



Leviticus 17:11

Blood of Atonement

The only way God deals with our sin is through the blood of the Lamb of God.

The very thought that the LORD God and sinful man are brought together in an intimate love relationship is expressed in the word "at one ment." Behind this word is the presupposition that alienation and hostility have been overcome. Reconciliation and forgiveness are also associated with atonement (Romans 5:11).

Atonement is needed because of the depravity of man (Romans 1-3). The LORD God is a holy God and He can not look upon sin. The word "atone" has the idea of "to wipe out," "to erase," "to cover." It is often translated "to make atonement," "forgive," "pardon," "purge," and "reconcile."

In the Scriptures, the means of atonement was the offering of a bloody sacrifice. God is seen providing the sacrifice and man performing the rite. Man is not seen initiating the relationship, but God. God made the provision for sin in an act of grace. The shedding of blood is the central action in making atonement for sin. This theme is developed through out the Scriptures.

Leviticus is a bloody book. You read only a few verses and you are into blood, sacrifices and offerings. There is the shedding of blood and sprinkling of blood on altars and veils. You can't escape it. It is not beautiful, but it was never meant to be beautiful. It fully meant to paint a picture of the awfulness of sin. Sin is not so beautiful as portrayed every night on our TV. It is ugly and it is deadly. "The wages of sin is death." "The soul that sins will surely die."

Sin is always sinful. God has never treated it lightly. It outrages the holiness of God. The "wrath of God" is God's opposition to all sin (Romans 1:18, 24, 26, 28; Ephesians 2:3).

When the Hebrew heard the word "blood", he most likely thought of a violent death and in particular to denote the blood of sacrifices. There was a close connection between life and blood in Hebrew thought. No reference is found to blood as indicating life distinct from death. Leviticus 17:11 is not referring to life as existent after the blood has been poured out, but to death. It is a life given up in death. The life ceases to exist when the blood is poured out. The shedding of blood stands for the bringing to an end of a life in the flesh. It is referring to physical death. "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement."

In the Old Testament, the shedding of blood in sacrifices has a special significance. The sprinkled blood is a "covering" for sin. The life of the animal was poured out in death as a substitute for the people. The animal's

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animal was poured out in death as a substitute for the people. The animal's life was given up on behalf of the life of the people. Judgment was carried out by transferring the sin of the people to the animal sacrifice. The Passover lamb and the scapegoat are substitutes for the offerer. The animal sacrifice was a sign that death had already taken place. Therefore, the death angel passed over that individual. It is the termination of life, the infliction of death that atones. Death had violently taken place as a substitute in the Passover sacrifice (Exodus 12:13).

The shedding of blood signifies a violent death, killing or murder. Life is associated with blood that flows through our veins. Life was given up in the pouring out of its precious blood. Death occurred. The dominant thought of the Old Testament is the infliction of death rather than the release of life. The natural interpretation when we think of blood and shedding of blood is death. The "blood of Christ" is a clear expression for the death of Christ. Blood is the symbol of sacrificial death; a life poured out in death. It is not the releasing of life, but the end of the life, death. Redemption is only possible by blood life poured out. Hebrews 9:22 summarizes the whole Old Testament teaching on sacrifice. " And according to the Law, *one may* almost *say*, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."

The whole Old Testament sacrifices find their fulfillment in the blood of Christ in His sacrificial death (Hebrews 9:7-28; 13:11-12). God achieved our full complete comprehensive redemption through the blood of Christ (Heb. 10:20; 9:26). The substitutionary sacrifice of Christ on the cross is all – sufficient and perfect to deal with all our sin and guilt.

The Old Testament saints anticipated the death of Christ for their sins by offering animal sacrifices. Jesus Christ is the substitute that has met the holy demands against the sinner. The sinner was forgiven only after the priest offered the bloody sacrifice anticipating the death of Christ for sin (Leviticus 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:10, 13, 16, 18; 6:7; 19:22; Numbers 15:22-28). Paul said, "In Him (Christ) we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us" (Ephesians 1:7-8).

