

The Lord Is Our Atoner

The Old Testament clearly reveals that Jehovah (= lord) is the Great Atoner. And Jehovah, of course, is none other than Jesus Christ. Over and over again, Jehovah commanded His prophets or priests to make an atonement for the people. Furthermore, the scriptures collocate the word *atonement* (or its cognate forms) with the words *Lord, God, blood, forgiveness, clean, and sin(s)* and with other words of theological import (see, for example, the passages in the chart). Psalm 79:9 summarizes, “Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name: and deliver us, and purge away [Hebrew = atone] our sins, for thy name’s sake.”

The English words *atonement, atone, atoned, atoneth, or atoning* are found in the Old Testament eighty times—but the Hebrew word *kpr* underlying the English *atonement* appears 102 times. Each of these attestations adds to our understanding of the meaning, purpose, or significance of Jesus’s atoning sacrifice.

The word *atonement* is a Middle English word that consists of three components—the preposition *at*, the number *one*, and the suffix

-ment. During the middle ages, *one* sometimes served as a verb. For example, *to one,*

oned, and oneing were all verbs that meant to unite or to make one. These verbs have fallen out of usage in modern times. The suffix *-ment*, which means “the state or condition of something,” is still used in today’s English, often added to verbs to make nouns. For example, *enjoyment* is the state or condition of enjoying, *amazement* is the state of being amazed, and *measurement* is the state of measuring (compare also *improvement, excitement, treatment, settlement, and many others*). Early English Bibles first used the word *onement* to mean the state of being at one. In Bible usage, *onement* evolved into *at onement* and then into *atonement*, a word that is used prominently today in English Bibles and religious writings regarding Jesus’s divine sacrifice.

The English *atonement* and related words—*atone, atoned, atoneth, atoning*—specifically refer to the state or condition of becoming one with God.

In sum, *at-one-ment* specifically refers to the state or condition of becoming one with God—the ultimate blessing of the Atonement.

Representative Examples of the Usage of Atonement in the Old Testament

Scripture	Reference
“For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.”	Lev. 17:11
“And this shall be an everlasting statute unto you, to make an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year. And he did as the lord commanded Moses.”	Lev. 16:34
“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.”	Lev. 16:30
“So the lord hath commanded to do, to make an atonement for you.”	Lev. 8:34
“And Aaron shall make an atonement upon the horns of it once in a year with the blood of the sin offering of atonements : once in the year shall he make atonement upon it throughout your generations: it is most holy unto the lord.”	Ex. 30:10
“Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the lord; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin.”	Ex. 32:30
“And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.”	Lev. 1:4
“The priest shall make an atonement for him as concerning his sin, and it shall be forgiven him.”	Lev. 4:26
“And the priest shall make an atonement for him as touching his sin that he hath sinned in one of these, and it shall be forgiven him.”	Lev. 5:13
“Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name: and deliver us, and purge away [Hebrew = atone] our sins, for thy name’s sake.”	Ps. 79:9