

Atonement – From Shadow To Reality

If you had been an ancient Israelite, you would have had a real treat on the Day of Atonement, you would have been privileged to stand hungry and thirsty in the hot sun for several hours, mentally feeling the burden on the year's accumulated sins pressing down on you.

You would have watched patiently [*or not*] the ceremony of wonderful pageantry as the high priest made an atonement for his own sins and then the sins of the nation of which you were a part.

All the many hours you would have suffered in the dust, heat, smoke, flies and the stink of blood and entrails.

Then at long last it would be over and the last year's burden of sin would have been atoned for.

But you knew that next year you would have to go through this all again, then the next and the next, for all the priest could do was only good for one year.

That is what this Day of Atonement would have meant to you if you had been an Israelite under the Old Covenant.

What does it mean to you as a Christian under the New Covenant?

1: The rituals of the Old Covenant were a reminder of sin and its seriousness, a reminder of a need rather than a means of atonement. A reminder not the reality of at-one-ment with God.

Colossians 2:16-17 [NIV] *“Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.”*

2: The rituals of the Day of Atonement are an illustration of the temporary nature and powerless “shadowy” nature of the Old Covenant made by God with a nation, not the individual. The rituals were designed to illustrate its own inadequacy, and to create an appetite for the reality which was to come and replace it.

Hebrews 9:1-7 [NIV] *“Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary. A tabernacle was set up. In its first room were the lampstand, the table and the consecrated bread; this was called the Holy Place. Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place, which had the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered ark of the covenant. This ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron's staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant. Above the ark were the cherubim of the Glory, overshadowing the atonement cover. But we cannot discuss these things in detail now. When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance.”*

a) **Hebrews 9:7** [NIV] *“But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance.”*

Only one day a year and one person could enter God's presence.

b) **Hebrews 9:8** [NIV] *“The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing.”*

This was not the true way into the presence of God.

c) **Hebrews 9:9** [NIV] *“This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshipper.”*

Blood sacrifices of animals are not able to take away sins or a guilty conscience.

d) **Hebrews 9:10** [NIV] *“They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings-- external regulations applying until the time of the new order.”*

External regulations applying only until the new order [covenant].

3: Jesus Christ offers Himself.

Hebrews 9:11-15 [NIV] *“When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance-- now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.”*

a) **v15** Now Jesus Christ has come as mediator of this New Covenant;

b) **v11** He is the high priest;

c) **v12, 14** and the sacrifice.

4: Continuing with the comparison of old and new.

Hebrews 9:24-27 [NIV] *“For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment....”*

a) **v24** **Jesus as high priest enters the real sanctuary, heaven, not earthly shadow the tabernacle.**

b) **v25** **Physical high priest entered physical sanctuary again and again, year by year.**

c) **v25-26** **Jesus Christ entered the real sanctuary [presence of God] with His own Blood [only valid sacrifice] once and for all time as a complete sacrifice.**

Hebrews 10:1-16 [NIV] *“The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming-- not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshippers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, ‘Here I am-- it is written about me in the scroll-- I have come to do your will, O God.’” First he said, “Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them” (although the law required them to be made). Then he said, “Here I am, I have come to do your will.” He sets aside the first to establish the second. And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ*

once for all. Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, because by one sacrifice he has made perfect for ever those who are being made holy. The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says: "This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds."

- a) **v1** From shadow to the reality.
- b) **v4-9** From bodies and blood of animals to the body and blood of Jesus Christ.
- c) **From the Old Covenant to the New Covenant, from a nation to an individual, personal covenant to God.**
- d) **v16** From an external national to an internal personal transformation.
- e) **i: From Moses to Christ.**

Hebrews 3:3 [NIV] *"Jesus has been found worthy of greater honour than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honour than the house itself."*

- ii: From Sinai to Mount Zion.**

Hebrews 12:18-24 [NIV] *"You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, because they could not bear what was commanded: "If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned." The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, "I am trembling with fear." But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel."*

5: The Old Covenant was a wonderful system of observances to keep the people's sin always in front of their eyes, and the need for forgiveness.

2 Corinthians 3:7 [NIV] *"Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, fading though it was..."*

2 Corinthians 3:8-11 [NIV] *"...will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? If the ministry that condemns men is glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness! For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory. And if what was fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts!"*

How much more glory is found in the New Covenant that fulfils the need eternally as shown in the Old Covenant?

The true redeemer has come. Receive Him now ... don't look for another.