By offering the sacrificial blood, the worshiper was acknowledging his own guilt and the just penalty of death. By the atonement, God was "passing over," "overlooking" and "covering" sins until Christ came. When Christ came and died He did not pass over or cover it, but took it away (John 1:29; 1 Peter 2:24). God's infinite holiness was satisfied in the death of Christ (John 19:30). The sacrifices in the Old Testament anticipated the efficacious blood of the perfect Lamb of God. The atoning blood of the animal sacrifices, by symbolizing the shed blood of Christ, served to cover (atone) sin until the day when Christ would actually deal with the sin. The death of Christ proved that God was righteous in passing over the sins for which the animal sacrifices had been shed before His coming. God had forgiven sin based on the promise of a sufficient Lamb. The death of Christ proved God to be righteous in all that He promised to the Old Testament saints.

Peter had the sacrificial system of the Old Testament in mind when he wrote 1 Peter 1:18-19. So did Paul in Romans 3:24-25 and John in Revelation 5:6-9. Jesus is clearly reminiscent of Isaiah 52:13-53:12 when He speaks of the "ransom" in Mark 10:45.

The expression "blood" and "cross" are synonyms for the substitutionary death of Christ. The expression "blood of Christ" is used more frequently in the New Testament than either the death of Christ or the cross of Christ. Christ made an atoning sacrifice by the offering up of His blood (Romans 3:25). We have been sprinkled with the blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:2). The only remedy for sin is the shed blood of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ (John 1:29). The blood of Christ refers to the violent, voluntary, substitutionary death upon the cross for men. The "blood of Christ" reveals the significance which His death bears for sinful men (Rom. 5:9). It is a once-for-all accomplishment. We have been "sprinkled" by His blood (Heb. 9:14; 10:19-23; 12:24; 13:20; 1 Pet. 1:2, 7). We have "redemption" through His blood (Rom. 3:24), "propitiation in His blood through faith" (3:25; 1 John 4:10), "justified by His blood" (Rom. 5:9), "peace through the blood of the cross" (Eph. 2:16; Col. 1:20, 22). The death of Christ has effected our reconciliation with God.

The blood of Jesus removes from the believing sinner the wrath of God (Rom. 5:9; 1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9). God is the one who removes His own wrath by the sacrifice He provides. To "propitiate" signifies "the turning away of anger," usually by an offering. Christ is that offering provided by God.

The life of the sinner was under the sentence of death until Christ by the shedding of His blood in the death on the cross released and cleansed us of all sin (Eph. 1:7; 1 Peter 1:18-19; Rev. 1:5; 5:9). Christ bore the divine penalty and God is now free to forgive all sin and declare the believing sinner just in His sight (1 Peter 2:24; 3:18).

The physical application of His blood occurred only on the cross of Calvary. However, the benefits of the finished work of Christ continue to be applied to the believer today (1 John 1:7). Those who "drink" His blood and "eat" His flesh appropriate by faith the benefits of His death and find shelter from the wrath of God (John 6:53-56).

The blood of the Passover lamb sprinkled on the doorposts stood between the firstborn and death when the death angel passed through Egypt. God wrought His wrath on the firstborn of Egypt. Only the blood of the Passover lamb saved the firstborn that night. However, the only begotten Son of God gave Himself as a "propitiation" for the sins of the world. His blood covers all our sins if we will only believe on Him. It was a reminder that the children of Israel were saved from death by the blood of the lamb.

"This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me" (1 Corinthians 11:25). The New Testament makes the teaching clear that the death of Christ on the cross provides atonement. The language of the Old Testament is expressed in the word "blood" in the New Testament. The "new covenant" of Christ is sealed by His blood, once-for-all.

The death of Christ is the fulfillment of all that was prefigured by the sacrifices in the Old Testament (1 Peter 1:18-19; 1 Cor. 5:7; John 1:29, 36; 2 Cor. 5:21).

The blood of Jesus saves us from the death of sin and eternal condemnation. It is by His blood we are cleansed and forgiven. The Passover and the Lord's Supper proclaims "the message of the Cross" (1:18, 23; 2:2, 8).

