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The Day of Atonement

When Aaron offered the bullock, he made "an atonement for himself, and for his house" Lev. 16: 6, 11). On the other hand, the goat of the sin offering was for the people (verses 8, 15). However, in the administration of the goat's blood Aaron is not said to have made atonement for the people, but "for the holy place," and "for the Tabernacle of the congregation" (verse 16).

We do not deny, but affirm, that an atonement was effected for the people, for this is stated definitely elsewhere (verses 30, 34). We are merely calling attention to the fact that the blood of the bullock makes atonement for Aaron and his house, while the blood of the goat makes atonement for and cleanses the holy places of the sanctuary (verse 18). It is almost incidentally that the atonement for the people is mentioned.

This study leads us to the conclusion that there were two distinct purposes in the cleansing accomplished on the Day of Atonement: one, the cleansing of things—such as the two holy places and the altar; the other, the cleansing of priests and people. Uncleaness is removed from things, and uncleaness is removed from the people. Both are cleansed (verses 16, 19, 30). Also, atonement is made for things, and atonement is made for the people (verses 11, 16, 18, 30, 33, 34). These two purposes are closely connected; one is dependent on the other, and yet they must be kept separate in our thinking as they are in the record.

The holy places were cleansed, not because of any inherent sin or evil in the sanctuary or altar, but "because of the uncleaness of the children of Israel, and because of the transgression in all their sins"

(verse 16). This is true of the altar also. The priest is to "cleanse it, and hallow it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel" (verse 19).

These statements make it clear that it was the sins of Israel that defiled the sanctuary and the altar. This defilement had taken place throughout the year in the daily ministrations. Each morning and evening a lamb had been slain and its blood sprinkled upon the altar "round about". This had defiled the altar. Offenders had brought their sin offerings, and the blood had been sprinkled in the holy place and put on the horns of the altars.

Other offerings had been brought, and the blood had been sprinkled on the altar "round about". Through these means the sanctuary as well as the altars had been defiled. The services of the Day of Atonement were to dispose of all these sins and to cleanse both the sanctuary and the priesthood as well as the people.

The question may well be raised, Why did the people need cleansing? Had they not brought their sacrifices from time to time throughout the year, confessed their sins, and gone away forgiven? Why would they need to be forgiven twice? Why should "a remembrance" be "made of sins every year"? Should not "the worshippers once purged" "have had no more conscience of sins"? Heb. 10:3, 2. These questions demand an answer.

It may be pertinent to remark that salvation is always conditioned upon repentance and perseverance. God forgives, but the forgiveness is not unconditional and independent of the sinner's future course. Note how Ezekiel puts it: "When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live?"

All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die."-Eze. 18:24.

This text states that when a man turns away from the right, all his good deeds "shall not be mentioned." The converse is also true. If a man has been wicked, but turns from his evil way, "all his

transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him.”-Verse 22.

Note also how Christ in the parable dealt with the man who owed ten thousand talents. When he begged for mercy he was forgiven (Matt. 18:27).

However, when the same servant was unmerciful to his fellow servant who owed the small sum of a hundred pence, and had him cast into prison, his lord "said unto him, o thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee?

And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.”-Matt. 18:32-35.

God keeps an account with each man. When, ever a prayer for forgiveness ascends to God from a true heart, God forgives. But after men have been forgiven they at times change their minds. They repent of their repentance. They show by their lives that their repentance is not permanent.

And so God, instead of forgiving absolutely and finally, marks forgiveness against men's names and waits with the final blotting out of sins until they have had time to think the matter through. If at the end of their lives they are still of the same mind, abhorring their sins in sincere repentance, God counts them faithful, and in the Day of Judgment their record is finally cleared.

So in Israel of old, when the Day of Atonement rolled around, each offender had an opportunity to show that he was still of the same mind. If he was, the sin was blotted out, and he was completely cleansed.

The Day of Atonement was the Day of Judgment to Israel, as evidenced by the quotations at the beginning of this chapter. Day by

day during the year the transgressors had appeared at the temple and received forgiveness. On the Day of Atonement these sins came in review before God, or as Hebrews puts it, there was "a remembrance again made of sins."-Heb. 10:3.

On that day every true Israelite renewed his consecration to God and confirmed his repentance. As a result, he was not only forgiven but cleansed. "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.

It must have been with happiness in their hearts that Israel went home in the evening of that day. "Clean from all your sins." Wonderful assurance! The same promise is given in the New Testament: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."-1 John 1:9.

Not only forgiven, but cleansed? Cleansed from "all unrighteousness," from "all your sins"! "Oh, the bliss of the glorious thought- My sin, not in part, but the whole."

Of the final judgment the revelator says: "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."-Rev. 20.12.

"The dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books." The Day of Atonement was a type of that day. While there were no books kept in the sanctuary, there was, nevertheless, a record of sin. Every drop of blood sprinkled on the altar of burnt offering in the morning and evening service constituted a record of sins committed. On the horns of the same altar, and also on the altar of incense, a record of sins forgiven was made by the blood put on the horns by the officiating priest as sinners came with their personal sacrifices to obtain forgiveness. On the Day of Atonement the sins of those who had already obtained forgiveness were blotted out. The unrepentant sinners were "cut off."

