

*The Day
of Atonement.*

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The Day of Atonement.

(LEVITICUS XVI.)

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS.

WE have in this marvellous portion of divine truth the work of Jesus typically set forth in its application and results, both to us now who form the church of God, and to the elect nation of Israel by-and-by.

We learn from the eleventh chapter of the Gospel by John that it was expedient that one should die for the people, that the whole nation perish not, and the high priest prophesied that "*Jesus should die for that nation.*" In Ephesians we also read that "*Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it.*" We thus see that Christ is the Redeemer of His *earthly* people

Israel, as well as of His *heavenly* people, who form / "the church, which is his body." The distinction between those whose destiny is blessing on *earth*, and those who are partakers of the *heavenly* calling is very clearly kept up in scripture; and these two branches of Christ's redemption work were typically set forth with remarkable precision in the ordinance enacted on the day of atonement. Those who limit the work of Christ to the blessing of the church—as, alas! many do—of necessity, therefore, fall far short of embracing the scope which divine truth so graciously spreads before us.

A point to notice at the outset of our remarks on this chapter is, that Aaron not only prefigures Christ as having gone into heaven itself for us by His own blood, but he also sets forth the access with confidence, which we now have through the veil, that is to say, His flesh, because Christ is there, and His blood ever speaks *there* for us. The ninth and part of the tenth chapters of Hebrews is a divine commentary on this scripture, specially in its application to us, and should be read in connection with it.

As Aaron could not come at all times within the veil, under penalty of death, except once every year, and then not without blood and incense, so no man can approach God but by Jesus and His blood.

It is perfectly clear from scripture that God's way of blessing to man could only be through the offering of a sacrifice—the laying down of a life, the shedding of the blood of another on his behalf. This is true, whether in regard to Israel or the church, and, as we have seen, the work of Christ's sacrifice avails for both; but the knowledge and apprehension of His infinitely precious work will be very different in Israel's case to what it is in ours. Hence different typical offerings were needed to set forth this remarkable distinction, such as a bullock for Aaron's house, and two kids of the goats for a sin-offering for Israel. Aaron brought the bullock for himself and his house (vers. 3, 6), but the two goats for a sin-offering for the people he took from the children of Israel. (Vers. 5-15.) The latter, we are told, was because of "the uncleanness of the children of Israel."

It is quite true that we do not find here *the church* plainly set forth, because "the mystery" was not then made known, nor was it known till long after, when it was revealed to Paul; up to that time it was "hid in God," "kept secret since the world began." (See Eph. iii. 5, 9; Rom. xvi. 25.) In Aaron's *house*, however, we do find typically portrayed that which strikingly resembles those who are now brought into the peculiar blessing of the church of God. 1st, Aaron's sons were *priests* to God; so are we. 2ndly, they were priests by *calling* and *consecration*; so are we. 3rdly, they were connected with Aaron by *birth*; and we are in relationship with Christ by new birth. 4thly, they only were in constant association with Aaron in the daily business of the sanctuary; so are we in association with the Great High Priest in the sanctuary which the Lord pitched, and not man.

In looking at some of the details of this divinely-drawn picture of the atoning work of Christ, we may observe the infinite glory of the Person of Christ—His death, His resurrection and ascension—entering into

heaven itself, not by the blood of others, but by His own blood, and there appearing before the face of God for us ; thus setting forth what we may call the circle of divine grace, and introducing us into the true grace of God in which we stand.

I. As to *the Person of Christ*, it need scarcely be said that it is the glory of His Person which gave such eternal worth to all that He accomplished. Had the smallest taint of impurity—a faltering step, the minutest flaw—been attachable to Him ; had an unholy thought sprung out of His heart, He would have been unfit for the work of atonement. Had the least conceivable sin been found in Him, He would have had to suffer for it, and thus be disqualified for being a sin-offering for others. His qualification for the work was that He was verily and truly God as well as man—divine and human in one blessed Person, and though tempted, despised, rejected, betrayed, forsaken, and hated without a cause, yet throughout He was always the unblemished One.

We may notice three ways in which Aaron faintly set forth the Person of Christ ;

1st, as outwardly pure; 2ndly, as inwardly pure; and 3rdly, as infinitely acceptable to God. As to *outward* purity, Jesus was "without sin;" in fact, "He knew no sin," for He always did the will of Him that sent Him. In the consciousness of this He could say, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" and though there were those who watched Him, seeking to catch something out of His mouth, that they might accuse Him, yet almost all intelligencies have borne witness to His outward purity. For instance, *His disciples* worshipped Him as the Son of God. *Angels* not only spake of Him as the "holy thing," but ministered to Him, and strengthened Him in His agony in the garden. The faithful testimony of *the dying malefactor* was, "This man has done nothing amiss." Wicked *Pilate* repeatedly exclaimed, "I find no fault in him." *Judas*, the betrayer, in bitter remorse threw down the thirty pieces of silver, saying, "I have betrayed the innocent blood." Nor were even *devils* silent on this point, for they cried out, "We know thee, who thou art, the Holy One of God." Thus there is almost uni-

versal testimony to the outward purity of the Son of God. Hence Aaron, in order to be a faint shadow of this, was first washed with water, and then covered with clean linen garments. (Ver. 4.)

