

Atonement and the Cross of Christ Lesson 1 4Q 2008

God's Nature: The basis of Atonement

As we begin this quarter let's begin with a clear Biblical definition of what atonement is and what it is not.

What is atonement? At-one-ment being at one, being united, being reconciled, being in harmony, unity, oneness.

Are there other concepts of atonement out there? What are they? Appeasement, expiation, payment of legal debt.

Which concept is Biblical and what evidence do we have?

First, the Bible was not written in English but in Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic.

The English word itself, back in 1611 when the KJV was written did not mean appeasement or expiation, but meant reconciliation, bringing to unity or oneness. This is the correct understanding of the Hebrew and Greek words translated as atonement.

The Hebrew *Kaphar*, used in the OT sanctuary service with all the atonement statements is translated: atone, purge, forgive, reconcile.

The Greek in Romans 3:25 "sacrifice of atonement" is *hilasterion* and means the lid to the ark of the covenant.

See Hebrews 9:5 "Above the ark were the cherubim of the Glory, overshadowing the atonement cover. But we cannot discuss these things in detail now."

The word translated "atonement cover" in the NIV is translated mercy seat in other versions and is the same word in Romans 3:25 translated "sacrifice of atonement" and means the lid to the ark.

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.”

The Greek is *Hilaskomai* and means reconciliation.

A better translation of Romans 3 is:

^{3:21} But now God has revealed, a healthy state of being – a character that is right and perfect in everyway, that did not come from the written code, but is exactly what the Scriptures and the 10 Commandments were pointing your minds toward. ²² This perfect state of being comes from God and is created within us by God when we trust him. Our trust in him is established by the evidence given through Jesus Christ of his supreme trustworthiness. There is no difference amongst any ethnic groups, ²³ for all humanity is infected with the same disease of distrust, fear and selfishness, and are deformed in character and fall far short of God’s glorious ideal for mankind. ²⁴ Yet all, who are willing, are healed freely by God’s gracious remedy that has been provided by Jesus Christ. ²⁵ God presented Jesus as the way and means of restoration. Now, through trust established by the evidence of God’s character revealed when Christ died, we may partake of the remedy procured by Christ. God did this to demonstrate he is right and good, because in his forbearance he suspended, for a time, the ultimate consequence of sin and has been falsely accused of being unfair. ²⁶ So, he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so he would be seen as right when he heals those who trust in Jesus.

Is there other evidence this is the right understanding? What did Jesus say about atonement?

John 17:22-23 "I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."

So when we think of atonement and the Cross of Christ what are we thinking? God's method, means, way of restoring mankind back into unity and oneness with Him! It is not a method of payment, appeasement, expiation, penal satisfaction etc. all such concepts are remnants of pagan theology which has infected the body of Christian thought!

INTRODUCTION

In the introduction to the study guide it tells a story of a man whose life was changed when he heard these words, "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin."

What do these words mean?

First, is it talking about red corpuscles? When Jesus said unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood you have no part with me was he talking cannibalism? No, the blood is symbolic of what? Leviticus tells us the "life is in the blood" so the life of Jesus cleanses us from all sin.

Second, what is being cleansed according to this passage? Record books in heaven or we the people? Are there other passages that support this?

Malachi 3:1-3 "See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the LORD Almighty. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner

and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver.

Heb 9:14 “How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!”

Heb 10:22 “let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

And what is sin? Lawlessness (1John 3:4), what law is not being kept? The law of love – and how did the law of love get broken? And when it is broken what is the result?

Lies believed break the circle of love and trust
 Broken love and trust result in fear and selfishness
 Fear and selfishness result in acts of sin
 Acts of sin result in damage to mind, character and body

So, Christ came to purge lies, fear and selfishness from humanity and restore God’s perfect character of love back into the tablets of the human heart, thus reconciling us to God or bringing us back into Oneness with Him, this is what atonement is all about.

The Study Guide rightly points out, “We should never give the impression that the death of Christ was needed in order to persuaded God to love us. God sent Christ to die for us because He already loved us.” Absolutely, any thoughts?

While Christ didn’t have to die in order to get God to love us, what about the idea that Christ had to die in order to give God legal permission to save us? Or in order to take care of God’s wrath toward sin? Or in order to expiate divine anger toward sin?

SUNDAY

In the beginning God created – Before God created what existed?

