

# The Atonement - What does it mean?

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Preacher: Rev.Prof. F. Dalrymple-Hamilton

[ 0 : 00 ] is in the Old Testament there at Isaiah chapter 53. Isaiah 53. Who has believed what we have heard? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?

For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no form or comeliness that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.

He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And as one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised and we esteemed him not.

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. Yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions.

He was bruised for our iniquities. Upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed.

[ 1 : 15 ] All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way. And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearer is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.

By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And as for his generation, who considered that he was cut out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people?

And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence and there was no deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the will of the Lord to bruise him.

He has put him to grief. When he makes himself an offering for sin, he shall see his offering and shall prolong his days. The will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

[ 2 : 25 ] He shall see light and be satisfied with the fruit of the travail of his soul. By his knowledge, the righteous one, my servant, shall make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.

Therefore I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong. Because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors.

Yet he bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors. Then turning to the passage already announced in Luke chapter 24, beginning at verse 13.

That very day, two of the disciples were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened.

While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing them.

[ 3 : 38 ] And he said to them, What is this conversation which you are holding with each other as you walk? And they stood still looking sad.

When one of them named Cleobas answered him, Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days? And he said to them, What things?

And they said to him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death and crucified him.

But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and beside all this, it is now the third day since this happened.

Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning and did not find his body. And they came back saying that they'd even seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive.

[ 4 : 50 ] Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the woman had said. But him they did not see. And he said to them, O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all the

prophets have spoken.

Was it not necessary that Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory? Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

Amen. May the Lord bless those who read me to his praise and to his glory. I think in particular, verses 25 to 27 of Luke 24, O foolish men and slow of heart to believe all the prophets have spoken.

Was it not necessary that Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory? And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

This series we're doing on the atonement is not the kind of series where I spend the next half hour telling you what I did last Sunday. Indeed, if you want to do that, you can listen to that. And some have already said that they have.

[ 6 : 08 ] And I'm very grateful for that. It's a real encouragement. But tonight, we're looking at the teaching of Jesus on the subject of the atonement, i.e. his death.

And so it's appropriate to look at this conversation which the risen Lord had with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24. And in that conversation, Jesus has recognized the sadness of the disciples.

And he's directed their attention away from that sadness to the facts of the prediction and the interpretation of the sufferings of Christ. And he's done it in two distinct ways.

He's done it, first of all, in what he said in his teaching. And he's also done it because he's acted out that teaching in his own life, his death, and resurrection.

So first of all then, the prediction of the sufferings of Christ. In this conversation, our Lord's teaching is to direct the attention of the disciples to the predictions of his sufferings contained in the Old Testament.

[ 7 : 26 ] Now right at the end of Luke 24, verse 44, he says this, these are my words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.

And what he's done in that statement is to take the entire Old Testament and to say to them, if you want to understand it, I'm the key.

Christ, the key to Scripture. So what does he say in his teaching? In the Gospel of Mark, there are what scholars have called three passion predictions.

What's that? These are statements in which Jesus predicted and foretold his own death. So in Mark chapter 8, we read this, Jesus began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed and after three days rise again.

And he said this plainly. Then in the very next chapter, in chapter 9, they went on from there and passed through Galilee and he would not have anyone know of it.

[ 9 : 04 ] For he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, the Son of Man will be delivered into the hands of men and they will kill them. And when he is killed, after three days, he will rise.

We find that the next verse says, they, the disciples, did not understand the saying and they were afraid to ask him.

So going on now to chapter 10 and taking the 12, that's the 12 apostles, he began to tell them what was going to happen to him, saying, behold, we are going up to Jerusalem and the Son of Man, that's him, will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes and they will condemn him to death and deliver him to the Gentiles and they will mock him and spit on him and scourge him and kill him and after three days, he will rise.

So there's three simple statements Jesus has made in Mark 8, 9 and 10 about his own sufferings that he would accomplish in Jerusalem.

Yet it could be said that in none of these predictions does our Lord state what he thinks will be accomplished with these sufferings. So we go to Matthew's gospel and then he makes this statement which is also in Mark, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many.

[ 10 : 50 ] And when it comes to the Last Supper with the apostles all sitting there, as they were eating, Jesus took bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to the disciples and said, take, eat,

this is my body.

And he took a cup and when he had given thanks he gave it to them saying, drink of it all of you for this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

So here in his teaching to the twelve, not only is he predicting that he will die and rise again but he's also saying it's going to achieve more than you could ever think.

We looked at Luke's gospel. Here's what Luke says about the Last Supper. Jesus took bread and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them saying, this is my body which is given for you.

Do this in remembrance of me. Likewise, the cup after supper saying, this cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant on my blood.

[12:17] What does all this mean? It means, in the words of the hymn that we sang, one man of sorrows, one acquainted with grief, one bowed down with the burden of sin.