2. But Jesus was also *inwardly* pure. God alone searches the heart; and after marking every thought, and feeling, and motive of this blessed One for thirty years, the heaven once and again opened over Him, and the voice from the excellent glory declared, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Nor could the Holy Ghost have descended and remained on Him, had He not been personally holy, harmless, and undefiled. The Holy Ghost dwells in us because we are cleansed by the blood of Jesus, and become sons by being born of God, but the temple of His body was so spotless, and He was so pure inwardly and outwardly, that the Holy Ghost could come down and seal Him. In order, then, that Aaron might be a shadow of Jesus as to His *inward* purity, he needed to be purged with blood. Aaron was a sinner, and guilty like other men, and inwardly unclean; he needed,

therefore, a sin-offering for himself, that, in virtue of the blood, he might be so cleansed as to set forth typically the spotless sinlessness and inward purity of the Son of God. (Ver. 11.)

3. Jesus, however, was not only pure both outwardly and inwardly, but He was also infinitely fragrant and *acceptable to God*. He was One in whom God was *well-pleased*. He was always bearing fruit in His season. He glorified the Father on the earth, and finished the work which He gave Him to do ; He was perfect in faith, in love, in obedience, in entire surrender to Him who sent Him. He was always, both in life and in death, a sweet savour, or a savour of rest to God. There was not only in Him the entire absence of sin, but there was that always manifested by Him which was an odour of a sweet smell, well-pleasing to God. These wondrous excellencies and moral glories of the Son of God could only be prefigured in Aaron by his bringing a ram for a burnt-offering. For the whole of the burnt-offering being offered to God upon the altar, and all found under the action of fire, to bring out that in which

God could find a sweet savour, he was accepted in all the savour and perfectness of that offering. Thus, through the burnt-offering Aaron became a shadow of the infinite acceptability of the Person of Jesus. (Ver. 3.)

Aaron, therefore, is presented to us in this chapter as a type of the peerless, spotless Person of the Son of God, who needed not to offer up sacrifice first for His own sins, but was holy, harmless, and undefiled, outwardly and inwardly pure, and in every respect infinitely fragrant and well-pleasing to God. Mark well, then, beloved friends, that the foremost figure in this divinely-drawn picture sets forth the infinitely holy and unblemished Person of the Son of God, who alone was qualified for the work of atonement. Surely He was God manifested in the flesh, found in fashion as a man—"made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death."

II. *His death.* The spotless bullock is now brought forth by Aaron to be *killed*; to set forth Christ as Offering as well as Offerer, for He was both—He "offered himself without spot to God." The absolute

necessity of the death of Christ is thus taught ; nothing less than His death could avail, and death, too, under the judgment of God for sin. This is a grand fundamental doctrine of the faith of God's elect. Had He done all that He did in His life, and not actually have died for our sins, no sinner could be saved. This our Lord clearly taught when He said, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and *die*, it abideth alone, but *if it die*, it bringeth forth much fruit." The unblemished bullock was then brought forth, for Aaron's hand was laid upon it thus in a sin-offering. Thus we have Christ's death, even the death of the cross, under the judgment and wrath of God, typically set forth, making propitiation for our sins, for we are told that "He died for our sins according to the scriptures." All our blessings, then, being founded on the death of Jesus, we can truly sing—

"Our every joy on earth, in heaven,
We owe it to thy blood."

Thus we see divine love freely flowing out

to us in an accomplished work of atonement, the claims of righteousness fully answered, peace made, the Father glorified in the judgment of our sins by the death of Christ, and ourselves delivered from the wrath to come, and justified from all things. Blessed, wondrous facts ! The holy Son of God made sin for us, the Prince of Life seen in death, the Son of the Highest in the lowest depths, and He by whom the worlds were made found here in fashion as a man, and pouring out His soul unto death, shedding His blood for the remission of sins—

“For man, O miracle of grace !
For man the Saviour bled.”

