CHRIST RENDERS A BETTER SERVICE THAN THAT OF AARON

Hebrews 9:1-12

Continuing the discussion of the "more excellent ministry" of Christ—"more excellent" than that of Aaron and all the Levitical priests—the Holy Spirit contrasts yet further, in Hebrews 9:1-12, the service of Israel's earthly priests with the "better" service of the Lord Jesus. Indeed, in this passage, which is our lesson for today, He shows conclusively that our Lord's ministry in the "true tabernacle," under the "better covenant" is not only "better than" that of Aaron, but that it is perfect. Nothing can be added to the sufficient, eternal, "more excellent ministry" of our Great High Priest, even Jesus, the Son of God.

It is difficult to limit our study today to the first twelve verses of chapter nine; for, as we saw in our last lesson, all of 8:1—10:18 should be considered as a unit, presenting Christ's better ministry in a better tabernacle, under a better covenant, established upon better promises—all based upon His better sacrifice of His own precious blood. To end our discussion for today with verse 12 is to stop right in the beginning of a long paragraph dealing with the "better sacrifice." But since the central theme of 9:13—10:18 is the "better sacrifice;" and since the entire passage is too long for us to consider in one lesson, we shall limit our study today to the contrast between Aaron's ministry in the early tabernacle with that of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary, of which the Jewish tabernacle was a type.

The first ten verses of chapter nine describe the earthly tabernacle in the wilderness, and refer to Aaron's ministry therein on the great Day of Atonement; verses eleven and twelve tell of the perfect work of Christ in the "more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands." They tell us that...
He has secured for us "eternal redemption." The reason why the Holy Spirit selected Aaron's ministry on the Day of Atonement, to contrast it with our Lord's perfect ministry, is very evident: The central theme of the epistle is the proof that Christ's priesthood is "better than" that of Aaron and all his sons—better in His Person and better in His work. Now the work of Israel's high priest reached its culmination on the Day of Atonement. What he did on that greatest day of the year was the very best he could do on behalf of his people. Therefore, since our Lord's ministry is far superior to the very best Aaron could do on the Day of Atonement, then the logical conclusion is that His ministry is superior to anything Aaron could do every other day, of lesser importance to the life of the nation of Israel. That is why, throughout chapters nine and ten, we see contrasted the service of Israel's high priest on the Day of Atonement with that of our Lord in heaven.

Since this prominence is given to the Day of Atonement in the epistle, we want to take time in this lesson to outline briefly just what Aaron's ministry was on that sacred occasion. But first let us read the description of the tabernacle, in which he ministered, as recorded in Heb. 9:1-5. Since we made a brief study of the Jewish tabernacle in our last lesson, we shall not repeat that here, important as it is. Let us turn now to the passage before us, reading these five verses from the Revised Version:

**THE EARTHLY TABERNACLE DESCRIBED**

"Now even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service, and its sanctuary, a sanctuary of this world. For there was a tabernacle prepared, the first, wherein were the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the Holy place. And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holy of holies; having a golden altar of incense, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was a golden pot holding the manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the cov-enant; and above it cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy-seat; of which things we cannot now speak severally (that is, 'in detail')."

As we saw in our last lesson, this earthly sanctuary is set in contrast with the "true tabernacle," described in verse eleven of our chapter for today as "the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation."

From this description in 9:1-5, we note that all the pieces of furniture in the Holy Place and in the Holy of Holies are mentioned, by way of introduction to the discussion of Aaron's ministry in the Most Holy Place on the Day of Atonement. Moreover, every devout Jew knew how costly and how beautiful the tabernacle in the wilderness was; therefore, he must have been impressed with the contrasting glories of the "greater and more perfect tabernacle," which "the Lord pitched" in heaven.

The question has been raised concerning the golden altar of incense, mentioned in verse four, as to why it is linked with the Holy of Holies; whereas it stood in front of the veil in the Holy Place. Critics have called this a mistake in the text; but a careful consideration of the passage shows a remarkable proof of its inspiration by the Holy Spirit.

