

## **Atonement – Death and Life**

For the past couple of weeks, we have been exploring topics related to atonement. These topics are important since they deal with the foundation of the gospel, the saving work of Jesus Christ on the cross. I have emphasized and will continue to emphasize that what is written in the Bible is for the everyday believer, you. There are issues today in understanding what writers 2,000 – 3,000 years ago wrote. But the concepts, if taught correctly by a pastor-teacher are for every believer today. Atonement, the work of Jesus Christ on the cross, is the basis for everything you have as a believer.

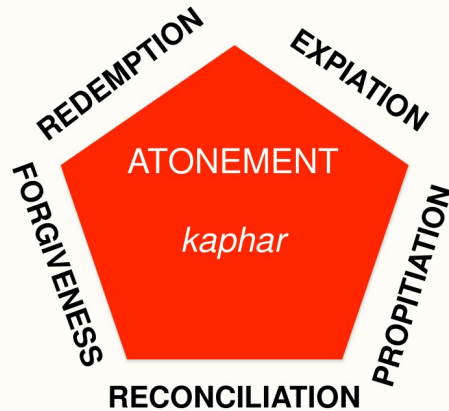
First, we dealt with the concept of sin. Sin is missing the mark of God's perfect righteousness. It can be deliberate or from ignorance. It is more than that as covered in the lessons on sin.

Last week we looked at the Old Testament ritual/teaching aid of atonement in Leviticus chapter 1. The evidence of the substitutionary death of the animal was in the blood which was presented to the altar as atonement which satisfied God's righteousness in the shadow Christology. This was only the first of five sacrifices which spanned the illustration of what Christ did on the cross.

The illustration below is from Robby Dean's teaching on the atonement. It is helpful to see the centrality of atonement and how it is related to other important doctrines.

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**Genesis 2-3; Leviticus 1; Hebrews 10 & others**

**The Many Facets of Atonement**



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The ritual sacrifice was a teaching aid pointing to the sacrificial spiritual death of Jesus on the cross. I emphasize spiritual. The spiritual death pays the penalty of the sin that caused spiritual death in mankind.

The physical death did not pay for the spiritual death. But the physical death was important and essential. It provided the preparation for the resurrection which is essential for believers as taught in the lesson on resurrection (1 Corinthians chapter 15). The rest of this lesson will focus on these two aspects of Christ's work. Jesus had to die both spiritually and physically. I want you to understand the reasoning and purpose of each.

Commenting on Hebrews chapter 10, Thomas Constable said:

“The incompetence of the old Levitical order is set forth in four particular respects in verses 1 through 4: (1) the insubstantial (shadowy) character of the Mosaic system, (2) the repetitive nature of the old sacrifices, (3) the function of the Levitical sacrifices as repeated reminders of sin, and (4) the ineffectiveness of the blood of animals.<sup>2</sup>”

1 <https://www.deanbible.org/dbmfiles/slides/2018-Ephesians-210b.pdf>

2 <https://soniclight.com/tcon/notes/pdf/hebrews.pdf> p176 quoting

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**Hebrews 10:1 For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near.**

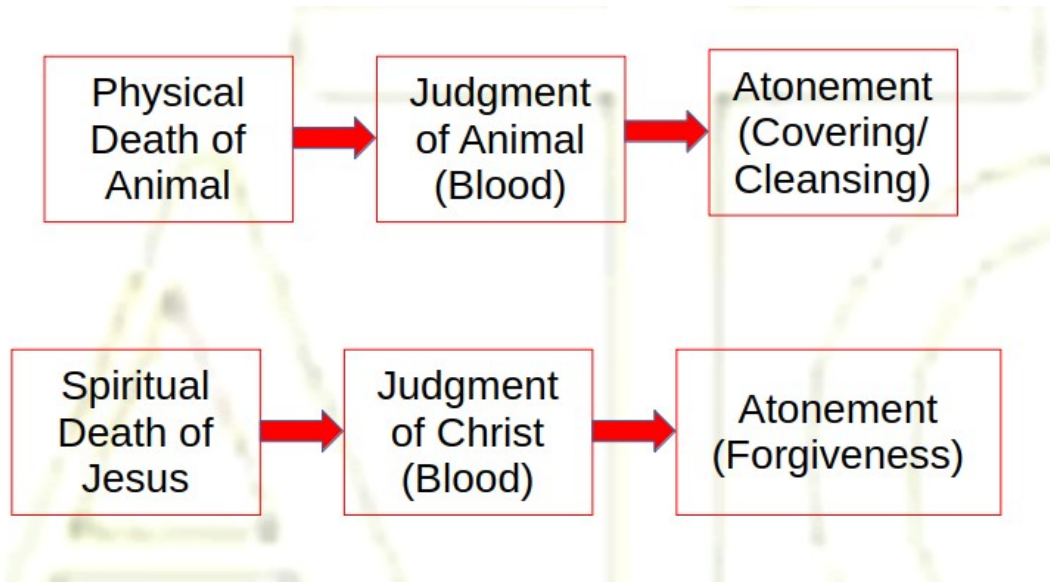
**Hebrews 10:2 Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins?**