- Go back far enough there was just God
- Genesis In the Beginning - God – but God is not a name, it would be like calling me human, in the Hebrew there is actually a name – Elohim, but this name is interesting because it is a plural name, it would be like call me Tims
- What do you think it means that God has a name that is not singular but plural? Does it imply anything about His nature of love?
- Dt 6:4 hear oh Israel Lord the Lord our God is One
 - Hear oh Israel Yahweh our Elohim, Yahweh is one,
 - The Hebrew has two words for “one” Yacheed and Echad, Yacheed means singular as in one and only, echad means the oneness of two or more, in the text Echad is used
- God is love – “God is love” 1John 4:8,
 - “Love is not self seeking” 1 Cor 13:4,5
 - God is other centered –
 - In the beginning love flowed from the Father to the Son and the Son to the Spirit and the Spirit to the Father in a perpetual circle of other centered goodness -
 - Love flows from God through Christ to all the universe and then back through Christ to the Father the circle of life
 - God is love -
 - Eternal power and Divine Nature – Romans 1:20
 - Other centered Love is the principle of Life!!!

MONDAY

Read first paragraph – thoughts?

What is the greatest revelation of God? Jesus Christ – He is the lens we must use to understand all other actions.

In the OT, which member of the Godhead was it that interacted with the people in OT times? Jesus, how do we know?

- Colossians 1:16,17 For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.
- 1CO 10:1 For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. ² They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. ³ They all ate the same spiritual food ⁴ and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.

Why is this important to realize? Have people ever been confused as they draw concepts about the Father from the OT and concepts about Jesus from the NT? Does it make a difference to realize the OT God and Jesus are one and the same?

Read last paragraph – “The statement...” thoughts? No question God is love and there is nothing we can or need to do to generate love from God. He is the source of all love. What do you think it means Jesus as our Mediator? Mediating what?

TUESDAY

Read second paragraph “The Bible explicitly...” thoughts?

What is meant by “this creation”? Is it just this earth or is the plan of salvation for the entire universe as well?

Colossians 1:19,20 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Read bottom pink section – thoughts? If we create artificial intelligence (AI) and we wanted the AI to be able to actually and genuinely love us what would we need to do? Set it free, would we then still “own” it? Would it be property? While we would have the “right” to own it, if we sustained that right and commanded obedience could it ever love? Does God command our obedience or does He set us genuinely free to love Him or not?

If you did create an artificial intelligence, where did you get the resources, ability, intelligence etc. from God or from yourself? If the resources came from God then does that mean God created it? If you create a computer program that is designed to wreak havoc and cause damage and destruction, where did your ability to do this come from? Where did the resources come from? Does that mean God created it or did you?

What about your child, who created your child in your image? Did God in heaven determine who you would share your gametes with? Did God use His power to create via nothing a new life that became your child? Or did you, via the abilities that God has given you?

WEDNESDAY

Read last paragraph “God’s holiness...” thoughts?

What does it mean “God’s holiness does not tolerate sin but reacts against it” Is God’s holiness something separate from God’s intellect, something other than His being, something other than His love, something outside His character? Is it a reflex God has no control over? Is it an instinct God is obliged

to follow? What does it mean “does not tolerate”? How does God react against sin?

Does He react in anger? In vengeance? With wrath?
Does God seek to destroy sin? YES!!!!

Does God seek to destroy sinners? NO!!!!

How does God seek to destroy sin? What is sin? Rebellion, selfishness based on what? Lies about God, so what does God use to destroy lies and selfishness? Love and truth!

God’s reaction to sin is to love and reveal more truth and to love and reveal more truth. Where sin abounds God’s graciousness and love abounds all the more!

Thoughts about the rest of the paragraph? Could God not “see” evil? Does God not know what is going on down here because He can’t take it? He hasn’t looked? Is Jesus somehow more capable of seeing evil than the Father? What do these statements mean? Did Jesus hate sin less than the Father?

How does the sacrifice of Jesus make us holy?

THURSDAY

Read second paragraph “It is not...” thoughts? Does God know the future? Some say God is an infinite calculator and knows all the possible futures of all the possible choices people make but He doesn’t know what choice people will actually make until they make it, this is called Open Theism, but it is wrong. The reason people have this idea is they cannot conceive of a God who could actually know our choices and not use that information manipulatively, a Being of such divine love that we would remain genuinely free if God knew our choices before we make them. So people make up this theory as a way of comforting themselves that they have freedom. But the truth is God does know and we are still completely free, that is what is so absolutely incredible.

Read last paragraph, “God’s omniscience...” thoughts?

Why was this mystery hidden? What is the mystery which heals from sin? What is the truth that has been hidden in darkness? What is the message that sets free and restores? The truth about God’s character of love, and why was it hidden? Did God hide the truth about Himself? Or was the truth hidden because of Satan’s lies about God and only through Christ are those lies taken away and the truth about God finally fully revealed?

FRIDAY

Read second paragraph – thoughts?