

Atonement

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[0 : 00] I'm going to speak on atonement in the Old Testament. We're not going to go to the New Testament, maybe we might do that next week, but maybe not. And I find it just enormously helpful in thinking about how we are to interact with Islam, and I hope that you will find it helpful as well.

So what is atonement? Atonement is bringing people together after an evil has been done. Bringing people together after evil has been done.

And the Oxford English Dictionary shows the word developed from the idea of being at one in the early 16th century. So let me ask you, what is the worst thing you've ever done to another person? What is the worst thing that you've ever done to another person? And how could you ever be one with them after that? What would need to be done in order to make you both at one?

And that is what atonement is. At a very trivial level, isn't it? We might buy someone a gift or cook them a meal or buy them flowers.

[1 : 13] In order to cool the heat of what we've done. When we do something to make amends. We're showing that it matters to us.

We're showing that relationship matters. And we're showing, aren't we, something of the value of the person to us. But it becomes much harder, isn't it? The deeper the courage goes.

And the more that we've done wrong. The closer we are to the person. So the bigger the need for genuine atonement. For the two to become one.

Is equal to it. When we've caused massive damage to someone. Lasting damage. When we've profoundly violated someone.

The consequences or the cost of our wrong are very heavy, aren't they? How can we ever look someone in the eye? If we've done them real wrong.

[2 : 13] The shame of our actions create a deep barrier. The shame that is on us. And the damage or hurt or loss that is suffered by the victim.

Can't be easily ignored. It's not easy for damage and shame to be returned to us. In such a way that there's a genuine atonement to bring back together.

An atonement seems to require that the damage done. Is somehow taken back by the person who did it. Can you understand that? That the burden and the pain and the suffering that has fallen onto the victim.

Is placed back onto the person who caused the damage in the prison face. So think about criminal justice system. We might impose a fine, might we?

To bring a cost down onto the criminal. Or it might involve them going to prison. Or some community service. Or another form of loss or cost. And in those ways.

[3 : 18] The victim of the crime. The prisoner who's had the crime done to them. Is able to feel a sense of closure. As the suffering that they've endured. Is passed back onto the criminal.

However it's rare isn't it? It's really rare that any real relationship is restored. Any real relationship established between the criminal and the victim.

Most often. Our justice system. It stops short doesn't it? Of real atonement. There's not a onement. There's not a oneness. A bringing together of the two parties into a union.

Because that goes way beyond the ability of the courts or the police. So think about it. Property damage. Or loss. That can usually be fixed.

But people. And communities. They are much harder to fix. Hearts and minds can't be repainted. They can't be glued back together.

[4 : 20] And so when you have caused real harm to someone. It is very costly to restore our relationship with them. Isn't it? When we've defiled.

When we've brought shame on a community. Or destroyed the deep structures of our society. Putting things back together. Restoring corporate life. Well it's not simple at all. So let's actually look at the cost of atonement. What is atonement? It is a bringing back together. Into what? What is the cost of atonement? Well the difficulty and the cost of forgiveness. Is rarely understood. Is rarely understood. How costly forgiveness is. Until we've actually got to do it. The Truth and Reconciliation Committee in South Africa.

You'll remember that in the aftermath of apartheid. And in the following years. There was a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa. And they had to confront some of the darkest truths about the evil committed over the years.

[5 : 26] When hateful things are done. And when hateful things are done so mercilessly. And when the damage goes very deep. The nature of those crimes mean that things can never be put right. Can they? Lives were lost. Mines were destroyed. Communities were torn apart. I read in preparation for this.

There was a powerful incident when there was a woman present. Was in that commission. When the man who had been part of the security forces in the 1980s. Told how he'd kidnapped. And how he'd tortured. And how he'd murdered her husband. She'd known what had happened to her husband. But she actually sat there. And she heard his confession. From the man who did it. When it originally happened. The woman was there from the younger children. And this terrible knowledge.

[6 : 26] And pain and anger. The years went by. And she somehow began to deal with all her anger. And her pain. And at the hearing. It was the man who'd originally did these things to her husband.

