



**The Salvation Equation: {Grace > Atonement} Man can now respond: +
 Repentance + Faith → (and God answers) Conversion + Regeneration +
 Justification + Adoption → Sanctification**
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3/17 Grace
3/24 Atonement
3/31 Repentance

4/14 Faith
4/21 Conversion
4/28 Regeneration

5/5 Justification
5/12 Adoption
5/19 Sanctification

PROMO:

*Have you ever wondered if God really sees you?
 Have you ever wondered if God really can love you?
 Have you ever wondered if God could really forgive your horrible past?
 Have you ever felt worthless even though you love Jesus?
 If we ever have, then we do not understand what happened when we met Jesus at Salvation.
 Come, find out what Jesus' love really does:
 Soteriology – a.k.a. The Salvation Principle
 Beginning March 17th, Pr. Orleen and the Wednesday Night Crew as we unpack the meaning of our SALVATION.*

Soteriology is the branch of theology dealing with the study of salvation. The term comes from the Greek soterion, “salvation,” and is also related to soter, “savior.” **Soteriology** relates to several other branches of theology in that it asks who is saved, by whom, from what, and by what means.

- How I met Jesus:
- Biggest hurdle Jesus and I have walked over:
- Jesus surprised me with/when:
- Jesus shows His love to me when:

“Eternal life was the life which Jesus Christ exhibited on the human plane, and it is the same life, not a copy of it, which is manifested in our mortal flesh when we are born of God. Eternal life is not a gift from God, eternal life is the gift of God. The energy and the power which was manifested in Jesus will be manifested in us by the sheer sovereign grace of God when once we have made the moral decision about sin...The life that was in Jesus is made ours by means of His cross when once we make the decision to be identified with Him. If it is difficult to get right with God, it is because we will not decide definitely about sin. Immediately we do decide, the full life of God comes in. Jesus came to give us endless supplies of life: “that you may be fill with all the fullness of God”...The weakest saint can experience the power of the deity of the Son of God once he is willing to “let go”. Any strand of our own energy will blur the life of Jesus. We have to keep letting go, and slowly and surely the great full life of God will invade us in every part, and men will take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus.” Oswald Chambers

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“Eternal life is not a gift from God, eternal life is the gift of God.” Oswald Chambers

“And I will give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.”

John 10:28 (NKJV)

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- What happens when we pray the prayer of Salvation?
- Are we scrubbed clean? Or???
- Do you ever feel like you are not really saved?
- Do you question how much God has forgiven...if there are some things that He has not?
- Do you ever feel like your sins are just too big for God to forgive?
- Is there something you can do to lose your salvation?

Hebrews 10:7 HCSB

Since the law has only a shadow of the good things to come, and not the actual form of those realities, it can never perfect the worshipers by the same sacrifices they continually offer year after year. ² Otherwise, wouldn't they have stopped being offered, since the worshipers, once purified, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? ³ But in the sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. ⁴ For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

⁵ Therefore, as He was coming into the world, He said:

You did not want sacrifice and offering, but You prepared a body for Me.

⁶ You did not delight

in whole burnt offerings and sin offerings.

⁷ Then I said, “See—

it is written about Me

in the volume of the scroll—

I have come to do Your will, God!”

⁸ After He says above, You did not want or delight in sacrifices and offerings, whole burnt offerings and sin offerings (which are offered according to the law), ⁹ He then says, See, I have come to do Your will. **He takes away the first to establish the second.** ¹⁰ **By this will of God, we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once and for all.**

Ordo Salutis (latin) = The order of Salvation

(The study of the doctrine of salvation in terms of logical order)

The Salvation Equation: Begins with Grace

Grace made way for the Atoning Work of Christ... **{Grace > Atonement}**

ATONEMENT

*expiation, **satisfaction**, propitiation, amends, damages, indemnification(hold harmless)(think whistle blower insurance), indemnity(protection against loss), redemption, redress, restitution, salvation*

satisfaction or reparation for a wrong or injury [took my place]

So what is the Atonement of Christ?

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Define it in FIVE words:

- 1.) Obedience
- 2.) Sacrifice
- 3.) Propitiation
- 4.) Reconciliation
- 5.) Redemption

1.) Obedience

Philippians 2:5-8 HCSB

⁵ *Make your own attitude that of Christ Jesus,⁶ who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be used for His own advantage.*

Instead, He emptied Himself by assuming the form of a slave, taking on the likeness of men.

And when He had come as a man in His external form, ⁸ He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death— even to death on a cross.

Luke 2:51 HCSB *Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth and was obedient to them. His mother kept all these things in her heart.*

Hebrews 5:7-9 HCSB

*During His earthly life, He offered prayers and appeals with loud cries and tears to the One who was able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His reverence. ⁸ **Though He was God's Son, He learned obedience through what He suffered.**⁹ After He was perfected, He became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey Him,*

- **Active Obedience:**

JC obeyed the positive demands of the law.

He submitted to the ceremonial, civil, moral law.

- **Passive Obedience:**

JC submitted to the penal sanctions of the law, to all the penalties attached to disobedience of the law of God. **Because of Jesus' choice to live in perfect obedience, He can be our substitutionary.**

2.) Sacrifice

(Could be the one biblical word that encompasses **the entirety** of Christ's work.)

Typological (Things that are **like**, a type) relation to the OT sacrifices:

- W/O blemish (sinless sacrifice)
- Laying on of Hands (Accept our guilt) **Both hands – goat????**
- Slain (He died)
- Given to priest and worshippers in (peace offering)
- A meal of fellowship (we fellowship with Him)

Ways it is **unique**:

- **Expiatory**: **Covers** man's sin. **Our sin is no longer.** Focuses on us, sinners.
(IF WE QUESTION IF OUR SIN IS TOO BAD FOR GOD TO FORGIVE, WE ARE SAYING CHRIST'S SACRIFICE WAS NOT ENOUGH.)
- Offered once for all.

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- Offered in heaven (heavenly transaction)
- Inherent (not symbolic) quality, it actually atones for our sins
- Opened up free and unlimited access to God
- Active obedient sacrifice = He **chose** to be our Sacrifice

3.) Propitiation

1 John 4:7-12 HCSB

Knowing God through Love

⁷ Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent His One and Only Son into the world so that we might live through Him. ¹⁰ Love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the **propitiation** for our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, if God loved us in this way, we also must love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God remains in us and His love is perfected in us.

- Christ **shields us from God's wrath.** (Not covering like expiation)
- Focuses on God and His *relationship* with us.
- It appeases His righteous and just anger against sinful man.
- Does it force God to be kind to us? (No. John 3:16)
- Tension: God loves us but His righteousness calls for judgment on all sin.

God's love provided the way to satisfy this spiritual law of payment for sin by this sacrifice of COVERING (expiation) our sin so it is no longer and SHIELDING (propitiation) us from the deserved wrath.

And it does not stop there.....

4.) Reconciliation

Romans 5:10 HCSB

For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, then how much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved by His life!

The payment of the sin is not what He is after. The Relationship is.

2 Corinthians 5:17-19 HCSB

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away, and look, new things have come. ¹⁸ Everything is from God, **who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.** ¹⁹ That is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and **He has committed the message of reconciliation to us.**

- The restoration of a right relationship after the relationship has been strained.
- God is the active agent in bridging the gap between Him and us.
- Be reconciled to God...
- God has removed the enmity (John 19:30 'It is finished')
- WE CAN RESPOND: ACCEPT OR IGNORE [vertical relationship]
- WE CAN RESPOND: SHARE JESUS...how? (Share our stories, Love others, Hospitality) [horizontal relationship]

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5.) Redemption

Set free from slavery.

Slavery to what:

- The curse of the law.
- The bondage of the law.
- Keeping the law as a condition of acceptance with God.
- Sin.

Romans 8:20-22 HCSB

For the creation was subjected to futility—not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it—in the hope ²¹ that the creation itself will also be set free from the bondage of corruption into the glorious freedom of God's children. ²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together with labor pains until now.

Romans 6:6-8 HCSB

⁶ For we know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that sin's dominion over the body may be abolished, so that we may no longer be enslaved to sin, ⁷ since a person who has died is freed from sin's claims. ⁸ Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him, ⁹ because we know that Christ, having been raised from the dead, will not die again. Death no longer rules over Him. ¹⁰ For in light of the fact that He died, He died to sin once for all; but in light of the fact that He lives, He lives to God. ¹¹ So, you too consider yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Romans 6:17-19 HCSB

¹⁷ But thank God that, although you used to be slaves of sin, you obeyed from the heart that pattern of teaching you were transferred to, ¹⁸ and having been liberated from sin, you became enslaved to righteousness. ¹⁹ I am using a human analogy because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you offered the parts of yourselves as slaves to moral impurity, and to greater and greater lawlessness, so now offer them as slaves to righteousness, which results in sanctification.

Romans 6:20-22 HCSB

²⁰ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free from allegiance to righteousness. ²¹ So what fruit was produced then from the things you are now ashamed of? For the end of those things is death. ²² But now, since you have been liberated from sin and have become enslaved to God, you have your fruit, which results in sanctification—and the end is eternal life!

Brain Science Idea – Sticky notes up on the board? Have them come and declare in a microphone?????
Living in Atonement is Worship

Declaration: I Will...

- 1.) Obedience - Doing the instead of.
- 2.) Sacrifice – It cost us to walk in obedience to Christ and His principles. Is there a something I need to give up?
- 3.) Propitiation – I am shielded from God's wrath to my repented sins. Do I believe this? Do I need to give up some self talk? Some coping behaviors because I feel lesser than?
- 4.) Reconciliation – I will share Jesus. HOW?
- 5.) Redemption – Free from....list those and give them up in worship. Free to...what do you want in your present and future?

Testimony Question:

I have experienced God's Atonement (He took my place) because:
(I can forgive myself).

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NOTES:

“I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.” **John 10:9**

“And this is the promise that He Himself made to us: eternal life.” **1 John 2:25**

“For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.”

† Peter 1:23

Colossians 1:13

Holman Christian Standard Bible

¹³ He has rescued^(A) us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom^(B) of the Son^(C) He loves.^(D)

[Read full chapter](#)

Cross references

- A. [1:13](#) : [Mt 27:43](#)
- B. [1:13](#) : [Mt 3:2](#); [Mk 1:15](#); [Ac 20:25](#)
- C. [1:13](#) : [Jn 5:19](#); [Heb 1:2](#)
- D. [1:13](#) : [Mt 3:17](#); [Jn 3:16](#); [15:10](#); [17:26](#); [1Jn 4:16](#)

2 Thessalonians 2:13

Holman Christian Standard Bible

Stand Firm

¹³ But we must always thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning^(A) God has chosen^(A) you for salvation through sanctification^(B) by the Spirit and through belief in the truth.

[Read full chapter](#)

Footnotes

- a. [2 Thessalonians 2:13](#) Other mss read *because as a firstfruit*

Cross references

- A. [2:13](#) : [Rm 9:11](#); [11:5](#); [Eph 1:4](#); [1Th 1:4](#)
- B. [2:13](#) : [Rm 6:19](#); [1Co 1:30](#); [1Th 4:3](#); [1Tm 2:15](#); [Heb 12:14](#); [1Pt 1:2](#)

1 John 4:7-12

Holman Christian Standard Bible

Knowing God through Love

⁷ Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God^(A) and knows God. ⁸ The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ God's love was revealed among us in this way:^(A) God sent^(B) His One and Only Son^(C) into the world so that we might live^(D) through Him. ¹⁰ Love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that He loved us^(E) and sent His Son to be the^(A) propitiation^(E) for our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, if God loved us in this way, we also must love one another.^(G) ¹² No one has ever seen God.^{(A)(H)} If we love one another, God remains in^(A) us and His love is perfected in us.

[Read full chapter](#)

Footnotes

- a. [1 John 4:9](#) Or *revealed in us*
- b. [1 John 4:10](#) Or *a*
- c. [1 John 4:12](#) Since God is an infinite being, no one can see Him in His absolute essential nature; [Ex 33:18-23](#).
- d. [1 John 4:12](#) Or *remains among*

Cross references

- A. [4:7](#) : [1Jn 2:29](#)
- B. [4:9](#) : [Mk 9:37](#)
- C. [4:9](#) : [Jn 1:14](#), [18:3:16](#), [18](#)
- D. [4:9](#) : [Jn 10:28](#)
- E. [4:10](#) : [Jn 3:16](#)
- F. [4:10](#) : [2Co 5:21](#); [1Jn 2:2](#)
- G. [4:11](#) : [Jn 13:14](#); [15:12](#); [Rm 13:8](#); [1Th 4:9](#); [1Pt 1:22](#)
- H. [4:12](#) : [Ex 33:20](#)

Atonement Redemption of the human race by God through the full payment of the penalty of sin. The ransom theory of atonement, common among Church Fathers, states that Christ died as an expiatory sacrifice to ransom human beings

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from the power of the devil (Mark 10:45; 1 Tim. 2:6). Anselm taught the satisfaction theory of atonement by which Christ paid the infinite debt owed by the human race to God as a result of sin. This, however, precludes forgiveness, because if a debt is paid in full it cannot be forgiven.

The Calvinist penal satisfaction theory is that God's claims against the elect were satisfied by Christ's death being a vicarious punishment. The emphasis is not on debt but on justice. The governmental theory emphasizes that Christ died for all men as a provisional substitute for penalty. In Wesleyan theology the idea of atonement as propitiation dominates. According to Wesley, the Atonement is God's method of becoming immanent in a sinful race. Calvinists teach limited atonement for the elect, while Arminians teach unlimited atonement for all.¹

Make Atonement

See also: *Reconciliation*, p. 373

Hebrew expression: *kapar*

Pronunciation: *kaw FAHR*

Strong's Number: 3722

KEY VERSES

Exodus 29:33, 36–37; 30:15–16; Leviticus 16:6, 10–11, 16–18, 20, 32–34

All of us have felt the need to atone for some wrong we have committed against another person. The problem is what to do and how to do it. The mystery of “atoning” for our offenses, or sins, against God and other persons is addressed by the Hebrew verb *kapar*, “to make atonement,” “to cover over.” The verb may come from an original root meaning “to wipe away” or “to cover.” All of these meanings describe in different ways how God deals with our sins, for only His Son can truly “make atonement” for our sin.

The priests of Israel were ordained and set aside for God's service, by a ceremony that included the sacrificing of a bull and two rams. God chose to accept these animal sacrifices as an atonement for the priests. These sacrifices symbolically covered the priests' sins, so that they could serve as priests before the Holy One of Israel (Exod. 29:10–34). The altar of bronze was “atoned for”—that is made holy, so that sacrifices could be presented upon it (Exod. 29:38–42). Moses hoped to make atonement for Israel's sin by having the people drink the powder of the ground up golden calf (Exod. 32:20), and God “forgave” them because of Moses' intercessory prayer (Exod. 32:14; Pss. 65:3; 78:38). In this case, *kapar* carries the meaning “to forgive, to atone.” Prayer, along with sacrifices, was a vital part of making atonement (*kapar*) for Israel's sins.

Kapar is used in Leviticus more than anywhere else in the Old Testament. The priests were in charge of the sacrifices and the handling of the sacrificial blood. When presenting the burnt offering, the worshiper laid his hand upon the head of the sacrificed animal and it was accepted in place of him, to make atonement for him (Lev. 1:4). *Kapar* is found 16 times in the description of the great ritual carried out on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16). After the ceremony was over the nation was cleansed from all of its sins (Lev. 16:34). The Day of Atonement and all of its goals and purposes assured Israel of its relationship with God. The Israelites were clean before Him through the “blood of bulls and goats”—but only in a temporary way until the blood of Christ was offered to “take away sins” forever.

The Old Testament ceremony of atonement has been fulfilled once and for all our high priest Jesus Christ. He had no sins of His own to deal with, but was presented as a sacrifice of atonement (*hilasterion* in Greek) for the sins of His people (Heb. 2:17–18; 9:5, 11–14; Rom. 3:25). God accepted this perfect sacrifice and offered all people the gift of forgiveness. Forgiveness is one of the crucial elements of the Christian faith, and a blessing we should not only remember, but also exercise frequently in our relationships with others (Eph. 4:32; Col. 2:13, *charizein* in Greek).²

¹ Kurian, G. T. (2001). In [*Nelson's new Christian dictionary: the authoritative resource on the Christian world*](#). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

² Carpenter, E. E., & Comfort, P. W. (2000). In [*Holman treasury of key Bible words: 200 Greek and 200 Hebrew words defined and explained*](#) (p. 122). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

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BLOOD (דָּם, *dam*; αἷμα, *haima*). In the Bible, blood functions as a symbol of life and death and serves as a sacred substance in sacrificial rituals for purification, consecration, and atonement.

