

MORE CHALLENGING QUESTIONS PEOPLE ASK

Lesson 2 w/answers

Atonement and "Enemies of Christ"

"Is there limited atonement or unlimited atonement?"

"Are we 'enemies of Christ'? Does God hate us?"

In this lesson, we conclude a brief look at some questions from our Bible study students. Specifically, we will examine the doctrine of atonement and conduct a scriptural investigation regarding our culpability as enemies of Christ, which begs the question: Does God hate us?

The doctrine of Atonement represents a key element in our Christian belief. Having a sound understanding of the principles behind it will strengthen our walk with Christ, grow our faith, and give us renewed hope.

What would the state of mankind be without hope? If indeed "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God", what can we do in order to atone for that, if we can do anything at all? The doctrine of Atonement addresses this question and shows us how God through His only son Jesus has provided the means for us to be reconciled unto him.

Our understanding regarding just how bad sin is, and how it permanently and internally separates us from God, is a big step in understanding our human dilemma. If we want to be close to God, we need to find a way to correct or right the relationship; however, we find ourselves powerless to do so. God, who also wants the relationship restored, is not powerless and provides the means by which we can be reconciled to Him. This week trine, and also look at the question of who are the enemies of God.

Let's take a look at these important questions by considering the following:

1. How did the word "atonement" originate? Who coined it, and why?
 - a. ANSWER: William Tyndale, one of the great biblical interpreters of the 16th century, coined the phrase in order to capture the Hebrew concept reflected in the Old Testament. By combining two parts "at" and "onement", he captured the essence of the sacrificial system found in the Old Testament for reconciling our relationship with God.
2. Define the term Atonement.
 - a. ANSWER 1: Atonement refers to the reconciliation of man and God through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Through His death, Christ paid the price required to reconcile us to God, and to remove the barrier that sin places between Him and man. Atonement thus refers to Christ having paid the ransom, offered the sacrifice, and "paid the price" required to set us free from sin; thus reconciling us to God.
 - b. ANSWER 2: Since it represents the only sacrifice required, it "atones" for all of our sins - past, present and future - and applies to our entire life. There is nothing partial, temporary, or incomplete - Christ's sacrifice on the Cross is full and complete atonement for us.
3. What is Yom Kippur, and why is it relevant to this lesson?
 - a. ANSWER: Yom Kippur, or "The Day of Atonement", was the holiest day of the year to those of the Jewish faith. On it, the Jews confessed their sins and offered sacrifices to God. It is the only day of the year that the Priest was allowed to enter the Holy of Holies to make sin offerings for himself, his family, and all of Israel. At the conclusion of the service, a goat was chosen, called the "scapegoat", on which all the sins of Israel were symbolically laid, and the goat was then sent into the wilderness to die.

4. Let's examine what the New Testament says about reconciliation and the death of God's only son. Look up the following verses, and note what each tells us concerning these topics.
 - a. Romans 5:10
 - i. ANSWER: We were God's enemies, but now we have life through Jesus' death on the cross.
 - b. John 1:29
 - i. ANSWER: Jesus is "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!".
 - c. Mark 10:45
 - i. ANSWER: Jesus paid the ransom for many.
 - d. Mark 14:24
 - i. ANSWER: Jesus' blood was shed for many.
 - e. 1 Corinthians 15:3
 - i. ANSWER: Christ died for our sins.
 - f. 1 Peter 2:24
 - i. ANSWER: By Christ's wounds, we are healed.
5. What is it that separates us from God, so that we need reconciliation? Are we enemies of God? What do the following verses tell us?
 - a. Isaiah 59:2
 - i. ANSWER: Our sins separate us from God.
 - b. Romans 5:10
 - i. ANSWER: In our unreconciled state of sin, we are God's enemies and we are against God.
 - c. Romans 8:7
 - i. ANSWER: The sinful mind is hostile to God and will not submit to God.
 - d. Ephesians 2:12
 - i. ANSWER: When we were separate from Christ, we were without hope.
6. Who then can atone for us, and who can reconcile us to God? What do these verses tell us regarding these questions?
 - a. 2 Corinthians 5:18
 - i. ANSWER: God reconciled us through Christ.
 - b. John 3:16
 - i. ANSWER: Christ died so that anyone who believed in him could be saved.
 - c. 1 John 4:9-10
 - i. ANSWER: God offered His Son as the required sacrifice so that we could be reconciled to him. He did this out of his love for us.
 - d. Romans 5:8
 - i. ANSWER: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

As evidenced in our lesson's scriptures, we can be assured that Christ's sacrifice on the cross was, and is, sufficient to atone for our sins, no matter what they are or how many. All that is required on our part is that we put our trust in Him and acknowledge him as our Lord and Savior.

We also noted that, while we were in our state of sin, before accepting Christ's sacrifice, we were enemies of God; just as those around us today who do not know Christ are enemies of God.

When we accept Christ, we are freed by the ransom, the price, that he paid for our sinful lives; and we are reconciled to God. His sacrifice was so complete that today we can "boldly approach the throne of grace" and today we can have a relationship with God that becomes so personal that we will shout "abba" (father) in His presence.

Be assured as you ponder the truths in this lesson that God is a God of love, mercy and great grace; and that love and mercy led him to offer His only son Jesus so that we might have an eternal relationship with Him. Once we are "His", the Bible tells us no one can snatch us from Him. Our hope and our atonement is eternal, full, and complete in Christ!

Have a great week everyone, and thanks for studying with us.

In Christ,

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