

Renewed Unity Atonement

Topic: Atonement is being right with God—the state of at-one-ment with God. Sin is the reason we are not right with Yahweh. Sin, whether intentional rebellion or unintentionally missing the mark, damages our relationship with God. God wants us to be at one with Him, however. Romans 6:23 sums up the situation. “The wages of sin is death, but the gracious gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Atonement is the theological explanation of how Jesus is the gracious gift that covers our sin and grants us eternal life.

The word “Atonement” come from the Hebrew word *kaphar*. *Kaphar* literally means “to cover.” Atonement involves we ourselves and our sin being covered by something God offers. God covered the nakedness of Adam and Eve with the skins of sacrificed animals. God instructed Noah to build an ark covered in pitch to survive the flood. Yahweh instructed His people to cover their doors with the blood of the lamb so that judgment would pass over them. After the Passover, Yahweh prescribed in the Law that the purging of sin would be through substitutionary sacrifice. Exodus 30:10 says, “Aaron shall make atonement on the altar once a year; he shall make atonement on it with the blood of the sin offering of atonement once a year throughout your generations. It is most holy to Yahweh.”

This annual practice of sacrifice was known as the Day of Atonement. Atonement in the Old Testament Law required the shedding of innocent blood. Looking back on the OT Law, Hebrews 9:22 says “In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.” God’s forgiveness requires the shedding of blood, for only death is a full enough punishment for sinning against the perfect and infinite God. To atone for our sins either we have to die or something else has to die. God does not want us to die, so He said that we could sacrifice animals and that the animal’s death would pay for our sins. Leviticus 17:11 says, “For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one’s life.”

- Why are animals not as valuable as humans? (read Genesis 1:26-27 & Hebrews 10:1)
- How is Jesus a sacrifice of atonement? (read Romans 3:25 & Philippians 2:6-11)
- How does Jesus’ human nature allow Him conceptually to completely cover another human’s sin?
- How does Jesus’ divine nature allow Him to completely cover every human’s sin?

Association: There are many aspects of the atonement described in Scripture—propitiation/atoning sacrifice (read 1 John 2:2 & 1 John 4:10), ransom (read Mark 10:45), purchased by blood (read Acts 20:28), cosmic swap (read 2 Corinthians 5:21), victory over the devil (read 1 John 3:8).

- Which description of atonement resonates with you the most (substitutionary punishment, debt repayment, ransom, purchase, swap, destruction of the devil’s schemes, Passover Lamb, etc.?)
- Have you ever explained to someone how Jesus’ death on the cross actually covers our sin?
- When did you place faith in Jesus and His gracious sacrifice?
- Have you ever shared your testimony about placing faith in Jesus and accepting His covering?

Guidance: Each Essential Christian Doctrine is an important aspect of Christianity.

- Work together to summarize the atonement and then practice delivering an explanation of it.
- Pray with and for each other. Pray about sharing the truth of the atonement with someone.