

# Atonement

Definition of biblical atonement: (1) a tangible memorial or reminder by sacrifice that sin has caused a loss, (2) a token or demonstration that strict punitive justice has been altered to an instructive demonstration of justice (tempered by mercy) upon an innocent victim. The use of an innocent victim in place of the repentant sinner is a token (lesson, example, memorial) of the Almighty's mercy and forgiveness. (3) It is a ransom from death. The repentant is viewed as held by death's bonds, confined to die. Death takes the ransom (sacrifice) instead of the repentant sinner. And the Almighty forgives the repentant sinner returned to him from death.

Biblical atonement is fundamentally different than the pagan idea of atonement. In the pagan world view, the god is bought off or placated from working mischief or evil upon the people under its power by a gift or offering. The pagan god receives a compensation for doing good to its people or for avoiding wrath. Because the pagan god is always compensated for doing good or avoiding punishment, the pagan god never acts out of love, but only out of self interest. Sadly this pagan idea of atonement has entered and corrupted Christianity in large part, and caused biblical atonement to be misunderstood by a large number of Christians, and a large number of ex-Christians, or non-Christians.

Biblical atonement begins with the notion that sin is committed which requires repentance and forgiveness. The kind of justice everyone wants is compensatory justice, i.e. a repair or reversal of all damages caused by wrong. When this is not possible, which is most of the time, strict justice is converted into wrath which requires the punitive judgment of the sinner. Punitive justice does not restore anyone of the damages. Even the death of the offender does not assuage wrath. The wrath can be eternally held even after the offender is done away with, especially if the offended party holds onto the damage caused by the offender which cannot be repaired.

Strict justice requires the sinner to die. Strict justice is the norm without forgiveness. Strict justice is an expression of divine wrath. Strict justice is naturally the only justice pagan's ascribe to their gods. This is because pagan gods have no power to forgive actual wrongs. Biblical forgiveness is foreign to the pagan world view.

Obviously if the Almighty is going to forgive sin, he cannot exact strict justice, much less receive reparative compensation. He is willing to forgive, but when he does so he requires an "atonement" for the repentant offender. This atonement is by no means an execution of strict justice. The sacrificial victim is innocent, not deserving of any wrath. The point of punishing the sacrificial

victim is to demonstrate the effect that sin has on the innocent. The victim is serving a purpose, not to receive actual wrath, but to make tangible the loss caused by our sin. This is point No. 1 in the definition above. Our sin did this to the victim. Animal life is considered disposable for this purpose, just as it is considered disposable for eating. Man is created in the image of God. Animals are not. Of course pity for the innocent animal is natural. If we pity the animal, then the point is that we should pity the humans who were damaged by our sin. God's point is to deter us and warn us against sin. If the offering is evil in man's eyes, it is because man does not see the evil of sin upon others, or that the evil of sin upon other humans entirely justifies God's use of sacrifice as a tangible illustration of what sin does. Man's evil to man and his evil to God is qualitatively different than anything done to an animal.

The Hebrew word for atonement literally means "wiping away." When God wipes away condemnation, he is forgiving. He is wiping away the intent to judge, to condemn, to destroy the sinner. We must always keep in mind who is really wiping out the judgment by forgiving. It is the Almighty. Atonement also means to wipe away impurity, to cleanse, to cleanse sin. This is a mighty theme in Scripture, but it is not what I am concentrating on at this point. I am concentrating on forgiveness as the divine act, the divine decision, that wipes away judgement.

With this in view, that God is the one who finally enacts atonement, we must consider the kind of causal link between the sacrifice and God's act of wiping out judgment. It is down these lines: when wiping away is demonstrated, then God wipes away judgment. Scripture says that the priest shall make atonement. It also says that the blood makes atonement, because the life is in the blood. This is a causal chain: (1) The priest makes atonement, who sacrifices the animal, and spills the blood. The priest puts the blood on the altar or pours it at the base, and the blood makes atonement. God sees the demonstration of justice and he himself atones, which is to say wipes away the condemnation, and this is the same as him forgiving.

Why are all parties said to make atonement when obviously it is God who makes it effective by deciding to forgive? The priest does. The blood does. The life does. God does. There is no magic here. No special physics. The causal chain is simply God's covenant requirement for a demonstration of what he himself ultimately does. When the demonstration is done then God has honored himself by covenant to forgive the repentant sinner. Therefore, the demonstration is equivocated with "making atonement," "effecting atonement" or "causing atonement" to happen.

