

Study Questions for BLT 53, no. 3 (summer 2008)

Resurrection as Victory?

The Eschatological Implications of J. Denny Weaver's "Narrative Christus Victor" Model of Atonement

By Kate Eisenbise

1. The great theologian Anselm believed that we owe our best to God every day. But in a sense, even if we are "A" students, always doing our best, we can never get a better grade no matter how much we improve. There is no better grade than A. In other words, human offerings are not enough to satisfy God. Payment for sin must be made by someone greater than a human, someone as in Christ. How does Anselm's view of God and what God wants compare with your view of God? How do you understand God's attitude toward our sinfulness?
2. "Whereas early Christians believed that the church represented the way of Jesus *over against* the world, contemporary believers often perceive that the world works in the way it does because God has ordered it to be so." Which is true? To what extent should Christians choose the way of Jesus over the way of the world? And to what extent is the way of Jesus actually the way of the world?
3. J. Denny Weaver writes, "Neither the purpose nor the culmination of the [Christ's] mission was to die. God did not send Jesus to die, but to live, to make visible and present the reign of God." If Jesus' death was not necessary, is it meaningful nonetheless? What does it mean to you?
4. Why do you think Jesus submitted to his own death? Why didn't he try to overcome it?
5. J. Denny Weaver suggests that the resurrection of Christ vindicates God's reign. Violence and death do not have the last word. If violence does not have the last word, it seems to have at least *a* word in every period of history. Why do you think there is there so much violence in God's world?
6. "Suffering is not itself salvific; it is a by-product of opposing evil, the price for beginning to resist." In this respect, people suffer for faithfulness and people suffer for sin. Which actions produce the "right" suffering? For example, is the suffering associated with parenthood the kind of suffering produced by faithfulness? Why or why not?
7. What does salvation mean to you? "God's act of salvation is bigger than just the salvation of individuals; it has implications for the whole of society—at its socio-political level as well as the cosmic level." In what sense does salvation happen to whole societies or groups?
8. J. Denny Weaver "seems rather ambivalent about whether the resurrection *changes* the balance of power in the universe or merely *reveals* to believers that God is in control and has been all along." What is the significance of the resurrection to you? Do you believe it changed everything? What changed? Did it simply reveal something about God? What did it reveal?

9. Eisenbise rejects the view of Christ as “victorious,” because it suggests that Christ is the victor over something, much like a warrior or fighter. If there is a victor, there must be the vanquished. Any upending of the current order, she believes, would involve upheaval. Is it possible to have change without destruction?

10. What, to you, is Christ’s purpose? Is Christ the vanquisher of sin? Is Christ the teacher? Healer? Other? What images make the most sense to you?

11. “The whole notion of Christian victory seems a bit odd, especially because winning never seemed to be a part of Jesus’ mission and ministry. Instead, Jesus’ mission was characterized by restoration (and restorative justice) rather than victory.” How does Jesus’ life and teachings, apart from his death and resurrection, bring us closer to God?

12. “The reign of God will be established in slow, small actions, not in some cataclysmic moment where Jesus returns and the ways of the world are suddenly changed in order to conform to the will of God.” Where have you seen these small, incremental changes?

13. “Christians are encouraged to work at their own moments of restoration in their lives and their relationships in order to further God’s cause of establishing the kingdom.” To what extent does God need the help of people to usher in the kingdom? Even if God does not need the help of people, why would God *want* the help of people?