Now the King James Version of our English Bible translates the word "censer," but the Revised Version uses the word "altar," and rightly so. The original Greek term here is the one ordinarily used for an altar of incense; whereas an entirely different Greek word is used to describe the "golden censer" in Rev. 8:3, 5. Moreover, it is logical that the "altar" should be mentioned in Heb. 9:1-5, thus completing the reference to all the articles in the two rooms of the Jewish tabernacle.

But to come back to the question of why the golden altar of incense is linked here with the Holy of Holies: The key to the understanding of the passage is found in the words "wherein" of verse two and "having" of verse four. The candlestick and the table of shewbread were "in" the Holy Place; but the Holy of Holies is described as "having"
the golden altar of incense—"having" in the sense that the altar "belonged" to the very throne-room and presence of God, who dwelt in that Most Holy Place. The text does not say that the golden altar was "in" the Holy of Holies.

We have seen in our study of the tabernacle that the golden altar of incense, before which the priests stood to pray for the people, represented Christ, our Intercessor, pleading our cause in the Holiest of all, even heaven itself. Thus the altar and heaven are inseparably linked together. As the smoke of the sweet incense went up to God in the earthly tabernacle, so also the sweet incense of our Lord's intercession avails for us before "the throne of grace." The golden altar had to be placed outside in the earthly sanctuary because no priest dared enter the Holy of Holies except the high priest just once a year, on the Day of Atonement. However, by the express command of Jehovah, the altar was placed just in front of the veil, as near to the Shekinah Glory as possible, because it was inseparably linked with God's presence. And when the veil of the temple was rent in twain the moment Christ died on the cross, even while some Levitical priest was doubtless ministering in the Holy Place, the sweet incense from the golden altar ascended before the Lord, filling the Holy of Holies with its fragrance. The way was forever opened into heaven itself, of which the Most Holy Place was a type. And now our ascended Great High Priest is forever at home in His heavenly mansions, praying for us in the Holiest of All!

We have seen that the mercy seat represented the throne of grace, even as the golden altar of incense foreshadowed the intercessory work of our Great High Priest before His throne. This truth is verified in Rev. 8:3, 4, where John describes the heavenly vision of the ascended Christ, our Great High Priest, called here "another angel"; i. e., The Angel of the Lord. And here the golden altar and the throne of God are inseparably linked together:

"And another angel came and stood over the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should add it unto the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand." (R. V.)

This is one of the clearest pictures of our Lord's intercessory work for His redeemed; for He takes our prayers, purges them of all that is selfish or self-willed or filled with pride, and adds to them His own availing prayer, presenting them all to the Father on our behalf. And let us ever bear in mind that the golden altar of incense must be associated with His glorious presence.

THE MINISTRY OF AARON ON THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

PROPHETIC OF CHRIST'S "BETTER MINISTRY"

The very heart of the Gospel message was foreshadowed in the God-given ritual for the Day of Atonement. It was a prophetic picture of the ministry of Christ, from His cross even unto His return in power and glory as Israel's Messiah and the world's righteous King. The entire sixteenth chapter of Leviticus is devoted to the ritual of this most sacred day in Israel's year. But if we would see the full significance of this high day in the year for God's ancient people, we should first get the message of the twenty-third chapter of Leviticus, where the Day of Atonement is placed in its chronological order, in its relation to all the seven "feasts of Jehovah," observed annually by devout Jews under the Law of Moses; for the Day of Atonement was one of the seven. We can only outline these seven "feasts of Jehovah" here; for they constitute a wonderful study all by themselves.

1. The Day of Atonement—One of the Seven "Feasts of Jehovah." The seven "feasts of Jehovah" were a remarkable, prophetic outline of God's great plan of the ages, from the cross of Christ unto and throughout His millennial reign on earth:

(1) The Feast of the Passover, which finds its fulfillment in the death of "Christ our passover" (I Cor. 5:7), was to be observed "on the fourteenth day of the first month
at even" (Lev. 23:5). It was not by accident that our Lord was crucified on the "Feast of the Passover," as all four of the evangelists are careful to tell us. He was the Paschal Lamb "without blemish and without spot."