Now I have covered part of point No. 2 in the definition of atonement. There is a reason that the sacrifice has been equivocated with the Almighty's action of wiping away the condemnation. And this is because the Almighty becomes himself, "the atonement," the demonstration of our forgiveness, through Mes-

siah Yeshua. The Almighty is every step in the causal chain of the ultimate atonement. As Father he is the priest. As Messiah he is the offering, As the blood, it is Messiah's. As the life, it is Messiah's. The Almighty is the one who wipes out the judgment of his people. Without this explanation, atonement is easily detached from the Almighty, especially the Father.

All too often, the Father is treated as pagans treat their gods, and one who needs to be placated to forgive. Not so. The Father loves his people, as does the Almighty Son. He forgives. His requirement for a demonstration of forgiving-justice is precisely because he loves us. The Father is not diverting wrath to his Son. He is forgiving the wrath. The Son is providing an instructive example of our wellness, of our peace with God. What happened to the Son was caused by a representative subset of our collective sin landing on him. The Son and the Father allowed this injustice to happen to the Son to serve an an example of what he is forgiving us. By allowing the injustice to himself, the Almighty gets the world to take notice. He makes a demonstration of both what he is forgiving and the deadly consequences of sin, so that many might perceive his love and repent.

It also points out what is going to happen to anyone who does not repent and receive God's love through Messiah's atonement, his atonement, his wiping away. The alternative is strict justice without mercy, unmitigated wrath.

There is a substitution in the atonement under definition (2) in two ways. The most important substitution happening is that God's actual wrath has been replaced with a demonstration of the consequences of sin. It was the sin of wicked men that killed Messiah, but their sin is just a microcosm of the ultimate results of our own sins, if left unchecked, and allowed to develop without divine intervention. Father and Son allowed this to happen to make the point. Those sitting in judgment on Messiah intended wrath. But the Almighty makes it an administration of benevolent justice.

The Scripture says that Messiah's death is "a ransom for many." A ransom is paid to an enemy to compel it to free a prisoner. The Father gives the ransom, his Son, to free us from an enemy called death: This is explained in Hosea 13:14:

From the hand of Sheol I will ransom them. From death I will redeem them. Where are your plagues death? Where is your destruction Sheol? Pity is hidden from my eyes.

Sheol (the grave) takes Messiah as a ransom to release the sinner in its grip. Redemption is also from death. Death receives Messiah and releases its sin prisoner. But Messiah escapes the grave by returning from death with proclamation of victory over death, "Where is your destruction?" Death is cheated of its ransom, but God shows it no pity. This is just as one gives a ransom to an enemy to release prisoners, and then later succeeds in defeating the enemy and recovering the ransom.

One false image of the atonement must by all means be avoided. This is the

compensation model, i.e. that the atonement compensated the Father for sin. This view paints the Father as a creditor collecting a debt who gets paid in full by his Son. It makes the Father unloving and unforgiving. And this divides the Son from the Father. So let us work through some texts and concepts that are twisted to teach this.

(1) The cup that Messiah drinks is often described as God's wrath. But when we see that the disciples will drink it also, we discover that the cup is suffering caused by sin, and not God's wrath. And if you think about it, even God's wrath does not balance the books to remove the loss he grieves over. So there is no point in substitutionary wrath. God is not trying to convince us that his wrath was successfully or completely vented on Messiah.

(2) Isa. 53:5, "And he was pierced because of our transgressions, and he was bruised because of our iniquities." This is literally, "from our transgressions" and "from our iniquities." The ultimate effects of all of our sin met up with Messiah in his suffering. The Jewish authorities were merely acting out in a microcosm what all sin ultimately does. So we may view this statement as saying what our sins did, putting ourselves in place of the wicked authorities. Now we deserved to be in his place reaping our own consequences, but he served as ransom so we could be released from death. Death received him in our place. (a) So we may say that a substitution is going on here. But it is not substitution of a compensatory nature. The Father is giving the ransom. Death is compelled to accept another in our place. The only compensation here is receiving the lost sinner back alive who he now forgives. Otherwise, the Almighty stands with a net loss. He has lost whatever evils our sin have caused that cannot be recovered. These evils have met up with Messiah. This suffering was a tangible loss and represents a greater loss caused by every sin.

