

# H O U S E o f W I S D O M

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## Atonement (Reconciliation)

When studying the Bible, we are dealing primarily with three languages - Hebrew, Greek and English. One of the difficulties of translation is determining ancient word meanings, and then transferring the concept into English. The same words in more modern Hebrew or Greek do not necessarily have the same meanings as the ancient, and neither do many English words. The King James Bible, considered by many to be based on a more accurate text, was translated about 500 years ago. Some words used then, have fallen from use in modern times, and still others have evolved to have a different meaning; the older definition is considered archaic today. In this study the key word to be considered is atonement and the verb atone.

From Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary, copyright **1963**: *atone*: 1. Obsolete: to reconcile; 2. To supply satisfaction for: *expiate*. *Expiate*: 1. Obsolete: to put an end to; 2a. To atone for; b. to pay the penalty for. From The American Heritage Dictionary, copyright **1985**: to make amends (for sins); archaic - to expiate, appease. The etymology of *atonement*: As used in 1510s - condition of being at one (with others); 1520s - reconciliation; 1610s - propitiation. (<http://www.etymonline.com>)

Various Hebrew Lexicons and other commentaries give a meaning of *to cover*; *pacify*, *expiate*, *placate*, *appease*. The TWOT, published by Moody Press, p. 452, explains that the Hebrew meaning of to cover is a result of a weak connection to an Arabic root.. It goes on to say that the Hebrew root is not used to mean cover. This writer disagrees with the last statement in that the blood of a sacrifice was sprinkled on furniture and people, and thus covering them with drops of blood. The idea of covering will be explored in scripture. Often, the concept of Christ's sacrifice taught by mainline Christian organizations today uses the words *expiate*, *propitiate*, and sometimes *appease*.

Ideas expressed in many teachings are that the death of the Son of God on the cross supplied satisfaction for or, appeased God concerning man's sins; Jesus paid the penalty we deserve. Some preachers even teach that God demanded a sacrifice. If however, we use the older meaning for "atone," the cross reconciles, or, makes man one with God, which paints a totally different picture of God, and does not infer that God needed a sacrifice so that man would be acceptable. The correct approach to understand what the cross means to man is by looking at Old Testament types, i.e. the sacrifices, etc. Note: The explanations above are to help the reader understand some of the reasons for different teachings concerning the cross.

Atonement in the Old Testament: Leviticus 4:27-31: 26. *And all its fat he shall burn on the altar, like the fat of the sacrifice of peace offerings; so the priest shall make atonement for him for his sin, and he shall be forgiven.* 27. *"If any one of the common people sins unwittingly in doing any one of the things which the Lord has commanded not to be done, and is guilty,* 28. *when the sin which he has committed is made known to him he shall bring for his offering a goat, a female without blemish, for his sin which he has committed.* 29. *And he shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering, and kill the sin offering in the place of burnt offering.* 30. *And the priest shall take some of its blood with his finger and put in on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and pour out the rest of its blood at the base of the altar.* 31. *And all its fat he shall remove, as the fat is removed from the peace offerings, and the priest shall burn it upon the altar for a pleasing odor to the Lord; and the priest shall make atonement* <sup>(3722)</sup> *for him, and he shall be forgiven.*

The Hebrew word *kapar*<sup>(3722)</sup>, translated atonement, properly means to cover. The solid gold lid on the ark of the covenant then, is a covering<sup>(3727)</sup> which is called a mercy seat and referred to as a place of atonement, on which blood was sprinkled twice on the Day of Atonement, only one day out of a year. The first time *kapar* appears is in Genesis 6:14, where Noah is instructed to cover the bottom of the ark inside and out with pitch. To get an idea of the spiritual meaning to cover, look at the following verses:

**Proverbs 16:6:** *By mercy (kindness) and truth iniquity<sup>(5771)</sup> is purged<sup>(3722)</sup> (covered): and by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil.* Man's iniquity is the twisted, crooked thinking he carries, and it is covered by God's mercy, kindness and truth as revealed by the cross. Babylon is a symbol of man's confusion about God.

**Atonement in the New Testament: Romans 5:8-11:** *8. But God commended (introduced) his love toward (to) us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9. Much more then, being now justified (rendered innocent) by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. 10. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled<sup>(2644)</sup> to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled<sup>(2644)</sup>, we shall be saved by his life. 11. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement<sup>(2643)</sup> (reconciliation). *Katallasso*<sup>(2644)</sup> means to change mutually, figuratively to reconcile. *Katallage*<sup>(2643)</sup> is the noun.*

**Psalms 78:38:** *Yet he, being compassionate, forgave<sup>(3722)</sup> (covered, reconciled) their iniquity<sup>(5771)</sup>, and did not destroy them; he restrained his anger often, and did not stir up all his wrath.* Being full of compassion the Lord reconciled their iniquity, or their perverted way of thinking.

**Ezekiel 16:62-63:** *62. And I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord: 63. That you may remember, and be confounded (ashamed), and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame (confusion), when I am pacified<sup>(3722)</sup> (covered, reconciled) toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God.* When mankind enters God's covenant, they will become reconciled with Him. Here is how to enter the covenant: *Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you...* (Isa 55:3). God is speaking to every person's conscience.

Here is the same concept discussed above, but uses a different Hebrew word for cover.

**Proverbs 10:12:** *Hatred stirs up strife: but love covers<sup>(3680)</sup> all sins.*

**Proverbs 17:9:** *He that covers<sup>(3680)</sup> a transgression seeks love...*

When the Old Testament concept is connected to that in the New, it can be seen that it is the love of God that reconciles us to the Father through His only begotten Son - It is also love that reconciles man to man.

**Colossians 1:19-23:** *19. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; 20. And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. 21. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled 22. In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight: 23. **If** ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister; (see also 2Cor 5:18-20).*

**1 Corinthians 13:4-8, 13:** *4. The love is long-suffering, it is kind, the love doth not envy, the love doth not vaunt itself, is not puffed up, 5. doth not act unseemly, doth not seek its own things, is not provoked, doth not impute evil, (i.e. love does not keep a record of evil) 6. rejoices not over the unrighteousness, and rejoices with the truth; 7. all things it bears, all it believes, all it hopes, all it endures. 8. The love doth never fail; and whether [there be] prophecies, they shall become useless; whether tongues, they shall cease; whether knowledge, it shall become useless.... 13. and now there doth remain faith, hope, love - these three; and the greatest of these [is] love. (Young's Bible) Amen.*