(2) The Feast of Unleavened Bread immediately followed the passover, and was closely linked with it. It began "on the fifteenth day of the same month," and was to be observed for seven days (Lev. 23:6). This finds its fulfillment in the holy walk of the believer as he feeds upon Christ, "the bread of life." Leaven is a type of sin, and all leaven was to be put out of the house of every Israelite during this week. Even so, we must confess and forsake our sins, if we would have fellowship with Christ, "the bread of life."

(3) The Feast of the Firstfruits, observed "on the morrow after the sabbath" (Lev. 23:11); that is, three days after the passover, on the first day of the week, is a remarkable type of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus from the dead, on the first day of the week, "when the sabbath was fully past," three days after He offered Himself as the Paschal Lamb on the altar which is Calvary's Cross. He is, indeed, "the firstfruits of them that slept" (I Cor. 15:20).

(4) The Feast of Pentecost, so called because it came fifty days after the "feast of the firstfruits" ("Pentecost" is a Greek word meaning "fiftieth"), finds its fulfillment in the descent of the Holy Spirit "when the day of Pentecost was fully come" (Acts 2:1), exactly fifty days after the resurrection of Christ. The Day of Pentecost marks the birthday of the church.

Between the Day of Pentecost and "the feast of trumpets" there was a long interval of several months, during which time Israel was to glean in the harvest field. (Lev. 23:22)—a striking type of this present church age, from Pentecost to the translation of the church, while the harvest is being gathered into the garner of the Lord. Then in the seventh month the three remaining feasts were observed, the fulfillment of which is yet future.

(5) The Feast of Trumpets, "a memorial of blowing of trumpets," (Lev. 23:24), gathered the people together to worship Jehovah. Before Christ returns in glory to be worshipped as King of kings and Lord of lords, Israel will have been re-gathered to her own land of Palestine; and then "the feast of trumpets" will find its fulfillment.

(6) The Day of Atonement was a day of mourning for sin, the only day in the year when Israel's high priest could enter the Holy of Holies. As we shall see in our study, among other things, it pointed on to the time when Israel's Great High Priest, even Jesus, shall come out of the Most Holy Place to deliver His suffering people. Then they shall "look upon" Him "whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son." (Zech. 12:10).

(7) The Feast of Tabernacles, observed for seven days (Lev. 23:34), was a time of rejoicing, and points on to the millennial reign of Christ, the Son of David, over re-gathered and redeemed Israel and over the whole world.

"These are the feasts of the Lord, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons," God said to Moses as He "called unto" him and "spake unto him out of the tabernacle of the congregation" many centuries ago at the foot of Mount Sinai. They picture to us a holy God inviting His redeemed people to share with Him the things which delight His heart—the perfections of the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. The Meaning of "Atonement." For a better understanding of the significance of the ministry of Aaron on the Day of Atonement, let us consider the meaning of the word "atonement." It is not a literal translation from the Hebrew; but is, rather, the expression of "a purely theological concept." The Hebrew word translated "atonement" in our English Bible means "covering;" "to atone for" means "to cover." "It is used seventy-seven times in the Old Testament; yet the thought it expresses is not a part of the Old Testament doctrine; whereas in the New Testament, where the doctrine is taught, the word is not used once" (The Reverend Lewis Sperry Chafer, D. D.).

In our English Old Testament "atonement" suggests "at-
one-ment” with God for the guilty sinner who brought the sacrifice in anticipation of Calvary’s Cross. On the merit of the one perfect sacrifice of the promised Redeemer, God “covered” or “passed over” the “sins done aforetime”—from Adam to Christ. (See Rom. 3:25, R. V.)

In other words, the Old Testament saints were saved by faith in the Christ of prophecy; whereas the New Testament saints were saved by faith in the Christ of history, who has fulfilled—or will yet fulfill—every Old Testament prophecy concerning Him. It is the cross of the Lord Jesus, and that alone, which can save the guilty sinner in any age.

