



Atonement

Note: Some of the answers in these Facilitator notes are taken from the study guide "Great Truths of the Bible" by Alan B. Stringfellow. Scripture references are the New International Version unless otherwise noted.

What does atonement mean?

This means to make amends or reparation for an injury or wrong. The price Christ paid on the cross was on our behalf, to pay the penalty that we would otherwise have to pay. Atonement addresses the entire sacrificial work of Christ. In the Old Testament, atonement is the English word translated from the Hebrew word "kaphar," which means "to cover, to make a covering."

What was the price Christ paid on the cross?

The blood of Jesus Christ is clearly the price paid for the atonement.

Before we proceed with the study of atonement, it is helpful to understand the meaning of a few related words:

- *Reconciliation* - "the restoration of man to fellowship with God."
- *Propitiation* - "the satisfaction of the just demands of God's holiness for the punishment of sin."
- *Redemption* - "a ransom, the price paid to free a slave... to be bought... to deliver by paying a price."
- *Justification* - "to declare one righteous (to justify does not make one righteous). God declares a person just on the basis of acceptance of the shed blood of Christ."
- *Substitution* - "the death of Christ was substitutionary, in our place, because He tasted death for every man."
- *Sacrifice* - "One who gives what is necessary to bring God and man together; Christ was sacrificed for us."
- *Type or Shadow* - "something which carries a prophetic significance beyond itself." Old Testament types are pictures of the New Testament fulfillment, such as the sacrificial system of the Old Testament was a type of the ultimate sacrifice, the atonement of Christ on the cross.

How is the atonement the reconciling work of Christ?

The atonement of Christ reconciled sinful mankind with Holy God through His sacrifice on the cross. Jesus made possible man's forgiveness since His substitutionary death satisfied the just and holy demands of God. It is Christ paying the price to make man "at-one" with God.

- A good way to remember the meaning of atonement is to think of it as: "at-one-ment" with God.

The Promise of the Atonement

When did God develop the plan of atonement for mankind?

Revelation 13:8 - All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast--all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.

The cross was not an afterthought of God, it was His plan from before the world was created. It was the working out of an eternal plan and purpose of God. It was the fulfillment of a promise of God.

How is the atonement represented in the first prophecy of the Messiah?

Genesis 3:15 - And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.

The promise of the atonement is found in God's pronouncement of the curse upon the serpent. Satan was to be defeated by the "seed of woman." That Seed was and is the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

How was the context of the first prophecy of the Messiah provide a type of the atonement?

Genesis 3:21 - The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.

When God made coats of skin to cover the nakedness of sinful man, He foreshadowed the atonement.

- Notice that the skins required blood to be shed which God Himself did.
- Also, the skins from God replaced the fig leaves which were Adam and Eve's feeble attempt to cover their sin through human means.

How was the Passover lamb a type of the atonement?

1 Corinthians 5:7 - Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast--as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

The sacrifice of the Passover lamb and the sprinkling of the blood on the doorposts of the homes pointed to the Cross of Calvary. Jesus shed His blood and became our Passover.

How were the Old Testament sacrifices a type of the atonement?

Leviticus 16:29-30 - This is to be a lasting ordinance for you: On the tenth day of the seventh month you must deny yourselves and not do any work--whether native-born or an alien living among you-- because on this day atonement will be made for you, to cleanse you. Then, before the Lord, you will be clean from all your sins.

In the system of the Old Testament sacrifices, established by the Lord God, the atonement was pictured. For all those years, God kept before the people one great "object lesson." The shedding of the blood of animal sacrifices reminded the people of the fact that without blood there could be no atonement for their sins. There was one day in the year set apart as the "day of atonement" (Leviticus 16:29-30).

What was the limitation of the animal sacrifices that were a type of the atonement?

Hebrews 10:4 - it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

The blood of the animal sacrifices only "covered" the sins of Israel, it did not take them away. The animal sacrifices foreshadowed the cross which was the ultimate sacrifice that paid the price for our sins for all time.

The Central Figure of the Atonement

Who was the key person involved in atonement during Old Testament times?

In the Old Testament, the high priest offered the sacrifice and sprinkled the blood of atonement on the mercy seat, in the holy of holies, in the tabernacle.

Who has been the key person involved in atonement since Christ?

Hebrews 9:11 - When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation.

Jesus Christ is the great High Priest. He not only offered the sacrifice to make atonement for sin, His own blood was the sacrifice...

Hebrews 9:12 - He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.

How effective was the atonement of Christ?

Hebrews 9:26 - Christ... has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.

Jesus did not just cover sin, He "did away with sin" and only one atonement was necessary. This means that He satisfied the just requirements for the penalty of sin by His one sacrifice.

Hebrews 9:28 - so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

How is it that the atoning work of Christ on the cross satisfies the just demands of God's holiness for the punishment of sin?

