

The Grand Scope of Redemption

Lesson 7: The Provision of Redemption (Part 2)

A Look at the Means of Salvation through Atonement in the Old Testament

*Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to your Cross I cling;
Naked, come to you for dress; helpless, look to you for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly; wash me, Savior, or I die.*

Augustus Toplady

1. Atonement in the Old Testament

How can sinful men be made acceptable to a holy God?

Middle English – “Atonement” = “At” + “one[ment]” – thus ‘reconciliation.’

Atonement is the means by which sinners are forgiven and reconciled to a holy God.

Hebrew – “Atonement” – Root word *kpr* (Hebrew has no vowels) which forms these terms:

- A) ‘cover over/ paint/ smear’ w/ pitch/ tar (*kaphar*); ‘tar/ pitch’ (*kopher*);
- B) ‘atonement’ (*kaphar*); ‘ransom’ (*kapher*); ‘day of atonement’ (*kippur[im]*- pl.);
- ‘mercy seat’ [i.e. place of atonement – NIV = ‘atonement cover’] (*kopporet*).

Possible meanings of principal term ‘[to make] atonement’ (*kaphar*) are:

- (1) Cover/ wipe on; (2) Ransom; (3) Wipe away/ off (i.e. clean/ purge)

Note ideas of ‘propitiate’ (i.e. turn away wrath) (cf. 1) & ‘expiate’ (i.e. cancel/ remove sin) (cf. 3)

In either case, the result of making atonement is the cleansing/ forgiveness of sins.

Why is it necessary to atone for sin? Atonement involves both the love and justice of God.

A. OT Sacrifices

Note atonement requires the shedding of blood (i.e. violent death) – see Lev. 17:11; Heb. 9:22.

See also Gen. 3:7, 21 (‘Coverings’ for Adam & Eve); Gen. 4:2-5 (Offerings of Cain & Abel).

Principal atoning (blood) sacrifices included: Burnt, Fellowship (Peace), Sin, & Guilt offerings.

Note common OT refrain when a person brings his sacrifice to the sanctuary:

“the priest shall make atonement (before the LORD) on his behalf for his sin... and it shall be forgiven him/ made clean.” E.g., Lev. 1:4; 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:6, 10, 13; 12:8; 14:18, 20, 31.

6 common elements in making atoning (blood) sacrifices:

- Offerer chooses unblemished suitable animal – signifies sinlessness of sacrifice.
- Offerer presents animal at door of sanctuary – i.e. before the presence of God.
- Offerer places hands on head of animal – signifies identity/ transferring sins (Lev. 16:21).
- Offerer slays animal as the substitute bearer of the penalty for his sins.
- Priest sprinkles blood on altar – symbolizes purification made (Heb. 9:14).
- Priest burns animal on altar – smoke is pleasing aroma to God (appeasing wrath).

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B. Passover – See Exodus 12:1-51 – The institution of the Passover Feast (cf. vs. 14, 43).

- Vs. 2 – *“Beginning of months”* – Marks [re]birth of nation as a redeemed people of God.
- Vs. 5 – *“Unblemished lamb [yearling]”* – Sinless substitute necessary for redemption.
- Vs. 7 – *“Blood put on doorposts/ lintel”* – ‘Smear’d’ with hyssop branches (vs. 22).
- Vs. 8 – *“Unleavened bread/ bitter herbs”* – Signifies purity and bitterness of slavery.
- Vs. 11 – *“Eat in haste”* – Deliverance is imminent.
- Vs. 12 – *“Strike down firstborn/ execute judgments”* – Wrath of God imminent.
- Vs. 13 – *“Blood shall be a sign”* – Sight reminder of God’s mercy to the people (vs. 23).
- Vs. 13 – *“When I see blood/ pass over”* – Sight diverts wrath away from the people (vs. 27).

The paschal lamb is a type of Christ. See John 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:7; Rev. 5:12

Christ implicitly identifies Himself with the paschal lamb when He institutes the Lord’s Supper (note Communion is observed with bread and wine not with meat and blood). Note the timing of Christ’s death coincides with the first offering of the Passover sacrifices.

C. The Day of Atonement – See Leviticus 16:1-34

- Vs. 4 – *“Holy Linen Tunic”* – Special garment worn only in the Holy of Holies.
- Vs. 4 – *“Bathe His Body”* – Usually priest only washes hands and/ or feet.
- Vs. 5 – *“Two goats/ One ram”* – Goats for the people/ ram for High Priest (vs. 11).
- Vs. 7ff. – *“Goats...sin offering/ scapegoat”* – One is normal, the other special.
- Vs. 13 – *“Cloud...cover mercy seat”* – Shield wrath or shroud mystery of God.
- Vs. 14, 15 – *“Sprinkle blood on mercy seat/ make atonement”* – Purge Holy of Holies from sin of people – defiling nature of sin shall not enter God’s presence (Hab. 1:13; cf. vss. 18-19).
- Vs. 17 – *“Make atonement for himself/ assembly”* – After whole sanctuary purged (vs. 20).
- Vs. 21 – *“Lay hands on head/ confess”* – Transfer sins from people to goat.
- Vs. 22 – *“Bear iniquities...in wilderness”* – 2nd Goat bears punishment of sin in desolation; abandonment; away from the presence of God at the sanctuary.
- Vs. 27 – *“Burn/ outside the camp”* – Suffering away from the presence of God (cf. Mark 15:34; Heb. 13:11-13).
- Vs. 30, 34 – *“Atonement made for you to cleanse you”* – Sins are wiped clean.

Atonement purges from sin and diverts (not just averts) God’s wrath; thus sin’s guilt is removed (expiation) and God’s just sanctions against sin is satisfied (propitiation).

Isaiah 43:25 – “I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins.”