

GROUP STUDY GUIDE

Blood and Atonement

TEACHING SUMMARY

This teaching examines the claim that repentance alone makes a Messiah who dies for sin unnecessary. It begins by defining sin against God's righteous standard. The Hebrew terms *chata'* and *chatat* convey missing the mark, while *avon* describes behavior opposed to what is right. Romans 7:7 and 1 John 3:4 connect the knowledge and definition of sin with God's Torah.

The account of Adam and Eve establishes death as the consequence of sin. The garments of animal skins are presented as an early foreshadowing of substitutionary atonement: one life exchanged for another. Leviticus 17:11 develops this principle by connecting the life of the flesh with blood given on the altar. These sacrifices provided earthly ritual atonement and illustrated the life-for-life pattern. Ultimate forgiveness and eternal redemption rest on Messiah's sacrifice alone; animal sacrifices did not provide a second saving system.

Passages in Leviticus repeatedly connect sacrificial blood with atonement and forgiveness, while Yom Kippur places sacrifice at the center of its observance. Numbers 35 supplies another example: the manslayer can leave the city of refuge after the high priest dies. The teaching understands that death as substitutionary. Isaiah 53 likewise portrays an innocent, righteous servant bearing the sins of others and giving his life on their behalf.

Repentance remains necessary, but the teaching distinguishes returning to God from the atonement that makes restored fellowship possible. *Shuv* means to return; repentance does not itself pay the required price. The prophets' rejection of certain sacrifices is explained as opposition to hypocrisy, insincere worship, and persistent sin. Their criticism does not cancel the sacrifices God commanded, any more than similar criticism cancels his Sabbaths and festivals.

Several proposed alternatives to blood atonement are then examined. In Leviticus 5, the poor worshiper's flour is placed on YHWH's food offerings and thus joins the sacrificial system. The census payment in Exodus 30 is distinguished from forgiveness of sin: the passage concerns a ransom for life and does not mention sin. These examples are therefore not treated as independent ways of obtaining forgiveness apart from sacrifice.

The discussion of Nineveh draws on Israel's priestly role and cited Jewish commentary about sacrifices offered for the nations. Isaiah's cleansing is also connected to sacrifice because the burning coal came from the altar. The teaching concludes that repentance and blood atonement belong together, and that the Torah's sacrificial examples point toward Messiah's death as the means of redemption and reconciliation with God.

SUMMARY POINTS

- Sin is failure to meet God's righteous standard expressed in the Torah.
- Death is presented as the payment required for sin.
- Substitutionary atonement is explained as a life exchanged for a life.
- Leviticus 17:11 links sacrificial blood, life, and atonement.
- The high priest's death and Isaiah's righteous servant illustrate substitution.
- Repentance is necessary, but the teaching says atonement makes restored fellowship possible.
- Prophetic criticism targets hypocrisy rather than abolishing commanded sacrifices.
- The flour offering joins the altar's offerings, while the census payment is distinguished from atonement for sin.
- Nineveh's repentance and Isaiah's coal are interpreted in connection with the sacrificial system.
- Messiah's death is presented as the reality foreshadowed by the Torah's blood sacrifices.

FILL-IN-THE-BLANK

Basic

1. The Hebrew verb chata' conveys the idea of missing the _____.
2. The payment required for sin is _____.
3. Leviticus 17:11 says the life of the flesh is in the _____.
4. Substitutionary atonement is explained as a life exchanged for a _____.
5. The day of atonement centered on sacrifice is called _____.
6. The teaching says _____ is necessary but is not sufficient by itself for reconciliation with God.

Challenging

1. The manslayer could leave the city of refuge after the death of the _____.
2. The Hebrew word shuv means to _____.
3. The prophets rejected insincere sacrifices because of the people's _____, rather than rejecting sacrifice itself.
4. Leviticus 5 places the poor person's flour on YHWH's _____ offerings.
5. The census tax in Exodus 30 is discussed as a _____ for life rather than a payment that buys forgiveness of sin.
6. The burning coal used to cleanse Isaiah came from the _____.

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does the teaching connect the definition of sin with the need for atonement?

2. How do Leviticus 17:11, the high priest's death, and Isaiah 53 develop the principle of life for life?

3. Why does the teaching distinguish repentance from the basis on which fellowship with God is restored?

4. How does reading the prophets' criticism in context distinguish commanded worship from hypocrisy?

5. Compare the explanations of the flour offering and census payment. Why are they not treated as independent alternatives for forgiveness of sin?

6. How do the discussions of Nineveh and Isaiah's coal support the teaching's conclusion about Messiah's atoning death?

ANSWER KEY – GROUP GUIDE

Basic

1. mark — Teaching opening discussion of chata'
2. death — Genesis 2:16–17; teaching explanation
3. blood — Leviticus 17:11
4. life — Teaching explanation of Genesis 3:21 and Leviticus 17:11
5. Yom Kippur — Exodus 30:10; teaching discussion of the Day of Atonement
6. repentance — Teaching section on repentance and shuv

Challenging

1. high priest — Numbers 35:28
2. return — Teaching section on repentance and shuv
3. hypocrisy — Isaiah 1:11; Amos 5:22, read in context
4. food — Leviticus 5:11–13
5. ransom — Exodus 30:14–16; teaching interpretation
6. altar — Isaiah 6:6–7

FACILITATOR DISCUSSION NOTES

Suggested responses follow the teaching. Invite discussion and personal application; these are not additional required answers.

1. Sin is measured against God's commands (Romans 7:7; 1 John 3:4). The teaching links human disobedience and the death consequence in Genesis 2:16–17 to the need for atonement. Invite participants to explain why recognizing sin matters when discussing forgiveness.
2. Leviticus 17:11 connects life, blood and atonement. Numbers 35:28 permits the manslayer's return after the high priest dies, and Isaiah 53:5–6, 11–12 describes the servant bearing others' sins. Explain that the high priest's death as substitution is the teaching's interpretation of the refuge passage.
3. The teaching defines shuv as returning and distinguishes repentance from the atonement that permits restored fellowship. It affirms both rather than treating repentance as unnecessary. Ask how this distinction shapes gratitude and a sincere response to God.
4. Read Isaiah 1:11 and Amos 5:22 in their surrounding prophetic appeals. The teaching says God rejects hypocrisy and persistent sin, not his own commands. Invite a practical example of outward religious activity that needs to be joined with sincere obedience.
5. Leviticus 5:11–13 places the flour on the altar's food offerings; the teaching understands this as participation in the sacrificial system. Exodus 30:14–16 concerns atonement for lives and does not mention sin; the teaching distinguishes this ransom from purchasing forgiveness. Keep these explanatory conclusions attributed to the teaching.
6. The Nineveh argument draws on Israel's priestly role and Jewish commentary cited by the teaching; Jonah's account itself does not narrate an Israelite sacrifice for Nineveh. Isaiah 6:6–7 explicitly identifies the coal's source as the altar; the connection to blood sacrifice is the teaching's explanation. Discuss how to distinguish a passage's wording from supporting interpretive reasoning.