Sin was never actually “put away” until Christ died; yet, in His mercy, God “covered” the sins of Old Testament believers for the time being, even as He saw in their hearts faith in the coming Lamb of God. Then when our Lord Jesus died, as the sinner’s Substitute, He forever “put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (Heb. 9:26).

Now on the Day of Atonement Israel’s sins, hitherto unconfessed, or even unknown perhaps to any save God, were “covered” by the ministry of the high priest, highly typical of the sacrificial work of Christ. Throughout the year, day after day, month after month, the sacrifices were continually offered; yet God decreed that, on this one day every year, atonement should be made for Aaron and his house, for the Holy Place and the tabernacle, for the altar and the outer court, and for the whole congregation of Israel. (See Lev. 16:6, 15-33). It was a prophetic object lesson, by which Jehovah taught His people the need of a Savior to come.

3. The Ritual of the Day of Atonement. Let us turn now to the sixteenth chapter of Leviticus, and read it very carefully. Here are some of the highly significant details:

(1) The penalty for entrance into the Holy of Holies was death, except as ordained of God for the high priest on the Day of Atonement, verse 2.

(2) On this day the sin offering and the burnt offering had to be sacrificed, verse 3. (The first seven chapters of Leviticus show how the offerings foreshadowed the sacrificial work of Christ.)

(3)—Aaron had to lay aside his garments “for glory and for beauty” before he could minister on the Day of Atonement, a very significant fact, as we shall see. Instead of his beautiful garments he put on “the holy linen coat,” “the linen breeches,” “the linen girdle,” and “the linen mitre”—all pure white, verse 4.

(4) Two kids of the goats were taken “for a sin-offering, and one ram for a burnt-offering.” The two goats were presented “before the Lord at the door of the tabernacle.” Lots were cast, “one lot for the Lord, and the other lot for the scapegoat.” The one was slain; the other was led away into the wilderness “unto a land not inhabited.” But before it was led away, Aaron placed both his hands upon the scapegoat’s head, confessing Israel’s sins, figuratively laying them upon the head of the sinless Substitute who was to come, even Jesus. (See verses 5-10, 21-22.)

(5) Aaron took the blood of the bullock and of the slain goat into the Holy of Holies, and sprinkled it “upon the mercy seat eastward, and before the mercy seat . . . with his finger seven times,” verses 11, 14, 15.

(6) In his hands Aaron also took the golden censer, “full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the Lord, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small.” The smoke of the incense went up before the Lord, covering the mercy seat with its fragrance, verses 12, 13.

(7) Aaron was alone in the tabernacle when he ministered before the Lord on this sacred day, verse 17.

(8) As he came out of the tabernacle, after having entered into the Most Holy Place, he sprinkled the blood upon the horns of the altar.

(9) Then it was that the scapegoat was sent away into the wilderness, symbolically bearing afar off the sins of all Israel. Afterwards the man who led the scapegoat away had to go through ceremonial cleansing, verses 21, 22, 26.

(10) Aaron, while in the tabernacle, took off the holy, linen garments and left them there; washed his flesh; put on once more the beautiful garments, verses 23, 24.
(11) Then he sacrificed the burnt offering, as "a sweet savour unto the Lord," verse 24.

(12) The fat of the sin offering was burned upon the altar; the remainder was carried without the camp, and burned with fire, verses 25, 27.

(13) This was a day of mourning for sin, verse 29.

(14) It was a day of rest, verse 29.

(15) It was to be observed "once a year," verse 34. Year after year for fifteen centuries, from Moses to Christ, Israel's high priest was commanded by Jehovah to obey this ritual.

And now let us consider the typical significance of some of these "shadows of good things to come" in Christ Jesus, our Great High Priest:

4. A Day of Mourning for Sin. The Day of Atonement was possible the most solemn of all feasts of Jehovah. Three times in the twenty-third chapter of Leviticus and twice in the sixteenth chapter we read God's commandment to Moses,

"Ye shall afflict your souls ... whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people."

It was a time of weeping and mourning in Israel, a time of sorrow for their sins. But Israel's grief on the Day of Atonement was just a shadow of the still future affliction of their souls when "they shall look upon" Him "whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn" (Zech. 12:10).

