

THE BIBLICAL MEANING OF ATONEMENT

Atonement means “to cover.” Atonement in the Old Testament was a temporary faith exercise of the Nation of Israel. Atonement involved offerings to God and especially the sacrificial system of the blood of animals. The purpose of the sacrificial system was for the remembrance of the people concerning their sin, their need for righteousness, and their need for relationship with God. The sacrificial system was a physical act done year after year to aid the people in remembering their sin and their need for forgiveness and the “covering of sin.” The “covering of sin” means that God no longer looked upon their sins (with wrath), and God’s presence stays with Israel. The sacrificial system never took away their sin. Personal faith in God’s promise of a Redeemer has always been the means of an individual’s sin being taken away.

The Day of Atonement in the Old Testament with its rituals and sacrifices never took away sin. For that reason, the New Testament Apostles never used the word atonement with regard to the sacrifice of Jesus. The sinless death and sacrifice of Jesus takes away sin rather than to just cover our sins. Instead of the word atonement, the Apostles used the word reconciliation. The sinless death of Jesus and Him being killed by sin, condemns sin to extermination. Sin’s extermination yields reconciliation of all creation back to God. Sin’s extermination is completed and described in Revelation 20-22.

For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Jesus, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through the blood of His cross.

Colossians 1:19,20

Once you were alienated from God and were hostile in your minds, engaging in evil deeds. But now He has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy, unblemished, and blameless in His presence if indeed you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope of the gospel you heard,, which has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant. Colossians 1:21-23

The sacrificial system has ceased and the Holy Spirit has been given to convict the world of sin, the need for righteousness, and the need for a personal relationship with God anticipating future judgment of all men. Every man’s work will be made known and fire shall try every man’s work for what sort it is. John 16: 5-16 1 Corinthians 3:12-15

God chose before creation to save everyone who would cooperate with the Holy Spirit and allow the Spirit to bring them to a saving knowledge of Jesus. By grace and through faith we are saved from sin.