

Th224 Sin and Atonement: The Restoration of Relationship

Lesson Th224-20 Atonement: Demands of Law

Ajay and his young son rode their motorcycle slowly through the streets of Jaipur. Neither of them wore a helmet to protect their heads. But now, as they rode along, they saw many stands along the road selling motorcycle helmets. Surprised at seeing hundreds of helmets for sale, the son looked up at his father with a question in his eyes. “The government has passed a new law requiring people to wear helmets when they ride a motorcycle,” Ajay said.

“How can the government make new laws?” his young son asked. “Aren’t they carved into stone like the ones at church?” Ajay had to think for a moment to try and understand what his son was talking about.

Suddenly, Ajay smiled as he realized his son was referring to the large stone at church which had the Ten Commandments carved on its face. “The government writes its laws on paper,” Ajay said to his son. “They change laws whenever they see fit, doing away with old ones and writing new ones.”

Ajay’s son thought about this as they slowly made their way through the busy traffic. “Why are the Ten Commandments written in the stone?” he asked his father.

Ajay immediately knew the correct answer to this question. “The Ten Commandments are God’s law. Because God does not change, his laws do not change.”

This concept of God’s law is very important. God’s laws are based on who he is; and God is holy. You have learned the attributes of God in your olBi theology courses. God is light. God is love. God is holy. You have also learned that God is eternal and that he is immutable. This word ‘immutable’ means that God does not change. The apostle Paul wrote a letter to his disciple, Timothy. In this letter he wrote, “If we endure, we shall also reign with him. If we deny him, he will also deny us. If we are faithless, he remains faithful; for he cannot deny himself” (2Tim 2:12, NASB). What does this mean?

God’s perfect holiness defines who he is. He cannot change. To do so would mean that he is not holy. If he is not holy, then there is no absolute standard to judge all creation by. His holiness defines his faithfulness. We can change. One day we are faithful to God, the next we are not. But in order for God to be unfaithful, he would have to deny who he is. And this is impossible.

The apostle John wrote that “God is love” (1John 4:16). It is God’s love that drives his desire for relationship with humankind. But God’s holiness defines how relationship with God must take place.

God created Adam and Eve in his own image and likeness. This included the ability to love and have relationship. God defined that sexual relationships were to take place only between a husband and wife. This faithfulness to each other is so important that God established

it as one of the Ten Commandments. A woman who is unfaithful to her husband and has sex with many men is called a harlot. God used this very term to describe Israelites who turned from worshipping him. Instead they worshipped the idols and gods of the people who had lived in the land before the Israelites came. There is a book of history in the Old Testament called the Book of Chronicles. The writer lists names of certain clans in Israel, saying, “They acted treacherously against the God of their fathers, and played the harlot after the gods of the people of the land, whom God had destroyed before them” (1Chron. 5:25, NASB).

This gives us insight into the holiness of God and how he views the sacredness of relationships. God saw these clans who started worshipping idols like a wife rejecting her wedding vows and committing adultery with foreigners. They rejected relationship with God and were severely punished. It is written of them that God stirred up the king of Assyria who came and captured them. He carried them away into exile, where they lived as slaves and a conquered people.

Those who reject perfect relationship with God suffer the same fate. They will die in their sins and be exiled from God’s presence. God’s holiness demands that sin is punished. Remember, God’s holiness is not written on paper, but rather is God’s very nature. And God does not change. Remember the verses we learned in previous lessons? “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). And then the verse that says, “The wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23).

You also have learned in previous lessons that sin, or the breaking of God’s law, results in guilt. This guilt demands punishment. The punishment must be carried out. The law demands it. In our next lesson we will learn the concept of ‘atonement,’ which is the payment demanded of guilt.

This lesson is **important** because it demonstrates to us how much holy relationships matter to God. First and foremost, this applies to our personal relationship with God. But the principle also applies to having right relationships with our wives, family, and community.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that God does not change. He is immutable. His holiness is based upon who he is. Thus, it can be said that God’s character, his holiness, and his law, are written in stone.

Let's **review** this lesson—

1. What does it mean when we say God is immutable? [Pause 5 seconds.]
 - A. If you said that God does not change, you are correct.
2. What kind of relationships does God expect us to have with him and each other? [Pause]
 - A. If you said, “God expects us to have holy relationships with each other,” you are right.
3. What are the wages or payment for sin? [Pause 5 seconds.]
 - A. If you answered, “The wages of sin is death,” you answered correctly.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to watch this lesson at least three more times and think about how God's nature does not change. Then think about your personal behavior and whether you live up to God's expectations of a holy life. After searching your heart, spend time in prayer. Repent of your failings in your relationship with God and relations with those around you. We are all under a sentence of death for our sins. But through faith in Jesus, our sins can be forgiven and we can be in right relationship with God.