

# ATONEMENT

## KEY QUESTIONS:

- What is atonement?
- Why is it important to Christians?
- How is it connected to the Law and salvation?



## INTRODUCTION

In this session we will find out what atonement is. At the end we will try to answer an exam question.

Atonement is what someone does when they've done something wrong. It's a way of making things up to someone, saying sorry.

## CONSIDER

1. Have you ever upset someone? Maybe your mum or a friend? (We all do, nobody's perfect - no, not even you!) What did you do to make it up to them?

That is **atonement** - you did something to say make up for what you did wrong.

2. What has atonement got to do with Christianity? Short answer: everything!  
For the long answer, check out the following:

When God created the world, He gave humans some rules. Just like at school, the world needs rules to make sure it runs properly.

The Ten Commandments is a famous example of God's rules. These rules are called the Law. They are in the Bible.

When people break the Law they are sinning - they've done something bad. God hates sin, so there is punishment for those who break the Law. This means they might go to prison for stealing, for example. But it also means they become separate from God.

The people in the Old Testament, before Jesus was born, hated being separate from God. They tried to make amends by making sacrifices to Him. They wanted to get close to God again.

This is known as reconciliation - becoming close to God again.

But they couldn't get close to God on their own, nothing they did could make up for their sins. So God sorted the problem out by sending Jesus.

**IMPORTANT BIT:** Jesus' death was a sacrifice which put things right with God. Jesus' death makes up for our sins. It means we can get close to God no matter how bad our sins are. Jesus' death saved us from separation from God - this is called salvation. We don't have to be apart from God because of our sins anymore.

As you can see, atonement is very important to Christians!

**TASK**

Complete these sentences:

- The Law is...
- Sin is...
- Atonement is...
- Reconciliation is...
- Salvation is...

3. Your exam board may ask for examples from sources of wisdom and authority about atonement. So, we are going to look at some Bible verses.

**OLD TESTAMENT TEACHINGS**

(the first part of the Bible, written before Jesus was born)

**FROM THE PROPHET ISAIAH**

<sup>5</sup> But because of our sins he was wounded,  
beaten because of the evil we did.

We are healed by the punishment he suffered,  
made whole by the blows he received.

<sup>6</sup> All of us were like sheep that were lost,  
each of us going his own way.

But the Lord made the punishment fall on him,  
the punishment all of us deserved.

*Isaiah 53:5-6*

The prophet Isaiah spoke of a new king that would come. He would be killed even though he'd done nothing wrong.

- How does this Bible teaching link to the death of Jesus on the cross?
- Complete the sentence:  
This Bible teaching links to the death of Jesus on the cross because...

## NEW TESTAMENT TEACHINGS

(the second part of the Bible, starting from when Jesus was born)

1 | The lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

*John 1:19*

2 | We were God's enemies, but he made us his friends through the death of his Son.

*Romans 5:10*

3 | **THE LORD'S SUPPER - THE NIGHT BEFORE JESUS WAS CRUCIFIED**

<sup>26</sup> While they were eating, Jesus took a piece of bread, gave a prayer of thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples. "Take and eat it," he said; "this is my body." <sup>27</sup> Then he took a cup, gave thanks to God, and gave it to them. "Drink it, all of you," he said; <sup>28</sup> "this is my blood, which seals God's covenant, my blood poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

*Matthew 26:26-28*

c. Read number 1. Why do you think Jesus was called 'the lamb of God'?

I think Jesus was called the 'lamb of God' because...

d. Read number 1 again. How does atonement link to the Law?

Atonement links to the Law because...

e. Read number 2. How does atonement link to salvation?

Atonement links to salvation because...

f. Read number 3. What does Jesus say His blood will do?

Jesus says His blood will...

g. Which of all these teachings from the Bible do you think best explains atonement? Choose two:

My first choice is...

I think this explains atonement well because...

My second choice is...

I think this explains atonement well because...

#### 4. Exam Question Time...

There are several GCSE and Scottish National Certificate exam boards across the UK. You should attempt the question which relates to your exam board as each of them has their own terminology and guidance on how to answer. If you aren't sure which is your exam board, contact your teacher to ask.

**WJEC EDUQAS**

Explain why Christians believe atonement is important. (8 marks)

**PEARSON EDEXCEL**

Explain two Christian teachings about atonement. (5 marks)  
In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom or authority.

**AQA**

Explain two Christian teachings about atonement. (5 marks)  
Refer to sacred writings or another source of Christian belief and teaching in your answer.

**OCR**

Outline why atonement is important to Christians. (6 marks)

**SQA - N5**

- a) What do Christians believe about atonement? (4 marks)
- b) How might belief about atonement affect the life of Christians? (4 marks)