Thus the sanctuary was cleansed of the record of sin accumulated through the year. The sins no longer remained as a witness against the people. Atonement had been made, and the people were not under condemnation. Even the record existed no more.

In another chapter the statement is stressed that Aaron not only represented the people but was practically identified with them. What he did, they did. What they did, he did.

The high priest "represented the whole people. All Israelites were reckoned as being in him." In him "everything belonging to the priesthood gathered itself up and reached its culmination." "When he sinned, the people sinned."

Adam was the representative man. By him "sin entered into the world."-Rom. 5:12. By his "disobedience many were made sinners." - Verse 19. And so "by one man's offence death reigned by one," and "through the offence of one many be dead," -Verses 17, 15.

Christ also was the representative Man. He was the second Man and the last Adam. "The first man is of the earth earthy; the second Man is the Lord from heaven."- 1 Cor. 15:47. This second Man, "the Lord from heaven," undid all that the first man had done by his transgression.

By the disobedience of the first man "many were made sinners." By the obedience of the second Man "shall many be made righteous. -Rom. 5:19.

By the offense of the first man, "judgment came upon all men to condemnation." By the righteousness of the second Man, "the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." -Verse 18. And so "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." -1 Cor. 15:22.

The high priest was a type of Christ and a representative of the nation. As a representative of the nation, he was identified with their sins and was worthy of death. As a type of Christ, he was their mediator and Saviour. In either case he transacted with God for the people. In this sense he was the people. If God accepted him, He

accepted the people in him. For this reason the people were anxious to hear the sound of the bells on his robe on the day of atonement. When at last the atonement had been effected and the reconciliation was complete, the sound of the bells as the high priest resumed his high priestly garments was the sign that God had accepted the substitute. As he stepped outside and the sound was clearly heard by all, their joy and thankfulness were profound. God had once more accepted them in the person of the high priest.

When the high priest went into the most holy on the Day of Atonement, he went in as the representative of the people. In him Israel appeared before the Lord to give account of the sins of the year. The record of these sins appeared in blood on the altar of burnt offering and in the holy place. With the Day of Atonement the day of reckoning had come, the Day of Judgment when all sins were to come in review before God. The high Priest appeared in God's presence, shielded by the veil of incense. For the first time that year sin was brought before God in the most holy.

The high priest sprinkled the blood of the bullock "upon the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat" he sprinkled "of the blood with his finger seven times," and received "atonement for himself, and for his house." -Lev. 16:14, 11. He was now clean. Whatever sins he was identified with, whatever sins he was responsible for, and they have in figure been transferred to the sanctuary. He was clean, but the sanctuary was not.

What has thus far been accomplished is this: The high priest in his representative capacity has appeared before God and the law. He has acknowledged his sins and sprinkled the blood. The law has in effect asked: "Have you sinned?"

The high priest has answered, "I have sinned, and I have confessed my sins."

The law says, "The wages of sin is death. I have no other choice than to demand life."

The high priest replies, "I have brought the blood of the victim. Accept it."

The blood is sprinkled on the mercy seat. A substitute has been accepted instead of the sinner.

On this substitute the sin has been placed; it is made sin, and as such has died. It has paid the penalty of transgression. It has died in the sinner's place and for sin. It has paid the debt due because of sin.

In our consideration of sacrifices for sin, stress was laid on the placing of the hand upon the victim's head, thus transferring sin to the victim. In each case the victim dies with guilt upon its head, dies for sin. Thus Christ took our sins upon Himself and was made sin. Being made sin, He must die, for the wages of sin is death.

Christ died not only as a substitute for the sinner but also as the Sinless One. Taking our sins upon Himself -we say it reverently -He ought to die; the law demanded it. But personally Christ had not sinned. He was sinless; yet He died. And the death of the Sinless One is a definite part of the plan of God. The death of the sinner satisfies the claim of the law. The death of the Sinless One provides the ransom and frees the sinner from death.

After the high priest had offered the bullock and sprinkled its blood upon the mercy seat and before the mercy seat, he was told to "kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the veil, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat: and he shall make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remaineth among them in the midst of their uncleanness. "-Lev. 16: 15, 16

It has before been noted, but should here be emphasized, that the blood of the bullock and that of the goat accomplished two different things. The blood of the bullock making atonement for or cleansing the

sanctuary, but this is definitely stated of the blood of the goat. (verses 15, 16). This may be accounted for on the following grounds.

In all cases in the daily service where forgiveness was obtained, the atonement was accomplished by means of blood and indicated a transfer of sins to the sanctuary. The sinner transferred his sins to the victim which was slain, and the blood was put on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, or on the horns of the altar of incense and sprinkled in the holy place. The blood which-because of sin's having been confessed on the victim-might be called sin-laden blood, typically and ceremonially defiles the place where it is applied. Thus the sanctuary is made unclean.

