

Atonement in Old Testament

#0207

Study Given by W. D. Frazee

The way to be ready is to get ready and stay ready. And we will be ready, won't we? What does it mean to be ready? It means that the damage that sin has done has been repaired, that the separation that sin has caused has been ended. We call that the atonement, or as it may be pronounced otherwise, at-one-ment.

In Isaiah 59:2 God says:

"Your iniquities have separated between you and your God..." Isaiah 59:2.

Sin brings separation. It's rebellion against God. God's purpose is to bring man back to full harmony with Him, in union with Him, and when that's accomplished, then we can live with Him and He with us forever. It'll be a wonderful reunion day, won't it, friends?

Now, this evening I would like to study this wonderful plan of atonement as it is revealed in the Old Testament. So many people, when they think of the good news, they think of the New Testament. When they think of the law, they think of the Old Testament. Well, there's plenty of both in both Testaments for it is all one message, my friend. But I thought you might be interested tonight, in spending the time looking at the good news concerning the atonement as it is revealed through the prophets of the first part of history.

In the ancient sanctuary, which Moses made in obedience to God's command, we have this wonderful work of atonement brought to view. I want you to notice this tonight, that we have three areas here. We have the sanctuary itself with the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place, and then surrounding we have the court.

Now if you're familiar with the sanctuary services, you will remember that all that went on in the court was preparatory to the work in the Holy Place. And the work that went on in the Holy Place was preparatory to the work in the Most Holy Place. This is the climax of all the sanctuary service.

Turn now to Leviticus 16, and I want you to notice what was done in that most holy place. Remember that this was given to Moses copied after the sanctuary in Heaven. Leviticus 16:30. The 29th verse speaks of when it was, the 10th day of the 7th

month.

"For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord" Leviticus 16:30.

The 33rd verse says he was to make atonement for the holy sanctuary, make atonement for the tabernacle, make atonement for the altar, atonement for the priest, and for all the people of the congregation. Sin had brought separation.

Now, through these services, the people were at one with God. So let us look at the sanctuary service tonight in its message concerning the atonement. You can see from what we've just read, that this atonement was made on what is called the Day of Atonement. Now, when you study the earlier chapters of Leviticus, you notice that day by day through the year of service that preceded this work of the Most Holy Place, services were going on here in the court, and in the Holy Place. As you read in the fourth chapter of Leviticus, there were offerings brought here to the altar: the lamb, the goat, the bullock, and various sacrifices. Men placed their sins upon these substitutionary sacrifices. The lamb or the ram was accepted instead of the man, and then the sacrifice was slain. As sin was transferred from the sinner to the substitute, this animal became the one who died in the sinner's place.

What does this teach us? This teaches us that sin brings death. Why does sin bring death? Because it is separation from God. If my finger is severed from my body, it dies. If my arm is cut off from my body, it dies. And so you and I, severed from the life of God, must meet death as the inevitable consequence. But here now, we see a work called a work of atonement, a work of bringing man *back* to God, the Life-giver. But in the process, we see something died. Atonement must come through death. That's the message of the sanctuary. Every day these animals were slain in the court, and the blood ministered either at the altar of burnt offering or at the golden altar of incense within the veil. In either case, it was a ministry of blood in which life was poured out so that the atonement might be accomplished.

Now in Leviticus 4 we are told that when the priest brought that blood in from the court and sprinkled it on the horns of the golden altar, that an atonement was made. We're also told that when instead he sprinkled the blood on the brazen altar, an atonement was made. So we see three places of atonement in the sanctuary service. We see the blood sprinkled on the brazen altar in the court. We see the blood sprinkled on the golden altar in the Holy Place. But at the close of the year, on the Day of Atonement, the priest sprinkled the blood upon the mercy seat. And what is there in that ark? Oh, that's where the law of God is. The Ten Commandments are enshrined beneath the mercy seat. There are those ten words that God Himself wrote on the tables of stone. And it is this law that tells us what righteousness is on one hand and sin on the other. This is what tells us what is right and what is wrong. And the wages of

the transgression of this, the wages of sin, is death.

So you see that while it is plainly stated that an atonement was made when the blood was sprinkled in the court, an atonement when the blood was sprinkled in the Holy Place, the fact that there was a Day of Atonement which comes at the end shows that the atonement was not fully completed until the blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat directly over the law. In each case, it was the blood that made the atonement.

As the Bible tells us in Leviticus 17:11:

“...it is the blood that makes the atonement, and I have given it to you” Leviticus 17:11.