Confessed all that he'd done. At the conclusion of his testimony. The woman got up from the gallery. She walked over to that man. She put her arms around him. To tell him that she forgave him. And we're amazed by that. Aren't we? We are moved by that. We realise how incredibly difficult it would be. To be at one. With somebody who'd done so much wrong to us. How could she be at one. With such a man. Who'd destroyed her family. Who'd done such a thing. What about all the hurt. And all the pain that he's caused her. If it wasn't going to fall onto that criminal man. Where was it going to fall? The truth is.

[7 : 26] That extraordinary woman. She had bought the pain. She'd bought the pain for herself. And she was prepared for it to fall on herself. And for it to remain on herself.

So that she could set that man free from his terrible crimes. And that incident gives you and I. A profound window onto the cross of the Lord Jesus. Why it costs the very blood of God. Can we say that? In order to set us free from this terrible offence. And the shame that our actions are your actions. That my actions have caused. If we've done wrong to one another. And if we're ever going to be at one with that person. Then the damage that has been done. Must be confronted. And it must be counted. And it must be carried. Both in terms of the harm that has been caused to the other person. And the shame and the corruption and the guilt that is upon us. In the case of an amazing South African woman.

[8 : 33] She not only carried that pain and that anger for so many years. But when she finally met the criminal. At great personal cost. She bore the full weight of his crime. On her own shoulders. She hugged him. And she forgave him and set him free. And thirdly. Atonement is necessary. Because we must be at one with the Lord God. What is atonement? It is bringing together those who are apart. What is the cost of atonement? It is very costly. And someone has to bear the cost. But atonement is necessary. Because we must be at one with the Lord God. Atonement comes clearly into focus. When we see that woman walk over from the gallery. And hug that guilty man. She was prepared. To be at one with that man. Even though he had done so much evil to her. And her family. In order to hug that man. She had to pay a very heavy price in her own heart.

[9 : 32] And mind. And yet in that embrace. In that physical union. There is atonement. And atonement is necessary with the Lord God.

Because he is determined. To be at one with humanity. So let me show you that. The Lord God. Right from the garden of Eden. Right at the beginning.

Is determined to meet with humanity. On a face to face basis. Adam and Eve walked with the Lord. In the garden. Adam and Eve talked with the Lord God.

In the garden. He created the entire universe. In order to kind of have that. Marriage union. With humanity. To meet in a hand. Where all is forgiven.

Where there is only love. No matter what pain and betrayal there may have been. And atonement is necessary. Because the Lord God is determined to visit you and I.

[10:27] To confront us. To bring us face to face with him. Because we have a destiny. To stand before him. You and I will stand before him. We were created to be at one with him.

Therefore atonement. Atonement is necessary. We don't need atonement. When we have a problem with the inland revenue.

Do we? Or the traffic lease. There is no need. For me to be at one. With the inland revenue. Is there? And I suspect the feeling is mutual.

If you ask them. The inland revenue. What do they require? They require me. To submit my paperwork. And then to submit to their demands. Got they?

And if I fail to do so. The inland revenue. They will punish me with fines. And if I persist in my defiance. The inland revenue. Will then require my imprisonment.

[11:27] But at no stage. Do we need to talk about atonement. With the inland revenue. The fines. The imprisonments. The threatening letters. The reminders. They are not designed to make us one.

They are not. They are not designed to bring about. A relational unity. Between myself. And the tax office. I don't love the tax office. And the tax office does not love me.

Rather the letters. The threats. The fines. The deadlines. They are intended to force. Not only by submission. To the tax demands.

But also that others might look. And they might learn submission. From my example of being caught. Prosecuted. And punished. Atonement is a serious.

As a serious category of thought. Atonement only matters. Atonement only becomes relevant. When personal relationships. And fellowship.

[12:27] And friendship. Are at the center. And that is why atonement. Has got really no place in Islam. Because Allah.

Is the God of the inland revenue. That is the kind of God he is. Atonement is never going to be an important idea. In Islamic thought. Because there is this great difference.

