

The Atonement of Christ

Throughout the Old Testament, the high priest had to make atonement for the sins of Israel. This was a special day for Israel, known as the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:1-34, 23:27-28). On this day, the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies after he had put on special garments, sacrificed a bull and sprinkled its blood on the Ark of the Covenant, and sacrificed two goats. One goat had its blood sprinkled on the Ark of the Covenant and the other goat was a scapegoat, who was said to carry the sins of Israel and was released into the wild. In this way, Israel was seen to be forgiven of their sins for another year.

Concerning the people of Israel, they were involved in fasting and repentance from sin. Although fasting and repentance did not save one's soul, this was commanded by God to the people of Israel. The purpose was to bring Israel's heart back to Him and away from sin, false gods, and evil nations.

Atonement, in the sense of the Old Testament, is no longer in practice because Jesus has given all of us who have placed faith in Him lasting atonement. This means that we don't have to offer endless sacrifices or fast in order to bring ourselves to God. Through Jesus' work on the cross, He has covered Himself with our guilt and removed our transgressions from us (Isaiah 53:4-12). He is the lamb who has taken away the sins of the entire world, including yours and mine (Isaiah 53:6).

We need to take this to heart because Jesus didn't atone for our sins for nothing. He did it in order to redeem us and save us. This shows us the love He has for every single one of us. Even if there was only one human living on the earth, He still would have died for their sins. This is because the Lord loves all and He desires for all us to be saved (1 Timothy 2:3-4).

Jesus' Sacrifice

"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:18-19).

The atonement of Christ is shown through His sacrifice on the cross. Jesus was in deep anguish and pain before His crucifixion because He knew what was to come. In the Garden of Gethsemane, He sweated blood (Luke 22:44). This is a rare phenomenon that only happens when one is severely stressed. Despite this anguish, stress, and pain, Jesus carried on with His mission out of love for the Father and love for us (Luke 22:42).

When Jesus died on the cross for our sins, He carried the weight of every horrible thing we have ever done or will do. The hatred we had for someone, the lies we have told, and the envy we have fostered in our heart were all placed upon Him. We deserved death by crucifixion, yet the Lord carried our sins on His back and paid the debt we owed (Colossians 2:13-14).

Unfortunately, many of us lose the impact of Jesus' work on the cross because we hear about it all the time. The phrase, "Jesus died for your sins" can begin to feel too familiar. Rather than taking it in, we overlook it and go on about our day. As believers, we need to take the atonement of Christ to heart and allow it to change our lives. By fully grasping its meaning, it can help us have a stronger relationship with Jesus and be more thankful for what He has done for us.

Challenge Questions:

- Jesus' sacrifice is crucial to our faith. How can you be thankful for His work on the cross?*
- Jesus took on all of the sins of the world during the crucifixion. Why do you think He did this?*
- Are you taking Jesus' sacrifice to heart today? If not, what can you do to take hold of it?*

Prayer: "Dear Jesus, I praise You for Your sacrifice. You sacrificed Your very life in order for me to be forgiven of my sins. Through You, I can truly live. I don't know what I can do to fully thank You, but I'm giving You praise and thanks today. In Your Name, I pray, Amen."

Propitiation for Our Sins

"And all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:24-26).

Jesus was the propitiation for our sins as He acted as a substitute. He died for our sins in order for our sins not to be held against us. We are justified by His blood and given a new life through Him. Jesus was the perfect propitiation for our sins because He is flawless, sinless, and God in the flesh. He didn't commit sins as we do, and He died in order for our own sins not to be held against us (1 Peter 2:22; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

By doing this, Jesus is now our eternal High Priest. The writer of Hebrews tells us, "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Hebrews 4:14-26).

Jesus is our High Priest, and He will forever show us empathy, kindness, and compassion. He knows what it is like to be tempted and tested, and He is able to help us overcome these struggles. The Lord doesn't watch from the sidelines as we suffer; instead, He is right beside us, encouraging us and giving us strength.

Challenge Questions:

- Jesus is the propitiation for our sins. What does this mean to you?*
- The only payment for sin is found in death. What does this tell you about the severity of sin?*
- Now that you know Jesus is our caring and sympathetic High Priest, how might you approach Him differently?*

Prayer: "Dear Jesus, You are the propitiation for my sins. Thank You for dying for my sins and being a substitute for me. I should have been the one to die on the cross as I am the sinner, not You. Thank You for being my High Priest and showing me nothing but love, grace, and empathy. In Your Name, I pray, Amen."

The Power of Redemption

"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ" (Ephesians 1:7-10).

Jesus suffered through the pain and died the death we deserved, yet He still rose victorious. He conquered the grave and Satan (1 Corinthians 15:54-57). He did all of this out of His love for us. The power of redemption now springs forth for all those who place faith in Him. Redemption by the blood of Jesus gives us forgiveness, eternal life, and a new start. None of these things need to be taken for granted, as they are truly gifts from the Lord.

Jesus doesn't only want to redeem a part of your life; He wants to redeem all of it. The atonement of Christ brings our hearts back to Him and sets our feet on level ground. The power of the cross gives us strength when we are weary. Allow the Lord to give your heart peace, strength, and hope today. As redeemed children of the King, we don't need to fret or worry because we know to whom we belong.

Let us walk in the freedom of knowing we are redeemed. This redemption comes from Jesus' own blood, not by anything that we have done (Ephesians 2:8-9). His mercy, love, and grace have washed over us in increasing measure. We need to worship the Lord and praise Him for all He has done. All of us would be lost without Him.

Challenge Questions:

- How does redemption change your life?*
- Jesus died so that we might be redeemed. What does this tell you about Jesus' love?*
- The power of redemption will continue throughout our lives. How might you allow the Lord to continue to cultivate redemption in your life?*

Prayer: "Dear Jesus, redemption is only possible because of You. Thank You for going to the lengths You did to save me. I also praise You that You are continuing to redeem my life every day. Help me to always listen to Your voice and instruction. In Your Name, I pray, Amen."

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