**Hebrews 10:3 But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year.**

**Hebrews 10:4 For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.**

Before moving on, I wanted to comment on an observation on pagan human sacrifice. This was something that was apparently practiced in the Maya religion. In those religions, even in Canaanite religion, there was an understanding that a human sacrifice was necessary to satisfy an angry god. Yet, they did not understand that it had to be a person who was without sin. We understand that person had to be Jesus Christ because He had no sin. We will get into that at a later date.

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**Hebrews 10:1 For the Law, since it has *only* a shadow of the good things to come *and* not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near.**

Let's back up a bit and look at the sinful act that started the stream of prophecies which culminated in the deaths of Jesus on the Cross.

First look at the warning of death to Adam.

**Genesis 2:15 Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.**

**Genesis 2:16 The Lord God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely;**

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**Genesis 2:17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.”**

It is obvious from Genesis chapter 3 that Adam and Eve did not die physically right away. They did die spiritually right away as evidenced by their awareness of their nakedness. After they sinned, the preexistent Christ made his daily visit with them. But they hid.

**Genesis 3:8 They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. (Because they were spiritually dead, they no longer had fellowship with God.)**

**Genesis 3:9 Then the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, “Where are you?”**

**Genesis 3:10 He said, “I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself.”**

They now had a sin nature and were operating under the domination of it. Fear.

**Genesis 3:11 And He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?”**

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The Lord God, the preexistent Christ identified that Adam and Eve all of a sudden had changed. They hid from the Lord and were afraid. They were spiritually dead.

It is for this reason that Jesus Christ had to be judged for sin and die spiritually. Adam and Eve's spiritual death required a perfect substitute to die spiritually to pay the price (redemption) which would satisfy God's righteousness (propitiation) thereby setting man in right relationship with God (reconciliation).

We can become spiritually alive by faith because Jesus was our substitute and died spiritually on the cross.

Man's spiritual death → Jesus spiritual death (judgment)→ man's spiritual life (after faith in Jesus)

We cannot escape physical death. But by Jesus' physical death and subsequent resurrection we can have life in a resurrection body after our physical death.

Now some would translate the "surely die" in Genesis 2:17 as "dying you shall die" indicating two deaths: immediate spiritual death and subsequent physical death. Some would say the Hebrew there is just emphasizing the spiritual death. But they would quickly admit that physical death also occurred as a result of the sin. So whether you interpret the Hebrew of Genesis 2:17 as one death or two, most are in agreement that Adam and Eve suffered two deaths: immediate spiritual death and a subsequent physical death outside of the garden.

**Genesis 3:22 Then the Lord God said,  
"Behold, the man has become like one of Us,  
knowing good and evil; and now, he might**

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**stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever”—**

**Forever.** From Biblehub.com:

**“Usage:** The Hebrew word "olam" primarily conveys the concept of eternity or an indefinite, unending duration. It is used to describe God's eternal nature, the everlasting covenant, and the perpetual statutes given to Israel. "Olam" can also refer to ancient times or the distant past, emphasizing the continuity and timelessness of God's purposes and promises.”

**“Cultural and Historical Background:** In ancient Hebrew culture, the concept of time was often viewed in terms of cycles and continuity rather than linear progression. "Olam" reflects this understanding by emphasizing the eternal and unchanging nature of God and His covenants. The term is frequently used in the context of God's eternal kingship, His unending mercy, and the everlasting covenant with His people.<sup>3</sup>”

Physical death was an inevitable outcome of banishment from the garden which was a result of sinning by violating God’s specific command.

But God’s plan provides for restoration to spiritual life (regeneration) and restoration of physical life (resurrection).

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<sup>3</sup> <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/5769.htm>

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<b>Man's Deaths</b>	<b>Jesus' Deaths</b>	<b>Man's Lives</b>
<b>Man's physical death (Genesis 3:22)</b>	<b>→Jesus physical death +resurrection (1 Corinthians 15)</b>	<b>→Man's eternal life (after faith in Jesus by resurrection) (1 Corinthians 15)</b>
<b>Man's spiritual death (Genesis 2-3)</b>	<b>→Jesus spiritual death (judgment) 2 Corinthians 5:21</b>	<b>→Man's spiritual life (after faith in Jesus) John 3</b>

Last week we followed Leviticus chapter 1 and other passages to show that the Old Testament was a shadow Christology.

