

- (4) The Atonement involves the bearing of both the guilt and the penalty of sin
- (a) "Guilt", "penalty", and "law" (In the legal sense) must be defined.

In its objective sense, "guilt" is defined as "liability to transgressed law." A guilty person is a person who has broken the law and is liable to the associated penalty. In the legal sense a verdict of "guilty" means that in the eyes of a judge and/or jury a person is regarded as having committed an unlawful act and as being deserving of an appropriate punishment.

"Penalty" or punishment is a consequence of transgression of law, whether the law is human or divine. In the legal sense, a penalty is a sanction to which one becomes liable by violation of a law or statute.

In the legal sense, a "law" is a rule of conduct promulgated by some competent authority and enforced by an appropriate sanction (or penalty).

- (b) In connection with God's Law, one question sometimes raised is whether God is just in His imposition and execution of the law. Scripture recognizes God as righteous and beneficent in His imposition of laws (rectoral justice), and impartial and equitable in His distribution of rewards and punishments (distributive justice). He imposes laws for His glory and mankind's good, and He punishes and rewards without "regarding faces" (respecting persons) or giving human beings less than they deserve (for good actions) and more than they deserve (for evil actions).
- (c) Another question sometimes raised is why God must punish at all. If human beings transgress His laws, is it necessary for God to punish them? When, for example, God said to Adam, "You shall not eat of it (the tree of the knowledge of good and evil), for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die"; and when later Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden tree; was it necessary for God to punish them with spiritual and physical death? Could He not simply have overlooked their transgression?

If in response it be said that God gave His word that the penalty would be executed, and that He could not break His promise, then could not the previous question be raised, namely why it was necessary for God to attach a penalty to the command in the first place?

It would appear that God created our universe with a built-in system of physical, biological, moral, and spiritual laws; and this system is intended to have beneficent consequences for those who live in accordance with it. It also appears that these beneficent consequences are intended by God to motivate His creatures to live in accordance with these laws.

It also appears that part of the cost of the beneficent consequences of this system of physical, biological, moral,