"His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of olives" (Zech. 14:4).

"And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends" (Zech. 13:6).

"Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him" (Rev. 1:7).

In that coming day, of which the Day of Atonement was a type, Israel's Great High Priest, even Jesus, will come out of the Holy of Holies, which is heaven itself, to deliver His people from the terrible persecution of the Antichrist. In great tribulation they will cry unto God, and their God will come down to deliver them. When they see the nail prints in His hands and feet and the print of the wounded side, they will remember the mocking, angry mob who cried out, saying,

"Crucify him, crucify him ... his blood be on us, and on our children."

Their penitential prayer will be the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, a marvelous prophecy of the sufferings of their Messiah and the Savior of the world. In the affliction of their souls, they will say:

"We hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:3-6).

But Israel's mourning will be turned into joy when Jesus comes; for He will deliver His people and usher in His long-promised kingdom of peace and righteousness.

5. A Day of Rest—A Finished Redemption. The Day of Atonement was "a sabbath of rest," for God said to Moses,
Ye shall do no work in that same day... And whatsoever soul it be that doeth any work in that same day, the same soul will I destroy from among his people" (Lev. 23:28, 30, 32).

Wherever the atoning work of Christ is referred to in the Word of God, it is always plainly set forth as a work of grace. Man can only remain passive, and accept the finished work of Christ. Likewise, on the Day of Atonement, it was the high priest who ministered for Israel; the people did no work!

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5).

"By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8, 9).

You can not do one thing to save yourself, my friend; you must accept what Christ has done for you in His death and resurrection. You must rest in His finished work of redemption. You and I must sing, from hearts of thanksgiving,

"Jesus paid it all;
All to Him I owe:
Sin had left a crimson stain;
He washed it white as snow!"

6. "Once a Year"—"Once for All!"

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the vail before the mercy seat, which is upon the ark; that he die not: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat... And this shall be an everlasting statute unto you, to make an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year" (Lev. 16:2, 34).

Now let us turn back to Hebrews 9:6-12, to see how the Holy Spirit gives His divine commentary on the meaning of the ritual of the Day of Atonement:

"Now these things (in the Jewish tabernacle) having been thus prepared, the priests go in continually into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the services; but into the second the high priest alone, once in the year, not without blood, which he offereth for himself, and for the errors (lit. 'ignorance') of the people: the Holy Spirit this signifying, that the way into the holy place hath not yet been made manifest, while the first tabernacle is yet standing (i. e., 'as yet had its standing' before God); which is a figure for the time present; according to which are offered both gifts and sacrifices that cannot, as touching the conscience, make the worshipper perfect, being only (with meats and drinks and divers washings, carnal ordinances, imposed until a time of reformation.

"But Christ having come a high priest of the good things to come, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation, nor yet through the blood of goats and calves, but through his own blood, entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption" (R. V.).

In these unmistakable words the Holy Spirit throws a flood of light upon the Old Testament ritual of the Day of Atonement. Day after day the morning and evening sacrifices were made in Israel, but only on this one day in the year could the high priest enter the Holy of Holies where God dwelt in the Shekinah Glory. Now a year is a full period of time; and typically the Day of Atonement covers all human history. Christ died "once for all," in fulfillment of the types and shadows set forth in every animal sacrifice of Old Testament days. What a mighty grandeur this gives to the cross of our Lord! There all the ages meet! Every other day of the past and of the future is pressed into that one atoning day. The cross links the past eternity with
the future eternity. Verily, Calvary's Cross does tower—

"... o'er the wrecks of time;
All the light of sacred story
Gathers 'round its head sublime!"

Having offered to the Father the sweet incense of His fragrant, holy life, even as Aaron offered sweet incense before the pillar of cloud and fire above the mercy seat, our Lord was accepted by His righteous Father as a worthy sacrifice for sinners; and we are "accepted in the beloved" Son of God (See Eph. 1:6.)

The words "once for all" are given special emphasis in the Epistle to the Hebrews; let us look at the array of passages, given such prominence by the Spirit of God:

"... this he did once for all, when he offered up himself" (7:27.)