Blood and Life

The Old Testament writers recognized that blood (דָּם, *dam*) was a life-sustaining substance (Gen 9:5). The connection between life (נֶפֶשׁ, *nephesh*) and blood is also evident in the parallel usage of expressions about taking someone's life (*nephesh*) and shedding blood (*dam*; e.g., Gen 37:21–22). The New Testament uses “blood” (αἷμα, *haima*) in this sense to refer to living beings (John 1:13), sometimes using the hendiadys “flesh and blood” (Matt 16:17; Gal 1:16 LEB; 1 Cor 15:50). Shedding blood is also used to indicate murder or death because loss of blood resulted in loss of life (Rom 3:15; Heb 12:4).

The biblical prohibition against eating blood was tied to its association with life and the recognition that it represented the essence (*nephesh*) of a living being (Gen 9:4; Lev 3:17; 7:26; 17:10–11; Deut 12:23). One consequence of Saul's foolish oath prohibiting his army from eating while they pursued the Philistines was that some of the Israelites became so desperate for food that once they defeated the Philistines, they began devouring the spoil—blood and all (1 Sam 14:28–32). Others reported the offense to Saul, who had to set up a designated spot for the animals to be butchered and the blood drained (1 Sam 14:33–34). In the New Testament, the instruction to abstain from consuming blood is one of the few requirements that the council of Jerusalem sees fit to expect from Gentile Christians (Acts 15:29).

Sacrifice and Ritual

After God prohibits consuming blood (Gen 9:4), He also prohibits the shedding of human blood because humankind bears the image of God (Gen 9:6). The blood of animals could still be shed if the appropriate procedures were followed. Typically, the slaughter should be in the context of a sacrifice where the blood could be handled properly (Lev 17:1–7). In the case of wild game, the blood should be poured out on the ground and covered with dirt (Lev 17:13). Milgrom suggests this law prohibiting nonsacrificial slaughter was probably a legal innovation of the Holiness Code since the laws in Deuteronomy explicitly allow for nonsacrificial (or profane) slaughter as long as the blood is poured out on the ground and covered with dirt as with wild game (Deut 12:15–16, 20–25; Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–22*, 1453–54).

When an animal was sacrificed, the blood was caught by the priest in a basin and then sprinkled, spattered, or smeared according to the instructions for the type of sacrifice. For example, with the sin offering, the priest had to spatter some of the blood seven times before Yahweh's sanctuary, then put some on the horns of the altar, and then pour out the rest at the base of the altar (Lev 4:5–7). Depending on the ritual or type of sacrifice, the blood could be sprinkled on the altar, sprinkled around the altar, smeared on the horns of the altar, poured out at the base of the altar, or smeared or sprinkled on individuals (e.g., Exod 29:10–22; Lev 1:5, 11, 15).

Ritual Effects of Blood

The detailed instructions for sacrifices in biblical law include specific stipulations for how the blood is to be handled. These instructions are not always explicit about the exact purpose for each act. In general, the biblical text focuses more on ritual practice than on ritual purpose. Often, no strong distinction is made and the three typical effects attributed to blood—consecrating, cleansing, and atoning—are associated with the same acts. For example, on the Day of Atonement—the only time the chief priest could enter the holy of holies—the high priest took the blood from the sacrifices and spattered the blood on and in front of the cover of the ark of the covenant (כַּפֹּרֶת, *kapporeth*; “mercy seat; atonement cover”; Lev 16:14–15). This ritual served to “make atonement for the sanctuary from the Israelites' impurities and from their transgressions for all their sins” (Lev 16:16 LEB). Then he would use the remaining blood to “make atonement” for the altar by putting the blood on the horns of the altar and spattering it on the altar seven times (Lev 16:18–19). In this way, the priest would “cleanse it and consecrate it from the Israelites' impurities” (Lev 16:19 LEB). The single act of applying blood to the altar served to make atonement, cleanse, and consecrate. Perhaps, from the biblical point of view, these effects were one and the same—making atonement, cleansing, and consecrating all represent a transition from common and profane to holy and sacred, fit for use or service before Yahweh.

Purification and Consecration. In some cases, blood was to be used for purification or ritual cleansing. For example, the ritual for purifying someone who had a leprous disease but who had healed was a several-stage process that involved, among other things, sprinkling the person with blood (Lev 14:5–7), and applying the blood of a “guilt offering” to the person's right earlobe,

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right thumb, and right big toe (Lev 14:14). A similar ritual was necessary for cleansing a house after dealing with surface discoloration like mold or mildew in the walls (Lev 14:49–52).

The rituals that purified and consecrated the priests and the tabernacle involved anointing with oil and the application of blood, but only the blood is said to have “purified the altar” (Lev 8:15). The blood rituals in Num 19:1–6 and Lev 16 are also associated with cleansing sacred spaces with blood. Milgrom sees the connection between blood and life as the key to explain its purifying function in the biblical sacrificial system. Seeing blood as the ritual detergent that purges impurity, he concludes that since impurity “is the realm of death,” the antidote to impurity is life, represented by blood (Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 711). Blood cleanses the sanctuary, purging it of impurity, because it “nullifies, overpowers, and absorbs the Israelites’ impurities that adhere to the sanctuary, thereby allowing the divine presence to remain and Israel to survive” (Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 712).

In addition to purifying the priests and the tabernacle, the blood rituals associated with the ordination of the priests and the dedication of the tabernacle function to consecrate them (Lev 8:10–30; compare Exod 29:10–21). When Moses poured blood at the base of the altar, he “consecrated it in order to make atonement for it” (Lev 8:15). Then, after Aaron and his sons had been anointed with oil (Lev 8:12–13), Moses used the blood from the “ram of ordination” to consecrate them as well (Lev 8:22–30).

The ritual at the giving of the law (Exod 24), where Moses sprinkled the blood of the sacrifices on the people, is likely an example of consecration as well. It is also the only ritual described in the Bible where all the people of Israel are anointed with blood (Peeler, “Desiring God,” 187). One common approach to interpreting this ritual is to identify it as signifying the people had become “parties to the covenant” with Yahweh (Stuart, *Exodus*, 555; compare Heb 9:19–20). Another approach understands the ritual in terms of the purifying and consecrating effects of the rituals in Lev 8–9 (Peeler, “Desiring God,” 189). From this perspective, the blood served to purge Israel of impurities, which enabled Moses, the priests, and the elders to enter God’s presence on Sinai (Exod 24:9–11). However, these approaches are not mutually exclusive. In the context of the covenant ceremony, the ritual undoubtedly serves to ratify and confirm the covenant (Hendel, “Sacrifice,” 370). In the context of similar blood rituals, the ritual also probably serves to purify and consecrate the people (Peeler, “Desiring God,” 190–91; Hendel, “Sacrifice,” 375).

The use of blood as a symbol of the covenant relationship is also evident in the New Testament references to the “blood of the covenant” (Matt 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; Heb 10:29; 13:20). While the Old Testament covenant was established by the death of animals, the new covenant was established by the death of Christ (Heb 9:14–18). Both covenants required the shedding of blood for purification and redemption (Heb 9:11–28).

Atonement. The third ritual effect associated with blood is the making of atonement (e.g., Lev 8:15; 16:16–19). Atonement is a complex theological topic and the exact process and nature of atonement is debated. However, it can be generally understood as a state of restoration or reconciliation. In the Old Testament, atonement is associated with the Hebrew root כפר (*kpr*), often defined as “cover” (see Rodrigues, “Atonement”). Milgrom points out that while “atone” is a common translation for כפר (*kpr*), the actual usage of the word reveals a much more complicated range of possible meanings in context, including “wipe,” “remove,” “purify,” “decontaminate,” “cover,” “rub,” and “ransom”; Milgrom prefers to use “purge” in most contexts (Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 1079–82).

Blood is a key ingredient for bringing about atonement in the biblical system. Most cases where a priest makes atonement for someone or something involve an animal sacrifice (e.g., Lev 1:4; 4:20; 5:6), though there were exceptions where a monetary offering was required for atonement (e.g., Exod 30:11–16). The practice of animal sacrifice for atonement is commonly interpreted as a case of substitution—where the animal’s blood is offered in place of the sinner’s to expiate (or remove) the person’s guilt (Rooker, *Leviticus*, 53). According to Hebrews 9:22, blood is an essential ingredient for atonement (for how ἄφεσις, *aphesis*; relates to atonement, see Koester, *Hebrews*, 420–21).

Passover

The ritual observance of Passover required everyone to put the blood of the sacrifice on the doorposts and lintel of their houses (Exod 12:7). This ritual act may function as a visible symbol of the occupants’ faith, displaying the people’s “faithful obedience to God,” their “acceptance of God’s plan for rescue,” and their “trust in his word” (Stuart, *Exodus*, 278). The blood testified that the people had put their faith in Yahweh.

Blood and Guilt

As a symbol of life and death, blood could be used in a variety of ways. For example, blood could symbolize guilt associated with violence (Judg 9:24; 2 Sam 16:8) or simply guilt from wicked behavior (Isa 1:15; 4:4; Mic 3:10; Acts 18:6; 20:26). This

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symbolism treats bloodguilt as a pollutant (Num 35:33–34), blending the concrete imagery of blood literally spilled on the ground with the abstract notion that “the spilling of innocent blood results in a stain that would provoke a divine punishment on the entire community unless proper action was taken against the murderer” (Feder, “Contagion,” 164). The metaphor represents the guilt for wrongdoing as an actual bloodstain clinging to the murderer and defiling the land (Feder, “Contagion,” 164).

In the case of actual bloodshed, the spilled blood was a visible and tangible sign of the wrongdoing. From that more concrete sense, the representation of guilt as a bloodstain was metaphorically extended to indicate guilt regardless of whether blood had literally been shed. For example, Mic 3:10 uses “blood” in parallel with “wickedness” in condemning Israel’s leaders for a variety of offenses including taking bribes and perverting justice; their offenses *may* have included the deaths of innocent people, but the text is not explicit (of course, this reading depends on taking Mic 3:2–3 as metaphorical for general oppression of the people, not a condemnation of the Israelite leaders for practicing actual cannibalism).

Other Ancient Near Eastern Views

Based on the biblical account, blood seems to have played a larger role in Israelite worship than it did in other ancient Near Eastern religions (Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 706). Milgrom notes that the blood prohibition is unique to Israel and that “nowhere else do we find Israel’s postulate of the life force residing in the blood” (Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 706).

Beckman argues that blood plays a more important role in Hittite ritual than is usually thought (“Blood in Hittite Ritual,” 102). While the Hittites may not have made an explicit statement linking life force with blood, as is found in Leviticus, they believed blood was “the carrier of life and strength” and recognized that the presence of blood was an indicator of mortality—whether enemies bled when cut revealed if they were human or divine (Beckman, “Blood in Hittite Ritual,” 95). Beckman also notes that the induction ceremony for new soldiers involved wine being poured out on the ground, symbolically equated with the blood of the soldiers, which they would lose if they betrayed their leader (“Blood in Hittite Ritual,” 95–96; interestingly, in the Bible, wine is poetically described as “the blood of grapes” [Gen 49:11; Deut 32:14]).

Hittite texts also have an expression where “shedding blood” refers to murder and appear to have had a conception of bloodguilt similar to that of the Hebrew Bible—where the guilt for innocent bloodshed remained like a stain over the people and the land itself (Beckman, “Blood in Hittite Ritual,” 96–97).

The Hittites also considered blood to be a purifying substance. One Hittite ritual describes how blood is used as a “ritual detergent” to purify a new god and temple, similarly to how blood purifies and consecrates the altar and the priests in Lev 8 (Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 254–55; see also Beckman, “Blood in Hittite Ritual,” 101). The Hittites used blood to cleanse “sacred places, cultic furniture, and ritual pits” (Beckman, “Blood in Hittite Ritual,” 101).

The use of blood to purify a sanctuary may be evident in other ancient Near Eastern cultures as well. Geyer has proposed reading the Baal Cycle’s account of Anat’s battle in her palace (*KTU* 1.3, ii) as an example of cleansing a sanctuary with blood (Geyer, “Blood and the Nations,” 6–7, 17–18). In that text, Anat “washes her hands in warrior-blood” and “warrior-blood is wiped from the house” (*KTU* 1.3, ii, lines 30–35; Smith, “Baal Cycle,” 108). According to Koester, the Greeks and Romans also believed blood had cleansing power (Euripides, *Iphigeneia at Tauris* 1223–24; Aeschylus, *Eumenides* 280–83; Koester, *Hebrews*, 420).

Related Articles

For more details on sacrificial rituals throughout the Bible and related topics, see these articles:

- Atonement
- Clean and Unclean
- Genesis, Book of
- Offerings
- Leviticus, Book of
- Sacrifice in the Old Testament
- Sacrifice in the New Testament
- Substitution

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DOUGLAS MANGUM³

ATONEMENT The means of reconciliation between God and people. Emerges in the Old Testament as part of the sacrificial system; reframed exclusively around the person and work of Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

Introduction

Atonement is one of the few theological terms with roots in the English language. It is the process by which two (typically estranged) parties are made "at-one" with each other. The Old Testament usually mentions atonement in the context of worship, primarily in reference to temple sacrifices. The word does not occur in the New Testament, but the concept is implied throughout—particularly in the metaphoric imagery used to describe the saving work of Christ.

This article explores atonement as it is understood in both Testaments with reference to the ancient Near Eastern context of Hebraic atonement rituals, as well as developments from the intertestamental and early church periods.

Old Testament Background

The Hebrew word for atone (כִּפַּר, *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.

The Old Testament never reveals what transpires on a metaphysical level when a sacrifice is offered to God. Instead, the Torah focuses on the means of atonement, describing the specific, necessary steps to reach reconciliation. While a variety of sacrifices are prescribed by the Pentateuch and depicted throughout the Old Testament, the primary passages for understanding atonement in the sacrificial system are Lev 4–6 and 16.

Leviticus 4–6 describes the process for making sin and guilt offerings. For the sin offering, an unblemished animal was presented and killed, then its blood was sprinkled and/or smeared on the altar. The fat of the animal was removed and burned atop the altar. When the nation of Israel or a priest was found guilty of sin, the sacrifice must be a bull. Individuals could offer a lamb, goat, or (for the poor) two small birds. Stipulations for guilt offerings are similar, but include restitution paid by the guilty party for their crime (Lev 5:14–19). While the two modes of offering are distinct from one another, the terms sin and guilt are used interchangeably in Lev 5:17–6:7 (see especially Lev 7:7).

The Day of Atonement (Lev 16) was a more complex ceremony involving special priestly garments, five sacrificial animals (one bull, two goats, and two rams), incense, and the purification of the holy place. After the bull had been killed to atone for the sins of the priest, lots were cast over the two goats. One of the goats was killed and its blood used to purify the holy place; the people's sins would be confessed over the other—the scapegoat—which was then released into the wilderness to carry away that sin. The two rams were then presented as a guilt offering for the priest and the people, and the fat of the bull and the slain goat was burned on the altar to conclude the ceremony.

The elaborate nature and blood sacrifice of these ceremonies attest the gravity with which the Old Testament views sin. The people's participation in the ceremonies speaks to the dynamic, covenantal relationship between God and Israel.

Ancient Near Eastern Context

Old Testament sacrificial rituals find numerous parallels in the practices of other ancient Near Eastern societies. In the Hittite ritual of Ulippi, they slaughtered a sheep and used its blood to consecrate a new temple. Other examples include the Hittite rituals of Ambazi and Huwarlu in which some form of evil (typically a sickness, tension, or pestilence) was transferred from a

³ Mangum, D. (2016). [Blood](#). In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, ... W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

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person to an animal that was then taken outside the camp and released (paralleling the scapegoat; see Wright, *Disposal*, 31–74).