This week, let us look at the Old Testament to show that the concept of resurrection was known, even if the Sadducees didn't believe it.

Start with the Sadducees' understanding as documented in the New Testament.

**Mark 12:18 Some Sadducees (who say that there is no resurrection) \*came to Jesus, and began questioning Him, saying,**

The gospels allude to the fact that resurrection was already an understood doctrine. Yet, the Sadducees did not believe it. But there are several passages in the Old Testament that make it clear that it was an established doctrine.



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**Job 19:25 “As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, And at the last He will take His stand on the earth.**

**Job 19:26 “Even after my skin is destroyed, Yet from my flesh I shall see God;**

Job was the oldest book in the Bible. It was composed around the time of Abraham. Commentators vary in their interpretation of this verse. Some see this as a reference to Job in his resurrection body.

Daniel is very clear in his description of resurrection.

**Daniel 12:1 -“Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands *guard* over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued.**

**Daniel 12:2 Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace *and* everlasting contempt.**

Often in the Old Testament, the word for sleep is used for death. So those who will awake from death alludes to resurrection. John Walvoord, in his commentary on the book of Daniel quotes another commentator from the 1800’s:

“Verse 2 introduces the resurrection of the dead. To what extent this belief existed among the Jews in pre-Maccabean times, cannot here be

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discussed, but this is in any case the earliest passage where the belief is unambiguously set forth.<sup>4</sup>

Then there is the account of Abraham being commanded to sacrifice his son.

**Genesis 22:7 Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” And he said, “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?”**

**Genesis 22:8 Abraham said, “God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” So the two of them walked on together.**

The Old Testament text does not provide Abraham’s thought process on this other than “God will provide...” But the writer of Hebrews did have an insight into Abraham’s thinking.

**Hebrews 11:17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son;**

**Hebrews 11:18 *it was he* to whom it was said, “IN ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED.”**

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4 Walvoord, J.F. (1971). Daniel : the Key to Prophetic Revelation. Chicago: Moody Press. Page 285

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**Hebrews 11:19 He considered that God is able to raise *people* even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.**

I quote this verse because the difference between resuscitation and resurrection must be observed. In the Old Testament there were several individuals who were brought back to life and who later died (1 Kings 17:17–24; 2 Kings 4:18–20 , 32–37). Take for instance Lazarus that Jesus raised from the dead. And here in Hebrews it is stated that Abraham knew that God could bring people back to life, raise them from the dead. So this passage, on the face explains resuscitation and not resurrection.

There are passages like Psalm 16, a psalm of David, which one might question until you see that Peter explains it as resurrection in Acts chapter 2.

**Psalm 16:7 I will bless the Lord who has counseled me; Indeed, my mind instructs me in the night.**

**Psalm 16:8 I have set the Lord continually before me; Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.**

**Psalm 16:9 Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will dwell securely.**

**Psalm 16:10 For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.**

**Psalm 16:11 You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.**

Now Peter's explanation:

**Acts 2:25 For David says of Him, 'I SAW THE LORD ALWAYS IN MY PRESENCE; FOR HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND, SO THAT I WILL NOT BE SHAKEN.**

**Acts 2:26 'THEREFORE MY HEART WAS GLAD AND MY TONGUE EXULTED; MOREOVER MY FLESH ALSO WILL LIVE IN HOPE;**

**Acts 2:27 BECAUSE YOU WILL NOT ABANDON MY SOUL TO HADES, NOR ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY.**

**Acts 2:28 'YOU HAVE MADE KNOWN TO ME THE WAYS OF LIFE; YOU WILL MAKE ME FULL OF GLADNESS WITH YOUR PRESENCE.'**

**Acts 2:29 "Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.**

**Acts 2:30 And so, because he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants on his throne,**

**Acts 2:31 he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay.**

The point of this little exercise was to show that Adam and Eve died twice: spiritual death immediately after sinning and subsequently experienced a physical death. These two deaths had to be remedied by God through Jesus Christ. So Jesus died spiritually as a result of “being made sin” and accepting the Judgment of God and then dying physically which He Himself did voluntarily, not from a loss of blood. After dying physically, He was raised in resurrection, God validating His work on the cross. This also opened the doors for all believers to be resurrected in their proper order.

“Extra credit”

It is interesting how people will say things that have greater meaning than what they understand. Remember Caiaphas prophesying that Jesus had to die.

**John 11:47 Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, “What are we doing? For this man (Jesus) is performing many signs.**

**John 11:48 If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.”**

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**John 11:49 But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all,**

**John 11:50 nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish.”**

**John 11:51 Now he did not say this on his own initiative, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation,**

**John 11:52 and not for the nation only, but in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.**

**John 11:53 So from that day on they planned together to kill Him.**