

The True Day of Atonement

Hebrews 9:23-28

INTRO:

The writer to the Hebrews labored to teach us why Jesus had to die.

- (1) To do this he described the earthly sanctuary and the worship service God established in the Old Testament to be a picture of what was to come.
- (2) He then told us about the importance of the blood. Jesus had to die to make His testament effective. He had to die to establish the New Covenant with all of its blessings.
- (3) Most of all, He had to die and shed His blood because without the shedding of blood there is no cleansing from or forgiveness of sin.

In this last paragraph of **chapter nine** the writer focused in on the Sacrifice that ended all sacrifices – the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus for our sin. He drew our attention to two points.

I. The Offering of the Sacrifice (v. 23-24)

II. The Sufficiency of the Sacrifice (v. 25-28)

I. The Offering of the Sacrifice (v. 23-24)

A. We read in **verses 22 and 23**,

“And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission. Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.”

With these words the writer built a bridge between what he said in **verse 22** and the events of the true Day of Atonement when the Lord Jesus Christ made atonement for us.

1. Because of the contamination caused by the sin of the people, the articles of the tabernacle had to be cleansed once a year at the Day of Atonement. In carrying this thought forward he reiterates that it was necessary that the copies of the heavenly realities be purified with the blood of bulls and goats.

2. However, the heavenly sanctuary, which is heaven itself, has to be purified with better sacrifices than the blood of animals.

B. This immediately raises a question. Why does heaven where God dwells need to be purified? If sin were present, God would not be there. I am not sure that any of us fully understand this. The writer does not really tell us. Still, it seems that the writer is intent on showing us that any approach that we make to God has to be made on the basis of the shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Without the blood of Christ, nothing that we have to offer to God could be accepted.

C. In **verse 24**, the writer continued his parallel with the Day of Atonement. He wrote,

“For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.”

Jesus entered into heaven itself to appear in the very presence of God for us. Like the high priest on the Day of Atonement, the Lord Jesus entered the very presence of God to make intercession for us. While there are similarities to the original Day of Atonement, there are important differences. The writer delves into these differences as he underlines the sufficiency of the Sacrifice that was made.

II. The Sufficiency of the Sacrifice (v. 25-28)

A. While Jesus did enter heaven in similar fashion to the way the Levitical high priest entered the Holy of Holies to make intercession for the people, there are some significant differences. We read of the first difference in **verse 25** and the first part of **verse 26**.

“Not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another—He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world.”

1. Although the Levitical high priest entered the Most Holy Place year by year with a sacrifice, the blood of a bull and a goat, he did not enter his own blood. His own blood would not have been an acceptable sacrifice.

2. Jesus' sacrifice was not a perpetual or a repeatable sacrifice. If it had been, then the writer points out **"He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world."** (Verse 26)

B. On the contrary, our Lord's sacrifice was a single sacrifice.

"But now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."

1. The word translated **"once"** in this phrase means **once**, but in the book of Hebrews and especially in this context it means **one time and one time only**. The action is not repeatable. This is why many translations translate this word **"once for all."** Jesus died never to die again.

2. Now at the end of the ages, the culmination of the ages is the Messianic age instituted with the death of the Lord Jesus. This is what all of the prophecies of the Old Testament looked forward to. It was all that the pictures of the tabernacle anticipated. Finally, Jesus Christ our Lord was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life and died on the cross for our sin. He did it once for all time.

C. What did Our Lord Jesus accomplish that never needs to be repeated again?

"He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."

This is a wonderful truth and another difference between what took place on the true Day of Atonement and what happened when the Levitical priest entered the Most Holy Place. Jesus made a permanent sacrifice for sin. It was sufficient to do away with our sin, forever.

1. The Aaronic priest only covered sin and made a provisional sacrifice to make atonement for the people.

2. Jesus put away sin. This is a very strong word translated "put away". It means *"to abrogate"* or to *"do away with a matter,"* or *"to cancel."* In the

Old Testament ritual of the Day of Atonement there were two goats taken. One was sacrificed; the high priest laid hands on the other and confessed the sins of the people over it. Then, that goat was taken to the wilderness and left there to take away the sin of the people. What that goat did, in shadow, Jesus did in actuality. He took our sin away!

We read in **Psalm 103:11-12**

“For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.”

In **Micah 7:19** the prophet Micah wrote,

“He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy. He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.”

What a picture of sins gone forever.

We already have read the great promise in **Jeremiah 31** when our God says of our sin under the blood of Jesus, ***“Their sins and iniquities I will remember no more!”***

D. To help drive the point home, the writer draws another parallel in **verses 27 and 28** in **Hebrews 9**.

“And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many.”

Our only hope is **verse 28**. We must be among those whose sin Jesus bore away. For if our sins and iniquities He remembers no more, then we need not fear a judgment for sin. Jesus was offered once, never to be repeated. He is not offered over and over again. His sacrifice was sufficient to take away our sin once for all.

E. In **verse 28** we read how the salvation purchased by the Lord Jesus Christ will be completed.

“To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.”

1 John 3:1-2 *“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”*

Are you one of those who eagerly wait for Him? If not, you can be by coming to Him by faith. If we are those whose sin and iniquity He remembers no more, let us eagerly wait for His appearing by being busy doing the Master’s work.