The Babylonians had a number of rituals based on their cognate for the Hebrew *kaphar*. Chief among these was the procedure for purifying the temple of Nabu, god of wisdom. They decapitated a ram and rubbed its carcass throughout the inner chamber of the temple to remove impurities. The Babylonians also had a personal atonement ceremony that involved using dough to expiate uncleanness and/or sin. Unfortunately, very few details are known about this ritual, and it appears to have no direct parallel in the Old Testament (Ringgren, *Sacrifice*, 31).

Intertestamental Developments

The Hebraic understanding of atonement continued to develop during the intertestamental period, influenced by the impact of Hellenism on Jewish life and culture. While some Jews chose withdrawal from society, developing their atonement theology under self-imposed isolation, others engaged (often violently) with the reigning superpower, leading to notions of atonement that embraced martyrdom and self-sacrifice. Along with these two approaches, the Greeks also possessed atonement-related ideas. All of these are helpful for understanding what the concept of atonement came to symbolize in the era leading up to the birth of Christ.

Atonement was an important concept for the Jewish separatists at Qumran; it was linked closely with their understanding of salvation. God was seen as the acting agent in atonement and people as the recipients. “For the Qumran covenanters, God has a dispute with the whole human race in which mankind is in the wrong and God is the right. Man’s appropriate response in this situation is to take sides with God’s justice against sinful mankind including one’s self, submitting to God’s just punishment and accepting with gratitude any favor God may graciously bestow” (Garnet, *Salvation*, 112). Atonement was thus achieved through the spirit of holiness bestowed by God on the members of the community and manifested through obedient adherence to the law (see further Garnet, *Salvation*, 112–20).

The deuterocanonical text of 2 Maccabees presents a notably different view of atonement, bridging Old Testament sacrificial rituals with Greek notions of martyrdom. Chapters 6–7 recount the desecration of the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes, bringing an end to the sacrificial system (6:1–12); and the martyrdom of Eleazar the scribe (6:18–31), an unnamed mother, and her seven sons (ch. 7). The author of 2 Maccabees interprets these events as divine judgment of Israel. The last of the seven brothers to be martyred may be presenting their deaths as atoning sacrifices when he says “I, like my brothers, give up body and life for the laws of our ancestors, appealing to God to show mercy soon to our nation and by trials and plagues to make you confess that he alone is God, and through me and my brothers to bring to an end the wrath of the Almighty that has justly fallen on our whole nation” (2 Mac 7:37–38; see the discussion in Williams, *Maccabean Martyr Traditions*, 27–63).

The Greeks were familiar with legends of heroic figures who willingly offered their lives on behalf of others, often achieving godhood as a result. The plays of Euripides, Plato’s account of the death of Socrates, and Livy’s description of Decius’ death on behalf of Rome—to name a few examples—all offer praise to the *devotio* of human martyrs (Williams, *Maccabean Martyr Traditions*, 33–37; Hengel, *Atonement*, 4–6). What was unheard of in the Graeco-Roman world was the notion that heroic martyrdom could be achieved by a Jewish peasant on behalf of the entire universe. The very suggestion that God would initiate such an act, marking the advent of a new eschatological era, seemed to catch both the Jewish and Hellenistic worlds by surprise (see 1 Cor 1:23).

New Testament Formulations

While the concept of atonement is centrally important to the New Testament, the word itself is never used. The Greek terms that come closest (ἱλαστήριον, *hilastērion*; and ἱλάσκομαι, *hilaskomai*) are better translated “expiate” or “propitiate,” as in the ESV (e.g., Rom 3:25 and Heb 2:17). The New Testament frames the Hebraic understanding of atonement around the person and work of Christ, centered especially on His death on a Roman cross.

The New Testament authors interpreted Christ’s death as the once-and-for-all atonement event, fulfilling and surpassing all other means humans had previously relied on to atone for sin. Payments of money to the temple, incense, and all other forms of securing reconciliation with God are eclipsed by the cross. Even the sacrifices and atoning rituals of the first covenant are reinterpreted as having been effective only in light of Christ (Heb 9).

Despite this radical interpretation of the *means* of atonement in the New Testament, much of the theology surrounding the *meaning* of atonement remains the same. As in the Old Testament, sin remains a problem, alienating humans from God and leaving us in need of redemption (Rom 1:18–32). The New Testament authors often view Christ’s death as a parallel to the Suffering Servant of Isaiah (compare Matt 8:17 and Isa 53:4) who carries the sins of many, lifts their iniquities, and is even referred to as a “guilt offering” (Isa 53:10–12; compare Lev 5:14–19). In keeping with the Old Testament, God is the initiator of atonement who provides a means for people to receive cleansing and enter into a relationship with him (John 3:16–17).

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Additionally, the cross is understood as an act of self-sacrificial obedience by Christ, enacted as a demonstration of the Father's love for sinful humanity (Rom 5:8).

New Testament authors employ a number of vivid metaphors to explain the atoning work of Christ. Drawn from various spheres of public life, these images enabled the earliest Christians to better understand the significance of Christ's death and the meaning of atonement. The remainder of this section will explore five of the most significant atonement metaphors in the New Testament: ransom, sacrifice, reconciliation, victory, and Second Adam.

Ransom

Likely the oldest metaphor for atonement in the Christian tradition, "ransom" is the term provided by Christ in the Gospels to interpret his impending death: "the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mar 10:45 ESV). In the Graeco-Roman world "ransom" (λύτρον, *lytron*) referred to the price paid for the release of a slave or captive. Such an image is not far from Paul's reminder to the Corinthian believers that they had been "bought with a price" (1 Cor 6:20; 7:23 ESV). In the New Testament framing, humanity is the captive that has been ransomed from the powers of sin and death through the atoning work of Christ. The ransom motif also resonated in a Jewish context, connected with God's ransoming of Israel from slavery (Exod 6:6, 13). In line with this, 1 Peter 1:18–19 says: "you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers ... with the precious blood of Christ" (ESV).

Sacrifice

"Sacrifice" is by far the most common image for atonement in the Old Testament, and it is also the most common way the New Testament speaks of Christ's death. The author of Hebrews envisioned Christ as both sacrifice and high priest (Heb 10:11–14). Sacrifice is also Paul's preferred language; his writings establish the substitutionary nature of Christ's death for sinners, in line with the sacrificial system of the Old Testament (Green & Baker, *Recovering*, 63–67). Christ identified with people in their fallen state (Rom 8:3) and was made sin (2 Cor 5:21), sharing in our death so that we might share in his resurrection (Phil 3:10–11). In John's Gospel, Jesus is similarly hailed as "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

Reconciliation

Closely related to the image of sacrifice is that of reconciliation. In much the same way that Jesus restored sinners and outcasts to right relationship in the context of first-century Judaism, the death of Christ reconciles the world with God (Eph 2:16; Col 1:20). God is the initiator of the reconciliatory work of Christ, restoring right relationship between a rebellious people and Himself and setting a precedent for the church's ongoing ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18–19).

Victory

A number of New Testament authors portray the death of Christ as His victory over sin. The mocking treatment of Jesus by the Roman soldiers—dressing Him in a purple robe, placing a crown of thorns on His head, and hailing Him as king of the Jews (Mark 15:17–18)—ironically casts the crucifixion as a coronation ceremony of sorts. Both Colossians and Revelation portray the death of Christ as a cosmic victory over the powers of evil (Col 2:13–15 and Rev 12:10–11). Luke-Acts focuses the salvific power of Christ on His post-resurrection exaltation by God (Acts 2:36; 5:30–31; Green & Baker, *Recovering*, 69–77). Christ was raised up in His death and resurrection, victoriously securing humanity's atonement.

Second Adam

While the atonement metaphors above focus primarily on the death and resurrection of Jesus, His incarnation as the Second Adam attributes atoning significance to His entire life. The angel's message to Joseph in the opening chapter of Matthew connects the salvation Jesus brings with His status as Immanuel, "God-with-us" (Matt 1:21–23). Similarly, in the Gospel of John, the incarnation of the Word in human flesh is presented as the means through which grace has become available (John 1:14–17). Paul also viewed Christ's arrival "in the likeness of men" as the precursor to His atoning death and exaltation (Phil 2:5–11 ESV). In the incarnation, Christ became God's perfect image, the Second Adam who overcomes death (see Rom 5:12–21). In sum, "what Adam did, Jesus undid to excess. Adam disobeyed God and brought death, but Jesus obeyed God and so passed on (abundant, eternal) life for all" (McKnight, *Community*, 58).

Early Church

In the world of the early church, worshiping someone who had been crucified was a scandal. Jews and Greeks alike rejected the notion that someone worthy of worship (or for Jews, the Messiah) would suffer and die in such a disgraceful manner. In addition to the biblical metaphors discussed above, the earliest Christians answered their challengers by narrating the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that the Gospel accounts devote so much space to

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Calvary—depicting Christ as fully aware and accepting of His fate and the cross as the culmination of His atoning mission (Green & Baker, *Recovering*, 13–20).

Church fathers Irenaeus (ca. AD 130–202) and Athanasius (ca. AD 297–373) were among the first Christian writers to produce explicitly theological accounts of the atonement. Their work represents a theory of the atonement that contemporary scholars call *recapitulation*. Broadly speaking, recapitulation teaches that Jesus “recapitulated” the life of Adam, Israel, and all people, bringing humanity into fullness before God. This recapitulation has two dimensions: exclusive and inclusive. Exclusively speaking, Christ stands alone as humanity’s substitute, achieving the perfect life none of us could live. In an inclusive sense, Christ incorporates us into the divine life so that we may join with Him in His suffering and glory (McKnight, *Community*, 100–106).

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D. BROCKWAY⁴

6614

atonement

Reconciliation; sin has alienated humanity from God and provoked God’s anger. God has responded by providing the means of restoring this broken relationship, bringing both sides to a place where they are at one again (“at-one-ment”).

6615

atonement, necessity and nature of

Scripture stresses the seriousness and reality of human sin, and that human beings are unable to atone for their own sins. In his grace, God provides a means by which the situation can be remedied.

Atonement is necessary because of human sinfulness

Atonement is necessary because sin cuts people off from God Isa 59:2 See also Isa 64:7; Eze 39:23; Hab 1:13; Jn 9:31

Atonement is necessary because sin provokes God’s wrath Eph 2:1-3 See also Ge 6:5-7; Ex 32:30-35; Ro 1:18-20; 2:8

God’s gracious nature is the basis for atonement

Atonement is grounded in God’s reluctance to punish sinners Eze 18:32 See also Eze 33:11; 1Ti 2:1-4; 2Pe 3:9

Atonement is grounded in God’s readiness to forgive sin Ex 34:6-7 *The punishment of subsequent generations makes God’s abhorrence of sin quite clear, but the extension of his love and forgiveness “to thousands” puts the emphasis in these verses on God’s grace and compassion. See also Ps 145:8; Da 9:9; Jnh 4:2*

Atonement is grounded in God’s covenant love Nu 14:19 *The Hebrew word for “great love” means God’s loving faithfulness to those within the covenant. See also Ps 25:6-7; 103:8-12; Joel 2:13*

God’s provision of atonement is a means of dealing with sin

Atonement through sacrifice Lev 9:7 See also Ex 30:10; Nu 15:22-26

God’s promised new covenant of forgiveness was fulfilled in Jesus Christ’s atoning death Heb 10:16-17 See also Jer 31:33-34; Mt 26:28; Heb 9:15; 12:24

⁴ Brockway, D. (2016). [Atonement](#). In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, ... W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

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Images used to portray the at-one-ment, or restored relationship, between God and humanity

Atonement as forgiveness of sins Eph 1:7-8 See also Lev 19:22; Ac 13:38; Col 2:13-14

Atonement as cleansing and purification Lev 16:30 See also Isa 6:6-7; Tit 2:14; 1Jn 1:7; Rev 7:14

Atonement as reconciliation 2Co 5:19 See also Ro 5:9-11; Eph 2:14-16

Atonement as healing 1Pe 2:24 See also 2Ch 7:14; Ps 103:2-3; Isa 53:5

Atonement as God buying people back for himself Rev 5:9 See also Mt 20:28 pp Mk 10:45; Ac 20:28; 1Pe 1:18-19

Atonement as making holy: creating a relationship of consecrated nearness to God Heb 10:10 See also Col 1:22; Heb 13:12

See also

1055 God, grace & mercy

6025 sin & God's character

6510 salvation

6653 forgiveness, divine

6717 reconciliation, world to God

6720 redemption

7314 blood

8266 holiness

6616

atonement, in OT

The OT laid down complex regulations by which the guilt of sin could be removed through the sacrificial system. Particular emphasis was placed upon the role of the high priest, who was required to make annual atonement for the sins of the people.

The covenantal framework of atonement

As God's covenant partners, the Israelites undertook to keep his laws Ex 24:3 See also Dt 26:17; Jos 24:24

The sin offering made atonement for unintentional sins under the covenant Lev 9:7 See also Lev 4:13-14; Nu 15:22-26

The guilt offering atoned for sins where reparation was required Lev 19:20-22 See also Lev 6:1-7

Deliberate flouting of God's law could not be atoned for Nu 15:30-31 See also Nu 35:33; 1Sa 3:14

The Day of Atonement provided for the removal of the nation's sin Lev 16:34 See also Ex 30:10; Lev 16:1-33 *The nation's sin was atoned for by sprinkling the atonement cover in the Most Holy Place with the blood of the sacrificial goat; the removal of the people's sin was symbolised by the driving of the scapegoat into the wilderness; Heb 9:7*

The atonement cover Ex 25:17-22 *The locating of God's presence above the atonement cover in the tabernacle demonstrated that it was only on the basis of atonement that God could accompany his people. See also Ex 30:6; Lev 16:2; Nu 7:89*

Atonement was effected by the blood of the sacrifice Lev 17:11 *The blood signified that the life of the animal had been given in place of that of the worshipper. See also Heb 9:22*

The role of priests in making atonement

Priests were dedicated to God in order to make atonement for others Ex 29:44 See also Lev 8:22-30

The priests had to make atonement for their own sins Heb 5:1-3 See also Lev 9:8-11

The priests represented the people before God to atone for their sin Heb 5:1 See also Ex 28:36-38; Lev 10:16-17

The people had constant reminders of the need for atonement

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Rituals of cleansing included an atoning offering Lev 12:7-8; 14:18-22,53; 15:15

Atonement was a feature of Israel's festivals Nu 28:22,30; 29:5,11

Abuses of the system of atonement

The sinful conduct of the priests who made atonement Hos 4:7-8 *See also* 1Sa 2:12-17; Jer 6:13-14; Eze 22:26; Mal 1:6-8

The sinful conduct of the people who sought atonement without repenting of their sins Hos 8:11-13 *See also* Isa 1:10-17; 66:3; Jer 7:21-24; Am 4:4

The need for repentance for a relationship of atonement Pr 16:6 *See also* 1Sa 15:22; Ps 51:16-17; Mic 6:6-8

The prophets foretold a renewing of God's relationship with Israel, involving atonement for sin

Isaiah's message about the obedient servant Isa 53:4-12

Jeremiah's prophecy of a new covenant Jer 31:31-34

Ezekiel's vision of a new temple Eze 43:18-27

See also

1345 covenant

6172 guilt

6648 expiation

6712 propitiation

7308 Atonement, Day of

7376 high priest

7412 priesthood

7435 sacrifice, in OT

7440 scapegoat

7444 sin offering

7454 sprinkling

8622 worship

6617

atonement, in NT

In dying for the sins of the world, Jesus Christ fulfilled and replaced the OT sacrificial system, so that all who believe in him are restored to fellowship with God. Christ is the true high priest, who finally liberates his people from the guilt of sin, by offering himself as the supreme sacrifice.