Between Allah. And his creatures. Allah has. Allah has. Allah has. No direct contact. With humanity. Allah had no direct contact. With humanity. Even when he was communicating the Quran. Even with his most valued prophet. Mohammed. In paradise.

According to Islam. There is no personal contact. With Allah. There is no. Union with Allah. That would be horrific to their thinking. The only thing there is.

[13:27] Is submission. Peaceful harmony. That comes. When creatures. Are totally submitted. Submissive to the will of Allah.

If human beings. Fall out of line. With the command of Allah. The situation is really easily remedied. By turning around.

And by repenting. Human beings. Come back into submission with Allah. So you decide. That you. Cannot cope with Ramadan. So you eat a sandwich.

In the middle of the day. What is the answer for that? Well. You do more Ramadan. You just do it for longer. You fast for longer. And Allah.

In his free mercy. Can forgive. The offence. Maybe. Or the disobedience. In fact. Surah 22. 37. Says.

[14:24] That the blood sacrifice. Has no relevance to Allah. But that piety. And repentance. Doing Ramadan for longer. Or other such things.

Well. That may bring down. The free mercy of Allah. Allah. Allah does not have. Anything like. The personal relationship.

With his creatures. That the biblical Lord God does. The God of the Bible. Has eternal relationships. Within himself. The father.

Loves the son. In the unity. Of the spirit. But this same. Relational life. That is the. That is the very foundation. Of God's covenant relationship.

With you and I. And when we go to the foundation. Roots of the Bible. And we ask. Why did the triune God. Why did the Trinity. Create the heavens and the earth.

[15:20] Why? Why did God create us? It comes back to the issue of relationship. So what is the fundamental language. That the Bible uses. To describe the relationship.

Between the Lord and his people. Think about it. What is the fundamental language. Used to describe the relationship. Of the church. God's people to the Lord God.

Let me tell you what it is. It is marriage. It is love. Union. Intimacy. Trust. Betrayal.

Jealousy. Passion. It is preparing. For a divine wedding feast. Like this. All this morning. And right at the beginning. Of the Bible. The Lord God said.

It is not good. For man to be alone. Apostle Paul. In Ephesians 5. Reminds us. That he wasn't just. Speaking of Adam. But in a much. Deeper sense.

[16:16] The Lord God. Is talking about. God's son. And the desire. To find a bride. For him. The church.

The gathered body. Of saints. From across the world. Down through the ages. And so. For these reasons. Atonement. Is always.

Going to be. Absolutely. Central. And the Bible. Is going to be. Passionate. About. Atonement. Atonement. And atonement. Lies at the center.

Of our faith. When a husband. And wife. Have been torn apart. Through adultery. Betrayal. And divorce. The pain cure. Is very deep. And it's very.

Very costly. Isn't it. If they are ever. To be won again. And we usually. Assume. That when there's been. Such a severe. Separation. That that. That can never. Be repaired.

[17:11] In human terms. And yet. The living God. Is prepared. To pay any price. He is even. Willing to pay. The price. Of his own. Life. And blood.

To bring. Atonement. And restoration. And reconciliation. Between himself. And his bride. And God. And humanity. I first. Looked at. Islam. This summer.

The two things. That kind of. The big. Culture shock. And although. I knew them. I never really. Thought about them. One. Is. Is first. The concept. Of a totally.

Unitarian. God. There's no trinity. There is. There is. One. Solitary. God. But secondly.

The thing. That I found. So alien. Is this idea. That Allah. Has no direct. Contact. With humanity. It came to me. Is a real shock.

[18:06] That. The system. Of belief. Of Islam. Is worded out. With Allah. Remaining. Profoundly. Isolated. In his own. Transcendence. There's no. Relationship.

And grasping that. I'm really happy. To understand. Why there's no. Real need. For a token. In Islam. And so. If you talk to. Muslims. That might. Accepting the Lord Jesus. They see.

The death of Jesus. As a problem. Don't they? But we see. The death of Jesus. As the. Great solution. I want to show you this.

