

Definite Atonement (Part 1)

The Old Testament sacrificial system often causes many people a good deal of consternation. The stipulations and rituals can appear convoluted and confusing at first, second, and third glance. However, like the rest of God's revealed Word, the sacrificial system prefigured the coming of Christ and the necessity for the atonement of sin and consequent reconciliation of God. Knowing this, the sacrifices take on a whole new light and meaning, for their repetition demonstrates man's inability to meet the demands of a holy God and the inefficacy of the blood of bulls and goats. This lesson explains the purpose of the Levitical system, and he demonstrates from the book of John the real, effectual atonement of Christ for His elect.

I. Definite Atonement

- a. The doctrine of substitutionary atonement rests at the heart of the doctrines of grace.
 - i. Substitutionary atonement states that Christ stepped in and bore the burden of sin for another. The question of whose sin He atoned for and what this accomplished will form the focus of the next two lessons.
 - ii. The Old Testament looks forward to Christ's substitutionary atonement.
 - iii. The New Testament reiterates, declares, explains, and looks forward to the benefit of Christ' substitutionary atonement.
- b. Jesus death accomplished its intent perfectly, and not one drop of His blood was shed in vain.

II. The Real Atonement of Christ

- a. The death of Christ did not potentially save, creating a contingency upon which people could decide whether or not to accept Jesus.
 - i. Jesus death actually atoned for sin, reconciled the elect to God, propitiated for them, and redeemed them.
 - ii. A real transaction occurred on the cross between the Father and the Son.
 - b. God instituted the sacrificial system, maintained and executed by the tribe of Levi, to prefigure the coming of Christ and His atonement for sin.
 - i. Our holy God must prescribe the means by which sinful man may approach Him.
 - ii. The sprinkling of blood on the mercy seat on the Day of Atonement portrayed the covering of our sin and propitiation (the satisfaction of the righteous anger of God), but the scapegoat prefigured the imputation of our sins on Christ as he hung in shame upon the cross.
 - c. John 1:29: John the Baptist refers to Jesus as the "Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." Three observations arise.
 - i. Jesus definitively took sin away, unlike the scapegoat.
 - 1. He atoned completely for sin.
 - 2. He accomplished the real task of reconciliation on the cross.
 - ii. The Old Testament sacrificial system applied only to the nation of Israel, whereas John the Baptist labeled Jesus as the savior of the sins of the world.
 - iii. The word "world" ("cosmos") possesses different meanings depending on its context. In John, it has the following meanings.
 - 1. Can refer to the entire created order (1:10; 17:5)
 - 2. Can refer to the physical earth (13:1)
 - 3. Can refer to the world system governed by Satan (12:31)
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- 4. Can refer to all unbelievers (7:7)
 - 5. Can refer to a large group (12:19)
 - 6. Can refer to the general public (12:4)
 - 7. Can refer to large groups of Jews and Gentiles (1:29)
 - 8. Can refer to the human realm (3:16)

9. Can refer to the non-elect (17:9)

10. Can refer to the elect (3:17)

d. John 1:29 refers to the elect within the groups of the Jews and Gentiles.

i. If John the Baptist meant all of humanity, then all humanity would be saved and no one would go to hell, for God would not require an unjust second payment for sin.

ii. Christ's atonement covers all sins of the elect, and ignoring this principle leads to an inequitable picture of God.

e. Jesus' atonement should elicit even more wonder when we recognize that He sacrificed His own divine, holy life for disreputable sinners He knows by name.

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Leviticus 16; John 1:10, 29; 3:16, 17; 7:7; 12:4, 19, 31; 13:1; 17:5, 9