The atoning purpose of Jesus Christ's death

Jesus Christ's death on behalf of others Jn 10:11 *See also* Jn 10:14-18; 2Co 5:15; Heb 2:9; 1Jn 3:16

Jesus Christ's atoning death for sin 1Co 15:3 *See also* Ro 4:25; 8:3; Gal 1:4; 1Pe 3:18

The atoning significance of Jesus Christ's death is expressed by references to his blood Ro 5:9; Rev 5:9 *See also* Eph 2:13; 1Pe 1:18-19; 1Jn 1:7; Rev 7:14

Jesus Christ's atoning death is commemorated in the Lord's Supper 1Co 11:23-25 *See also* Mt 26:26-28 pp Mk 14:22-24 pp Lk 22:19-20

Explanations of the atonement

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Jesus Christ's death as an atoning sacrifice Ro 3:25 *See also* 1Co 5:7; Eph 5:2; 1Jn 4:10; Rev 5:6

Jesus Christ's atoning death as redemption Mk 10:45 pp Mt 20:28 *See also* Ac 20:28; Gal 3:13-14; Eph 1:7; Col 1:13-14

The atonement is effective because of Jesus Christ's sinlessness

2Co 5:21 *See also* Heb 4:15; 1Pe 2:22-24; 1Jn 3:5

Jesus Christ's death fulfils and replaces the Day of Atonement

Jesus Christ makes atonement as the new high priest Heb 7:26-28

Jesus Christ is the mediator of the new and better covenant Heb 8:6-7; 9:15

Jesus Christ has made atonement in the true heavenly sanctuary Heb 8:1-2; 9:24

Jesus Christ's atoning blood brings effective cleansing Heb 9:12-14

Jesus Christ's single sacrifice replaces the many required under the old covenant Heb 10:11-14

Access to the heavenly sanctuary is now open Heb 10:19-20

By dying with Christ, believers are released from this age into the life of the age to come

Ro 6:1-7 *See also* Ro 7:4-6; Gal 2:19-20; 6:14; Eph 2:6-7; Col 2:11-13

God the Father and the atoning death of his Son

God's sending of his Son to make atonement 1Jn 4:14 *See also* Jn 3:16; Ro 8:32; 2Co 5:18; Gal 4:4-5

God's grace displayed in making atonement for the ungodly Eph 2:4-5 *See also* Ro 5:6-8; Eph 2:8-9; Tit 3:4-5

The worldwide scope of Jesus Christ's atoning death

1Jn 2:2 *See also* Jn 1:29; 2Co 5:19; 1Ti 2:5

The appropriate response to the atonement

The response of repentance Ac 3:19 *See also* Ac 2:38; 17:30; 20:21

The response of faith Ac 10:43 *See also* Jn 3:14-15; Ac 16:31; Ro 3:22; Gal 2:16

The response of baptism Ac 22:16 *See also* Ac 2:38; 1Pe 3:21

See also

2306 Christ, high priest

2315 Christ as Lamb

2410 cross, the

2530 Christ, death of

5005 human race & redemption

5492 restitution

6027 sin, remedy for

6676 justification

6728 regeneration

6754 union with Christ

8020 faith

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9165 restoration⁵

FUTURE:

6611

adoption, privileges and duties of

As adopted members of the family of God, believers receive both the privileges and responsibilities of being children of God.

The privileges received by believers through adoption

Believers are given the Spirit of adoption Gal 4:6 See also Ro 8:15

Believers have access to their heavenly Father Eph 2:18 See also Eph 3:12; Heb 4:16

Believers become heirs with Christ of heaven Ro 8:17 See also Gal 3:29; 4:7; Col 1:12; 1Pe 1:4

The benefits God gives to those he adopts

Believers are pitied by him Ps 103:13

Believers are protected Pr 14:26

Believers are provided for Mt 6:31-33

Believers receive loving discipline Heb 12:6

Believers are never forsaken Ps 94:14

Believers are assured by the Spirit Ro 8:16

The responsibilities of God's adopted children

Believers are to walk in the light See also Jn 12:35-36; Eph 5:8; 1Th 5:4-5

Believers are to shun evil 2Co 6:17-18; Php 2:15

Believers are to purify themselves 2Co 7:1; 1Jn 3:2-3

Believers are to live obediently Mt 12:50; 1Pe 1:14; 1Jn 5:2-3

Believers are to live in peace Mt 5:9; Ro 14:19

Believers are to live in love Gal 5:13; 1Pe 4:8; 1Jn 3:18

Believers are to be watchful 1Th 5:5-6

See also

6606 access to God

8104 assurance

⁵ Manser, M. H. (2009). *Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies*. London: Martin Manser.

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8453 obedience⁶

Is the Atonement of Christ Unlimited?

Is the Atonement of Christ Unlimited?

Is the Atonement of Christ Unlimited?

The Bible has much to say on the atonement of Christ.

Is the Atonement of Christ Unlimited?

The question is whether His sacrifice provided limited or unlimited atonement.

Is the Atonement of Christ Unlimited?

The word atonement means “satisfaction or reparation for a wrong or injury; amends.”

Is the Atonement of Christ Unlimited?

The doctrine of unlimited atonement states that Christ died for all people, whether or not they would ever believe in Him.

Is the Atonement of Christ Unlimited?

When applied to Jesus’ finished work on the cross, atonement concerns the reconciliation of God and humankind, as accomplished through the suffering and death of Christ.

Is the Atonement of Christ Unlimited?

Paul highlights the atoning work of Jesus when he says: “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Is the Atonement of Christ Unlimited?

There are at least nine different positions on the atonement of Christ ranging anywhere from the act being merely one of moral influence (the Moral Example theory) to one that holds that Christ’s atonement was a judicial, substitutionary act (the Penal Substitution theory).

Is the Atonement of Christ Unlimited?

But, perhaps the most controversial debate concerning the atonement of Jesus centers around what is referred to as ‘limited’ or ‘definite’ atonement.

Is the Atonement of Christ Unlimited?

In examining this issue, the first question to ask is this: Is everyone going to be saved through the atoning work of Christ?

Is the Atonement of Christ Unlimited?

This being true, there is one inescapable fact to understand: *the atonement of Christ is limited.*

Is the Atonement of Christ Unlimited?

So unless one is a universalist and can defeat the biblical evidence above, then one must hold to some form of limited atonement.

Is the Atonement of Christ Unlimited?

⁶ Manser, M. H. (2009). [*Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies*](#). London: Martin Manser.

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How, then, is the Atonement Limited?

The next important question to examine is this: If the atonement is limited (and it is), how is it limited?

Is the Atonement of Christ Unlimited?

In this passage, the necessary condition that limits the atonement is found: “whosoever believes” (literally in the Greek: “all the believing ones”).

Is the Atonement of Christ Unlimited?

In other words, the atonement is limited to those who believe and only those who believe.

Is the Atonement of Christ Unlimited?

Who Limits the Atonement?

Both theological camps previously mentioned will not argue this point—the atonement of Christ is limited to those who believe.

Is the Atonement of Christ Unlimited?

The disagreement occurs over the next question that arises: who limits the atonement—God or man?

Is the Atonement of Christ Unlimited?

Calvinists/Reformed thinkers maintain that God limits the atonement by choosing those whom He will save and thus only placed on Christ the sins of those He had chosen for salvation.

Is the Atonement of Christ Unlimited?

The Arminian/Wesleyan position states that God does not limit the reparation of Christ, but instead it is humanity that limits the atonement by freely choosing to accept or reject the offer that God makes to them for salvation.

Is the Atonement of Christ Unlimited?

A common way for the Arminian/Wesleyan theologians to state their position is that the atonement is unlimited in its *invitation*, but is limited in its *application*.

Is the Atonement of Christ Unlimited?

God offers the invitation to all; however, only those who respond in faith to the gospel message have the work of the atonement applied to their spiritual condition.

Is the Atonement of Christ Unlimited?

To support the position that humanity, and not God, limits the atonement, the Arminian/Wesleyan proponent lists a number of Scripture verses, including the following:

Is the Atonement of Christ Unlimited?

- “He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the *sins of the whole world*.” (1 John 2:2, emphasis added)

Is the Atonement of Christ Unlimited?

They see a God-limiting atonement as a denial of the omnibenevolence of God.

Is the Atonement of Christ Unlimited?

Furthermore, the Arminian/Wesleyan believes that a God-limiting atonement is devastating to the gospel message.

Is the Atonement of Christ Unlimited?

There is a complete lack of confidence, they say, in making the statement to any one person that Christ died for them because the evangelist has no real idea if (given a God-limiting atonement) that is really the case.

Is the Atonement of Christ Unlimited?

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Unlimited

Atonement—The

Conclusion

Unless one is a universalist and believes that everyone will ultimately be saved, a Christian must hold to some form of a limited atonement.

Is the Atonement of Christ Unlimited?

The key area of disagreement is over who limits that atonement—God or man?

Is the Atonement of Christ Unlimited?

Those wishing to hold to a God-limited atonement must answer the biblical arguments put forth by those holding to a humanity-limiting atonement and also explain how God can be described in Scripture as being all loving and yet not have His Son die for everyone.

What Are the Main Arguments against Limited Atonement?

What Are the Main Arguments against Limited Atonement?

What Are the Main Arguments against Limited Atonement?

Limited atonement is the teaching that Jesus died only for the elect.

What Are the Main Arguments against Limited Atonement?

Many who hold to limited atonement prefer the term “particular redemption,” but to minimize confusion this article will use the term “limited atonement.”

What Are the Main Arguments against Limited Atonement?

For a full explication of what limited atonement is from a five-point Calvinistic perspective, please read our article on limited atonement, and for arguments supporting unlimited or universal atonement, please read our article on unlimited atonement.

What Are the Main Arguments against Limited Atonement?

Arminians and four-point Calvinists, or Amyraldians, believe that limited atonement is unbiblical.

What Are the Main Arguments against Limited Atonement?

Got Questions Ministries takes an official four-point stance in support of unlimited atonement.

What Are the Main Arguments against Limited Atonement?

Here, we present several arguments against limited atonement.

What Are the Main Arguments against Limited Atonement?

Argument 1: Limited Atonement Is Hermeneutically Insupportable

What Are the Main Arguments against Limited Atonement?

Arguing against limited atonement are verses which appear to teach universal atonement, the absence of verses that explicitly limit Christ’s atonement, verses that declare the necessity of faith for salvation, and several Old Testament types of Christ that do not fit the limited atonement paradigm.

What Are the Main Arguments against Limited Atonement?

Passages Supporting Universal Atonement

What Are the Main Arguments against Limited Atonement?

Universal (or unlimited) atonement is supported throughout the New Testament.

What Are the Main Arguments against Limited Atonement?

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Other verses supporting unlimited atonement include John 1:29, where Jesus is said to take away “the sin of the world”; Romans 11:32, in which God has mercy on “all” the disobedient; and 1 John 2:2, which says Jesus is “the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.”

What Are the Main Arguments against Limited Atonement?

As if saying that Jesus is the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world was not sufficient, the apostle John specifically included the Greek word *holou*, which means “whole, entire, all, complete.”

What Are the Main Arguments against Limited Atonement?

Unless limited atonement is presumed, there is no solid basis for limiting the extent of the atonement mentioned in 1 John 2:2.

What Are the Main Arguments against Limited Atonement?

Passages Only Mentioning Atonement for Believers

What Are the Main Arguments against Limited Atonement?

Verses that seem to support limited atonement include John 10:15, where Jesus says, “I lay down my life for the sheep”; and Revelation 5:9, which indicates that Jesus’ blood “purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.”

What Are the Main Arguments against Limited Atonement?

“Universal atonement” is *not* the same as “universalism,” which says that everyone will be saved and go to heaven.

What Are the Main Arguments against Limited Atonement?

Unlimited atonement acknowledges the reality that Jesus’ atonement must be accepted by faith, and that not everyone will believe.

What Are the Main Arguments against Limited Atonement?

Four-point Calvinists believe that salvation comes only to those who have faith; it is faith that brings the saving effects of the atonement to the Christian.

What Are the Main Arguments against Limited Atonement?

Unbelievers, though offered the gift of salvation through the atonement of Christ, have rejected God’s gift.

What Are the Main Arguments against Limited Atonement?

The Passover’s atonement was universal in that it was offered to all, but the atonement still had to be applied individually, by faith.

What Are the Main Arguments against Limited Atonement?

Argument 2: Christian Tradition Opposes Limited Atonement

What Are the Main Arguments against Limited Atonement?

Limited atonement has always been a controversial belief.

What Are the Main Arguments against Limited Atonement?

The Synod of Dort in 1619 issued the points of doctrine now known as TULIP; however, several theologians at the synod rejected limited atonement while accepting the other four points of Calvinism.

What Are the Main Arguments against Limited Atonement?

Long before the Protestant confessions and synods, though, the early church father Athanasius was describing universal atonement.

What Are the Main Arguments against Limited Atonement?

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Athanasius' point is that Jesus' death atoned for all of humanity.

What Are the Main Arguments against Limited Atonement?

Ironically, Calvin himself may not have placed much value on the idea of a limited atonement.

What Are the Main Arguments against Limited Atonement?

Argument 3: Limited Atonement Would Make It Impossible to Genuinely Offer Salvation to All

What Are the Main Arguments against Limited Atonement?

Limited atonement affects one's beliefs regarding evangelism and the offer of salvation.

What Are the Main Arguments against Limited Atonement?

Essentially, if *only* those who will be saved (the elect) are atoned for, there is no atonement to be offered to anyone else.

What Are the Main Arguments against Limited Atonement?

If Christ's death did not provide atonement for everyone, then the apostles, and even Jesus Himself, were offering something that most of their audiences could never receive.

What Are the Main Arguments against Limited Atonement?

Limited atonement is the point of traditional Calvinism that has caused the most confusion and consternation among Bible-believing theologians.

What Is Amyraldism?

This doctrine, in essence, softens the Calvinistic doctrine of limited atonement.

What Is Amyraldism?

3. Limited Atonement—In order to save those whom God has unconditionally elected, atonement for their sin must be made.

What Is Amyraldism?

God the Father sends His Son, Jesus Christ, to atone for the sins of the elect and secure their pardon by His death on the cross.

What Is Amyraldism?

5. Perseverance of the Saints—Those whom God has elected, atoned for and efficaciously called are preserved in faith until the last day.

What Is Amyraldism?

As mentioned earlier, the particular point that Amyraldism takes issue with is the third point, limited atonement.

What Is Amyraldism?

By doing this, Amyraldism avoids some of the problems that limited atonement raises, while at the same time, preserves the doctrine of unconditional election.

What Is Amyraldism?

This places Amyraldism somewhere between Calvinism and Arminianism when it comes to the extent of the atonement.

What Is Amyraldism?

Calvinism teaches that the extent of the atonement is limited to the elect only; Christ's death on the cross makes salvation a reality for the elect.

What Is Amyraldism?

Arminianism teaches that the extent of the atonement is unlimited and available to all; Christ's death on the cross makes salvation possible to all and man must exercise faith to make salvation actual.

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What Is Amyraldism?

This is very similar to a view that is circulating in some Calvinistic circles called unlimited/limited atonement.

What Is Amyraldism?

However, in attempting to resolve some of the apparent problems that limited atonement presents—namely, the biblical passages that teach Christ died for all men (John 3:16; 2 Peter 3:9; 1 John 2:2 to name a few)—the Amyraldians create larger problems that require resolution.

What Is Amyraldism?

The same objection that can be applied to Arminianism regarding the extent of the atonement can also be applied to Amyraldism.

What Is Amyraldism?

If Christ died for all men as it says in 1 John 2:2, then we have a problem; namely, there are people in hell right now who have had their sins atoned for.

What Is Amyraldism?

Whether or not they responded in faith or God elected them, their sins have been atoned for and they should not be in hell!

What Is Amyraldism?

Without going into a detailed exegesis of 1 John 2:2, the apparent contradiction between what some think that verse means and the doctrine of limited atonement can be easily resolved by looking at the context of the verse.

What Is Amyraldism?

He was the atoning sacrifice for our sin, but not ours only but also the whole world.

What Is Amyraldism?

In other words, Christ actually atoned for the sins of John and his readers; it is a statement of fact.

What Is Amyraldism?

John then applies this actual atonement not only for his readers, but the whole world.

What Is Amyraldism?

The Arminians say that the atonement didn't actually save anyone, but makes all men savable.

What Is Amyraldism?

He is referring to an actual atonement, not a potential atonement.

What Is Amyraldism?

It would be hermeneutically incorrect to go from an actual atonement to a potential atonement in the same sentence.

What Is Amyraldism?