By looking at. Atonement. In the Old Testament. Okay. And I want to look. At just three ways. That the word is used. The first way. That the atonement. Is used.

In the Old Testament. Simply means. To cover. To cover. And so. From the very beginning. The Lord God. Came to confront. And to meet with. Adam and Eve. Face to face.

[19:03] And they tried. To make. Coverings. To hide their shape. They tried. To make. Atonement. So that they. Could face.

Each other. So that they. Could be one. With each other. And they. Could be one. With the Lord God. Yet the fig leaves. Didn't feel enough. To it. And so they hid a bush. They hid a bush.

Rather than. Be at one. With the Lord Jesus. The eternal son. Would come to meet them. In the garden. And speak to them. Face to face. They felt. The need. Of a covering. Because the Lord God.

Was coming to meet them. Their own. Fig leaves. Were not enough. And so. The Lord God. Killed animals. And made animals. Skin coverings.

For them. His atonement. His covering. Came at the cost. Of blood. God. In other words. In order for them. To be one. With him again.

[19:57] It is going to be costly. In order for God. To overlook. What they had done. For him. To embrace them. And for them. To feel no shame. In his presence. It was going to cause.

A great deal of pain. Even ending in blood. And death. You see the same thing. In Genesis 4. Abel and Cain. They bring their offerings.

To the Lord. And Abel brings. The offering. Of the fat portions. Of the firstborn. Of the flock. And it's preferred. Over the. Well. The fig leaves. Of Cain's offering.

And when we read. How Abel offered. Not just any animal. But he offered. The fat portions. Of the firstborn. Of the flock. Particularly those sheep. Or goats. It's almost as if.

You're in the middle. Of Leviticus. And we can only assume. That that is a copy. Of the animal offering. That the Lord God. Had made for Adam. And Eve. In the previous chapter.

[20 : 53] There's some primal knowledge. Of the living God. And his way. So it's. It's intuitively. Obvious. To the first human beings. Nevertheless.

The lesson is clear. What is the lesson? To be one with the Lord God. To make an offering. That soothes. Or heals. Or atones. Is painful. Bloody.

And faithful. It's so simple. It really is. So very. Very simple. How can wrong. Be covered over. How can we bury.

The crime. And its consequences. So that we can. Move on. If our victim. Always sees. Or feels. The evil. We have done. How can we cover it?

Or how can they. Express. Their hurt. In such a way. That we can be one. So that we can embrace. In genuine. Unity. Unity. What can be done. So that neither of us. We never think about.

[21 : 47] What's happened before. Atonement. Covers. Evil. It cannot just. Ignore it. And in our experience. We know. Don't we. That that is very costly.

And it's very painful. To put a wrong. Behind us. And move on. In true. In true. Reconciliation. With the person. Who has wronged us. There is pain.

And a price. To pay for such unity. Second thing. That we learned. In the Old Testament. About atonement. Is. When the Lord God. Visits. It's striking.

When you kind of. Look at the Hebrew words. That we translate. As punish. Or punishment.

Actually. The most common word. It can mean. To visit. If you've got the AV. The AV.

Translation. The King James. The translation. Often. Translated. As. To visit. It can mean. To pay attention for. Or to care for. To count.

[22 : 45] Or number. Or to punish. The old. The English word. Punish. Isn't. Isn't. As personal. It isn't.

As relational. But if we. See the word visit. We'll be just in social visit. Don't we? But the word visit. Is good. When it speaks of a child. But let me tell you why. Because it shows us.

That the Lord God. Will personally. Call to account. For what we've done and said. He will visit you. He will visit us. In the sense of coming to number our offences.

Confronting what we've done. Confronting us about our defiance. He is coming to meet with us.

You will meet with the Lord God. Face to face. And we may be ashamed of what we've done.

We may try and hide. And run away from it. We might try to cover our shame. With whatever fig leaves of religion. Or respectability we can find. But when the living God. Comes to visit.