(3) Isa. 53:5b "The instruction of our peace was upon him." Peace here represents peace with the Almighty. He forgives us through atonement. Atonement is an instruction to us of the reality of the cost to God and an instruction of our forgiveness. Messiah was sold to the enemy, one man for all the people. The enemy, sin, death, then executed its sufferings on Messiah. The image again is the ransom. Messiah takes what death can deal out in our stead, and then defeats it by rising again. The Father is not getting a satisfaction of strict justice. The Father is taking a loss, his only kindred Son. There is no exchange of value equal to loss. There is only recovery of a person that rightfully belongs to the Almighty through a ransom, less whatever damages we caused in our sin that cannot be repaired, even though we are forgiven.

The Almighty could have forgiven us without appearing to take personally himself any consequences of sin. But this would be to obscure the reality. God is love, and therefore all sin harms him, causes him grief and erases his creation. God grieves over man's sin, and watches while our sins destroy others for whom

he intended everlasting life and fellowship with him. If he did not allow the destruction to occur, he could not forgive or show mercy. Therefore through his Son he makes allows men to make a tangible demonstration of his suffering to show what waiting for us to repent and seek forgiveness cost him! The Father is letting his only kindred Son suffer from our sins, represented by the evil the Jewish authorities put upon him, to show in a small way the spiritual suffering that all sin has caused him. What the Son agreed to go through as the Almighty Son in a human body is but a tiny part of the total suffering of the Almighty.

God is not getting paid back for the trouble it takes to draw us into repentance and forgiveness. He recovers one sinner at a time, and loses the rest of humanity.

If God did not do it this way then what would the rest of the beings created in God's image say? They might say he is unforgiving? Because the alternative was to destroy all of mankind the moment he sinned. It seems better to the Almighty to forgive and save a remnant of repentant mankind, through longsuffering, and giving the ransom of his Son, and to allow mankind as a whole to destroy itself than for him to destroy mankind at the start. When judgment day comes, it will be to destroy destroyers and to end their destruction of the repentant remnant. It will grieve God to have to destroy the unrepentant.

(4) Isa. 53:5b, "And with his stripes will have been healing for us." This is the point I have been making. Watching the Son suffer. Being told the image of his sufferings shows God's longsuffering pain with our sins, that because of his love he is waiting for our repentance, receiving our transgressions as blows to his Spirit while he waits. If nothing else, this ought to convince sinners to repent and be forgiven. So therein his sufferings lead to healing for Israel.

(5) Isa. 53:6, "And Yahweh will have made to meet on him the iniquity of us all." Really, this was a small part of humankind's iniquity, because only so much can happen to the Almighty Son in the flesh. But as I have been saying, this tangible physical suffering is only a tiny part of the suffering and grief that man's sin has been causing the Almighty all along. His Son took part of it directly to show us what is really going on. The Father is indeed as longsuffering as the Son. Every day he waits for judgment day his pain increases. Only his love for his creation, and the possibility of redeeming it delays him.

(6) Isa. 53:8, "He will have been cut off from the land of the living because of the transgression of my people: a blow for us." This is not some kind of grand transaction in strict justice in which the Father is paid off in some positive fashion of reparations by the merits of Messiah. God is not a debt collector getting paid off. He is forgiving us and not collecting what cannot be collected. He cannot collect on lost righteousness. His own righteousness cannot make up for righteousness absent from sinners. The blow he received is but one tangible token or demonstration of the total loss that the Almighty is taking. His taking

this blow is to convince us to see.

(7) Isa. 53:10, “And Yahweh will have been pleased to cause him to be bruised. He will have caused him to suffer when his soul makes a guilt offering.” A guilt offering is a type of atonement for forgiveness of more serious sins. Here it is extended to transgression and iniquity. Why is he pleased to do this? Because what happened to the Son is only a small part of his suffering! He is just converting it to a tangible format in the Almighty Son who became flesh to show us what is happening to himself in the spiritual realm. His desire to display it this way is out of love for his people, whom he wants to repent of sin.

(8) Isa. 53:11, “The labor of his soul he shall see. He will be satisfied.” By allowing the sin of man to affect the Son, which the Son agreed to, because he loves as does the Father, the conviction and repentance of many is accomplished. This is the what he labored for. The deliverance of sinners is his only compensation for his efforts.