On the other hand, as noted earlier, the Amyraldian claims that God actually atoned for the whole world, but only applies it to the elect, to which we would argue that God is sending people to hell whose sins have been atoned for.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

Please also read our article on arguments against limited atonement.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

And, for a balanced perspective on the entire issue, please see our article on unlimited atonement.

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Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

“Limited atonement” is a term that is used to summarize what the Bible teaches about the purpose for Christ’s death on the cross and what His life, death and resurrection accomplished.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

The doctrine of limited atonement is clearly the most controversial and maybe even the most misunderstood of all the doctrines of grace.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

Because the name can confuse people and cause them to have wrong ideas about what is meant, some people prefer to use terms like “particular redemption,” “definite redemption,” “actual atonement,” or “intentional atonement.”

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

The doctrine of limited atonement affirms that the Bible teaches Christ’s atoning work on the cross was done with a definite purpose in mind—to redeem for God people from every tribe, tongue and nation (Revelation 5:9).

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

One of the greatest passages on the atonement in the Old Testament is Isaiah 53.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

These verses and many others talk about an atonement that was specific in whom it covered (God’s people), was substitutionary in nature (He actually bore their sins on the cross), and actually accomplished what God intended it to do (justify many).

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

Clearly, here is a picture of an intentional, definite atonement.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

The doctrine of limited atonement also recognizes that the Bible teaches Jesus’ death on the cross was a substitutionary atonement for sins.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

Many theologians use the word “vicarious” to describe Christ’s atonement.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

The vicarious atonement of Christ means He was acting as a representative for a specific group of people (the elect) who would receive a direct benefit (salvation) as the result of His death.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

In order for Christ’s atonement to truly be a substitutionary or vicarious atonement, then it must actually secure a real salvation for all for whom Christ died.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

If the atonement only makes salvation a possibility, then it cannot be a vicarious atonement.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

Four different words or aspects of the atonement are clearly seen in Scripture, and each one helps us understand the nature and extent of the atonement.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

These four aspects of Christ’s atonement all speak of Christ as having actually accomplished something in His death.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

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A study of these four terms in their biblical contexts leads to the obvious conclusion that one cannot hold to a true universal atonement without also requiring universal salvation.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

If one holds to an unlimited atonement while denying universal salvation, one ends up with a redemption that leaves men not totally free or actually redeemed, a reconciliation that leaves men still estranged from God, a propitiation that leaves men still under the wrath of God, and a substitutionary death that still makes the sinner himself help pay the debt of his sin.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

All of these aspects of the atoning work of Christ then become nothing more than a possibility that relies upon man to make them a reality.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

One common misunderstanding about the doctrine of limited atonement is that this view somehow lessens or limits the value of the atonement of Christ.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

Limited atonement correctly recognizes that Christ's death was of infinite value and lacking in nothing.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

God's purpose in the atonement was that Jesus would secure forever the salvation of those the Father had given to Him (Hebrews 7:25).

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

Therefore, while Christ's atonement was limited in its intent or purpose, it was unlimited in its power.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

Another common misunderstanding about the doctrine of limited atonement is that it somehow lessens or diminishes the love of God for humanity.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

Of all of the doctrines of grace, the doctrine of limited atonement, when correctly understood, magnifies the love of God; it does not diminish it.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

Limited atonement reinforces the intensive love of God that is revealed in the Bible.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

God loves His people with a love that saves them from their sin, as opposed to the love of the unlimited atonement view that sees God's love as being more general in nature.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

In the unlimited atonement view, He loves everyone in general but saves no one in particular and, in fact, leaves the matter of their salvation up to them.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

One of the main arguments used against limited atonement is that, if Christ did not atone for the sins of everybody in the world and if God only intended to save the elect, how do you explain the numerous biblical passages that indicate the free offer of the gospel to "whosoever will come?"

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

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Another argument against limited atonement points to the passages in the Bible that speak of Christ's atonement in a more general or unlimited sense.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

Other verses that seem to indicate an unlimited view of the atonement include 2 Corinthians 5:14–15: "He died for all" and 1 Timothy 2:6: "He gave Himself a ransom for all" (although Matthew 20:28 and Mark 10:45 say Christ came to "give His life a ransom for many").

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

Those who believe in unlimited atonement use such verses to make the point that, if Christ died for all and takes away the sins of the world, then His atonement cannot be limited to only the elect.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

However, these verses are easily reconciled with the many other verses that support the doctrine of limited atonement simply by recognizing that often the Bible uses the words "world" or "all" in a limited sense.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

Understanding that basic fact allows one to consider each of these seemingly universal passages in their contexts, and, when that is done, it becomes apparent that they do not present any conflict with the doctrine of limited atonement.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

Yet another argument against limited atonement is that it is a hindrance to the preaching of the gospel and to evangelism.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

The doctrines of grace, and specifically the doctrine of limited atonement, empower evangelism rather than hinder it.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

Belief in an unlimited atonement, on the other hand, presents many logical and biblical problems.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

First of all, if the atonement was truly unlimited, then every person would be saved as all of their sins, including the sin of unbelief, would have been paid for by Christ on the cross.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

Therefore, both the Arminian and Calvinist believe in some sort of limited atonement.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

The Arminian limits the effectiveness of the atonement in saying Christ died for all people but not all people will be saved.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

His view of the atonement limits its power as it only makes salvation a possibility and does not actually save anyone.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

On the other hand, the Calvinist limits the intent of the atonement by stating that Christ's atonement was for specific people (the elect) and that it completely secured the salvation of those whom He died for.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

So, all Christians believe in some sort of limited atonement.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

The question, then, is not whether the Bible teaches a limited atonement but how or in what sense the atonement is limited.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

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Is the power of the atonement limited in that it only makes salvation a possibility, or is its power to save unlimited and it actually results in the salvation of those whom God intended to save (the elect, His sheep)?

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

A major problem with unlimited atonement is that it makes redemption merely a potential or hypothetical act.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

An unlimited atonement means that Christ's sacrifice is not effectual until the sinner does his part in believing.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

In this view, the sinner's faith is the determining factor as to whether Christ's atonement actually accomplishes anything.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

If the doctrine of unlimited atonement is true, then it has Christ dying for people the Father knew would not be saved and has Christ paying the penalty for the sins of people who would also have to pay the penalty for the same sin.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

Either God punishes people for the sins that Christ atoned for, or Christ's atonement was somehow lacking in that it does not sufficiently cover all the sins of those for whom He died.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

Logically, it makes no sense for God the Father to have Christ atone for the sins of people who were already suffering the wrath of God for their sin.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

Again, this also shows that an unlimited atonement cannot be a vicarious, substitutionary atonement.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

Still another problem with an unlimited view of the atonement is that it demeans the righteousness of God and destroys the grounds of a believer's assurance.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

Yet that is what a universal atonement leads to.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

Unlimited atonement says that, while Christ does a great deal to bring salvation to His people, His death on the cross did not actually secure that salvation for anyone.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

Christ's death is not sufficient in and of itself to save lost people, and, in order for His atoning work to be effective, there is a requirement that sinners themselves must meet.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

For man to be saved, he must add his faith to Christ's atoning work on the cross.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

Therefore, the effectiveness of the atonement is limited by man's faith or lack thereof.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

On the other hand, limited atonement believes that Christ's death and resurrection actually secures the salvation of His people.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

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Christ plus nothing equals salvation—an atonement so sufficient that it secures everything necessary for salvation, including the faith that God gives us to believe (Ephesians 2:8).

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

Limited atonement, like all of the doctrines of grace, upholds and glorifies the unity of the triune Godhead as Father, Son and Holy Spirit all work in unison for the purpose of salvation.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

Next, the doctrine of limited atonement explains how God can be perfectly just and yet redeem those sinful people and reconcile them to Himself.

Limited Atonement—Is It Biblical?

That leads to another question: how can a spiritually dead sinner who is hostile to God have faith in the atoning work of Christ on the cross?

Calvinism vs. Arminianism—Which View Is Correct?

Calvinism sees the atonement as limited, while Arminianism sees it as unlimited.

Calvinism vs. Arminianism—Which View Is Correct?

Limited atonement is the belief that Jesus only died for the elect.

Calvinism vs. Arminianism—Which View Is Correct?

Unlimited atonement is the belief that Jesus died for all, but that His death is not effectual until a person receives Him by faith.

What Is Arminianism, and Is It Biblical?

(3) Unlimited Atonement—Jesus died for everyone, even those who are not chosen and will not believe.

What Is Arminianism, and Is It Biblical?

The only point of Arminianism that four-point Calvinists believe to be biblical is point #3—Unlimited Atonement.

What Is Arminianism, and Is It Biblical?

First John 2:2 says, “He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.” Second Peter 2:1 tells us that Jesus even bought the false prophets who are doomed: “But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you.

What Is Calvinism and Is It Biblical? What Are the Five Points of Calvinism?

T stands for total depravity, U for unconditional election, L for limited atonement, I for irresistible grace, and P for perseverance of the saints.

What Is Calvinism and Is It Biblical? What Are the Five Points of Calvinism?

Limited Atonement—Because God determined that certain ones should be saved as a result of God’s unconditional election, He determined that Christ should die for the elect alone.

What Is Calvinism and Is It Biblical? What Are the Five Points of Calvinism?

As for Limited Atonement, however, four-point Calvinists believe that atonement is unlimited, arguing that Jesus died for the sins of the whole world, not just for the sins of the elect.

What Is Calvinism and Is It Biblical? What Are the Five Points of Calvinism?

Other verses in opposition to limited atonement are John 1:29; 3:16; 1 Timothy 2:6; and 2 Peter 2:1.

What Is Calvinism and Is It Biblical? What Are the Five Points of Calvinism?

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First, they argue, if Total Depravity is true, then Unlimited Atonement cannot possibly be true because, if Jesus died for the sins of every person, then whether or not His death is applicable to an individual depends on whether or not that person “accepts” Christ.

What Is Calvinism and Is It Biblical? What Are the Five Points of Calvinism?

In addition, if Unlimited Atonement is true, then hell is full of people for whom Christ died.

What Is Calvinism and Is It Biblical? What Are the Five Points of Calvinism?

For a more in-depth look, please visit the following pages: Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, and Perseverance of the Saints.

What Is Preventive Grace?

In this position, God has given all men a preventive grace that results in a universal healing of total depravity by the grace of God through the atoning work of Christ.

What Is Preventive Grace?

That is, because of the atoning work of Christ, all people are no longer completely incapable of hearing and responding to the Gospel (John 6:44, 8:43); rather, all people have some ability.

What Is Preventive Grace?

In this position, because of the first coming and atoning work of Christ, God has dispensed a universal preventive grace that fully negates the depravity of man.

What Is Preventive Grace?

Since Wesleyans believe in unlimited atonement as opposed to limited atonement, Wesleyans then further state that when Paul speaks of God giving those whom Christ died for “all things” (Romans 8:32), this universal preventive grace is one of those “all things.”⁷

10

CHRIST: THE ONCE-AND-FOR-ALL SACRIFICE!

The previous chapters have shown that the sacrificial system in Israel during the Old Testament time was wide-ranging and complex. It certainly exerted a significant financial burden on the people. God showed grace, to be sure, in allowing different types of sacrifice, depending on one’s economic status, but even a bird cost money! Further, the time burden would have been great, especially for those who did not live in Jerusalem. **After all, it was only at the altar in Jerusalem that sacrifices could legitimately be offered.** If you lived out of town, the need to sacrifice would have meant traveling to Jerusalem, finding some place to stay, and then traveling back. In addition, for many at least, there would have been a large psychological burden of traveling to the tabernacle/temple in the knowledge of their sin.

The wonderful news of the New Testament is that Jesus has fulfilled the sacrificial ritual by his own death and resurrection. Jesus is the perfect sacrifice, which all the animal sacrifices simply anticipated. In this chapter, we will pursue this important teaching by surveying the variety of passages that make this claim. We will begin with passages that talk in general terms about Jesus as our sacrifice and then continue by looking at Jesus as, specifically, our sin offering, our guilt offering, and our Passover sacrifice.

JESUS, OUR SACRIFICE

The New Testament often connects Jesus’ death to Old Testament sacrifice in general terms without using words that specifically identify a type of sacrifice. Even so, it is especially the atonement nature of Old Testament sacrifice that is at issue here. With that in mind, we may especially see the *’olah* as at least implicitly in the background of New Testament writers.

⁷ Got Questions Ministries. (2002–2013). [*Got Questions? Bible Questions Answered*](#). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

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However, we did observe in our study of the Old Testament sacrifices that the *'olah*, *minhah*, and *shelamim* were normally offered at the same time, and so the whole complex may serve as the backdrop of Jesus' sacrifice. Fortunately, our decision on this matter does not radically affect our understanding of Jesus as the fulfillment of the whole sacrificial system.

Jesus' Blood and Sacrifice

For God sent Jesus to take the punishment for our sins and to satisfy God's anger against us. We are made right with God when we believe that Jesus shed his blood, sacrificing his life for us. God was being entirely fair and just when he did not punish those who sinned in former times. And he is entirely fair and just in this present time when he declares sinners to be right in his sight because they believe in Jesus. (Rom. 3:25–26)

In many other places in the New Testament the blood of Christ is seen as the means by which our relationship with God, shattered by sin, has been restored (see for instance Rom. 5:9). But here Paul specifically connects Jesus' blood to the idea of sacrifice. This association, of course, makes immediate sense against the background of the Old Testament. The blood of the animal, symbolic of its death when shed, represented the death of the sinner who identified with it through the ritual of laying his hands on its head. This connection was purely symbolic, but here in Romans 3:25 we learn that Christ's blood is the ultimate sacrifice that removes from us God's anger for our sins. We are declared righteous because of our union with Christ.

It is important to note that God the Father sent Jesus to perform this act, which removed his anger from us. There is a longstanding debate over whether Jesus' death does away with the wrath of God (propitiation) or simply removes sin (expiation). Romans 3:25 is at the heart of this discussion. Some find the former unflattering of God, and indeed we should note that this passage talks about God sending Jesus. It is wrong to think of Jesus unilaterally pacifying his angry Father by virtue of his death. The three persons of the Godhead work in concert to bring about our redemption. However, we must fully embrace the idea that God (and Jesus, who is of course God) hates our sin, and, though the Father provides the means, Christ's sacrifice does away with that wrath.

Jesus the Spotless Lamb

For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And the ransom he paid was not mere gold or silver. He paid for you with the precious lifeblood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God. (1 Peter 1:18–19)

In the paragraph preceding these verses, Peter has called for a life characterized by holiness, obedience in spite of the temptations of this life, and hope (vv. 13–17). Starting with verses 18–19, he provides motivation for this life style and attitude by reminding his readers of Christ's great act on the cross, which redeemed them. What draws our interest in these verses is the sacrificial language used here. Our salvation was not paid for by mere money, but rather by Christ's life, which is here described in clearly sacrificial language. He is a lamb without blemish, whose blood, representing his death, earns our redemption. The mention of a spotless animal can be connected to a variety of Old Testament sacrifices, for instance the Passover lamb (Exod. 12:5), the *'olah* sacrifice (Lev. 1:10), a *shelamim* sacrifice (Lev. 3:6), a *hattat* sacrifice, and so on. The effectiveness of the image does not depend on an exact identification with a particular sacrifice. The NLT brings out what is implicit in the characterization of Jesus as without defect; he is, as a human being, without sin. The "sinless" one voluntarily sacrifices himself on our behalf.

Jesus' Sacrifice as Sweet Perfume

Follow God's example in everything you do, because you are his dear children. Live a life filled with love for others, following the example of Christ, who loved you and gave himself as a sacrifice to take away your sins. And God was pleased, because that sacrifice was like sweet perfume to him. (Eph. 5:1–2)

Paul here states that Christ is a sacrifice who died in order to remove our sins. We have seen this language before and will see it again. What is new is the description of that sacrifice as "sweet perfume" to God. This phrase reminds us that the *'olah* offering provided "an aroma pleasing to the LORD" (Lev. 1:9, 13, 17 NIV).² Indeed, the Septuagint translation of the phrase in Leviticus is identical to Paul's words in Ephesians 5:2 (*osmē euōdias*). Paul reminds the Ephesians of the sacrificial nature of Christ's death in order to prod them on to sacrificial behavior themselves. In a later section of this chapter, we will see Paul revisit this language in Philippians 4:18 to describe the behavior of that Christian community.