It means he did it for each and every one of us. That is the miracle of it all.

Now, in the Presbyterian churches we used to sing, I've given it up, but we used to sing Scottish paraphrases. And what these paraphrases are, in reality, are 19th century scripture in song.

And the paraphrase that deals with the Lord's Supper has Jesus saying this, my broken body now I give for you for all to eat and live.

There's something wonderful about the mystery of the atonement that we find in the teaching of Jesus. Let's move on. The interpretation of the sufferings of Jesus.

[13:38] Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them and all the scriptures the things concerning himself. And in this conversation that he had with the two on the way to Emmaus, he asks the question, was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter in to his glory?

Now, that's a very important statement because what it does, it defines the area of prediction along two different lines.

There's the line that speaks of the sufferings of Christ like we read in Isaiah 53. There's also another strand which speaks of the entrance of Christ into a future state of glory.

Now, in the first epistle of Peter, he's thinking about the experience of the prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and so on.

And they were puzzled by some of the things that they said. So he says this, 1 Peter 1, verses 10 and 11. The prophets who prophesied of the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired about this salvation.

[15:02] They inquired what person or time was indicated by the spirit of Christ within them when predicting the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glory.

Here's these two threads again. They foretold the sufferings of Christ and his subsequent glory by which they meant the resurrection.

So if we ask Peter the question, what scripture is he thinking about? He gives a summary in 1 Peter 2, 22 to 24.

Speaking of Jesus, he committed no sin. No guile was found on his lips. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return.

When he suffered, he did not threaten, but he trusted to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body in the tree that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.

[16:10] By his wounds, you have been healed. Now, making that summary, he's actually thinking of Isaiah 53.

And Isaiah 53 in the chapter that we read there, there are two very distinct predictions that Peter is commenting on. Verse 9, They made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence and there was no deceit in his mouth.

They made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death. It was a rich man who gave up his own tomb so that Jesus could be buried there, as we read in the Gospels.

And then verse 12, Therefore I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors.

Yet he bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors. So Isaiah 53 is very important to Peter when he produced that summary of the sufferings of Jesus in our place.

[17:37] But that's only one. There's another thread about Christ entering into his glory. We don't find it in the first epistle of Peter, but we find it in the sermon that he preached in Acts 2.

In Acts 2, verse 24, Peter says this, But God raised him up, having loosed the pangs of death because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

And in that sermon, what he's quoting from and what he builds his case on is Psalm 16, verses 25 to 28 of Acts 2.

He quotes Psalm 16. I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken. Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue rejoiced, my flesh will dwell in hope, for you have not abandoned your Holy One to Hades, the place of the dead, nor let your Holy One see corruption.

His body did not decay. You have made known to me the ways of life, you will make me full of gladness with your presence. Now David was the one who said these things.

[ 19 : 00 ] But he's not speaking of himself because Peter makes clear that the author David is both dead and buried and his tomb is still with us. But being a prophet, he spoke of the resurrection of Jesus.

And so Peter says this in the sermon, being therefore a prophet and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants upon his throne, he foresaw and spoke of the resurrection of Christ that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.

So here is the point. Yes, Jesus foretold all this, but he also brought it about by his own person.

In his person there were the sufferings of Christ. He is the one who on the cross cried out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

and he did it for you. Let's go on. Belief in the sufferings of Christ.

[ 20 : 23 ] 24 verses, in Luke 24, 31, 32. And their eyes were opened and they recognized him and he vanished out of their sight.

They said to each other, did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road and opened up the scriptures. So here's something new that's happening.

This has not happened before, but it's happening now. And there are one or two things that happen. And the scripture says that their eyes were opened and they recognized him while he opened to us the scriptures.

Now, in this narrative of Luke 24, it's clear that what's been happening is they're reacting to the physical presence of Jesus who has made himself known when he broke the bread and distributed it to them.

They recognized him. But these are not only physical reactions, they're spiritual ones. While we cannot react to the physical presence of Jesus, we can and must do so to the spiritual person.

[ 21 : 41 ] So, how do we do that? Well, the whole point of what is being said here is now the ministry of the atonement in preaching.

In Romans 10, the apostle makes this point very well. He talks about the need of preachers. He says this, How are men to call upon him in whom they have not believed?

And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher? And how can men preach unless they are sent?

So, if men and women are to believe, it's got to be by the preaching of the word of God. So, the need is for preachers. Romans 10, 15, quoting Isaiah 52, verse 7, which somebody, not knowing I was going to quote this, has actually put it on the bulletin.

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, proclaiming salvation, saying to Zion, your God reigns.

[ 23 : 00 ] You find the same thing in Nahum 1, verse 12. So, how can we define something about this need of preachers? In Romans 10, verse 17, he says, faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ.