"... through his own blood, (He) entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption" (9:12).

"... nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place year by year with blood not his own; else must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once at the end or ('consummation') of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.... having been once offered to bear the sins of many." (9:25, 26, 28).

"... we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all," 10:10.

"... but he, when he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God ...." (10:12).

"... For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified," (10:14).

Aaron had to render this service "year by year"—1500 B. C., 1499 B. C., 1498 B. C., 1497 B. C., 1496 B. C.—on down the years. Then he died, and his sons took up his ministry—for fifteen hundred years! What if Christ had to be offered year by year? What if we had only an annual redemption? What if we could be saved for a millennium or a thousand milleniums; then cast into hell? Do you begin to realize, my friend, the efficacy of the shed blood of our Great High Priest? Do you begin to comprehend the length and breadth and height and depth of the love of Christ, in that He has obtained "eternal redemption" for us? Do you see how far superior His Great High Priestly ministry is to that of Aaron and his sons? "Once for all" He died and was buried and rose again and ascended into heaven—our ever-living unchangeable Great High Priest, whose ministry is sufficient for our eternal redemption!

This established fact forever refutes the doctrine of the Roman Catholic mass, which is the very heart of their system of teaching; for they hold that the sacrifice of Christ is repeated every time mass is observed. Such a doctrine is man-made, contrary to the Scriptures, and dishonoring to our Lord. His work is all-sufficient; it is perfect; it has been done "once for all"!

7. The Affliction and Humiliation of the High Priest in Israel—A Picture of the Suffering of "The Man of Sorrows." Seven days prior to the Day of Atonement the high priest in Israel had to be separated from family and home; and on the great day of the feast he had to divest himself of his garments of "glory and beauty," putting on a white linen robe. How marvelously this speaks to us of how our Great High Priest was for thirty-three and one-half years separated from His Father and Home—a self-denying Servant. He laid aside His garments of glory and beauty—not His deity—and was "fashioned" like unto His brethren, "that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people" (Heb. 2:17).

"Being in the form of God," He "thought it not a thing to be grasped after to be equal with God; but ...
humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:6-8).

"Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (II Cor. 8:9).

Yet He was still God, the spotless, sinless God-Man. Of His holy nature, Aaron's white linen clothes speak. For us He wore the crown of thorns and the purple robe, put upon Him in derision and mockery by wicked men. The affliction and humiliation of the high priest in Israel on the Day of Atonement was but a faint "shadow" of the affliction and humiliation of Jesus, our Great High Priest, when He made atonement for our sins upon the cross.


God said to Moses,

“There shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goeth in to make an atonement in the holy place, until he come out, and have made an atonement for himself, and for his household, and for all the congregation of Israel” (Lev. 16:17).

When Christ drank the bitter “cup,” He drank it alone! There was none to help. Even His Father in heaven had to turn His face away in that dark moment; for a holy God can not look upon sin—and in His death the holy Son of God took upon Himself the sins of the whole world.

“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

He cried.

And yet, knowing beforehand that this would be, still He had prayed,

“O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matt. 26:39).

He willingly went to Gethsemane and to Calvary alone.

9. The Two Goats A Type of "Eternal Redemption."

There was a God-ward and there was a man-ward aspect of Calvary. There was the sweet savour offering, when the Son presented Himself without spot or blemish to the Father as the whole burnt offering, delighting to do His will. And there was the non-sweet savour offering, when, as the sin offering, the holy Son of God became the sinner's Substitute. These were often sacrificed at the brazen altar of the Jewish tabernacle. But the ritual concerning the two goats was observed only on the Day of Atonement; and it is highly significant.

The two goats were to be taken from “the congregation of the children of Israel” (Lev. 16:15); that is, they were to be purchased from the public treasury. In other words, they represented the people. Aaron, the high priest, presented them “before the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation,” and “cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the Lord, and the other lot for the scapegoat” (Lev. 16:7, 8). The one was slain, and the blood sprinkled on the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies. The other was led into the wilderness, “unto a land not inhabited.” But before the scapegoat was led away, Aaron laid his hands upon the head of the animal and confessed the sins of the people, symbolically transferring them to their Substitute, even Jesus, of whom the animal sacrifices were a type. (See Lev. 16:21, 22.)