III. But He is *risen*, for “it was not possible that he shall be holden of death.” “It is Christ that died,” said the apostle, “*yea, rather* that is risen again.” Had He not risen again from the dead, no salvation could possibly have been effected for us ; as scripture says, “If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins ;” and Satan, who has the power of death, would have been victorious. But

this could not be. Blessed be God, Christ is risen from the dead; He triumphed over death, and Satan, and the grave, and "He saw no corruption." In this way, through death, our triumphant Saviour "destroyed death, and him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Hence, in the resurrection of Christ we have the clearest proof that all our sins were judged and purged, that He was the Son of God, and in this way God gave public testimony to the fact that He had finished the work, fully satisfied divine justice about us, and obtained victory for us over death, the grave, and Satan. Bless the Lord, O our souls, and all that is within us bless His holy name! Death and judgment are therefore behind us, and glory our blessed and joyful hope. It is because of this it is said that "we shall not all sleep." Instead of dying, and our bodies being laid in a grave, it is possible that we may have nothing to do with either, for if alive when Jesus comes, we shall be "changed in a moment," "caught up to meet the Lord in

the air, and so be for ever with the Lord." Thus Christ having triumphed over death, and Satan, and the grave for us, we can now say by faith, "Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

IV. *Christ is gone into heaven by His own blood.* He said, "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again I leave the world, and go to the Father." He was glorified with the glory which He had with the Father before the world was. But we are told that "by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." (Heb. ix. 12.) Thus Jesus, as the anti-type of Aaron, is set before us. We read, "And he [Aaron] shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the Lord, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the veil; and he shall put the incense upon the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy-seat, that is upon the testimony that he die not. And he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the

mercy-seat eastward ; and *before* the mercy-seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger *seven times*." (Vers. 12-14.) In the sweet-smelling cloud of incense under the action of fire we discern the graces and moral excellencies of Jesus, who loved us, and gave Himself for us. The cloud thus covering the mercy-seat tells us how infinitely acceptable and precious in heaven is that blessed One who was obedient unto death, triumphed over it in resurrection, and ascended into heaven itself in all the fragrance of His personal excellence and worth. But Aaron took in blood as well as incense ; and let us not fail to observe that it was sprinkled *upon* the mercy-seat for God's eye, and *before* the mercy-seat for those who approached it. Once from Aaron's finger *upon* the mercy-seat was enough for God, for He perfectly estimated the value of that blood ; whereas, to assure *our* poor hearts of its all-prevailing efficacy, it was sprinkled *before* the mercy-seat *seven times*. Thus we are encouraged to approach God at all times with unquestionable assurance and childlike confidence.

Two things here present themselves for our comfort and blessing—1st, that Christ is gone into heaven itself by His own blood; and, 2ndly, that we have in consequence liberty to be at all times within the veil, where He is. As to Christ being there, it shews that His purpose in suffering for our sins was to bring us to God, and that His being there is the clearest proof of our title to be there also; for while the sacrifice of Christ has for ever settled every question as to our guilt and sin, yet it is *in Him* who is now in the glory that “God has given to us eternal life,” and that we are “made the righteousness of God.” When we, therefore, now look at the Lord Jesus in heaven we can say, He is my life, my righteousness, and my peace! Again, Jesus being now there in greatest possible nearness and acceptance, shews that our nearness and acceptance are the same, for we are in Him; and thus in Him by His blood, we are made nigh, accepted, and blessed. So perfectly has divine grace given us acceptance in Him, that we are taught that “As he is, so are we in this world.” The sprinkling of blood *upon* and

before the mercy-seat surely speaks to us of sins cleansed, peace made, righteousness established, and God satisfied. Yea, God is so satisfied with that blood, that He can say to us, "Come boldly;" while our eye resting on the blood seven times sprinkled before the mercy-seat, we "enter in," and "draw near," having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience. Thus we find our hiding-place and true ground of communion and worship to be inside the veil. We adore that love that has brought us there, and redeemed us not only by blood, but by that mighty power which was *to usward*, when He raised up Christ from the dead. All is peace and favour and blessing to us there, and surely "this is the true grace of God in which we stand." The circle of grace is here seen to be complete. It begins in God sending forth His Son, made of a woman, and found here in the likeness of sinful flesh; then He lovingly went forth unto death, even the death of the cross. After lying in the sepulchre, He rose from the dead on the third day, triumphing over our enemies for us; thence He went back to the throne of God, a risen,

ascended Man, by His own blood. Thus, the veil having been rent by the sacrifice of Christ from top to bottom, we now by faith follow Him who has gone in there by His own blood. Those who do not know what it is to "enter into the holiest," may desire a little more light, and a little food, but those who know what it is to be inside the veil know what it is to have Christ Himself for their hearts' satisfaction and strength; and the difference is immense.

