intercession for us.

"Satisfaction pertains to the work Christ accomplished on the cross in bearing the punishment demanded by the law. Scripture teaches that God's justice...was violated and his wrath aroused by the sin of his creatures. His holy nature required that sin be punished by death. In the plan of God, Christ endured the penalty of death on the cross thereby satisfying God's justice and averting his wrath. Satisfaction is related to atonement, as cause is to effect. "Satisfaction is not strictly a biblical term, although the idea is woven into the fabric of both testaments."
-Bruce Demarest, "Satisfaction," in New Dictionary Of Theology.

Matthew 20:28: “even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

1 Peter 3:18: “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,”

(3) Jesus turns away the wrath of God from those who are saved. This is what is meant by the word “propitiation”.

Romans 3:24-26: “and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, [25] whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. [26] It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”

1 John 2:2a: He is the propitiation for our sins....”

(4) In Jesus' saving work His perfect obedience is imputed to us that we can be perfect as God demands (cf. Mt. 5:48) and our sin penalty was imputed to Him whereby He paid the penalty.

2 Cor. 5:21: “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

(5) When we trust Jesus Christ as our Savior we are reconciled to God.

2 Cor. 5:18-20: “All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; [19] that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. [20] Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”

“Simul justus et peccator”
 (“At the same time just and a sinner”)
 -Martin Luther's brief explanation of the effect on us of the great exchange between us and Jesus Christ.

Because our sin penalty is paid, we are declared righteous, and we are reconciled to God, we have amazing benefits from this which clarify to us that such a salvation truly is the solution for the world's problems. We will look at these benefits in our next reading.

Discussion:

Have each family member put into his/her own words why the death of Jesus Christ is so important.