How significant is all this ritual! The two goats represent Christ in His death for our sins, as He bore them away, to remember them no more forever. Even as the animals were purchased from the public treasury, so the thirty pieces of silver, given to Judas for selling the Lord Jesus, came out of the public treasury, from the officials of the Jews. For the sins of “the whole congregation” He died!

Again, the casting of the lots, to determine which goat was to die and which was to be the scapegoat, reminds us that it was God who made the decision. Likewise, Christ was not the victim of circumstance; He came into the world to die, “delivered by the determinate counsel and
foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:23), even as He said,

“I lay down my life, that I might take it again.
No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of my­self” (John 10:17, 18).

The blood of the goat which was slain was brought up
by the high priest “within the vail,” into the Holy of
Holies, and was sprinkled “upon the mercy seat, and be­
fore the mercy seat” (Lev. 16:15). So also was the blood
of the bullock for a sin offering. Thus the blood was
sprinkled where God rested, and where man stood. God
rested in the finished work of Christ, and man can stand
before Him, resting also in Him, only on the merit of His
finished redemption. This is the meaning of Heb. 9:11, 12,

“Christ being come an high priest of good things to
come . . . by his own blood . . . entered in once into the
holy place (heaven itself), having obtained eternal re­
demption for us.”

Think, my friend, of the contrast between the blood of
an animal, and the blood of Christ! Not only was He the
“Man, Christ Jesus”; and human life is more precious than
that of a dumb animal. Not only was He the sinless Son of
Man; but He was the God-Man. His precious blood, shed
for our eternal redemption is superior beyond comprehen­
sion to that of any other living creature!

This is the heart of the message of the Gospel. It ex­
plains to us the meaning of the rent veil. Until Christ died,
no man except Israel’s high priest dared enter the presence
of the Shekinah Glory, and even he went in only once a
year, “not without blood.” The veil shut the sinner out
from the presence of God. Why? Because a full atone­
ment had not been made for sin. The animal sacrifices were
only “shadows of good things to come.” But then Christ
came; He died; He shed His own precious blood; He rose
again, and entered into heaven, bearing in His glorified body
the marks of Calvary. He presented His own blood before
the mercy seat, changing the judgment throne of God into

a throne of grace. That is why the veil of the temple was
rent in twain when He died on the cross. “The way into
the holiest” was forever opened; and the weakest sinner was
invited to draw near to God. That is why we no longer
need an earthly priest, before whom to confess our sins.
We have an all-sufficient Great High Priest, and to Him we
go in prayer.

In shedding His blood for our sins, the Lord Jesus bore
them away into “the wilderness,” as it were, “unto a land
not inhabited.” The place of no habitation is the grave.

“The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all”
(Isaiah 53:6).

And in His death He has taken away our sins.

“As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he
removed our transgressions from us” (Psalm 103:12).

10. The High Priest’s Coming Forth from the Holy
of Holies A Type of Christ’s Return in Glory. After
Aaron came out from the presence of God, and before he
appeared again unto the people, he took off the linen clothes
of humiliation, and put on once more his garments of
“glory and beauty.” When our Lord returns, when He ap­
pears once more to His people, Israel, He will come in all
His glory, His “eternal glory” which He had with the
Father “before the world was” (John 17:5). He laid aside
that glory, in order to become a merciful and a faithful
high priest; but He took it again after He had made a full
atonement for sin. When He rose from the grave, He put
on His robe of glory. And very soon perhaps He will come
out of the Holy of Holies.

“Behold, he cometh with the clouds; and every eye
shall see him” (Rev. 1:7).

