

UNDERSTANDING THE ATONEMENT - BIBLICAL

Intro: Reading: Mark 10:45:

What do we understand by the word “Atonement”? (any words?)

“The English word 'atonement' originally meant "at-one-ment", i.e. being "at one", in harmony, with someone. It is used to describe the saving work that God did through Christ to reconcile the world to himself, and also of the state of a person having been reconciled to God”.

Wikipedia.org.

The word “atonement” in the Authorized Version of the Bible is an Old Testament term. It appears only once in the New Testament (Romans 5:11) where it is translated “reconciliation” in the Revised Version. It is not entirely fanciful to suggest the idea of *at-one-ment* because the word atonement is used to refer to the atoning death of Christ through which the sinner is reconciled to God, restored to His favour. Bible.org

To atone for means to make amends. In the Bible atonement is associated with man’s sin. God commanded Israel to set aside one day each year, the tenth day of the seventh month, which He called “the day of atonement” (Leviticus 16:29-30; 23:27-28). The people were to bring a sin offering, an innocent animal sacrifice “whose blood was brought in to make atonement” (Leviticus 16:27). God had said, “For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul” (Leviticus 17:11) “. . . and without shedding of blood is no remission” (Hebrews 9:22). Bible.org.

The New Testament uses metaphor and imagery to describe the significance of the crucifixion.

The historical development of atonement attempts to find an overall theory that utilises the ideas conveyed in the New Testament Metaphors (not covered in this session).

Metaphor does not imply falsity in any way, only the use of descriptive language.

Atonement is only one aspect of the overall work of Christ.

The ‘doctrines’ of God and Christ come together to explain how God dealt with the problem of humanity and its sin.

The NT does not give us a COMPLETE theory of the atonement at any one point.

In the NT – the *problem* of Christ's death also had to be explained – 1 Cor 1:23.

The Use of Metaphor:

What is a metaphor?

'A metaphor is an imaginative way of describing something by referring to something else which has the qualities that you are trying to express' (Collins COBUILD Dictionary).

How does that relate to the description that Jesus' death was a *sacrifice*?

What does the word 'sacrifice' bring to mind in our culture?

We need to bear in mind the *limitations* of each metaphor that we shall mention.

Remember – atonement is only one aspect of Christ's work – His work could be summarised with the three-fold office: Prophet, Priest & King (3 groups – summarise each title).

Five Metaphors:

- Sacrifice
- Substitution
- Ransom
- Propitiation
- Reconciliation

Group Exercise:

SACRIFICE:

Discuss the metaphor given to your group – what imagery does it bring to mind?

Is there any limitation to its use?

Was the use of such language different for the original NT listeners compared to our culture?

How might we adapt such a definition for people to understand today?

How do the following verses help your understanding?

OT verses: Exodus 12:3, Leviticus 4:12, Leviticus 16:10, 21

NT verses: John 1:29, Eph 2:13, Heb 9:6-15

SUBSTITUTE:

Discuss the metaphor given to your group – what imagery does it bring to mind?

Is there any limitation to its use? (did Jesus die ‘for us’ or ‘in our place?’)

Was the use of such language different for the original NT listeners compared to our culture?

How might we adapt such a definition for people to understand today?

How do the following verses help your understanding?

OT verses: Isaiah 53:6

NT verses: 2 Cor 5:21, Heb 9:28

RANSOM: (redemption – price paid to set free):

Discuss the metaphor given to your group – what imagery does it bring to mind?

Is there any limitation to its use? (see below)

Ransom suggests there must be someone to who the ransom is paid – if the ‘unsaved’ are enslaved to sin and Satan – who might this suggest the ransom is paid to?

Was the use of such language different for the original NT listeners compared to our culture?

How might we adapt such a definition for people to understand today?

How do the following verses help your understanding?

OT verses: Deut 7:8, Psalm 74:2, think of Ruth’s story...

NT verses: Mark 10:45, Gal 3:13, Eph 2:2

PROPITIATION:

(appeasing wrath by offering a gift of some sort)

Some people prefer ‘expiation’ – the removal of guilt.

Collectively called ‘penal substitution’

Discuss the metaphor given to your group – what imagery does it bring to mind?

Is there any limitation to its use? Was Christ’s death simply driven by the need to appease God’s wrath?

Was the use of such language different for the original NT listeners compared to our culture?

How might we adapt such a definition for people to understand today?

How do the following verses help your understanding?

OT verses: Leviticus 4

NT verses: Rom 1:18, Rom 3:25, Heb 9:5, John 3:16

RECONCILIATION: return to a peaceful relationship:

Discuss the metaphor given to your group – what imagery does it bring to mind?

Is there any limitation to its use?

Was the use of such language different for the original NT listeners compared to our culture?

How might we adapt such a definition for people to understand today?

How do the following verses help your understanding?

OT verses: Gen 3 – the Fall....

NT verses: Rom 5:1, Eph 2:14

Metaphor	NT Reference
Sacrifice	Matthew 26:26-28, 1 Corinthians 5:7, John 1:29, Ephesians 5:2, John 6:51-55, Hebrews 10:11-14, 1 Peter 1:19
Substitution	Matthew 20:28, Romans 8:32, Mark 10:45, 2 Corinthians 5:15, 21, John 11:50, Galatians 3:13, Hebrews 9:28, 1 Peter 2:24.
Propitiation	Romans 3:25, Hebrews 9:5, 1 John 2:2, 1 John 4:10
Ransom	Matthew 20:28, Galatians 3:13, Mark 10:45, 1 Peter 1:18-19
Reconciliation	Romans 5:10-11, 2 Corinthians 5:18-20, Ephesians 2:16, Colossians 1:20

Worship concerning the Atonement:

We sing many and varied songs today – many of which contain atonement metaphors – look up the words to these songs and discuss which metaphors they convey?

SFB: 11, 14, 36, 56, 60, 66, 70, **82**, 101, 116.....