[23 : 42] All the flimsy coverings. Are ripped away. And true shame is revealed. The punishment of the Lord God. Is not this.

Just plain existence. Of a legal system. But the punishment of the Lord God. Is a personal confrontation. With those who defied him.

And attacked and provoked him. And it's when the Lord God. Pays attention to the way. We've lived and thought. And desired and spoken. It's when the books are opened. It's when we are inspected.

By the one. With whom we have to do. Pakash. That's the word. It's when the living God. Who is hot with us. Hunger.

And passionate with love. For the victims of our evil. Comes knocking on the door. It's when the righteous judge. Who against all our evil deeds.

[24 : 39] Have been committed against. Comes to see us. When we hurt others.

And violate the character. The character of the living God. When we sin against God. We might think. We've gone away with it. We might think. There's no real cost. We can become.

Can we sadly. So hard hearted. That we feel no shame. For what we've done. Especially. When our thoughts. And our words. And our deeds. They don't directly involve.

Another human being. We can easily begin to think. Well no harm. Has actually been done. To anyone. And that the hurt. Kind of disappears. Into thin air.

If we don't care. About the damage. We cause to our fellow human beings. Or right in front of us. How little we care. About the damage. We cause to the living God.

[25 : 33] Who is unseen. Who we think so little about. However. The Father. The Son. And the Holy Spirit. They are violated.

By these vile acts. Of rebellion. And greater damage. Is caused by our sin. Than we can ever dream. It's one of the reasons.

Why it's important. For criminals. To meet. Their victims. So very often. The criminal. Does not realize. The genuine cost.

To what they've done. They minimize it. They minimize any cost. But when they come. Face to face.

With the people. Who have had to bear. The terrible damage. Caused by their actions. Well it can be. A very profound event. This concept. There's one article. By Dina Potter.

[26 : 28] Dina Potter. On offenders. Meeting their victims. Let me read it to you. It can help offenders. Confront the human cost. Of what they've done. Said Pat Nolan. Most criminals.

Depersonalize their crime. But meeting with the victim. Makes it real. He said. Many then. Work out ways. To pay restitution. Or otherwise. Atone for the crime. It is too simplistic.

To dismiss the need. For this visiting. For confrontation. For counting. For charging. For bearing the cost of sin. If there is going to be.

For genuine atonement made. If there's going to be. A true covering for sin. If there's going to be. A reconciliation. When criminal and victim.

May be. May be. One. There needs to be. A visiting. A visiting. And again. The fact that Allah. Does not seek. Union. And Allah.

[27 : 25] Doesn't seek. Feast of feasts. Fellowship. And friendship. With the humanity. Explains. Doesn't it. Why there's no place. For atonement. In Islam. Third thing. Is the anger of God.

After the flood. You might know the story. Noah. Makes an altar. And offers burnt offerings. To the Lord God. Let me read it to you. From Genesis 8. Noah built an altar. To the Lord. And took some of all.

The clean animals. And the clean birds. And he sacrificed. Burnt offerings on it. And the Lord. Listen to this. The Lord smelt. The pleasing aroma. And said in his heart.

Never again. I curse the ground. Because of man. Even though. Every inclination. Of his heart. Is an evil. From childhood. That's the first reference. In the Bible. To burnt offerings. About 200 of them.

And they were to be. Described. And explained. Carefully. In detail. In the book. Of it. Guess what they. And it could be argued. That this burnt offering. In Genesis 8. Is the foundation. Of all the sacrifices.

[28 : 22] Because it deals. Directly. With the fundamental. Problems. Between God. And humanity. What were those. Burnt offerings. All about? The book of Exodus. Ends. With Moses.

Shut out. At the tent of meeting. Due to the glory. And the presence. Of the angel. Of the Lord. He's shut out. He can't get to God. And yet. The book of Leviticus. Begins by offering.

A way of atonement. A way for human beings. To be at one with the Lord God. And with the. Opening words. Of the book of Leviticus. God is declaring.

There is a way. That you can meet with me. There is a way. That atonement. Can be made. He is a way. For the curse. To be broken. For the exiles. And he's found a way.