Then the work which He did on that “feast of the pass­
over” nearly two thousand years ago will find its complete
fruition. At the first “feast of the passover” the Israelite
sprinkled the shed blood upon his own lintel and door posts,
but then there was no tabernacle; there was no Holy of Holies; there was no sprinkling of the blood on the mercy seat. The passover set forth the man-ward aspect of Calvary. Each sinner must, by his own volition, allow the Holy Spirit to apply the shed blood of the Lamb of God to his sinful heart. On the Day of Atonement, however, it was the high priest who sprinkled the blood in the presence of God. This is the God-ward aspect of a Calvary, and shows what Christ has done for the sinner. Thus the feasts of the passover and atonement dovetail perfectly, setting forth also Israel's special relation to Jehovah, in that Christ will appear on the Day of Atonement, as it were, to establish His promised kingdom over the house of Jacob. On the basis of the shed blood "all Israel shall be saved." Just as God heard the cry of His people in Egyptian bondage, so also He sent Moses to deliver them long ago, so He Himself will arise from "the marriage supper of the Lamb," and will come out of the Holy of Holies to deliver His people in their hour of great affliction. Then Israel will receive Him as her Great High Priest and righteous King.

Then there will be no more "wars and rumors of wars." Thorns will no longer infest the ground. And "the desert shall blossom as the rose."

Are you ready for the Lord's return, my friend? He has died for you; He will bear all your sins away, and remember them no more forever, if you will only trust Him. He has opened the way into heaven, into His own glorious presence, by His own shed blood. But you must accept His "great salvation." It is a free gift; but you must take it if you want access before "the throne of grace"—now and throughout the endless ages.

11. Our Great High Priest "within the Veil." For some fifteen hundred years, from the days of Moses until our Lord was crucified, Israel observed the Day of Atonement, with more or less devotion. Part of that time the nation as a whole was in gross idolatry. Part of that time the northern kingdom was in the Assyrian captivity. Part of that time Judah was in Babylon, with no temple, with no Holy of Holies, with no manifestation of the Shekinah Glory. But throughout the centuries, godly Jews, of whom there was always a faithful remnant, honored that sacred day every year—from Moses to Christ.

Then the Lord Jesus came and suffered "without the camp," outside the gate of Jerusalem. Having risen from the dead, He went "within the veil," there to present His finished work before the throne of Grace, there to make intercession for those He had bought with His own precious blood. During this church age He is still "within the veil." But one day He will come forth to be acknowledged by all the world as "The mighty God . . . The Prince of Peace." Meanwhile, the veil of the temple has been rent in twain; and our Advocate bids us "draw near."

It seems to us, in the light of the prophetic Scriptures, that we must be living in the evening of the great Day of Atonement, as it were. Soon, we believe and pray, our Great High Priest will come forth, wearing His garments of beauty and glory, to be honored by all His universe. Shall we not re-dedicate our lives to telling the lost of "such a high priest" who longs to be their Saviour? When He comes as the "Judge of all the earth," the wicked will find that "the day of salvation" is past. "The night cometh, when no man can work." Let us, with renewed zeal, point never-dying souls to Him who has forever "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

It was the "Holy Spirit" who explained to us this typical teaching concerning the Jewish tabernacle and the ministry of Aaron on the Day of Atonement, even as our text says, in Heb. 9:8. He is the One who wrote the Bible; and He is the only Teacher of the Word of God. When He taught these things to the Hebrews living in the days of Paul, that should have settled the issue for them forever; it settles it for us! Charles Wesley believed the Holy Spirit, or he could never have written the hymn which our own hearts would echo today:
"Arise, my soul, arise;  
Shake off thy guilty fears;  
The bleeding Sacrifice  
In thy behalf appears.  
Before the throne my Surety stands;  
My name is written on His Hands.

"Five bleeding wounds He bears,  
Received on Calvary;  
They pour effectual prayers;  
They strongly plead for me:  
'Forgive him, O forgive,' they cry,  
'Nor let that ransomed sinner die!'  

"He ever lives above  
For me to intercede,  
His all-redeeming love,  
His precious blood to plead.  
His blood atones for all our race,  
And sprinkles now the throne of grace.

"My God is reconciled;  
His pard'ning voice I hear;  
He owns me for His child;  
I can no longer fear.  
With confidence I now draw nigh,  
And 'Father, Abba, Father' cry."