(9) Isa. 53:11, “In knowledge of him my righteous servant shall get justice for many, and their iniquities he shall bear.” Or the text may read, “By his knowledge” and what this would mean is that by his knowledge of the right thing to do to convince sinners to repent and be forgiven. Through his atonement a benevolent justice is administered, a ransom from death, which is combined with God’s forgiving us. But we must know to repent of sin and know to receive forgiveness. This is how to read the text the other way, “In knowledge of him.” The justice received is forgiving justice. For the Almighty as judge can decide to forgive or not to forgive. When he sees repentance, as a judge his righteousness determines that forgiveness is called for. He requires us to embrace Messiah’s atonement as a demonstration of this type of justice, this outcome deciding forgiveness. Bearing out iniquities also has a double sense. This means in one case being longsuffering until we repeat, grieving and suffering spiritually from our slowness. In another way it means carrying them off and cleansing us from them.

Messiah is the Almighty’s administration of justice on our behalf, as a ransom from the hand of the grave, from the hand of death. Hopefully you have ears to hear the good news.

Now I would like to compare and contrast a false gospel with the good news, and I hope here not to make too much of a straw man of the false gospel, because there are many degrees or mixtures of the true gospel and the false. Since most Christians are immersed into a mixture of truth and error, one can only test whether they hold faithful to the true good news or not based on their repentance and treatment of other people. Beyond that, to the degree that a false gospel is in the mix of beliefs, the faith, and here I mean the Messianic Faith is apologetically and operationally crippled.

The false gospel is Satan’s re-explanation of Messiah’s ransom. It is his new

narrative. His goal is to destroy God's love and man's repentance. It evolves like this. Back in the days when the Messianic Faith was sent into the nations, there were many who did not repent, or who did not want to turn from their sin, yet they were attracted to elements of the true good news. In order to make their unrepentance work they gutted to meaning of the structure of the good news, keeping the facade, which was so attractive, which drew all men to it, and they replaced the interior with a message to justify their unrepentance.

The false gospel separates the Father and the Son, casting the Father in the role of a debt collector and the Son in the role of a rich uncle who is a friend of the debtor. This all started in Judaism with God and Abraham. So let's go back there and see what the foundations of the false gospel are.

Abraham was cast in the role of the Son. It works like this. If a Jewish person did evil or wrong, he gets a demerit, a black mark which on judgment day will result in condemnation. How does the demerited one get out of this situation? In Judaism Abraham has an excess of merit, which he can bequeath on his demerited offspring. His merit cancels out the demerit, and the seed is saved from judgment. So long as the demerited one can be confident of receiving merit from Abraham to cancel out his demerit, then he does not have to be so concerned about getting the demerit removed from his life.

Now I should hasten to mention here that the Jewish doctrine of the merits of the fathers is not always so crassly described. That's why I mentioned the risk of a straw man. Judaism is also a mixture of true and false. Often the doctrine is simply reduced to the offspring getting some spiritual benefit from the fathers. But the radical merit and demerit explanation existed and was widespread in the past. Anyone who doubts this may consult, *The Doctrine of Merits in Old Rabbinical Literature*, Arthur Marmorstein. What I have witnessed is that when someone wishes to involve themselves with some sin, then they intellectually justify the sin by trusting in the crass form of the doctrine. Such a position is unstable and temporary. Those who wholly embrace fall into greater sin. But amazingly, the doctrine does not die with its results. Satan manages to keep it alive in the tradition.

So now how does this play out in Christianity? In this case the Father is the the debt collector, and the Son is now the one with the merits (instead of Abraham or the Jewish Fathers). The righteousness of the Son is treated as a positive commodity, of which he is said to have sufficient excess, to pay into the accounts of the sinners. This is to say, the merits of Christ cancel out the demerits of the sinner, and fill in the blank spaces with merit. The Father, who is the creditor, is then satisfied, and upon seeing the merit in the accounts does not judge the sinner. What I have seen then, is that when a Christian wants to justify his sin, he then invokes this doctrine to cover his problem. Of course continued sin and this justification of it is inherently unstable. Such people fall

into post-modern Christianity. But amazingly, Satan manages to maintain this tradition in the Church.

During the holocaust, in the camps, there were certain Jews who were called “Kapo’s.” These were Jews recruited by the SS to help administer their program of murder, forced labor, death and slow starvation. Similarly, the doctrine of merit for demerit is administered by Satan Special Kapo’s in Church and Synagogue, religious leaders that claim to be one of God’s people, who who really do the work of Satan. I mean Priest and Rabbi, Theologian and Sage. These are they who work the mystery of iniquity, and who slaughter the sheep.