To cover our shame. To cleanse away. The moral pollution. And dirt. And the first offering. Is a burnt offering. We read it. The sons of Aaron. The priests. Are to put fire on the altar.

[29 : 15] And arrange wood on the fire. Then Aaron's sons. The priests. Shall arrange the pieces. Including the head. And the fat. Of the burning wood. That is on the altar. He's to wash the inner parts. And legs with water.

And the priests. Is to burn on it. On the altar. It's a burnt offering. And listen to this. An offering made by fire. And an aroma. Pleasing to the Lord. Back in Genesis 3.

24. Do you remember. When they're kicking out the garden. The Lord God. Set barrier of fire. Between himself. And us. It's a powerful. And frightening statement.

That the curses come. And the fire was guarded. By the cherubim. And the fiery sword. Says you cannot come. Into the presence of God. Who is too holy. To even look at sin.

The fire shows. That our guilt. And our shame. And our uncleanness. They are so serious. That it will cost us. Our very life. If we try to come. Into the presence of God. The fire is not just.

[30 : 13] A flickering candle. Is it? It's a flaming sword. And it states. That we are not. Welcome. But it also says.

That if we try. We will die. So is there a way. Back through the fire. Is there a way. To propitiate. To atone.

With the living God. Can your shame. Be covered. Can our uncleanness. Be washed away. Can our offenses. Be forgiven. And notice. There's two sides. To the problem of atonement. To be at one. With the Lord God. Not only must you and I. Be cleansed. And our shame covered. But also. The Lord God. Must be soothed. And satisfied. About our sin. The Lord God.

Must be satisfied. That our sin. Has been. Confronted. And counted. And charged. And condemned. And that he is at peace. With what we've done.

[31 : 06] So that he can forgive it. And forget it. And he can allow us. To be one with him. Enjoying his fellowship. And so let's just take a moment. To think for a moment. About that phrase.

That comes after the burnt offering. An aroma. Pleased into the Lord. An aroma. Soothed into the Lord. It comes at least 40 times. In the Old Testament. And it's important for you and I.

To think this grows seriously. There's lots of conversation. I want to say. Well that's just metaphor. We need to spend. Long enough. Grasping the vision.

Of God here. That the Hebrew Bible. Must be for us. It's tempting. To take all this language. And make it kind of abstract. But you need to understand.

What it would have meant. To those who heard it. And appreciate. Why the language is so rich. And so powerful. There's a strong image. That's implied. Isn't it? Put it in your mind. It's an aroma.

[32 : 05] Soothing to the Lord. An aroma. You breathe it in. And you breathe it out. The typical word for anger.

In the Old Testament Bible. It's the word af. Af. A-W-P-A-F. In English. Anger is quite an abstract idea.

In Hebrew. The word literally means. Noses. That's what the word angry means. So for the Hebrew person. You speak about anger.

And they think. Noses. Now why? Why do you think. Noses. What happens when you get angry? What happens when you get angry? What happens when you get angry?

Is your nostrils flare. And you might be aware. Isn't it? Of heavy breathing. We talk about this. Through a. Loud breathing.

[33 : 04] Through a flared nose. In the Old Testament. In the Old Testament. So when the Old Testament. Speaks of the anger of God. Typically you read. As a very. Intimidating. Vision.

Of the genuine. Passionate. Anger. Of the living God. Rather than. We think. You'll be a. Kind of English church. Sitting in a high court. Coldly disapproving.

That's not the case. So just imagine. A man full of this anger. Coming towards you. With nostrils. Flared. Breathing heavily. Against you. And you can see. Why the Hebrew word.

For anger. Is nose. And so can you see. How it is so. So powerful. To know. That atonement. Can be made. Which produces.

An aroma. That is. Soothing. To the Lord. And the nose. That is. Flared. In anger. Can be soothed. By this aroma. Think of the words.

[34 : 02] From Psalm 18. In my distress. I called to the Lord. I cried to my God. For help. From his temple. He heard my voice. My cry came before him. Into his ears. The earth trampled. A quick. And the foundations.