How marvellous is the grace of God in thus giving us standing and acceptance in Christ, as well as liberty to enter into the holiest at all times. And surely the practical question for each of our hearts is, Do I know what it is to be there? Do I enjoy the comfort and solemnity of thus being in the presence of God? Is it my habit thus to approach God? We cannot work ourselves into this by trying. It is not a question of effort, but of faith. No strugglings of nature can enable us to enjoy this blessed nearness to God. It is Christ our life being there, and His blood speaking for us there, that entitle us to be

there, and by faith we enter in. We believe in this triumphant work of Jesus, and draw near. O the blessedness of this nearness to God which He gives us! Do we know it? Do we enjoy being in this unclouded region of perfect love and peace? What worship springs up in our hearts when consciously there! To be thus in God's presence now by faith is surely to stand in liberty and the true ~~grace~~ of God.

“'Tis finished!—here our souls have rest,
His work can never fail;
By Him, our Sacrifice and Priest,
We pass within the veil.

“Within the holiest of all,
Cleansed by His precious blood;
Before the throne we prostrate fall,
And worship Thee, O God.”

Thus the application and enjoyment of the precious work of Jesus is *now* made known to *us* who compose the church of God. But what about the nation of Israel? How is it affected by the work of Christ for them? Surely as a people they are under divine government in displeasure,

and in blindness, both natural and judicial. Of course, if a Jew now receives the Lord Jesus as his Saviour, he is born of God, and a member of the body of Christ; he belongs to the church of God, and has liberty, like a believing Gentile, to enter into the holiest now by faith. But as we have said, Israel as a people are in blindness. The sacrifice of Christ was offered for them as for us on Calvary, and the blood has been sprinkled on the mercy-seat (set forth by the slain goat), but as yet they know it not. Well-nigh two thousand years have passed, and they are still in darkness. Nor will the scales fall from their eyes till He who has gone into heaven shall "*come out.*" Israel then, and not till then, will know that their sins are taken away. "There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is my covenant with them when *I shall take away their sins.*" (Rom. xi. 26.) So we find that after Aaron had by himself gone in, and had offered sacrifice not only for his "household," but for "all the congregation of Israel," that he *comes out*, and then

goes out unto the altar, and sprinkles it with the blood, reconciling it, as he had previously done for the holy place and tabernacle of congregation, *because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel.* (Vers. 16-18.) And so when the Lord Jesus comes out from inside the veil, where He now is, the children of Israel will know that the things on earth have been reconciled, and all their transgressions taken away. The live goat being brought out (observe, this is after Aaron comes out from the holy place), he puts his hands upon its head, and “confesses on him *all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins*, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send them away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness. And the goat shall bear upon him *all their iniquities* into a land not inhabited; and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.” (Vers. 21, 22.) *This* all the congregation of Israel saw, and knew, when they saw the goat led away, that by the “sin-offering” all their sins were thus removed from them; so, after the Lord Jesus comes out from heaven, and is mani-

fested in glory, and they *see Him whom they pierced*, then, and not till then, will they know that He was their sin-offering—that by His death and blood-shedding on Calvary their sins have been cleansed. Thus the “two goats” were needed for a sin-offering, to shew forth the double aspect of Christ’s work—one to satisfy God by bearing His judgment for sins, and the other to satisfy the people that their sins have been removed from them as far as the east is from the west. (Ps. ciii. 12.) As to fact, Christ died for that nation on Calvary; but eighteen hundred years have passed, and still, like Thomas, they will not believe till they *see*, whereas we, by the grace of God, have joy and peace on the principle of *faith*, without seeing. Believing as we do that the new and living way was consecrated for *us* through the veil, that is to say His flesh, we have liberty for present entrance into the holiest of all. This Israel, with all their blessings, will never know. Blessed as an earthly people wondrously as they will be, it will be in relation to God’s throne and sanctuary on earth, which is another reason for

the need of *two* goats for a sin-offering for them.

Without entering upon the various other details of this divinely-drawn picture, most interesting as they surely are, we would only now notice the two results of the accomplished work of Christ—remission of sins, and rest. As to the first, we read, "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." We have this now by faith in virtue of Christ's sacrifice, on the ground that He once suffered for our sins. But Israel as a nation will not know this, as we have noticed, till Christ comes out. In that day "the people shall be forgiven their iniquity." (Is. xxxiii. 24.) Rest is the other result, now *ours* by faith, with the expectation of entering bodily into that rest which remains for the people of God. When Israel know remission of sins, then they will enter into their millennial rest. We in our heavenly places enjoying everlasting and unbroken rest, through the accomplished work of Jesus, and Israel on earth all righteous, every

man sitting under his own vine and fig-tree, and the Messiah reigning before His ancients gloriously, when it will be said, "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the *earth*! who hast set thy glory above the *heavens*." All in heaven, and those who are blessed on earth, ascribing all their blessings to the precious death and blood-shedding of the Lamb of God.

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