Christ was the one-and-only God-Man who had an eternal relationship with God the Father. His sacrifice was sufficient to pay the penalty for the sins of all who trust in Him.

What preparation did the Old Testament high priest have to make prior to the atonement sacrifice?

Leviticus 16:4 - He is to put on the sacred linen tunic, with linen undergarments next to his body; he is to tie the linen sash around him and put on the linen turban. These are sacred garments; so he must bathe himself with water before he puts them on.

In the Old Testament, the high priest washed himself in water and put on clean garments on the Day of Atonement so that he would be clean to minister. This is symbolic of his need to be without sin. The sacrifices themselves had to be without blemish which also represented their need to be sinless...

Leviticus 4:3 - If the anointed priest sins, bringing guilt on the people, he must bring to the Lord a young bull without defect as a sin offering for the sin he has committed.

How did our Great High Priest prepare Himself to make the atonement sacrifice?

Hebrews 4:15 - For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are-- yet was without sin.

Jesus was without sin and His life in this world demonstrated that fact.

What did Christ's deity have to do with the atonement?

John 10:17-18 - The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life--only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."

Only God who is in control of all things make the atoning sacrifice. Jesus came to make this sacrifice and since He was uniquely qualified, His one sacrifice was good for all believers for all time.

What did Christ's humanity have to do with the atonement?

Hebrews 2:17 - For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. To qualify as our Great High Priest that is able to reconcile us to God, Christ had to identify with mankind...

John 1:14 - The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Since Jesus was the one-and-only God-Man, He was uniquely qualified to serve in this capacity.

The Plan of Atonement**What does Romans 3:25 tell us about God's plan of atonement?**

Romans 3:25 - God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished--

The atonement of Christ removed the sins of the Old Testament saints. This was necessary because the Day of Atonement sacrifices only "covered" their sins. So the atoning work of Christ removed the sins "that are past." This is why Jesus came, to save us from the penalty of our sins...

Matthew 1:21 - She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

How did the atoning work of Christ on the cross demonstrate God's justice?

The penalty for the sins of the Old Testament saints had not been paid. For justice to be served, there had to be a sacrifice of blood.

What does Romans 5:8 tell us about God's plan of atonement?

Romans 5:8 - But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. The incarnation of Jesus was for the purpose of the atonement, the atonement was God's plan all along.

Why was the atonement necessary?

Romans 5:10 - For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

The atonement was necessary to reconcile mankind to God, to make God and man "at-one" with each other.

2 Corinthians 5:19 - that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

What was necessary for mankind to be reconciled to God?

Matthew 26:28 - This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. The matter of mankind's sin had to be resolved for there to be a relationship between mankind and God. The love of God provided the Redeemer to not just "cover" our sins but "remove" them.

Psalms 103:12 - as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

What aspect of atonement is addressed in the following verses?

1 John 2:2 - He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. Atonement includes "propitiation" of our sins, this is "the satisfaction of the just demands of God's holiness for the punishment of sin."

Colossians 1:14 - in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Atonement includes "redemption" -- "a ransom, the price paid to free a slave... to deliver by paying a price."

1 Corinthians 1:30 - It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God--that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

So along with the redemption that the atonement makes possible, we also have righteousness and holiness... righteous in God's eyes who looks at our finished state in eternity and holiness in that we are set apart from the rest of mankind for a purpose.

Romans 3:28 - For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.

Atonement includes "justification" – "to declare one righteous."

Does our justification mean that believers are righteous?

The fact that believers are justified does not make them righteous. God declares believers just on the basis of acceptance of the shed blood of Christ. And when we are resurrected, we will be just.

1 Peter 2:24 - He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

Atonement includes "substitution" – the death of Christ was substitutionary, in our place, because He tasted death for every man...

2 Cor. 5:21 - God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

1 Corinthians 5:7 - Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast--as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

Atonement includes "sacrifice" – Jesus Christ was the One who gave what was necessary to bring God and man together...

Hebrews 10:12 - But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.

Did the atonement apply to the whole world?

John 3:17 - For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

Yes and no... yes, it is offered to the whole world but it only applies to those who have accepted Jesus as Savior and Lord.

Matthew 20:28 - just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Notice that it doesn't say He was a ransom for all.

How should we regard sin in light of the atoning sacrifice Christ made for us?

Knowledge of the atoning sacrifice of Christ should cause us to hate sin. It was our sin that nailed Jesus to the cross. He shed His blood so that we might have a personal relationship with Him.

How should we regard our relationship to Christ in light of His atoning sacrifice for us?

We should love the Lord with all our being. If He loved us enough to leave His place in heaven, come in our likeness and offer Himself on the cross so that we might live; then we should love Him enough to live for Him and even die for Him if necessary. We should love Him enough that we tell the world His message.