So now, what is the doctrine of merit for demerit called by the Church? It is called “justification by faith” or “imputed righteousness.” Since I have reconstructed the true good news based on the truth of Scripture above, I am now free to deconstruct the false gospel. These phrases epitomize the redefinition of the good news by SSK’s (Satan’s special Kapo’s). They have been running a spiritual holocaust, not turning men from sin, but justifying it. There is a physical holocaust coming to the Church. Trust me, it will only be the physical manifestation of the spiritual holocaust that goes before it.

Justification is a doctrine in which all sin in the account of the believer is transferred to Christ, and all the merit of Christ is transferred to the account of the believer. God is then satisfied with the upstanding account of the sinner and does not judge the sinner. The verdict is acquittal. The faith part of this doctrine is “believe only,” or more specifically believe this doctrine only and you are safe. Whatever sin one may commit, Christ has sufficient credits to take care of the debt. The imputed righteousness part, is simply another way of saying this. All the merit of Christ is reckoned into the account of the believer.

What has gone wrong here? Well as you can see, there is absolutely no forgiveness going on. The Father has become a creditor and debt collector who collects enough positive merit at the expense of his Son to wink and look the other way on judgment day. Basically the judge has been bribed into an acquittal. As long as the sinner is confident the bribe will be paid, he is free to be unconcerned about eliminating sin from his life. He thinks the judge is going to let him back onto the streets every time he sins.

Ok, so how did the SSK redefine the Scripture. They did so by a combination of redefinition of terms, reinterpretation, and mistranslation. The full story on this is in the translation and notes of *The Good News of Messiah*, by the present author. Here I will have to provide only the barest of outlines. In the days of Messiah, justification had a more common meaning than “acquittal.” The term mean “the administration of justice” in general. A judge who justifies is the judge who administers justice, which being more generally defined, included three options: (1) punishment, (2) pardon (forgiveness), or (3) acquittal.

A judge who justifies can choose any one of the three outcomes in a trial,



and and whichever course he takes, he has justified the defendant, that is administered justice to him. So we see that the case with the Father and Messiah is clearly no. 2: the pardon, also called forgiveness. Messiah's death serves as the atonement, as described above, the instructive demonstration of our deliverance from death through ransom. The atonement is an instructive demonstration of what is being forgiven. It is not a banking operation of transfer of merit from one account to another. The atonement is a demonstration of what we deserve, to suffer and die. God allowed the consequences of some men's sins to meet up with Messiah, which epitomizes the ultimate consequences of all sin, to show us what we are getting rescued from.

In the true good news, there is no justification for sin. The Father is not getting compensated. Rather the Father is suffering right along with Messiah the consequences of our sins. The Almighty is pardoning us. He is expecting us to hold faithful to Him, to his Son Yeshua, to forsake sin, and not continue in it. Sin is the slave master leading to the grave. Messiah ransomed us from it. He cut the bonds to sin, the power of death, by forgiving. Repentant and forgiven faithful are not to return to sin and again be chained to it.

To be released from sin, the sinner has to perceive the love of the Almighty, and the evil of sin, true evil that cannot be waved away by a credit system. He sinner must perceive a real offer of forgiveness, and understand sin well enough to forsake it. And I am afraid the intellectuals of this world are busying their minds with trying to figure out how to justify sin.

<sup>21</sup>But now apart from <sup>ψ</sup>the legal norm, the justice<sup>μ</sup> of the Almighty has been getting revealed, <sup>φ</sup>being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, <sup>22</sup>that is, the <sup>ω</sup>justice of the Almighty, through <sup>π</sup>the faithfulness of Yeshua the Anointed, unto all those <sup>ι</sup>confirming *their* faithfulness, because there is no distinction, <sup>23</sup>because all have sinned and are falling short of the glory of the Almighty, <sup>24</sup>being <sup>β</sup>administered justice <sup>φ</sup>benevolently, by his loving-kindness through the <sup>ψ</sup>ransom which is in the Anointed Yeshua, <sup>25</sup>whom the Almighty set forth as an <sup>γ</sup>atonement through *his* faithfulness, by his blood, to demonstrate<sup>ε</sup> his justice<sup>κ</sup>, because he overlooked the iniquities that had been occurring previously, <sup>26</sup>according to the mercy of the Almighty, for a demonstration<sup>ε</sup> of his justice<sup>γ</sup> in the present time, that he should be just and the one administering justice, which is from the faithfulness of Yeshua.

Rom. 3:21-26, *The Good News of Messiah*, Edition 0.5.2.1.

Daniel Gregg  
[www.torahtimes.org](http://www.torahtimes.org)