Jesus' Sacrifice as God's Expression of Love

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My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if you do sin, there is someone to plead for you before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who pleases God completely. He is the sacrifice for our sins. He takes away not only our sins but the sins of all the world. (1 John 2:1–2)

God showed how much he loved us by sending his only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. This is real love. It is not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. (1 John 4:9–10)

We can treat these two passages in 1 John together. In both places, Jesus is called a sacrifice (*hilasmos*) for our sins. The use of this term makes these passages appropriate for our survey of New Testament teaching on Christ as our sacrifice. We have already seen a word related to sacrifice (*hilasmos*) above in Romans 3:25. It is, in the words of G. Burge, specifically “a sacrifice to placate someone who is angry.” Theologians have debated precisely who or what is placated here. Some say God and others sin itself. I concur with Burge, who is dependent on L. Morris, who makes the commonsensical statement that “sins are covered over and God’s righteous anger is changed” by means of this sacrifice. Both of these passages in John describe the basis on which Christians enjoy a restored relationship with God after that relationship has been broken by sin.

Jesus, the High Priest

In chapter 6 we saw how seriously the book of Hebrews takes the priestly theology of the Old Testament and applies it to Jesus Christ. Accordingly, we should not be surprised to observe that the vast majority of passages that describe Jesus as our sacrifice appear in that book. The following passages allow us to capture the flavor of the author’s teaching on this subject.

Now a high priest is a man chosen to represent other human beings in their dealings with God. He presents their gifts to God and offers their sacrifices for sins. And because he is human, he is able to deal gently with the people, though they are ignorant and wayward. For he is subject to the same weaknesses they have. That is why he has to offer sacrifices, both for their sins and for his own sins. And no one can become a high priest simply because he wants such an honor. He has to be called by God for this work, just as Aaron was. (Heb. 5:1–4)

He [Jesus] is the kind of high priest we need because he is holy and blameless, unstained by sin. He has now been set apart from sinners, and he has been given the highest place of honor in heaven. He does not need to offer sacrifices every day like the other high priests. They did this for their own sins first and then for the sins of the people. But Jesus did this once for all when he sacrificed himself on the cross. Those who were high priests under the law of Moses were limited by human weakness. But after the law was given, God appointed his Son with an oath, and his Son has been made perfect forever. (Heb. 7:26–28)

We will understand these passages more fully after we have studied the priesthood in part three. Right now our attention is riveted on the idea of sacrifice. Hebrews 5 presents the Old Testament situation where even the high priest, the most set-apart of all human beings, needed to offer sacrifices to atone for his own sins. He, after all, was a sinner himself, and since he drew near to God with the sacrifices and gifts of others, his sins needed to be atoned for as well by means of sacrifice. Jesus is a priest of a different order. He is not only the priest but also the perfect sacrifice. He offered this sacrifice of himself for others, not for himself. After all, he is sinless. As the perfect sacrifice, he had to offer himself only once, which our next passage indicates.

Sacrifices and Tabernacle: Shadows of Jesus and Heavenly Reality

That is why the earthly tent and everything in it—which were copies of things in heaven—had to be purified by the blood of animals. But the real things in heaven had to be purified with far better sacrifices than the blood of animals.

For Christ has entered into heaven itself to appear now before God as our Advocate. He did not go into the earthly place of worship, for that was merely a copy of the real Temple in heaven. Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, like the earthly high priest who enters the Most Holy Place year after year to offer the blood of an animal. If that had been necessary, he would have had to die again and again, ever since the world began. But no! He came once for all time, at the end of the age, to remove the power of sin forever by his sacrificial death for us.

And just as it is destined that each person dies only once and after that comes to judgment, so also Christ died only once as a sacrifice to take away the sins of many people. He will come again but not to deal with our sins again. This time he will bring salvation to all those who are eagerly waiting for him. (Heb. 9:23–28)

The unnamed author of Hebrews recognizes that the Old Testament system of sacrifices was an earthly shadow of heavenly realities. The shadow was a physical tent (the tabernacle) where animals were sacrificed and their blood was manipulated.

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However, the reality is heavenly, and therefore animal sacrifice simply won't do. It was fine as a symbol, but the reality has to be something much more substantial. And that something more substantial is someone, namely Jesus Christ, who, as we have already seen in Hebrews 7:26–28, offered himself as a sacrifice. And this kind of sacrifice only needs to be offered one time.

The contrast in Hebrews between the inadequate shadows of animal sacrifices and the effective reality of Christ's sacrifice continues in 10:1–18. It wasn't that the animal sacrifices failed in their divinely appointed function; they were instituted after all to be symbols and not the reality. Now that the reality is here, there is absolutely no need for any more animal sacrifices. After all, "when sins are forgiven, there is no need to offer any more sacrifices" (Heb. 10:18).

JESUS, OUR SIN AND GUILT OFFERING

Though most of the relevant passages in the New Testament refer to Jesus as a sacrifice in general terms—at best only hinting at a connection with a particular sacrifice described in Leviticus 1–7—in a few cases there is an apparent identification with the *hattat* or the *asham*. We begin with two passages that speak of Jesus' crucifixion in the language of the *hattat*:

We are Christ's ambassadors, and God is using us to speak to you. We urge you, as though Christ himself were pleading with you, "Be reconciled to God!" For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ. (2 Cor. 5:20–21)

We have an altar from which the priests in the Temple on earth have no right to eat. Under the system of Jewish laws, the high priest brought the blood of animals into the Holy Place as a sacrifice for sin, but the bodies of the animals were burned outside the camp. So also Jesus suffered and died outside the city gates in order to make his people holy by shedding his own blood. So let us go out to him outside the camp and bear the disgrace he bore. For this world is not our home; we are looking forward to our city in heaven which is yet to come. (Heb. 13:10–14)

In the context of the 2 Corinthians passage, Paul urges his audience to be reconciled to God. The basis of this reconciliation is Christ's death. He is the purification offering that removes our sin. He is the sinless sin offering that allows reconciliation with God to take place.

The Hebrews passage is part of the book's concluding emphasis on the benefits of our relationship with Christ. Here, it is specifically the sin offering on the Day of Atonement (see part four) that is meant. The interesting link with Christ's death has to do with the general requirement that the remains of any sin offering be burned outside the city. So the author of Hebrews points out that Jesus was crucified outside the city walls of Jerusalem. He is our sin offering, our Day of Atonement offering. He makes the impure pure again. Not only this, but his death outside the walls of the city also beckons his followers to go outside. Outside the camp is unclean territory, but Christ, having made them holy, tells them to move out. Most commentators argue that the camp represents the security of Judaism, but now they are to move out into the world for Christ.

JESUS, OUR PASSOVER SACRIFICE

Now the LORD gave the following instructions to Moses and Aaron while they were still in the land of Egypt: "From now on, this month will be the first month of the year for you. Announce to the whole community that on the tenth day of this month each family must choose a lamb or a young goat for a sacrifice. If a family is too small to eat an entire lamb, let them share the lamb with another family in the neighborhood. Whether or not they share in this way depends on the size of each family and how much they can eat. This animal must be a one-year old male, either a sheep or a goat, with no physical defects.

"Take special care of these lambs until the evening of the fourteenth day of this first month. Then each family in the community must slaughter its lamb. They are to take some of the lamb's blood and smear it on the top and sides of the doorframe of the house where the lamb will be eaten. That evening everyone must eat roast lamb with bitter herbs and bread made without yeast. The meat must never be eaten raw or boiled; roast it all, including the head, legs, and internal organs. Do not leave any of it until the next day. Whatever is not eaten that night must be burned before morning." (Exod. 12:1–10)

How terrible that you should boast about your spirituality, and yet you let this sort of thing go on. Don't you realize that if even one person is allowed to go on sinning, soon all will be affected? Remove this wicked person from among you so that you can stay pure. Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed for us. So let us celebrate the festival, not by eating the old bread of wickedness and evil, but by eating the new bread of purity and truth. (1 Cor. 5:6–8)

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As we deal with the New Testament picture of Christ as our sacrifice, it is absolutely necessary that we introduce another variation on the Old Testament theme of sacrifice, the one connected with the tenth plague against Egypt at the time of Moses. This climactic attack against Egypt and its gods (Exod. 12:12; Num. 33:4) would finally lead to the release of Israel from their slavery in that foreign land. On the night the angel of death came to claim the firstborn of Egypt, Israel was to offer a sacrifice and smear their doorways with the blood and then eat the lamb. While the sacrifice bore some characteristics in common with the Levitical sacrifices described in the preceding chapters, it was unique, and Paul uses this sacrifice in particular to describe Christ's death on the cross.

But Paul is not picking this imagery out of thin air. Indeed, though not stated in so many words, the timing of Christ's crucifixion and indeed the whole structure of his earthly ministry point to the truth that he is the fulfillment of the Exodus; he is the Passover Lamb.

The gospel of Mark (1:2–3) begins with a quotation from Isaiah 40:3 referring to a voice calling in the wilderness. In effect, the opening of the gospel announces that some connection exists between the historical Exodus and Jesus' ministry.

A brief survey of this rich comparison begins with the baptism of Jesus, which parallels the Re(e)d Sea crossing. Paul called the Re(e)d Sea crossing the baptism of the Israelites (1 Cor. 10:1–5). It was the beginning of their redemption, just as Jesus' baptism initiates his ministry.

After the crossing of the sea, the Israelites wandered in the wilderness for forty years. Jesus, remarkably, goes into the wilderness for forty days and forty nights, where he is tempted by Satan (Matt. 4:1–11). More than a superficial numerical coincidence is at work here. Jesus' temptations are the same as those the Israelites experienced in their wanderings. Jesus is tempted in regard to food; the Israelites complained heartily about their lack and quality of food. Jesus resists the temptation to test God; the Israelites were constantly testing God. Jesus rejects Satan's invitation to worship a false god; the Israelites caved in easily to the worship of a golden calf.

Jesus responds to Satan's temptations by quoting the book of Deuteronomy three times, using the speech Moses gave the Israelites just before his death and their entry into the promised land. Moses warned the people not to succumb to temptation as they had in the wilderness. Jesus, by resisting the temptations, shows that he is the obedient Son of God in precisely those areas where the Israelites failed their heavenly Father.

These examples are just the beginning of the Exodus-echoes we find in Jesus. During the wilderness wanderings Moses went up on Mount Sinai and received the law of God. It is more than a coincidence that in the gospel of Matthew (chaps. 5–7) Jesus also goes up a mountain, where he delivers a sermon on the law. Jesus is showing himself to be the divine lawgiver.

There are many more connections, but we are ready to return to our topic. Jesus is crucified during the Passover (John 19:17–37); he becomes our Passover Lamb. What is the Passover but the Jewish festival that celebrates the Exodus? The relationship is undeniable. The Gospels insist that we understand Jesus as the fulfillment of the Exodus and his death as the ultimate Passover sacrifice.

The above survey has no pretensions of being complete. However, the point is well established by this sampling of passages: Jesus is our sacrifice! He is the one anticipated by the symbolic system of Old Testament ritual. With his once-and-for-all sacrifice, there is no longer any need to have any other sacrifice of any kind. As we reflect on the difficulty and unpleasantness of animal sacrifice, we should thank Jesus that he has offered his life as a sacrifice for our sins.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

1. Read Isaiah 53, a passage that many Christians say anticipates the coming of Messiah. Notice and reflect on the sacrificial language. How does it relate to Leviticus, and how does it anticipate the New Testament?
2. Read Genesis 22, the story of Abraham taking Isaac to Mount Moriah. Do you note any parallels with Christ's later sacrifice? What do you make of these parallels?
3. Sacrificial language in the New Testament is also used in connection to our response to our new life in Christ. Read Romans 12:1–2; Philippians 2:17; 4:18; Hebrews 13:15; 1 Peter 2:5 and consider implications for our lives.

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4. Reflect on the fact that Christ sacrificially died for your sins. What emotional reactions does this evoke from you? How should you respond in terms of your actions?⁸

Offerings and Sacrifices. The Old Testament regulations for offerings and sacrifices are renowned for their many and complicated details, and the overall sacrificial system is quite foreign to our Western culture. Yet one could hardly overestimate the significance of the Old Testament sacrificial system for the theology of the Bible. Even before the revelation to Moses at Sinai, offerings and sacrifices were a key part of the practice of relationship with God from Cain and Abel, to Noah, to the patriarchs, to Jethro the priest of Median, to the ratification of the Mosaic covenant by sacrifice before the tabernacle was built. They remained central to the ritual systems of the tabernacle and the first and second temples and, therefore, to the Old Testament theology of God's "presence" and his relationship to ancient Israel as his "kingdom of priests." When God became present with us by means of the incarnation of Jesus Christ the Old Testament offerings and sacrifices continued to yield much in terms of Jesus as our sacrifice, Jesus as our High Priest, and our Christian commitment and ministry as a sacrifice to God of ourselves and our kingdom labors.

The Old Testament. The Hebrew expression "to present an offering" is a combination of the verb "to present, bring near, offer" (*hiqrīb*) and its cognate noun "offering" (*qorbān*). The Hebrew word normally translated "sacrifice" (*zebah*) does not occur in Leviticus 1–3 until 3:1 in the introduction to the "peace offering" section (see also vv. 3, 6, 9). The term for "offering" continues to be used there (vv. 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 12, 14). Thus, one can say that the peace offering was a particular kind of "offering" that was also a "sacrifice"—it involved an animal that was killed and then eaten as part of a communal meal.

In this article the word "offering" will be used as a comprehensive term including both grain and animal offerings. "Sacrifice" will refer only to animal offerings.

Offerings and Sacrifices outside the Sanctuary. According to the earthen altar law in Exodus 20:24–26 and the many references to such altars in the early history of Israel as a nation in the land of Canaan, the Lord clearly intended that the Israelites perpetuate the practice of building solitary altars and worshiping at them even after the tabernacle altar existed. These altars and the practice of worship at them were relatively simple compared to that called for in the "sanctuary" (i.e., the tabernacle and later the temple). The sanctuary included a corresponding burnt offering altar but it was also an actual residence of God. The sanctuary system of offerings and sacrifices included the major features of the previously existing external system (i.e., the burnt, grain, drink, and peace offerings at the solitary altars), but the solitary altar system did not include sin and guilt offerings.

Even as early as Genesis 4:3–5 Cain brought an offering to the Lord from the fruit of the ground and Abel brought one from his flock. The Hebrew term for both offerings in this context is *minhāq*, which can be either a general term for "offering, gift, present, tribute" or a specialized term from "grain offering." Some have argued that Cain's offering was rejected precisely because, not being an animal offering, it did not include blood atonement. A better explanation is that the lack of descriptive terms such as "firstfruits" for Cain's offering is conspicuous for its absence in light of the description of Abel's offering as "fat portions" and "firstborn" (Gen. 4:3b–4a). Cain's response only made matters progressively worse and may indicate that there was a preexisting problem in Cain's relationship with both God and Abel.

The first reference to "burnt offerings" is Genesis 8:20, where it is said that "Noah built an altar to the LORD, and, taking some off all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed *burnt offerings* on it." The word for "sacrifice" (*zebah*) first occurs in Genesis 31:54 in the covenant-making ceremony between Jacob and Laban: "He [Jacob] offered a *sacrifice* there in the hill country and invited his relatives to a meal" (cf. Gen. 46:1). These two terms occur together in Exodus 10:25, where Moses explained to Pharaoh, "You must allow us to have *sacrifices* and *burnt offerings* to present to the LORD our God."

The first occurrence of the term "peace offering" (*sēblāmîm*, נִיב "fellowship offering") is in Exodus 20:24, where the Lord refers to it along with "burnt offerings" as part of the altar law: "Make an altar of earth for me and sacrifice on it your *burnt offerings* and *fellowship offerings*, your sheep and goats and your cattle. Wherever I cause my name to be honored, I will come to you and bless you." Finally, all three terms appear together in Exodus 24:4–5 in the ritual for the ratification of the covenant at Mount Sinai: "He [Moses] got up early the next morning and built an [earthen] altar at the foot of the mountain.... Then he

⁸ Longman, T., III. (2001). *Immanuel in Our Place: Seeing Christ in Israel's Worship*. (T. Longman III & J. A. Groves, Eds.) (pp. 103–115). Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing.

