

ABOUT

# SACRIFICE & ATONEMENT

from The Bible Project

Despite the fact that most humans long to live in a world where goodness and justice prevail, something always compels us to wreak havoc and destruction. In the Bible, we see this evil nature ruining things in two ways. For one, evil has the direct effect of hurting other people. This direct effect must be made right by fixing whatever problem the evil has caused. For example, if a person steals from another person, they must make it right by returning whatever item was stolen.

There is another, indirect effect of evil that the Bible talks about, though. This effect is one of a ruined relationship with God, destruction of trust, and emotional damage. This effect of evil must be corrected in another way.

Many people feel as if it is God's responsibility to correct this effect and rid the world of evil. However, the same evil that is corrupting relationships and causing damage out in the world is the evil that exists in all of us. To rid the world of evil, God would have to destroy all of mankind. Thankfully, God has a plan to rid the world of evil without destroying humanity.

In the early story of the Bible, animal sacrifice atoned for man's sins. Though it was the sinner who deserved to be removed from the world, an animal would take their place. The animal's blood would then be sprinkled by priest in a symbolic cleansing of evil's indirect consequences throughout the community. This process was called purification, and it was able to make things right between the Israelites and God.

Though Old Testament atonement was a temporary solution for evil, evil still persisted no matter how many sacrifices were made.

These Old Testament sacrifices fell short of atoning for man's sins. Speaking on this problem, Isaiah talked of a king who would come as a servant and die on behalf of the Israelites, giving his life to atone for their sins. The king that Isaiah prophesied about was Jesus.

All over the New Testament, we hear how the death of Jesus was an atonement for our sins, covering the debt that humans owe God for contributing to all the evil and death in the world. The New Testament also talks about the atonement of Jesus Christ as a purification. Like the blood of the animal sacrifices, it is now Christ's blood that washes away all of the damage and side-effects of sin, purifying and sanctifying the world.

The story doesn't end there, though. Because Jesus was able to conquer death and rise from the dead, Christ made Himself the perfect sacrifice who now continually offers Himself to anyone who needs Him. Because Christ became the perfect sacrifice, the ritual of animal sacrifice was no longer required.

It was replaced, though, with two other rituals. The first is baptism. Like Jesus, who was lowered down into the grave and rose again anew, Christians are lowered down into the water and rise up out of it a new person. In this way, baptism connects us with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. The second ritual that Christ instituted is the Lord's supper, a reenactment of Jesus's last supper, which allows Christians to remember the sacrifice that Jesus made on their behalf.

Thanks to atonement in Christianity and the rituals that connect us to it, we are able to have our debts forgiven and walk in newness with God.

#### SOURCE LINK:

<https://thebibleproject.com/explore/sacrifice-atonement/>