Christ. So, in other words, when God's word is being spoken upon with dignity and integrity, it has the act of creating faith.

It's something dynamic. And the effect is that those that listen to it have their eyes open that they might recognize the person of Christ in all his glory.

So, he talks to the Corinthians, and he says this, 2 Corinthians 3, not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us.

Our competence is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not in a written code, but in the spirit.

[ 24 : 22 ] For the written code kills, the spirit gives life. So, in the days of the Acts of the Apostles, in the days of these churches that Paul visited, this act of preaching was held in a very high order, quite unlike today.

Now, why is it that preaching is not held in the same value as it is there in the Acts of the Apostles, and indeed in the teaching that we find in the epistles?

Two years ago, I listened to a service which came on the first Sunday in Advent. It came from a historic church in Edinburgh, and on that Sunday, in the first Sunday of Advent, where people are following the liturgy, you're meant to preach on the second coming.

So, what happened here was this. Listening to the sermon, the first thing that happened was that he derided the work of the Covenanters. These were men and women and children who sealed their testimony with their own blood.

Yet in the sermon, they were classed as extremists and fanatics, but worse was yet to come. Well, then he went on in the sermon to deny that Jesus would ever come again.

[ 25 : 50 ] So, if we look round, not necessarily here, but the entire church situation as it is in Scotland, is it any wonder that churches are failing in their calling when the ministry is not being conducted with integrity, with belief, and with conviction?

men and women were brought to a place under God where they were able to recognize the person of the risen Savior and the Lord in it.

I've indicated something about how pathetic it can be, but here's another illustration of how good it can be. There was a scholar, he died almost a hundred years ago, called Professor James Denny. He came to write a tremendous book on the death of Christ, but he started out his career being very much a liberal theologian, but his wife was a born-again believer, and he testified later that he was one to a sound message of the gospel because his wife read to him from the printed sermons of Charles Spurgeon.

Now, Spurgeon, by the time that he was being read to, was long gone. He was dead. But he who was dead was yet speaking, and because it was based with conviction and integrity on God's word, God's word was doing its work.

[ 27 : 39 ] Coming back to Peter on the day of Pentecost, we find that he had been transformed from someone who betrayed Jesus to someone who was very bold in his proclamation of the word.

We read that following his sermon, those who received his word were baptized, and they were added that day about 3,000 souls.

That is a majestic statement. It is one that is absolutely marvelous in the history of the church. How would it come about? Well, here's something else that happens. It comes about, or it came about, by the Holy Spirit in conviction of sin.

Acts 2, verse 37, we read this, that when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, brothers, what shall we do?

[ 28 : 49 ] And we don't refer all that often to the King James Version, but the translators knew what they were about. and if you read Acts 2, verse 37, in the King James Version, what it says is, they were pricked in the heart.

Jesus said, when he, the Holy Spirit, is come, he will convict the world of sin. And I believe this idea, this truth, of conviction of sin coming through the ministry of the word is indeed one we need to reclaim.

It used to be, in evangelical circles, people talked about the conviction of sin. God hasten the day when we start to talk about it again.

sin. So this message that was based on the Old Testament was such that 3,000 souls were continuing and brought into the kingdom.

What can we do? One, we can act by properly respecting and preaching on the inspired word of God, the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[ 30 : 08 ] I mentioned to one or two that I'm starting to compile a biography of Graham Scroggie who was pastor in Charlotte Chapel from 1916 to 1933.

When he went to the chapel in 1916 in the first service, he said this, you are looking to me for inspiration, but I want to say to you, that there will be no power in the pulpit without prayer in the pew.

Now, people must have responded to that because he did indeed have a presence of power in the pulpit. So, we have to continue in prayer for the ministry here and elsewhere that God's kingdom

might be extended and there continue to be rejoicing in heaven over those that are brought into the kingdom.

The way the apostle concludes his advice to Timothy in chapter 4 is this, I charge you in the presence of God and of Jesus Christ, who is to judge the living and the dead and by his appearing and his kingdom, preach the word.

Convince, rebuke, and exhort. Be unfailing in patience and in teaching. As for you, always be steady, enduring suffering.

[ 31 : 48 ] Do the work of an evangelist. Fulfill your ministry. This is the ancient apostle's advice to the young Timothy.

But it's not only advice to people who are in ministry, it's advice to us all. Take the word of Christ into you.

Speak about it. Pray over it. Share it with those that don't know it. And God will bring in a mighty harvest.

So the teaching of Jesus on the atonement is this. It's predicted, it's interpreted, and it's applied. Not just for the acts of the apostles, but for today, in 2016. And let's make it our aim to produce power in the pulpit for his name's sake.

[ 32 : 58 ] Amen. Amen. Our closing children. Amen. Amen.