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sent young Israelite men, and they offered *burnt offerings* and sacrificed young bulls as *fellowship offerings* to the Lord” (here the NIV translates the apposition “sacrifices, fellowship offerings” simply as “fellowship offerings”; both terms are there in Hebrew).

After the tabernacle had been established the nation continued to offer burnt, grain, drink, and peace offerings on solitary earthen altars as well as on the altar in the tabernacle. In fact, the Lord himself commanded that they build such an altar at Shechem (i.e., Mount Ebal) and offer burnt and peace offerings there as part of the initial covenant ceremony in the land (Deut. 27:5–7). At least part of the purpose of this ceremony appears to have been to lay claim to the land that the Lord had promised Abram long before when he first entered the land and built an altar in the same general location, near Shechem (Gen. 12:6–7). In some cases such altars and the burnt and/or peace offerings presented on them were a means of calling on the name of the Lord in specific situations (see, e.g., Gideon in Judg. 6:24–27, the Benjamites in Judg. 21:3–4, Samuel in 1 Sam. 7:8–10, David in 2 Sam. 24:25, and Elijah in 1 Kings 18:23–24, 30, 36–39). In other instances altars on high places were used for communal sacrificial meals before the Lord.

Offerings and Sacrifices inside the Sanctuary. From a literary point of view, the rules for burnt, grain, and peace offerings in Leviticus 1–3 is a unified whole. The repetition of the introductory formula and address to “the sons of Israel” in Leviticus 4:1–2 separates the rules for sin and guilt offerings in Leviticus 4:1–6:7 from those in Leviticus 1–3. This seems to be a literary reflection of the historical reality that before and even after the construction of the tabernacle the burnt offerings (Heb. *’ōlâ*) and peace offerings (Heb. *sěblāmîm* or *zēbah*, “sacrifice,” or some combination of the two; see below), and the grain offerings that often came with them (Heb. *minḥâ*; see Lev. 2 and Num. 15:1–16), constituted a system of offerings used by the faithful at solitary Yahwistic altars outside the tabernacle (see above).

The burnt offering. The burnt offering could be from the cattle (Lev. 1:3–9), the sheep and goats (vv. 10–13), or the birds (vv. 14–17; usually limited to the poor, e.g., Lev. 12:8; 14:22). Amid the diversity of different kinds of animal offerings and the many distinctive ways they were offered to the Lord it appears that there was one constant in the presentation of sacrificial animals: the laying on of the hand (or pl. hands if more than one person was involved). The purpose of this act was to identify the offerer with his or her offering and possibly also to designate or consecrate the offering for the purposes of the offering: “He is to lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him” (Lev. 1:4). The laying on of the hand did not transfer anything to the offering animal, least of all sin. Only holy things could have contact with the altar. In the scapegoat ritual the high priest was to lay *both* hands on the animal and confess the sins of the whole congregation in order to expressly transfer the sins to the goat. But in that case the animal was not offered upon the altar but instead sent as far away from the altar as possible (e.g., Lev. 16:21–22).

The normal form of blood manipulation for the burnt offering was relatively simple: the priest would “splash it around on the altar” (Lev. 1:5). This was not just a way of disposing of the blood, but a way of offering it on the altar. It corresponded to arranging the pieces of the animal’s carcass on the altar (Lev. 1:8–9).

The offerer normally slaughtered the animal, but the priests placed its various parts on the altar fire (Lev. 1:7–9a) “to burn all of it on the altar” as a “burnt offering, an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the LORD” (v. 9b). The basic principle behind the burnt offering was that the whole animal was offered on the altar, that is, with the exception of the hide of the larger animals that had been skinned as part of the slaughtering process (Lev. 1:6; 7:8) and “the crop” of the birds “with its contents” (Lev. 1:16).

It was the burning of the offering that made it a pleasing aroma to the Lord which, in turn, caused it to arouse a certain kind of response from the Lord. According to Genesis 8:20–22 it was the pleasing aroma of the burning meat that led the Lord to promise that he would never again destroy the earth and mankind as he had done in the flood. The burnt offering was a way of calling on the Lord to pay attention to the needs, requests, and entreaties of his worshipers either independently or in association with the peace offering. It was also a means of expressing worshipful responses to the Lord (Lev. 22:18–20) and, along with its accompanying grain offerings, was the staple of the daily, weekly, monthly, and annual festival cycle in the sanctuary (Exod. 29:38–45; Num. 28–29).

The grain and drink offering. The Hebrew term for “grain offering” is *minḥâ*, which, as noted above, can also mean generally “gift, present, tribute.” In Leviticus (and other sanctuary contexts) it always means “grain offering.” The grain offering pericope in Leviticus 2 stands between the burnt and peace offering chapters (Lev. 1 and 3, respectively). This is as it should be since the grain offering was a regular part of a burnt or peace offering along with a prescribed libation (Num. 15:1–15).

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Like the grain offering, the practice of offering drink offerings (i.e., libations) predates the tabernacle system and continued at other altars even after the tabernacle and temple were available (see above). However, within the sanctuary system they constituted a significant part of the ritual procedures even on a regular daily basis. It was specifically legislated that libations along with grain offerings should normally accompany any burnt or peace offering (Num. 15:1–5).

The priest was to offer a part of the grain offering on the burnt offering altar as a “memorial (portion)” to the Lord along with the salt of the covenant (v. 13). If the grain was offered raw then incense was to be added to the memorial portion to lend it an especially pleasing aroma as it burned on the altar (vv. 1–2, 15–16). According to the law of the test of adultery in Numbers 5:11–31 the purpose of the “memorial (portion)” (see v. 26 there) seems to have been to call to mind the reason for the offering in the presence of the Lord. The term itself is directly related to the Hebrew verb meaning “to remember” and in this passage the whole of the grain offering was viewed as literally “an offering of memorial causing remembrance of iniquity” (5:15b; cf. v. 18). The grain offering of jealousy did not include oil or frankincense because it called to mind the accusation of iniquity. The grain offering used as a sin offering was similar (vv. 11–13).

Since the memorial portion was burned on the altar, the whole of the grain offering was to be unleavened with no honey added (Lev. 2:11), and the priests were to consume the remainder as unleavened cakes (Lev. 6:16–17). The prohibition against leaven and honey is probably best explained by their association with decay through fermentation. The “bread of presence” placed on the table before the Lord in the Holy Place every Sabbath was also conceived of as a “grain offering” (Lev. 24:5–9).

Leviticus 2:13 refers to the importance of adding “the salt of the covenant of your God” to every grain offering. This expression occurs in only two other places in the Old Testament: once in reference to the covenant commitment of the Lord to provide for the Aaronic priests (Num. 18:19) and once in reference to the covenant commitment to the dynasty of David and his descendants (2 Chron. 13:5). The preserving character of salt suggests the enduring nature of the covenant bond between the Lord and his people. The commitment was permanent.

The peace (or fellowship) offering. The peace offering emphasizes the fact that the people of ancient Israel had the opportunity for close communion with the Lord. They could eat the flesh of an animal that had been presented, identified, and consecrated as an offering to the Lord (Lev. 3:1–2; 7:11–21). This signified that all was well (i.e., peaceful) in the relationship between the Lord and his people and therefore always came last when offered in a series with other kinds of offerings.

The blood manipulation for a peace offering was normally the same as that for a burnt offering (Lev. 3:2b; cf. vv. 8, 13). However, only the fat parts of the carcass were offered on the altar to be burned “as an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the Lord” (vv. 5, 11, 16). Thus, the fat parts of the carcass became like the whole carcass of the burnt offering and accomplished the same purpose. It is likely that the fat was not to be eaten because it was viewed as a delicacy. For example, according to Deuteronomy 32:13–14 the Lord fed the people the best of the land including, among other things, the “fat” of lambs, rams, goats, and even wheat as well as the “blood” of grapes. The “fat of the kidneys of the wheat” (v. 14) is clearly a play on words for the best of the wheat.

Leviticus 7:11–34 is important to a fuller understanding of the peace offering. Aside from the prohibition against eating blood or fat in verses 22–27, there are two major sections here. The first deals with the various kinds of worship rationale associated with the peace offering (thanksgiving, votive, or freewill) and rules for eating the meat that went to the offerers (vv. 11–21). The second section is about the portions that went to the priests from every peace offering (vv. 28–34): the breast of the “wave offering” (vv. 29–31; the noun derives from the Hebrew verb, “to wave”) and the right thigh of the “contribution” to the particular priest who officiated at the offering of the particular peace offering (vv. 32–33). The latter derives from the Hebrew verb “to raise up” and for that reason is called a “heave offering” in some English versions (cf. English “to heave,” meaning to lift, raise up). However, in ritual contexts this verb actually means “to remove” something in order to present it to the Lord (i.e., to set it aside as a special contribution).

These were the standard prebend for the priests (Lev. 7:34) and they could be eaten in any clean place (Lev. 10:14; i.e., they were “holy,” not “most holy,” contrast the grain offering prebend in vv. 12–13). Therefore, not only the priests themselves, but also all who lived in their households and were clean could eat of these portions of the peace offerings, but no common persons of a non-priestly household (Lev. 22:10–16). For a common person to eat of these portions would be to violate the sancta, the holy things of the Lord (see the “guilt offering” below).

The sin (or purification) offering. The sin offering was the primary blood atonement offering in the sanctuary system of offerings through which worshipers could receive forgiveness for their sin and deal with the degree to which they might have contaminated the tabernacle. Very detailed rules of blood manipulation were the focal point of this ritual procedure.

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Leviticus 4:1–2a sets the sin offering pericope off from Leviticus 1–3. Unlike the previous sections virtually every paragraph in Leviticus 4:1–5:13 either begins or ends with a statement of sin committed and its associated guilt. Leviticus 4:2 states: “Say to the Israelites: ‘When anyone sins unintentionally and does what is forbidden in any of the LORD’s commands....’ ” Leviticus 4:3 then begins the first of the four major divisions: the sin offering of the priest (4:3–12), the whole congregation (4:13–21), the leader (4:22–26), and the common person (4:27–5:13).

Sin offerings were used on several unique occasions (see, e.g., the consecration of the priests, Exod. 29:14, 36; Lev. 8:2, 14; the inauguration of altar worship, Lev. 9:2–7, 8–11, 15–17). They were also called for on regular occasions monthly (Num. 28:15), at various annual festivals, and especially on the annual Day of Atonement (Exod. 30:10; Lev. 16; Num. 29:11). Other specific situations that occurred throughout the year would also require a sin offering (e.g., the cleansing of the woman after childbirth, Lev. 12:6–8; the cleansing of irregular unclean discharges, Lev. 15:15, 30; in our age the term “sin offering” could be construed to mean that this offering focused on the problem of moral and social sin. In the Old Testament such sins were included as part of the purpose for sin offerings, but the sin offering could also be brought for physical impurities that had nothing to do with moral failure).

The focal point of the sin offering ritual was blood manipulation and the way it was done was different when it was brought for the priest and whole congregation as opposed to the leader and the common people. For the priests and the whole congregation the priest sprinkled the blood with his finger seven times in front of the veil of the sanctuary (i.e., the tent of meeting inside the tabernacle complex), put some of the blood on the horns of the incense altar inside the Holy Place, and simply poured out the remainder of the blood at the base of the burnt offering altar near the gate of the tabernacle complex (Lev. 4:6–7, 17–18). In other words, the blood penetrated the tabernacle complex as far as the contamination did (i.e., the “priest” could enter the Holy Place, and the “congregation” included the priests). The blood of the leader and the common Israelite was applied only to the horns of the burnt offering altar (Lev. 4:30, 34; 5:9), which was the boundary of penetration for the nonpriestly Israelite into the tabernacle. The principle is that the blood went as far as the particular person or collective group of persons could go and, therefore, decontaminated the tabernacle to that point.

Leviticus 16:29–34 is a summary of the intended effect of the three sin offerings on the Day of Atonement: the scapegoat sin offering cleansed the *people* from their sins (vv. 29–31), and the slaughtered sin offerings for the priests and the people cleansed the *tabernacle* from the impurity of their sins (vv. 32–33). Some scholars have argued that the cultic regulations dealt with only cultic infringements, and that the cultic system and the larger everyday community life of the nation were disconnected. However, the scapegoat ritual suggests that this was not the case. On the contrary, the Day of Atonement cleansed both the cultic impurities and the various kinds of iniquities of the people that could defile the tabernacle. The tabernacle holiness and purity emphasized in Leviticus 1–16 and the national holiness and purity which is the primary concern of Leviticus 17–27 were viewed in close relationship to each other—so close that both were dealt with on the Day of Atonement.

The guilt (or reparation) offering. The purpose of the guilt offering was to make atonement for “desecration” of “sancta,” that is, the mishandling of holy (sacred) things by treating them as if they were common rather than holy. For example, according to Leviticus 22:10–16 the holy food gifts were to be eaten by the priests and those in their household, not the common people. To do so would be to “profane” the “holy” gifts (v. 15). However, if a common person ate holy meat mistakenly, then he had to give the same amount back to the priests plus one-fifth as reparation for what he had done. This passage is an instructive parallel to the major guilt offering pericope (i.e., Lev. 5:14–6:7).

The guilt offering law begins as follows: “When a person commits a violation and sins unintentionally in regard to any of the Lord’s holy things” (Lev. 5:15a). The word “unintentionally” is the same one used in reference to the sin offering. It refers to “straying” or “erring” from the commands of the Lord, in this case, specifically the commands about “the Lord’s holy things” (i.e., the things dedicated to the Lord for the tabernacle or priesthood).

The basic idea behind the expression “commits a violation” is that the person has acted unfaithfully against God by violating the boundary between the common and the holy. In this context, therefore, it means “to commit a sacrilege.” However, the guilt offering was also brought in cases of violations against the property of other people, not only the Lord’s “sancta” (Lev. 6:1–7; 19:20–22; Num. 5:5–10). Therefore, whether the property belonged to the Lord or to other people, a guilt offering was presented to the Lord to make atonement and the violated property was restored plus one-fifth to the one whose property had been violated (Lev. 5:14–16, the Lord’s property; Lev. 6:1–7; Num. 5:5–10, other people’s property). Therefore some scholars refer to this as the “reparation offering.” The violator not only brought the offering to the Lord but also made reparation for the property he had violated. In both cases the final result for the one who committed the violation was that it would “be forgiven him” (Lev.

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5:16, 18; 6:7). Once the reparation had been made it was possible for the offender to make atonement and receive forgiveness from the Lord (vv. 15b and 16b).

The violation in Lev. 5:15 was done “in error” and “known” by the violator. The violation in verses 17–18 was also done “in error” but it was “not known” by the violator. The assumption is that he might come to know his error either through remembering after the fact or being informed by another person that, for example, the meat he had eaten was from the “holy” portion that belonged to a priest and his family. Even though it was done in ignorance (vv. 17–18), if he did indeed come to know about it he was still responsible for bringing a guilt offering to make atonement and obtain forgiveness (vv. 18–19).

A good example of the use of the guilt offering is the ritual procedure for the cleansing of the “leper” (Lev. 14:1–20; the term “leper” probably includes any person whose skin showed any kind of infectious blemishes). After the initial cleansing by special water and the “scapebird” (vv. 1–9), the first standard blood atonement ritual was the guilt offering (vv. 10–18). The point of the guilt offering at the beginning of this series of offerings was to reconsecrate the leper so that he could once again become part of the “kingdom of priests, a holy nation” (Exod. 19:6) from which he had been expelled and therefore, in a sense, “desecrated” because of his diseased condition (Lev. 13:45–46).

The word for guilt offering also occurs in Isaiah 53:10, where it is said of the suffering servant “though the LORD makes his life a *guilt offering*, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand.” How was the suffering servant a guilt offering? The answer is that he was estranged and “desecrated” from the nation as a leper was estranged and desecrated. He suffered this at the hands of and yet also on behalf of the nation in order to make atonement for them before the Lord. In the days of Isaiah the ultimate suffering servant was yet to come, the Lord Jesus Christ. That brings us to the New Testament.