Of the mountain shook. They trampled. Because he was angry. Smoke rose. From his nostrils. Consuming. Fire came from his mouth. Burning corals. Blazed out of it. What a terrifying image. Of the living God. That is. And if such. A divine being. Was coming. To vent. His fury. Against us. How wonderful it is.

To know that there is. An atonement. That is soothing. To the Lord. And if we're trying. To cover our shame. If we're trying. To hide our cleanliness. In the presence. Of such anger. It would be incredible.

Wouldn't it? To find out. That there is a way. That this God's anger. Can be soothed. Against us. Yes. Other sacrifices.

[34 : 56] They describe. How young cleanliness. Can be washed away. We've got time for that. But to know. That our shame. And our guilt. And our filth. Is covered. Atoned for.

And that the divine anger. Is suing. Is. It's more wonderful. Than we can express. Isn't it? And if we so violate. The heart. And ways.

Of the living God. Then it's obvious. Why we're cast out. From him. Disconnected. From alienated. From him. He cannot start. Our presence. Near to him. When we are so filled. With the very things. He detests. And we. In turn. Cannot turn. Cannot come near him. Because of our shame. He is repelled. By our uncleanness. To the courts of heaven. On our own. We are like. The most unrepentant. Hard and war criminals. Covered in shame. We cannot enter. The gates of heaven. Polluted by our filthy. Hearts and minds. [35 : 50] There can be no welcome. For us. In the pure. Perfect realms. Of glory. And if we are. Detestable to him. Then we must die. We must be cast out. Into outer darkness.

What happened to Adam and Eve. When they were driven out. From the presence. Of the living God. It was just a foretaste. A foretaste. Of what it means. To be a sinner. Covered in shame. And untruthiness. One who has offended.

This glorious God. And if we cannot be at one with him. We must be thrown out. Thrown away. Thrown away. Into outer darkness. Of emptiness. Burning shame.

And agony. Frustration. And far from playing this down. Jesus emphasised it. Doesn't he? And so he. Speaks about the eternal weight of this.

That if he. That he will not. And he cannot allow us. To be part of his kingdom. If our sin remains unkilld. If our shame is not dealt with. He says.

[36 : 48] Then we will be thrown outside. Into the darkness. Where there will be weeping. And gnashing of teeth. And if our sins have caused such. Rebulsion. Within the life of God. Then he cannot bear for us to be in his presence.

And so we begin to realise. Why it's so hard. To find peace with the most high God. And if our sins are so vile. That they cut us off.

From the life of God. Then it's inevitable. That the punishment of death. Rebounds upon us. If we cut off the branch. We're sitting on.

Then we can't be surprised. We fall. And if it's so very hard. To bring about forgiveness. And reconciliation. When we've done evil to each other. How impossibly hard it is.

To find. Forgiveness and reconciliation. When we've done evil to the most high God. Who dwells in the heavens. And if such a cost.

[37 : 47] Is paid for us to be at one. When we commit evil against each other. Then what is the cost for us to be at one. With the living God. Who's been so offended.

And angered by our repeated evil. Three things. Three summaries. Three conclusions. Three things I want you to see. I want you to see firstly.

Do you see the wonder of what Christ has done? Do you see the wonder of atonement? That there is a covering for our sheep. In the blood and death of Christ.

That there is a visiting. And Christ has. Been visited by the anger and the wrath of God. On the cross. And that sacrifice on the cross. Is a soothing aroma.

So that you can know peace with God. And so worship him. The second thing is.

[38 : 43] I think we need to talk about this to our Muslim neighbours. And our argument. Really. To Muslims. Is. Is our God is better than your God. You consider.

A God who you can never know. A God who will have nothing to do with you. Versus. Versus. The God who loves you so much. That he gave his son. So that you can know him.

There's no contest. Is there? There's no contest. And then thirdly. The thing to say is. Don't be afraid. I've done very little study in Islam.

But there's nothing to it. There's nothing to it. Let's pray.