

# THE ATONEMENT : When and where perfected.

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STOCKTON-ON-TEES :  
PRINTED BY HEAVISIDES & SON, FINKLE STREET.

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## The Atonement: when and where perfected.

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IN the gospel the supreme object presented to the eye of faith is the person of Christ. The look of faith is outwardly directed to the glory that shines in the face, in the person of Christ. In this day of grace, His resurrection from the dead and the power of God to save through Him, form the grand theme of evangelistic testimony. Souls are quickened and men are born anew by the "word of truth." If the uninspired words of men suggest what is found in scripture, they then become the means of communicating the "words" which "are spirit and are life" to the soul. But everywhere and always quickening is by the word of God. His word is directly the sole instrument, as the Holy Spirit is the sole agent in new birth. Forgiveness of sins, too, the full, free, and everlasting forgiveness of sins, is preached in Christ's name. Then we have justification and its consequent peace with God, founded upon the *work* of Christ and openly attested by His resurrection. But many in our own day are born of God who have no true sense of the forgiveness of their sins. Others who rejoice in the assurance of forgiveness, have yet no true enjoyment of peace with God. For the last named Christian blessing is possessed by those only whose consciences are enlightened, and by the word and Spirit of God instructed in the work of Christ for them. As they are begotten again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ and believe on (not *in*) Him to soul-salvation; so also, "through Him" they are "believers *in* God,

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which raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory; so that "their "faith and hope might be in God" (1 Pet. i. 3, 8, 9, 21, R.V.).

The importance of clear and scriptural teaching on the Atonement is thus made evident, and for this we have the instruction afforded by the types of the Old Testament, in addition to the light vouchsafed to us now in the Christian Revelation. To both then we may turn for the profit of our souls.

In the Levitical system we have the foreshadowings of God's great purpose of grace and redemption through Christ. Yet if we compare the two dispensations of law and grace, we see how largely contrast rather than analogy prevails.

The sacrificial blood sprinkled before God in the holiest on the day of Atonement, effected an outward purification of the people from their sins (Lev. xvi). In the consecration of the priests and in the cleansing of the leper it was sprinkled on the person (Ex. xxix. 21; Lev. xiv. 7). With the sacrificial ashes of a sin offering the ceremonially defiled were sprinkled for their cleansing (Num. xix. 17). But whatever the mode of dealing with the sacrifice or with the blood, it availed only for an outward and formal sanctity, or "purity of the flesh," in contrast with what is inward and spiritual, the purity that pertains to a purged conscience.

The repetition of sacrifices under the law bore constant witness to their insufficiency to "take away sins" and thus to cleanse and perfect the conscience. The "one offering" of Christ transcends in its efficacy, secures everlasting redemption, and effectually purges the

conscience from sins. The conscience of the worshipper is thus freed, or "purified" from all obligation to offer the legal offerings which, through the efficacy of Christ's blood, have *now* become "dead works" and ineffectual to give even an outward sanctification (Heb. ix. 14).

The sacrifice of Christ is necessarily associated with His priestly service. He is "come, a high priest of the good things to come" (11). His coming to accomplish a work is not in question, but His "having come" as identified with a new and heavenly order of things, and being high priest of the good things promised, the blessings that were to be brought in, with and by Him.

His priesthood is distinguished and characterized by (or through) the "greater and more perfect tabernacle" in contrast with that which was "made with hands," made "of this creation" or material world. His entrance into the holiest is also distinguished and characterized by His own blood in contrast with the blood of goats and calves through which Aaron entered (12). Then in verse 14 His blood is contrasted in its *worth* with the blood of bulls and goats. The constant renewal of the legal offerings proved their temporary character and the value attached to them had passed away. But Christ's offering conjoined to an everlasting spirit, by which its *abiding* value is distinguished and characterized in contrast with the Jewish offerings which have become *dead* works. From these the worshipper is now purified and practically sanctified to serve (or "worship") the living God.

On the day of Atonement in Israel the high

priest, and he only, was appointed to do all the service connected with the sanctuary. With marked transition from the frequent and almost constant expression "Aaron and his sons" in the first fifteen chapters of Leviticus, Aaron alone in the sixteenth is named for the work. Nor was any man (i.e. priest) permitted to be in the sanctuary when he went in, or until he came out.

In the antitype, also, One Person accomplished the whole work by which Atonement was made. He became the substitutionary victim before and when He died. He became the propitiating priest after He died. To be the victim, "He offered Himself without blemish unto God" at the altar (ix. 14), and there, in the place of sacrifice, in perfect obedience to the will of His Father, laid down His life, that is, surrendered Himself to the enmity and will of man, that man might work out to the utmost the evil of his heart against Him. As the victim, too, He bore the sorrow and sufferings of the cross; atoningly and unutterably "suffered for sins," and was forsaken of God. All this was substitutionary and accomplished here in this world when He delivered up His spirit to the Father, when He died and before the holiest came into being. The instant He died, the holiest was formed—formed by His work and therefore by Him (viii. 2).—and His perfected "one offering" represented by the blood, was before God therein. It was in the holiest to make propitiation, to complete the work of Atonement before God. But this was the Lord's work as high priest, and identified with entrance into the holiest (ix. 25). It was the offering *up* "once for all"

of His "one sacrifice," that is, of Himself the slain victim, represented by the blood. For if we adhere strictly to inspired terms, we must say that in the work of Atonement offering "up," with which is identified the offering of the blood in the holiest, was exclusively the service of the high priest (vii. 27; ix. 7); and as the offering up by Him was the completion of His work, it must have been co-incident with the offering of the blood, that is, with entrance into the holiest (xiii. 11, R.V.).