The New Testament. The verb *thuō*, “to slaughter, sacrifice” an animal, is used fourteen times in the New Testament referring to (1) nonsacrificial animals killed (John 10:10; Acts 10:13; 11:7) and prepared for a wedding feast (Matt. 22:4) or other kind of celebration (Luke 15:23, 27, 30); (2) the slaughter of the Passover lamb (Mark 14:12; Luke 22:7; 1 Cor. 5:7); and (3) offerings to pagan gods (Acts 14:13, 18; 1 Cor. 10:20).

The noun *thusia*, “sacrifice, offering, act of offering” (cf. the verb above), occurs twenty-nine times referring, for example, to specific Old Testament passages (e.g., Matt. 9:13; 12:7), fulfillment of Old Testament sacrificial regulations (Luke 2:24) or festival celebrations (1 Cor. 10:18), and the sacrifice of Christ on the cross (Eph. 5:2). *Prosphora*, “offering, sacrifice, gift; act of offering; grain offering” (9 occurrences; cf. the verb *prospherō*, “to offer, present”), refers to Christ’s presentation of himself to God as an offering (Eph. 5:2, Heb. 10:10, 14) and the Old Testament offerings (Heb. 10:5, 8). The term *dōron*, “gift,” occurs nineteen times in the New Testament; sixteen of those times it refers to sacrificial gifts or offerings to God.

Jesus Christ and the Old Testament Sacrificial System. During his incarnation Jesus explicitly honored the Mosaic sacrificial system (Matt. 8:4; Mark 1:44; Luke 5:14; 17:14). He lived as a Jew and encouraged others to also keep every “smallest letter” and “least stroke of a pen” (Matt. 5:18). However, he was also in continuity with the Old Testament prophetic critique of the cult. For example, in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus suggested that the relationship with one’s brother needed to be resolved before presenting offerings in the temple (Matt. 5:23–24). He also expressed frustration with loopholes in the present priestly system whereby one could violate other Old Testament laws (e.g., the requirement to honor one’s parents by taking care of them) by substituting the cultic piety of making offerings to the Lord (Matt. 15:5; Mark 7:11, the well-known “corban” passage).

Another dimension of the relationship between Jesus and the Old Testament sacrificial system is his own personal identification with different aspects of the system. There are two aspects of this: Jesus as our High Priest and Jesus as the sacrificial victim offered to God on the altar. It is important to remember that the New Testament offers a *metaphorical* application of the categories of the Old Testament system of offerings and sacrifices to Jesus in order to explain and illustrate the various ways in which his death on the cross was beneficial to us. Jesus was not literally slaughtered at the burnt offering altar, his blood was not applied there, and his body was not burned there. Nevertheless, the different kinds of offerings and sacrifices serve as metaphors to illustrate the various purposes and complete efficacy of Jesus’ death on the cross.

Jesus as our “Passover sacrifice.” There are many possible references to Jesus as a Passover sacrifice in the New Testament. However, the most certain of them all is in the exhortation to purity in 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.” In the context Paul uses this to rebuke the Corinthians for not removing an evil man from their church fellowship. The Passover sacrifice was associated with the removal of leaven from every Jewish household (see Exod. 12:15–20 and cf. Mishnah Pesahim 1–3). Therefore, the leaven

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image could be used to refer to the polluting effect of one evil person in the midst of the congregation. Since Christ has already been sacrificed it was certainly time now to get rid of the leaven.

Jesus as our suffering servant "guilt offering." When John the Baptist said "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29), it is not certain whether he was referring to Jesus as the Passover lamb or as the suffering servant of the Lord mentioned in Isaiah 53:7b, "he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth." The Passover lamb option has been favored by some but the general consensus is that it refers to Isaiah 53:7.

Jesus as our new covenant ratification "peace offering." According to Luke 22:1–23, the "last supper" of Jesus was a Passover meal. Toward the end of that meal Jesus created a new ritual on the foundation of the Passover ritual. The new ritual is the basis of the ordinance that we have now come to call "Communion," the "Eucharist," the "Last Supper," or the "Lord's Supper." As is well known it includes Jesus words over the *bread* (Luke 22:19) and the *cup* (Luke 22:20). Both elements were part of the underlying Passover ritual, but Jesus referred to the bread as his own "body" and the cup as his own "blood."

Jesus referred to the cup as "the *new* covenant in my blood." The similarity to Moses' statement in Exodus 24:8 that "this is the blood of the covenant" makes it inconceivable that the apostles would have failed to connect Jesus' words with the covenant ratification ritual back in Exodus 24. In this case, however, the blood was for the ratification of the *new* covenant, which of course recalls Jeremiah 31:31–37 (see esp. v. 31).

Jesus as our "sin offering." The Old Testament word for "sin offering" can also mean "sin." According to the NIV translation of Romans 8:3, God sent his Son "in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering" but marginal option is "in likeness of sinful man, for sin," which reflects the fact that the Greek text has only the word "sin." This translation problem appears again in 2 Corinthians 5:21, where Paul writes, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us." In this case the NIV translation decision is reversed from that in Romans 8:3 because here the marginal option is "to be a sin offering for us." The important question is, did Christ become "sin" or did he become a "sin offering" for us? From an Old Testament cultic perspective the translation "sin offering" might make more sense in these passages.

It is the sin offering rationale that is at the foundation of atonement, redemption, forgiveness, and purification terminology and concepts in the New Testament. For example, according to Romans 3:24b–25a, we are justified before God "through the *redemption* that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a *sacrifice of atonement*, through faith in his blood." It will be recalled that the offering with which atonement was most associated was the sin offering. Moreover, the sin offering blood atonement was foundational to Old Testament forgiveness.

In the New Testament the connection between redemption or atonement and forgiveness of sins is also explicit. For example, in its context the reference to Jesus as "the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2) is a continuation of the argument that "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will *forgive* us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

The sacrifice of Jesus and the whole Old Testament sacrificial system. Hebrews 9–10 opens with a summary of the Old Testament sanctuary system, beginning with a description of the sanctuary itself and ending with the distinction between the sacrifices that were offered throughout the year versus the Day of Atonement. The background is the quotation of the new covenant passage from Jeremiah 31:31–34 in Hebrews 8, to which the writer will return in Hebrews 10:16–17. In the meantime Hebrews 9:1–10:15 is devoted to a comparison between: (1) the Old Testament sacrificial system in general versus the sacrifice of Christ (Heb. 9:8–14), (2) the Old Testament covenant ratification sacrifice (Exod. 24:5–8) versus the new covenant sacrifice of Christ (Heb. 9:15–20; see above), (3) the cleansing of the Old Testament tabernacle with blood (Exod. 29:10–14; Lev. 8:15; Num. 7:1) versus the blood of Christ cleansing the heavenly tabernacle (Heb. 9:21–24), and (4) the Old Testament Day of Atonement (Lev. 16) versus the sacrifice of Christ (Heb. 9:25–10:14).

With regard to the sacrificial system in general, the writer begins by saying that, since even the high priest could only enter the most holy place once a year (9:7), therefore, "The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the most holy place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing" (9:8). The first reason for this is that the Old Testament gifts and sacrifices "were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper" (9:9b). This stands in contrast to the sacrifice of Christ our High Priest. The Old Testament sacrifices accomplished only the "cleansing of the flesh" (v. 13, NASB) whereas the blood of Christ cleansed the "conscience" (v. 14).

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With regard to covenant ratification, since Christ's sacrifice was better than the sacrifices that ratified the covenant at Sinai (vv. 18–20), the covenant ratified by his sacrifice was a better covenant (i.e., the new covenant, v. 15). Moreover, regarding the use of blood to cleanse the tabernacle (Heb. 9:21–24), it is well known that this was the essential purpose of the sin offering in the Old Testament sacrificial system. However, there is no mention of sprinkling the whole “tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies” (Heb. 9:21) with blood on that day.

The final section of the writer's excursus on the Old Testament sacrificial system is the most extended of the four (Heb. 9:25–10:15). In it he recalls that the Old Testament sacrifices could not remove the “conscience of sins” (10:2). Instead, those sacrifices were “an annual reminder of sins” (10:3). Thus, he brings his earlier argument with regard to the *level of cleansing* accomplished by the Old Testament sacrifices (i.e., they only worked on the level of the flesh) into his discussion of the *temporal limitations* of the cleansing accomplished by the Old Testament sacrifices. Even the annual Day of Atonement sacrifices only accomplished cleansing for one year (9:25–10:4), much less the regular offerings, which were even more limited since they had to be offered time after time throughout the year (10:10–11).

It is important to recognize that the difference in sacrificial efficacy corresponds to the difference between the two covenants to which the sacrifices were related. In the old covenant the law was written on tablets of stone, but in the new covenant it was written on the tablets of human hearts (2 Cor. 3:3). No law, not even God's law, can change the heart (i.e., cleanse the conscience) of a person unless it is somehow written on the heart of the person. The new covenant functions on this very level by the power of the Holy Spirit who works in the human heart. He applies the law, including the sacrificial law, to the heart (conscience) of the person who trusts in Christ by faith. He thereby transforms their heart and with it their life.

The Christian and the Old Testament sacrificial system. The fact that the Old Testament sacrifices and the New Testament sacrifice of Christ functioned on altogether different levels is reflected also in the fact that Paul was willing to continue to offer temple sacrifices long after he had become a Christian. In fact, he even paid for other Jewish Christians to do the same thing and thereby encouraged the practice (Acts 21:23–26). This suggests that, although he did not see himself or any other Jewish or Gentile Christian as being under the law, nevertheless, the apostle Paul did indeed view the Old Testament sacrificial system as a legitimate means of expressing piety and worship for first-century Jewish believers. This, of course, ended with the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70, but by that time Paul was also off the scene.

In the meantime, Paul also used the Old Testament sacrificial laws as a metaphorical foundation for teaching Christian life principles and practices. The foundation for this metaphorical shift was already laid in the Old Testament, where we find such statements as, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise” (Ps. 51:17). Therefore, in view of the multitude of mercies that God has shown to us, the apostle Paul urges Christians to “present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship” (Rom. 12:1, NASB). To live as a sacrifice involves several things. For Paul it meant that he was willing to be “poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service” of those whom he led to the Lord (Phil. 2:17). Sometimes this required suffering. Paul was no stranger to it and the apostle Peter used the example of Jesus as the suffering servant to encourage Christians to be willing to suffer patiently for Christ (1 Peter 2:18–25).

Other New Testament metaphorical applications of sacrificial law to the Christian life focus on the service and worship we can offer to God. For example, Paul viewed the fruit of his ministry to the Gentiles as “an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 15:16b). Finally, the writer of Hebrews exhorts us to “continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name” and “to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased” (13:15–16). In a sense, therefore, just as Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament sacrificial laws, in a similar way we can fulfill them by living like Jesus lived.

RICHARD E. AVERBECK

See also ALTAR; ATONEMENT; DEATH OF CHRIST; LAMB, LAMB OF GOD; LEVITICUS, THEOLOGY OF; LORD'S SUPPER, THE; PRIEST, PRIESTHOOD; SPIRITUALITY; TABERNACLE; TEMPLE.

Bibliography. G. A. Anderson, *ABD*, 5:870–86; C. Brown, *NIDNTT*, 3:415–38; P. J. Budd, *The World of Ancient Israel*; W. W. Hallo, *The Book of the People*; M. Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel*; J. Henninger, *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, 12:544–57; P. P. Jenson, *Graded Holiness: A Key to the Priestly Conception of the World*; H. J. Klauck, *ABD*, 5:886–91; I. Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence: The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School*; J. Gordon McConville, *Law and Theology in Deuteronomy*; J.

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Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*; idem, *Numbers*; R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 2:415–56; G. J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*; D. P. Wright, *The Disposal of Impurity*.⁹

LAMB OF GOD—a phrase used by John the Baptist to describe Jesus (John 1:29, 36). John publicly identified Jesus as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” Elsewhere in the New Testament Jesus is called a lamb (Acts 8:32; 1 Pet. 1:19; Rev. 5:6). The Book of Revelation speaks of Jesus as a lamb twenty-eight times.

John’s reference to Jesus as the Lamb of God calls to mind the Old Testament sacrificial system. In the sacrifice God accepted the blood of animals as the means of atonement for sin. It is likely that John had many themes from the Old Testament in mind when he called Jesus the Lamb of God. These themes probably included the sin offering (Leviticus 4), the trespass offering (Leviticus 5), the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16), and the Passover sacrifice (Exodus 12).

But the strongest image from the Old Testament is the suffering servant who “was led as a lamb to the slaughter” (Is. 53:7) and who “bore the sin of many” (Is. 53:12). Thus, this vivid description of Jesus was a pointed announcement of the *Atonement He would bring about on man’s behalf.¹⁰

ATONEMENT—the act by which God restores a relationship of harmony and unity between Himself and human beings. The word can be broken into three parts which express this great truth in simple but profound terms: “at-one-ment.” Through God’s atoning grace and forgiveness, we are reinstated to a relationship of restored unity with God, in spite of our sin.

Human Need. Because of Adam’s sin (Rom. 5:18; 1 Cor. 15:22) and our own personal sins (Col. 1:21), no person is worthy of relationship with a holy God (Eccl. 7:20; Rom. 3:23). Since we are helpless to correct this situation (Prov. 20:9) and can do nothing to hide our sin from God (Heb. 4:13), we all stand condemned by sin (Rom. 3:19). It is human nature (our sinfulness) and God’s nature (His holy separateness from sin) which makes us “enemies” (Rom. 5:10).

God’s Gift: Atonement. God’s gracious response to the helplessness of His chosen people, the nation of Israel, was to give them a means of *reconciliation through Old Testament covenant Law. This came in the sacrificial system, where the death or “blood” of the animal was accepted by God as a substitute for the death (Ezek. 18:20) which the sinner deserved: “For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls” (Lev. 17:11).

The Law required that the sacrificial victims must be free from defect, and giving them always involved some cost to the sinner. But an animal’s death did not automatically make a person or the people right with God in some simplistic or mechanical way. The separation between God and man because of sin was and is a dynamic and personal matter. God for His part personally gave the means of atonement in the sacrificial system; humans, for their part, personally were expected to (1) recognize the seriousness of their sin (Lev. 16:29-30; Mic. 6:6-8); and (2) identify themselves personally with the victim that substituted for them (Lev. 1:4). Thus, under the Old Testament, God Himself brought about atonement by graciously providing the appointed sacrifices. The priests represented Him in the atonement ritual, and the sinner received the benefits of being reconciled to God in forgiveness and harmony.

Although Old Testament believers were truly forgiven and received genuine atonement through animal sacrifice, the New Testament clearly states that during the Old Testament period God’s justice was not served: “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins” (Heb. 10:4). Atonement was possible “because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed” (Rom. 3:25). However, God’s justice was served in the death of Jesus Christ as a substitute who “not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption” (Heb. 9:12). “And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant” (Heb. 9:15).

Our Response. The Lord Jesus came according to God’s will (Acts 2:23; 1 Pet. 1:20) “to give His life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45), or “for all” (1 Tim. 2:6). Though God “laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (Is. 53:6; also 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13), yet Christ “has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God” (Eph. 5:2), so that those who believe in Him

⁹ Averbeck, R. E. (1996). [Offerings and Sacrifices](#). In *Evangelical dictionary of biblical theology* (electronic ed., pp. 578–581). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

¹⁰ Hayford, J. W., Thomas Nelson Publishers. (1995). [Hayford’s Bible handbook](#). Nashville, TN; Atlanta, GA; London; Vancouver: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

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(Rom. 3:22) might receive atonement and “be saved from [God’s] wrath” (Rom. 5:9) through “the precious blood of Christ” (1 Pet. 1:19).

No believer who truly understands the awesome holiness of God’s nature or the justice of His wrath for sin, nor any who even slightly fathom the terrible helplessness and hopelessness of man due to our personal sins, can fail to be overwhelmed by the deep love of Jesus for each of us and the wonder of God’s gracious gift of eternal atonement through Christ. Through Jesus His Son, God will present us “faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 24¹¹)

¹¹ Hayford, J. W., Thomas Nelson Publishers. (1995). [*Hayford’s Bible handbook*](#). Nashville, TN; Atlanta, GA; London; Vancouver: Thomas Nelson Publishers.