

### The Nature of Atonement.

In the Old Testament, animal sacrifices were required to atone (reconcile; make “at one”) man with God. Leviticus 4–6 describes the process for making sin and guilt offerings; it typically involves an unblemished animal presented and killed, then its blood was sprinkled and/or smeared on the altar. As the book of Hebrews points out, the blood of the animal sacrifice was only a temporary way of dealing with sin and had to be done regularly for individuals and yearly for the people. The high priest also had to offer sacrifice for himself before he could atone for the sins of the people (Leviticus 16; Day of Atonement).

The Hebrew word for atone (כָּפַר, kaphar) conveys the idea of covering, both in the sense of covering to hide and also covering for someone (i.e., not charging someone with an offense or penalty). Atonement for sin was made by sacrificing an unblemished animal, although that is not always the case. Exceptions including money (Exod 30:14–16), prayer (Exod 32:30–33), the scapegoat (Lev 16:10), and incense (Num 16:46–47) are said to atone for sin under certain circumstances without requiring death. People are not the only recipients of atonement—inanimate objects like the altar (Exod 29:36–37) and holy place (Lev 16:16) are also said to be atoned.<sup>1</sup>

The nature of these ceremonies speak to the gravity with which sin is viewed in the Old Testament and Israel’s participation speaks to their covenantal relationship with God.

**And just as the animal sacrifice had to be perfect and without blemish to be accepted as the temporary atonement for sins so did God's Messiah- the final sacrifice for dealing with sins had to be perfect (or, sinless).**

Forgiveness of sins can come only through the shedding of blood. It is the shed blood of Jesus Christ on the cross which makes it possible for God to forgive the sins of a person.

- **Read aloud:** John 1:29; Hebrews 7:26-28; Hebrews 9:11-14; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:18-21; Revelation 5:6-10
- **Homework:** How many more Scriptures on the “lamb of God” can you find?

Notice that it took the shed blood, the sinless perfect Son of God as the sacrificial lamb, to satisfy God's justice and provide atonement for sins. Jesus Christ is the only way to God.

- **Scriptures to Memorize:** Acts 4:12; John 14:6.

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<sup>1</sup> D. Brockway, “Atonement,” ed. John D. Barry et al., The Lexham Bible Dictionary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

## THE ATONEMENT OF JESUS CHRIST IS:

1. **Sacrificial**- out of love and obedience to the Father, Christ gave His life as a sacrificial gift. John 3:16; John 10:17-18; 1 Corinthians 5:7; Hebrews 9:26; Hebrews 12:2. Sacrifice involves the giving up of something of value. God gave up His own Son to redeem people. Christ sacrificed Himself.
2. **Substitutionary**- Jesus' sacrifice on the cross was substitutionary in that it was made for and on behalf of the sins of all people. He made for people a perfect, permanent sacrifice for sins which they are unable to make. As someone has said " we owed a debt we could not pay, Christ paid a debt He did not owe". Christ's sacrifice was once for all as He took our sins in His body to pay the penalty for us. Hebrews 7:27; Mark 10:45; 1 Peter 2:24; 2 Corinthians 5:21
3. **Sufficient**- Christ's death on the cross was sufficient to pay (atone) for the sins of all people of all time and was so accepted by God. God was satisfied with Christ's substitutionary atonement. Because Jesus was sinless, he did not need to make a sacrifice for himself to be worthy to sacrifice for us. Hebrews 10:10; 1 Peter 3:18; 1 John 2:2; Hebrews 1:3
4. **Final**- Christ's one-time perfect sacrifice was the final sacrifice needed for sin. Hebrews 10:17-18
5. **Permanent**- Christ's perfect sacrifice provided a permanent means of dealing with sin. Hebrews 10:12-14; Hebrews 9:28; 1 John 1:7-9

Salvation was Christ's work on the Cross, and the Father's will for him.

While some would argue that Christ only died for the elect, the witness of Scripture is clearly that Christ died for all people even though not all will be saved because not all will choose to receive by faith the forgiveness of sins provided on the cross. While salvation is available to all people and God desires all people to be saved, not all call on the name of the Lord because of unbelief.

- **Read aloud:** 1 Timothy 2:3-6; 1 Timothy 4:10; Romans 10:12-13; Acts 17:30-31; Hebrews 2:9
- **Scripture to memorize: John 3:16**

Jesus died for the ungodly, all lost people- even those who reject Him. In that sense Christ rendered all people savable. Romans 5:6-8; 2 Peter 2:1.

Let's examine 3 aspects of Christ's work on the Cross:

1. **Reconciliation.** To reconcile means to restore what was broken. Sin caused the person's relationship to God to be broken. Sinful people are separated from God, strangers, and enemies of God. In Christ, God reconciled the world and made it possible for people to come back into the right relationship with Him. It was a person who needed to be reconciled to God, not God to the person.
  - 2 Corinthians 5:16-21; Romans 5:10-11; Colossians 1:21-22
  - **Key point:** Righteousness equals.... "right-relationship" with God.
2. **Redemption.** To redeem means to release or to buy back because payment has been made. Lost people are enslaved to sin and Satan. Christ on the cross paid the ransom price so that people no longer had to be slaves to sin.
  - Luke 1:67-68; Galatians 4:4-5; Titus 2:14; Galatians 3:13-14; 1 Peter 1:18-19; Colossians 1:13-14; Hebrews 9:15.
3. **Propitiation.** Sin is a violation of God's holy character. God's justice demands that adequate, appropriate payment be made for that sin, or the *penalty must stand*. God's holiness and justice

had to be propitiated and His wrath appeased (satisfied and atoned for). Christ's death on the cross provided the only payment which was sufficient to satisfy our Holy God.

- 1 John 2:2; Romans 3:25-26; Hebrews 2:17-18

**Key points: So, Christ dealt with: Person's bondage to sin; Person's broken relationship to God; Person's breach of God's character.**

In his work at the Cross, Christ also effected several other benefits to those who believe, including the sending of the Holy Spirit (John 14:25-26), access to the throne of God through prayer (Hebrews 4:15-16), and physical bodily healing (1 Peter 2:24).