The atonement was provided by God.

Now this truth was given to the world long before the sanctuary was built there. From the time that sin entered, God taught Adam and later his descendants to bring the sacrifices. One of the most wonderful representations of this truth of atonement through the death of a substitute was given to Abraham. You remember that God awakened him in the night and said, “Abraham, I want you to take your son, Isaac, up to a mountain that I will show you and there sacrifice him as an offering.”

What did Abraham do? He obeyed. What a test that must have been! Those three days that he journeyed with that beloved son. Finally, as they trudged up the mountain that God showed him, Mt. Mariah, the young man turned to the father and said, “Father, here is the fire and the wood for the offering, but where is the lamb?” Where is the lamb?

How that father’s heart must have ached. He couldn’t bear yet to tell his son that he, Isaac, was to be the sacrifice. But from his heart came an answer, God must have inspired it, “My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering.” And so it came to pass, for as at the top of the mountain the altar was erected and the news was broken to Isaac and he willingly yielded himself in harmony with the divine command, as the hand of Abraham was raised to obey the command, God spoke to him out of Heaven and said, “Abraham, no, don’t do anything to the lad.” God renewed His covenant with him and as Abraham turned, he saw caught in the thicket a ram caught by his horns. Abraham took that ram and offered it, the Bible says, instead of his son upon the altar.

Oh, what a wonderful picture! A wonderful picture. The lamb died, that the man may live. Yes, this is the great lesson of the atonement. But now, let us ask this question: Does this mean that the death of the lamb or a goat or a bullock can pay for sin? Is this the atonement? I think we can all see, friends, that if the death of an animal could pay for sin, sin is not so much of a problem after all. You know if I were to break

this microphone and all it cost to fix it was 50 cents, I might feel sorry that I'd broken it, but I wouldn't need to feel very sorry, would I? No.

And if the sins that men commit can be atoned for by bringing a lamb or a bullock, then sin is not so terrible after all. You can all see that. But God never intended that people should get the idea that the bringing of a lamb or a bullock could pay for sin. He never intended any such thing.

Notice Isaiah 1:11. God didn't want them to have any such thoughts:

"To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? Saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?" Isaiah 1:11–12.

Well you say, "Didn't God require it?" No, God didn't require it.

"Didn't He tell them to do it?" Yes, but God didn't require it. The people required it. God never intended that they should get the idea that these sacrifices were to appease Him, or to satisfy justice, or to atone for the transgressions of this law. Not one of these offerings, not all of them together could atone for a single sin.

Now if a beast's sacrifice couldn't atone for sin, could one man's sacrifice atone for another?

Let's turn to Psalm 49:7–8. What's the first word? None. What does none mean? No one, nobody.

"None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceases for ever" Psalm 49:7–8.

Can one man atone for another? No. Utterly impossible!

As God says in Ezekiel 14:20:

"Though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness" Ezekiel 14:20.

So we see that no beast could atone for a man. No man could atone for

another—utterly impossible. God, as Abraham said, must *provide* the substitute. God must provide a substitute. As we, like Isaac, come to the altar of sacrifice, God in mercy shows us Someone else, a substitute, who is offered up for a burnt offering in our stead.

Now turn to Isaiah 53. This is one of the most wonderful chapters in all the Bible. I want you to notice how vividly it presents the one who makes atonement, the sacrifice, the substitute that brings us back to God. I want you to look at these verses and meditate on them with me:

“Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?” Isaiah 53:1.

What is the arm of the Lord? What is an arm anyway? An arm is the agency we use to do something, to accomplish something. Isn't it? The arm of the Lord, then, is the agent that God uses to accomplish something.

Notice what this arm of the Lord will do:

“For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not” Isaiah 53:2–3.

Now notice:

“Surely he...”

This arm of the Lord, this agent God uses.

“Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded...” Isaiah 53:4.

What for? Is that what happened to the lamb? That's right. He was wounded for somebody else's transgressions. Here we see the suffering Servant, the Arm of the Lord.

“...He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all” Isaiah 53:5–6.

Notice the marginal reading on that. Reading from the Hebrew it says:

“He hath made the iniquity of us all to meet on Him”
Isaiah 53:4.

Did any of you children ever take a magnifying glass and use it for a burning glass? You can take a magnifying glass and focus it just right on a piece of paper and pretty soon what happens to that piece of paper? It starts to smoke, and then to burn. Where did it come from? The sun. But the burning glass focused it on the paper. And here is a prophecy that there would come One *on whom would be focused* the iniquity of us all.

