Models of the Atonement

| | Legal/Penal | Personal/Relational | Spiritual/Ontological |
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| View of God and His intent for man. | God viewed as Lawgiver who gives the Law. God intends man to keep the Law. Man's choice is to obey or disobey the Law. | God viewed as personal and psychological. God wants man in personal relationship of submission. Man's choice is to submit or rebel. | God viewed in terms of His character. God intends man to derivatively manifest His character. Man's choice is to be receptive to God or reject God. |
| Offense of man against God. | Regarded as legal offense. Transgression, trespass, violation. Sin is "missing the mark" of God's Law. | Regarded as personal offense. Rebellion, broken relationship. Sin is "missing the mark" of God's personal expectations and plans | Regarded as spiritual offense. Rejection of God's presence and empowering. Sin is "missing the mark" of God's character expression. |
| Consequence of man's offense. | Punishment, penalty, judgment, condemnation. Sinner viewed as guilty violator. | Alienation, separation, broken relationship. Sinner viewed as estranged, hostile, enemy. | Devoid of God's presence; energized by satanic spirit. Sinner viewed as misued and abused humanity. |
| Remedy for man's offense against God. | Necessity to make amends for violated Law. Satisfy demands of Law. Price to be paid is death penalty. Jesus Christ takes death penalty as our substitute. Man is declared "right with God," pardoned, acquitted. | Necessity to appease, placate, pacify God. Satisfy God's personal favor. Price to be paid is suffering wrath of God. Jesus Christ is substitute for God to vent His wrath. Man is reconciled to God in "personal relationship." | Necessity to sever man's spiritual identification with Satan. Satisfy consistency with God's character. Price to be paid is abolishment of death and its source. Jesus Christ is substitutional representative to take death consequences. Man is ontologically invested with spiritual life of God. |
| Restoration of man to God's intent. | Free from penalty of Law. Christ intercedes as Advocate. | Free from estrangement with God. Christ intercedes with personal pleas before God on man's behalf. | Free to be man as God intended man to be. Christ is our life as Christians. |