

Atonement in Leviticus 9

Opening Hymn: #187 — “Jesus Paid It All”

The Hebrew word #3722 appears in 92 verses of the Old Testament. More than half those verses are in Exodus and Leviticus where in nearly all cases in the KJV it is translated **atonement** (the three exceptions are reconcile/reconciling/reconciliation). In other Old Testament books this Hebrew word is sometimes translated: cleanse, merciful, purge, pardon, forgive, disannul, put it off, pacify.

It is wonderful to see the grand arrangement the Israelites received from God compared to the superstitious Egyptians. He gave them a beautiful place of worship, a priesthood to carry out the duties of worship, and a law or code of conduct that raised them morally and physically above their heathen neighbors. What they probably did not know at the time they received the law was that now they would be constantly reminded how easy it was to disobey God’s law and come under the influence of sin:

Rom. 3:20 By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

How long did it take to construct the Tabernacle? Not very long; in fact, less than a year! When the Israelites left Egypt they were told: "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months" (Ex. 12:2). In the **third** month Moses went up into Mount Sinai to talk with God, to receive the law, and there he received the instructions for the building the Tabernacle. By the end of that first year, it was finished:

Ex. 40:17 And it came to pass in the first month [**second year**] on the first day of the month that the tabernacle was reared up.

Now the people had a **place** to worship God. Next they needed **priests** responsible for the operation of this place and to accept sacrifices and offerings from them. In the 8th chapter of Leviticus we read what happened during a full week of ceremonies that formally inducted Aaron and his sons into the priesthood. (See Lev. 8:33.)

When these ceremonies were over, the people had a place to worship and a priesthood. One legal detail remained: the people had to be purged from sin so that they could have a relationship with God. Of course animal sacrifices could not make them actually perfect. These were only types of what was to come. Once each year, on the tenth day of the seventh month, there was a great Day of Atonement. This is described in Lev. chapter 16, the chapter most Bible students recall when this subject is discussed. But at the end of Lev. chapter 8, we are still in the first month of the year. Must everyone wait six months for THE great Day of Atonement before the people can bring sacrifices? That, of course, was one possibility. But it is not what was done. The first official act of the priests, described in Lev. chapter 9, was to purge the nation from sin--typically, of course:

Lev. 9:7 And Moses said unto Aaron, Go unto the altar and . . . make an atonement for thyself and for the people . . . as the Lord commanded.

These words are almost identical to Lev. 16:24, “[the high priest shall] make an atonement for himself, and for the people.” The ceremonies described in chapter 9 and in chapter 16 of Leviticus were for the express purpose of making atonement for the nation of Israel. If the purpose is the same, then one

would expect the ceremonies to be identical. In fact they are not. Depending upon how you compare the two accounts, you might find as many as 20 differences. Why?

Nothing is accidental when God makes a type. If the ceremonies in chapter 9 differ from those in chapter 16 and if both ceremonies bring the nation into a condition of “rightness” with God, there must be a reason for these differences. We suggest it is because the work of atonement is being described from two quite different viewpoints.

Describing one thing from two viewpoints does **not** mean one is describing two **different** things. The work that brought about the typical cleansing of Israel, that made the people “clean” in God’s sight so they could bring gifts and sacrifices to him, is a picture of the Gospel Age. The Millennial Age is typified in what occurred on the other days:

Thus the typical "Day of Atonement" ended; and Israel, thus typically cleansed from sin, was reckoned no longer defiled and separated from God, but now **at one** with him. Justice no longer condemned, but bade them realize God's reconciled presence in their midst, to bless and protect and direct into the Canaan of rest and peace.

The antitype of the "Day of Atonement" is this Gospel age, during which Jesus and "his Body," the Church (by virtue of the redemption and consequent justification), make sacrifice to Justice, in full satisfaction of the Adamic sin. When the work of reconciliation is complete, God will recognize the world of mankind, and place his sanctuary among men. Then will be fulfilled that which was written: "The Tabernacle of God [God's dwelling, the glorified Church] is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be [become] his people, and God himself shall be with them and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things [the reign of Satan, sin and death] are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new."--Rev. 21:3-5

--*Tabernacle Shadows*, page 76

We assert that both Lev. 9 and Lev. 16 describe the Gospel Age, but that this description takes place from two different viewpoints. Lev. 9 gives us a picture of the Gospel Age from our viewpoint, the viewpoint of the church. Lev. 16 offers us a glimpse of how God sees the work of this age. So let us focus on Lev. 9 and see how it beautifully pictures this present Gospel Age from our viewpoint.

Who does the sacrificing?

The 9th chapter opens up with Moses summoning Aaron, his sons, and the elders of Israel. As the chapter progresses we see the sons have a part in the ceremonies:

Lev. 9:9 And the **sons** of Aaron brought the blood unto him.

Of course Aaron represents Christ:

Heb. 5:1,4,5 For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was **Aaron**. So also **Christ** glorified not himself to be made an high priest...

Christ is the reality of the high priest in the atonement sacrifices. The underpriests, Aaron's sons, picture those who walk according to the example of Jesus:

1 Peter 2:21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.

We see Jesus as our high priest and ourselves as under priests. The "elders" briefly mentioned at the start of chapter 9 might well picture the ancient worthies whose faithfulness we recognize as though they were sacrificing right with us:

Heb. 11:2 For by [faith] the elders obtained a good report. [12:1] Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses.

Notice when we get to chapter 16, Moses, Aaron's sons, and the "elders" of Israel have disappeared.