All the sins of men were to meet on Him.

“The LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all” Isaiah 53:6.

This is the price of the atonement. Reading on:

“He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought...” Isaiah 53:7.

What are the next three words? As a lamb. Here is that lamb, the real Lamb. No beast could pay the price. But here is the arm of the Lord, the agent that God uses, who, like a lamb, is led where? To the slaughter.

“...and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth” Isaiah 53:7.

Notice in the eighth verse His innocence:

“He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare His generation? for He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was He stricken” Isaiah 53:8.

He was stricken for what? The transgression of My people, God says.

“And He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death; because He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth” Isaiah 53:9.

Was He innocent or guilty? Innocent. But He was treated as if He was guilty.

“Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He hath put Him to

grief: when thou shall make His soul an offering for sin”
Isaiah 53:10.

We are reading from the Old Testament over 700 years before the Christian era. Isaiah is writing by inspiration and describing this One that is to be stricken, and wounded, and bruised, and suffer as the sacrificial lamb.

It says:

“When thou shall make His soul an offering for sin...”
Isaiah 53:10.

He died then as the sin offering, do you see?

“...He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand”
Isaiah 53:10.

Now watch in these next two verses that close the chapter:

“He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied:
by His knowledge shall My righteous servant justify many;
for He shall bear their iniquities” Isaiah 53:11.

What does He carry? He carries their iniquity.

“Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He hath poured out his soul unto death: and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bear the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors” Isaiah 53:11–12.

This leads me to the next point. As we go back to that ancient sanctuary, we see that it was not enough that a lamb be slain, that a bullock be sacrificed. A *priest* must make the atonement. He must go within the Holy Place and sprinkle the blood before the veil. And then, on the closing day, the Day of Atonement, the high priest must come in the Most Holy Place. There must be not only a sacrifice, I repeat: there must be an interceding priest. There must not only be Someone who dies for us, but there must also be Someone who lives, and prays, and intercedes, and offers in our behalf. And here it is in the 53rd chapter of Isaiah. This One whose soul was made an offering for sin was also to make intercession for the transgressors.

Now let's turn to Zechariah 6 and learn something more about this One who was to be a sacrifice, an offering for sin, and also make intercession. Let us see what else

this interceding Priest is.

“And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaks the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the Man whose name is The BRANCH...”
Zechariah 6:12

This branch is another name for the Messiah. As we learn from Isaiah 11:1. He is a Branch from the root of Jesse.

“...and He shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a Priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both”
Zechariah 6:12–13.

This interceding Priest then shares the throne of God. That is what I want you to see in this verse. He’s not only a Priest, But He’s also what? A King.

Now turn to Psalm 110, and we’ll get a picture of this same scene—a combination of the work of Priest and King:

“The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at My right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool” Psalm 110:1.

Here is God upon His throne saying to somebody else, I want you to sit right here at My right hand. We saw the picture in Zechariah. He shall be a priest upon His throne with the Father.

“The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth” Psalm 110:2–3.

Now notice, as God upon His throne speaks to this One who shares the throne with Him.

“The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek” Psalm 110:4.

Melchizedek, you remember, was the priest-king in the days of Abraham. When Abraham came back from the defeat of the kings that had conquered Sodom and carried Lot off, when Abraham returned from that successful campaign, he met

Melchizedek the king of Salem, who was also, the Bible says, the priest of the most high God. He was king and priest. And Abraham gave tithes of all. Paul refers to this in Hebrews 7.

My point is: this priest-king, this Melchizedek who was a king and a priest of the most high God, is taken here as a type, a representation. God upon His throne says to this One who shares the throne with Him, I'm swearing by Myself and by this solemn oath, You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. You are here on the throne with Me as a king. You are here as a priest to intercede for Israel.

Now let's turn to Psalm 2 and we'll get another view. This will take us right into the heart of God's wonderful plan of salvation.

"Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against His anointed" Psalm 2:1-2.

This word "anointed" is taken from the same Hebrew word that is translated "Messiah." In fact, that's what the word "messiah" means "anointed." In Greek, the word is "Christ." So Hebrew—"Messiah," Greek—"Christ," English—"Anointed." It all means the same thing.

So here is a prophecy concerning King Messiah:

"The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against His anointed" Psalm 110:2.

His Messiah.

"...saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us" Psalm 110:2-3.

Now how does God view this opposition of earthly kings and kingdoms?

