



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

EASTER'S GOOD NEWS-RECONCILIATION

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As we focus on the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, we need to come to grips with theological terms that affect our understanding of the death of Jesus Christ.

The deafening theme of 2 Corinthians 5:18-21 provides for us God's glorious truth of reconciliation.

2 Corinthians 5:18-21 Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation,¹⁹ namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.²¹ He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

THEOLOGICAL TERMS RELATED TO THE CRUCIFIXION

RECONCILIATION — THE PROCESS BY WHICH GOD AND PEOPLE ARE BROUGHT TOGETHER AGAIN.

ATONEMENT — THE ACT BY WHICH GOD RESTORES A RELATIONSHIP OF HARMONY AND UNITY BETWEEN HIMSELF AND HUMAN BEINGS.

IMPUTATION — CHARGING OR RECKONING SOMETHING TO A PERSON'S ACCOUNT.

JUSTIFICATION — THE DECLARED POSITION BY WHICH SINFUL HUMAN BEINGS ARE MADE ACCEPTABLE TO A HOLY GOD.

CONDEMNATION — TO DECLARE A PERSON GUILTY AND WORTHY OF PUNISHMENT.

RECONCILIATION — the process by which God and people are brought together again. The Bible teaches that they are alienated from one another because of God's holiness and human sinfulness. Although God loves the sinner (Rom. 5:8), it is impossible for Him not to judge sin (Heb. 10:27). Therefore, in biblical reconciliation, both parties are affected. Through the sacrifice of Christ, people's sins are atoned for and God's wrath is appeased. Thus, a relationship of hostility and alienation is changed into one of peace and fellowship.

God took the initiative in reconciliation—while we were still sinners and “enemies,” Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8, 10; Col. 1:21). Reconciliation is thus God's own completed act, something that takes place before human actions such as confession, repentance, and restitution. God Himself “has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 5:18).

Paul regarded the Gospel as “the word of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:19). And knowing “the terror of the Lord,” Paul pleaded, implored, and persuaded people to be “reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5:20).¹

ATONEMENT — the act by which God restores a relationship of harmony and unity between Himself and human beings. The word can be broken into three parts that express this great truth in simple but profound terms: “at-one-ment.” Through God's atoning grace and forgiveness, we are reinstated to a relationship of at-one-ment with God, in spite of our sin.

Human Need: Because of Adam's sin (Rom. 5:18; 1 Cor. 15:22) and our own personal sins (Col. 1:21), no one is worthy of a relationship with a holy God (Eccl. 7:20; Rom. 3:23). Since we are helpless to correct this situation (Prov. 20:9) and can do nothing to hide our sin from God (Heb. 4:13), we all stand condemned by sin (Rom.

BIBLE STUDIES

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3:19). It is human nature (our sinfulness) and God's nature (His holy wrath against sin) that makes us "enemies" (Rom. 5:10).

God's Gift: God's gracious response to the helplessness of His chosen people, the nation of Israel, was to give them a means of reconciliation through Old Testament covenant Law. This came in the sacrificial system where the death or "blood" of the animal was accepted by God as a substitute for the death (Ezek. 18:20) the sinner deserved: "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls" (Lev. 17:11).

The Law required that the sacrificial victims must be free from defect, and buying them always involved some cost to the sinner. But an animal's death did not automatically make people right with God in some simple, mechanical way. The hostility between God and people because of sin is a personal matter. God for His part personally gave the means of atonement in the sacrificial system; men and women, for their part personally, are expected to recognize the seriousness of their sin (Lev. 16:29–30; Micah 6:6–8). They must also identify themselves personally with the victim that dies: "Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him" (Lev. 1:4).

In the Old Testament, God Himself brought about atonement by graciously providing the appointed sacrifices. The priests represented Him in the atonement ritual, and the sinner received the benefits of being reconciled to God in forgiveness and harmony.

Although Old Testament believers were truly forgiven and received genuine atonement through animal sacrifice, the New Testament clearly states that during the Old

Testament period God's justice was not served: "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins" (Heb. 10:4). Atonement was possible "because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed" (Rom. 3:25). However, God's justice was served in the death of Jesus Christ as a substitute: "Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the most holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption" (Heb. 9:12). "And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant" (Heb. 9:15).

OUR RESPONSE: The Lord Jesus came according to God's will (Acts 2:23; 1 Pet. 1:20) "to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45), or "for all" (1 Tim. 2:6). Though God "laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Is. 53:6; also 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13), yet Christ "has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God" (Eph. 5:2), so that those who believe in Him (Rom. 3:22) might receive atonement and "be saved from [God's] wrath" (Rom. 5:9) through "the precious blood of Christ" (1 Pet. 1:19).²

No believer who truly understands the holiness of God's, His wrath and the utter hopelessness that comes from personal sin will cherish his sin over the love that Christ has for him. The sinner will be captured and silenced by Christ's divine love He has for him. It is only through Jesus Christ that God will present us "faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24).

¹ Youngblood, Ronald F., F. F. Bruce, R. K. Harrison, and Thomas Nelson Publishers. *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. Rev. ed. of: Nelson's illustrated Bible dictionary.; Includes index. Nashville: T. Nelson, 1995.

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² Ibid., "Atonement"