Where did the ceremonies take place?

In both chapters, animals were killed in the court and parts of the animals were burned on the brazen altar. In both chapters parts of the animals were burned outside the camp. But in the 9th chapter nothing happens in the Holy or Most Holy.

We see each other in the court condition. We understand that the world sees only the stench of the sacrifice "outside the camp." But the incense altar and mercy seat are not a part of chapter 9 because those only God appreciates.

What happened to the blood?

Lev. 9:8,9 Aaron therefore went unto the altar and slew the calf of the sin offering which was for himself. And the sons of Aaron brought the blood unto him and he dipped his finger in the blood and put it upon the horns of the altar and poured out the blood at the bottom of the altar.

Clearly it was the brazen altar which received the blood of the sacrificed sin offering. The brazen altar is cleansed so it is sanctified for use. This altar and its purpose is seen by all who walking in the example of Christ. But in chapter 16 it is the unseen altar, the incense altar, that is sanctified.

What types of sacrifices are made?

Both the 9th and 16th chapters require a sin offering and burnt offering for "Aaron and his house" and a sin offering and burnt offering for "the people." The animals for these four offerings were the same for both sin offerings and for the burnt offering for Aaron and his house. But in Lev. 9 there is a bullock offered in addition to the Lev. 16 ram as a burnt offering for the people.

We notice that Lev. 9 talks about three offerings never mentioned in Lev. 16:

Lev. 9:17 And he brought the meal offering and took an handful thereof and burnt it upon the altar...

Lev. 9:18 He slew also the bullock and the ram for a sacrifice of peace offerings which was for the people...

Lev. 9:21 And the breasts and the right shoulder Aaron waved for a wave offering before the Lord...

The sin offering was required to effect the atonement. The burnt offering showed God's acceptance of the sin offering. But here we have the meal, peace, and wave offering. These three offerings all show our consecration from three perspectives:

MEAL

The high priest "took a handful and burnt it on the altar" [9:17]. Vs. 4 says it was "mingled with oil." Notice that no measure was specified. Each person gives what's appropriate for him--a handful. The Companion Bible says the meal offering was a present, or gift offering. The oil would represent the Holy Spirit mingled among the kernels of ground wheat which we willingly sacrifice on the altar.

PEACE

The Companion Bible suggests: "The Hebrew word conveys the idea of peace on the ground of perfection of compensation or recompense. Hence connected with the thought of rendering payment of vows or praises because of peace enjoyed."

Rom. 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God...

WAVE

There is no instruction about how long Aaron was to wave the breasts and right shoulder. Clearly he was to continue doing so until it was taken from him. So we also must continue to "wave" the choicest portion of the peace offering (or consecration vows) until it is removed from us.

Blessing of the People

We often hear about the special "blessing of the people" after the atonement ceremony was successfully completed. In fact there are two such blessings, but those are only recorded in chapter 9:

Lev. 9:22,23 And Aaron lifted up his hand toward the people and blessed them and came down from offering of the sin offering and the burnt offering, and peace offerings. And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of the congregation and came out and blessed the people: and the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the people.

We can appreciate that the world receives a kind of blessing from Jesus and the church class--a so-called "one handed" blessing. "Ye are the salt of the earth" reads Matt. 5:1 But the real blessing comes when the "glory of the Lord" appears unto all the people. Moses with Aaron in Lev. 9 seems to show the law [pictured by Moses] approves since justice is fully satisfied. This occurs only after Aaron goes into the tabernacle [showing a change from the sacrificing to the glorified condition] and comes out again.

A Beautiful Picture

Many may read the 9th chapter of Leviticus and ask why so many animals had to die. Modern man calls it barbaric. But that's not the way it appeared to Paul. Writing in Hebrews he explains the symbolism:

Heb. 9:22-24 And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than

these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself now to appear in the presence of God for us.

Modern man loves the easy way out: no suffering, no sacrifice, no death. But remission of sins--atonement--comes only by the death of the perfect man Jesus. And as a result he has passed into the real Most Holy, the presence of God there to supervise the sacrifice of his body members.

The bullock represents our Lord. If he did not lay down his life in sacrifice, there would never have been a goat to be sacrificed. But his sacrifice has occurred and Paul tells us to obey the picture and willingly accept the ignominy of the way the sacrifice appears to the "world" outside the camp. It was a stench as these others gazed on the sacrifice. That was the way they saw it with our Lord and that's the way they see it with us.

But the result of the sacrificing will be blessing. Hebrews speaks about Jesus being the mediator of a new and better covenant:

Heb. 8:6 But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant which was established upon better promises.

Our commission now is to lay down our lives in sacrifice and help our brethren do the same. Phillips has beautifully translated Heb. 10:19-25 this way:

So, by virtue of the blood of Jesus, you and I, my brothers, may now have confidence to enter the Holy of Holies by a fresh and living way, which he has opened up for us by himself passing through the curtain, that is, his own human nature. Further, since we have a great High Priest set over the household of God, let us draw near with true hearts and fullest confidence, knowing that our inmost souls have been purified by the sprinkling of his blood just as our bodies are cleansed by the washing of clean water. In this confidence let us hold on to the hope that we profess without the slightest hesitation--for he is utterly dependable--and let us think of one another and how we can encourage each other to love and do good deeds. Let us not hold aloof from our church meetings, as some do. Let us do all we can to help one another's faith, and this the more earnestly as we see the final day drawing ever nearer.

Closing Hymn: #54 — "Once For All"

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