"He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the LORD shall have them in derision. Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure. Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto Me, Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee" Psalm 110:4-7.

Here we see that this King upon the throne who is also a priest, this One who

shares the throne with the infinite God, who is the Messiah, is none other than the Son of God.

“I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto Me,
Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee”
Psalm 110:7.

Now let's look at the total picture here. The sanctuary shows us to make the atonement the lamb must die, the bullock must die, the goat must die. The blood must be sprinkled on the brazen altar, on the golden altar, on the mercy seat—all this to bring about the atonement. But we have seen that the Old Testament itself teaches that those sacrifices in themselves could not accomplish the atonement. Even one human being could not ransom another. All this then prefigured, represented One whom Isaiah represents as the arm of the Lord, God's agent, who is the offering for sin, who is wounded for our transgressions, on whom all our sins are placed, and who dies in our stead.

Isaiah also presents Him as the One who makes intercession as a priest pleading as Aaron did in the ancient sanctuary. Zechariah presents Him as a priest upon His throne sharing the throne of God. David presents Him as the One who sits at the right hand of God to whom the Father swears, “Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek,” both priest and king. And the second Psalm presents Him as no other than the Son of God Himself.

Now friends, with these wonderful facts before us, do you see first how costly sin is that it should require such a sacrifice? And do you see second how full of love our Father is that He would provide such a ransom? Sin must be a terrible evil if it calls for such a sacrifice. And God's love must be *infinite* if He will give His own Son—He gave Himself in His Son—to provide this ransom.

There is a third lesson that comes home to my heart as I think of these marvelous facts, and that is the certainty of the completion of this work. If the Son of God Himself has been given as the offering of the atonement, and as the priest who makes the atonement, can anyone doubt that He will complete the work He started? Thank God, friend, He'll do it. There's no question about it. That's what the New Covenant is about. And did you know where to find the new covenant? Not in the books that we call the New Testament. This new covenant is presented in the Old Testament.

Turn to Jeremiah 31.

"Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make
a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house
of Judah" Jeremiah 31:31.

What kind of a covenant? A new covenant.

“Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt: which My covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts...” Psalm 110:32–33.

Thank God, friends, in the new covenant—don’t miss it—the law that was written on the tables of stone back there is written where? In our heart.

“...and will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD” Psalm 110:34.

Now watch these next two lines.

“...for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” Psalm 110:34.

When sins are forgiven, they are covered; Psalm 32:1. But when they’re blotted out then they are forgotten, nevermore to be brought into mind. This is the blotting out. Oh, I pray that every one of us shall let God do for us in the new covenant what He has promised in these wonderful verses. What do you say?

Now, I want to bring you to what I think is one of the most wonderful verses in all the Old Testament.

Turn to Zechariah 12.

“And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications...” Zechariah 12:10.

God is speaking here. That’s evident because He pours out His Spirit. No man could do this. Now listen as God is speaking:

“...and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced,

and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn” Zechariah 12:10.

Here is a clear Old Testament prophecy that God—and we saw from the other prophecies, the Son of God, who is God, the same as the Father is—that God Himself would be pierced by men. What a prophecy! Hundreds of years before the Christian era. But there’s more to it than the historical fact given prophetically. There is the wonderful promise that if those who look at Him pierced will open their hearts to the Spirit that is poured upon Him, they shall do what? They shall mourn. What are the next two words? For Him. Mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son.

And so as I come and see the Messiah, the suffering servant, the sacrificial lamb, the interceding priest pierced for me, if my heart is open to the Spirit I will do what? Mourn. Mourn for Him. Who pierced Him? I did. That’s what this text says.

“...they shall look at Me whom they have pierced...”
Zechariah 12:10.

This is right at the heart of the solution of the problem. It is finding out what sin has cost God that causes you and me to turn from it and never want it again. To bring a lamb would make me some sorry for my sin, but I might forget that as days and weeks go by. But oh, when I come and see that it is God Himself, the Son of God, who must die in my stead if I am to live, who must bear my sins to take it from me, then friend, I don't want to go back to it anymore. Do I? *This* is the heart of the plan of salvation.

May we bow our heads?

Precious Lord, we thank Thee for the light shining from the pages of Thy word. We thank Thee that God Himself provides a lamb for a burnt offering. And as, like Isaac, we come to the altar of sacrifice, oh, we thank Thee that there is Someone who comes and dies in our stead. And as we behold that love, we choose to yield our lives to the One who gave Himself for us. Amen.

[Testimony service]

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