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1 John 1:7 reminds us that "blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all [every] sin." The blood of Jesus has the power to cleanse from all sin. It purges the guilty conscience from dead works and removes the sense of guilt by perfect forgiveness. God has made a covenant with the believer in the blood of Christ (Matt. 26:26-29; 1 Cor. 11:25). The shed blood of Christ consummates our redemption. Moreover, "we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus" (Hebrews 10:19).

The blood of bulls and goats was incapable of taking away our sins (Heb. 10:4). Christ has taken away our sins by the sacrifice of Himself (Hebrews 9:24-28). Hebrews 9-10 interprets the cross of Jesus in terms of a sacrificial system, particularly the Day of Atonement. What the Temple sacrifices were unable to accomplish, Christ actually did on the cross. The Law and its sacrifices were "a shadow of the good things to come" (Hebrews 10:1). We now have boldness to enter into the Holy of Holies "by the blood of Jesus" (10:19). Christ entered the heavenly sanctuary with His own blood to make atonement for us (9:24). By His dying He broke the veil of His flesh and sprinkled His own blood upon the mercy seat in the heavenly tabernacle in the presence of God. Christ put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (9:25f).

In Hebrews 10:19 "blood" stands for all that is implied in the sacrifice of Christ. This sacrifice provides "a new and living way" for all believers. "Blood" in Hebrews refers to the death of Christ (9:14f; 12:24; 13:11ff). Christ presented His offering in a heavenly and perfect sanctuary (9:12). Something is done in the death of Christ, which enables God to justify the ungodly who believe on Christ, and at the same time enables God to remain a righteous God. "The wages of sin is death," and Christ died the sinner's death.

Christ was represented a sacrifice for sin in the same sense in which the sin offerings in the Old Testament were sacrifices. The New Testament teaching on Christ's death makes it clear that Christ's blood was shed as a sacrifice which God Himself provided to meet His holy demands against sin. Jesus was the substitute for sinners, who bore our guilt, suffered the penalty of the law in our stead, and reconciled us to God. Christ is the sacrifice that perfectly fulfills all that is foreshadowed in the Levitical system. He is the one sacrifice that removes all sin. All that the sacrifices dimly foreshadowed is perfectly fulfilled in Christ. He did what the animal sacrifices could never do. The blood of Christ cleans the soul from guilt.

Blood is associated with the covenant (Heb. 9; 13:20); remission (Matt. 26:29; Mk. 14:24; Heb. 9:22b; Isa. 53; Heb. 13:12; sanctification (1 Cor. 1:2; Heb. 2:10-11; 9:13-15); redemption (Eph. 1:7; Jn. 1:29; Col. 1:14; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; Rev. 5:9; Acts 20:28); propitiation (Rom. 3:25); peace (Eph. 2:13; Col. 1:20); reconciliation (Col. 1:20-22; Rom. 5:10ff); victory (Rev. 12:11); justification (Rom. 5:9); and through it entrance into the Holy of Holies (Heb. 10:19-20).

Now that Christ has died for sin the only requirement, regardless of the degree of guilt, is to *believe* on Him as your Savior. The death of Christ on the cross answered the divine judgment against every sin. God is uncompromised in His holiness. God justifies the sinner who does nothing more than believe in Jesus. He can remain just and righteous because of the substitutionary death of Christ who paid the debt for the believing sinner.

The resurrection of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit are proof that God is satisfied with the death of Christ for our sins (Rom. 4:25; 1 John 2:2; Romans 8:16; Galatians 4:5f).

"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10).

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Wil is a graduate of William Carey University, B. A.; New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Th. M.; and Azusa Pacific University, M. A. He has pastored in Panama, Ecuador and the U. S, and served for over 20 years as missionary in Ecuador and Honduras. He had a daily expository Bible teaching ministry head in over 100 countries for ten years. He continues to seek opportunities to be personally involved in world missions. Wil and his wife Ann have three grown daughters. He currently serves as a Baptist pastor and teaches seminary extension courses in Honduras.

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