When the high priest comes out after sprinkling the blood of the bullock, he is cleansed. Whatever sins he carried for which he was responsible, had been confessed and transferred to the sanctuary.

When he steps out of the most holy, he is cleansed, free, holy, a type of Christ the Sinless One. He has confessed his sins, they have been forgiven him, and he has no further confession to make for himself.

The Lord's goat, whose blood he is about to sprinkle, typifies the Sinless One. In all the offerings made during the year the death of Christ as the Sin Bearer was portrayed. He was made sin who knew no sin. In the goat on the Day of Atonement He is typified as the chosen of God, harmless, undefiled, and sinless.

To emphasize: In the goat offered on the day of atonement we have symbolic reference to the death of the sinless Christ, "who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." -Heb. 7:26. Because the blood of the goat is not sin laden, it has cleansing efficacy and makes possible the cleansing of the sanctuary.

The sprinkling of the blood of the morning and evening sacrifices for the nation "covered" all sin done throughout Israel for that particular day. The daily sacrifice on the altar represented Christ, who died for us "while we were yet sinners"; who gave "Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor"; who "is the

propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."-Rom. 5:8; Eph. 5:2; 1 John 2:2.

The daily burnt offering is symbolic of Him who gave Himself for the sin of the world, dying for all men, thus making provision for all who will come to Him to be saved. The sprinkling of the blood "round about upon the altar" denotes the temporary or provisional atonement provided, and also constitutes a record of sins committed but not as yet individually atoned for.

The individual sin and trespass offerings constituted, in effect, a record of sins for which atonement was sought. The sins had already been recorded in the daily morning and evening service.

Now the individual offenders register their repentance by bringing the required offerings, and the blood is duly placed on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, or on the horns of the altar of incense and sprinkled before the veil. The blood thus ministered recorded confessed sins. It has already been noted that all confessed sins found their way eventually into the sanctuary, for in cases where the blood was not carried directly into the sanctuary, the flesh was eaten by the priests who thus carried sin; and when the priests offered sacrifices for themselves, these sins would, with their own, be carried into the holy place.

This earthly tabernacle service - was typical of the work carried on in the sanctuary above, where a complete record is kept of sins committed and of sins confessed. When the Day of Atonement came in Israel, all were supposed to have confessed their sins and had that confession recorded in blood in the sanctuary. To complete the work it was now necessary to have the record removed, to have the sins blotted out, to cleanse the sanctuary of its blood defilement. Before this specific cleansing was done, the high priest went into the most holy with the blood of the bullock and made atonement for himself and for his house. This having been done, the work of cleansing began.

The most holy was cleansed with the blood of the goat, and then the holy. Thus the record of sin was blotted out. After that the altar was cleansed. 'He shall sprinkle of the blood upon it with his finger seven

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'He shall sprinkle of the blood upon it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it, and hallow it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel.' -Lev. 16:19.

Thus he makes "an end of reconciling the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar."-Verse 20. All is now cleansed, reconciled, and atoned for. Thus far in the record nothing has been said of the people's cleansing. They had already confessed their sins. They were forgiven. Only the record of their sins remained, and on this day that was blotted out. The blotting out of the record was the last act in the cleansing of the people. They began the New Year with a clean slate.

We would call attention to one more thing, namely, the putting of the bullock's blood on the horns of the altar (verse 18). That the goat's blood was put on the altar needs no further explanation, for that was to cleanse it. But why the blood of the bullock?

The high priest represented the whole people. He transacted for them with God. As Christ's representative he typically effected atonement, so that when his work was done on the Day of Atonement all sin had been dealt with, and all confessed sin blotted out. When he therefore confessed these sins, he did so on behalf of Israel and received atonement. Hence, the high priest was said to make atonement for

them, to cleanse them, that they might be clean from all their sins (verse 30).

There were doubtless those in Israel who delayed their confession until it was too late to bring an individual sin offering before the Day of Atonement. They were repentant, but they had been delayed in coming to the sanctuary. Others were sick and could not come, or were on a journey in far lands. None of these had brought their sin or trespass offerings. Were they to be left out?

Their sins were recorded by and in the daily morning and evening sacrifice, but no confession had been recorded in the sanctuary, because they had brought no sacrifice. What is to be done? The high priest on the Day of Atonement put some of the blood on the horns of the altar, and thus recorded confession and forgiveness for them. He did the work which they would have done had there been time or had they been able; and because of their repentance they were included in the atonement. Of such are the thief on the cross and others.

Thus the work of the Day of Atonement was finished, as far as all confessed sins were concerned. Everyone who had confessed his sins and repented of them had the assurance of sins blotted out. He had heard the bells as the high priest resumed his high priestly garments, telling of the completed work. He was not only a pardoned sinner; he was not only forgiven; he was cleansed. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," -1 John 1:9. The forgiveness had been accomplished in the daily service; the cleansing on the Day of Atonement. Even the record of sin was blotted out. Israel was clean.