To fit Himself perfectly to be the priestly offerer, it was necessary that He Who offered up as high priest, should first become the victim, that He should suffer and die and thus become the perfected offering to be offered up to God. He alone could be the efficacious offering. He alone could be the competent offerer to make the true propitiation (ii. 17). His entrance into the holiest by His own blood (that is, after death) was the one act of His priesthood by which His perfected offering was offered up to God. As the cloud of the "sweet incense beaten small" rose from the high priest's censer and covered the mercy-seat when he entered, so the infinite fragrance, perfection and acceptability of Christ's offering was presented before God when He entered the "true" holiest (ix. 12).

When the high priest in the type entered within the veil, he was in the presence of God and the blood was there. It was before God and sprinkled on the mercy-seat, or throne, to abide thereon before Him. Twice on the day of Atonement the high priest in Israel entered the holiest for a brief moment to do his appointed work and came out to re-enter another day. Christ entered the true holiest "once for

all" to become abidingly "the propitiation for our sins" (1 John ii. 2), having by His one entrance according to the virtue of His own blood obtained everlasting redemption.

His entrance was "once for all" because it accorded with the power of His own blood. No further entrance was necessary, He "having obtained everlasting redemption" in, or by, His one entrance. Such an entrance could not be repeated. It was essentially "once for all." His work as priest is in question, and not His work as victim. His work as the priestly offerer necessarily followed His work as the peerless and all-efficacious victim. He did not "come" as priest to die (Heb. ix. 2). He died as the victim and He became "a priest for ever" after He died. He is introduced as high priest "having come . . . by the greater and more perfect tabernacle" and by His entrance therein "having obtained everlasting redemption" (12). The words "His own blood" and "once for all" in the passage furnish its point and aim, which is to shew the contrast between Aaron's entering and the Lord's. If we say that as high priest the Lord entered after He obtained redemption, we divest the entrance of all motive and purpose, and of its true and unique character. He entered the holiest the instant after He died. At the same moment—the instant that followed His death He obtained redemption, His death having "taken place" for redemption before He obtained or "found" it (15).

By His bloodshedding and death, by the "decease" which He "accomplished" here in this world (Luke ix. 31), the Lord as a forerun-

ner entered the true holiest. He prepared the way into it for the people of God. In the earthly tabernacle there was no way "made manifest," no visible way into the inner sanctuary. In the true holies He opened and dedicated "a new and living way" into "that which is within the veil," the holiest. In the legal system the way of the entrance was "by the blood of goats and calves." The new way is "by the blood of Jesus" (Heb. x. 19). The way of approach for the high priest in Israel consisted in offerings that have ceased to be offered and have become dead works by reason of their inefficacy to make perfect them that drew nigh (vers. 1, 2). The "living way" abides. It lives in its availability towards all, a dedicated way by which we enter "through the veil." The way of the entrance is the blood. The entrance itself is the rent veil, the death of Christ. By the shedding of His blood the veil was rent, the holiest was opened. By entering the holiest as high priest He made propitiation for the sins of the people (ii. 17), and by propitiation He made\* the purgation of their sins (i. 3). Entering the holiest with hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and bodies washed with pure water (x. 22), the purged worshippers draw near to God therein. Their *hearts* in a spiritual sense are sprinkled with the blood for their cleansing from an evil (that is, unpurged) conscience, and their *bodies* are washed with water for their cleansing from outward defilement.

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\* The word in the original translated "made" signifies, also, that it was "made within His own person and work"—See J. N. D.'s New Testament. Doubtless *all* He did in obedience and devotedness to His Father's will, was done in the energy of the Holy Ghost.

They are cleansed by the blood from all sin (1 John i. 7) and made clean by the word from all defilement (John xv. 3). They have, therefore, "boldness to enter into the holiest," and having entered, they are exhorted to "draw near (to God) with a true heart in fulness of faith" (Heb. x. 22).

The people of God in pre-Christian times "before-hoped in Christ" (Eph. i. 12). But to them the fulness of the Christian hope was not nor could be proclaimed; yet as heirs of the promise they were assured of its fulfilment by the word and oath of God. We also have the same "strong encouragement" and now all is grounded on the work wrought out by Christ for us. To the shelter of His atoning work we "have fled for refuge" from coming judgment (Heb. x. 27). We have this hope, therefore, "as an anchor" securing our souls in peace and safety, and in this assurance we enter as cleansed worshippers into that which is within the veil, we enter the holiest (vi. 17-19).

The holiest is a spiritual sphere or place. It came into being by the death of Christ. It embraces at the same moment every conscience-purged worshipper on earth and the throne of God which is "far above all heavens." Before the death of Christ, before "His flesh" became the true rent veil, the holiest existed only in type. Nor was God's throne a throne of grace, nor could it be until Christ died.

The blood carried by the high priest into the holiest was sprinkled on the mercy-seat which, with the ark, represented God's throne. In the type it was thus ceremonially vindicated and also identified with the sacrifice. The Lord's

entrance into the true holiest according to the everlasting efficacy of His own blood vindicated the throne on high and identified it with His sacrifice. Thenceforth it became the true propitiatory or place of propitiation. Representatively Christ Himself is both propitiatory and propitiation (Rom. iii. 25; 1 John ii. 2). And what is He not to His own? But the actual *place* where propitiation was made and the Atonement perfected is before the throne in the holiest and the throne itself is the true mercy-seat or propitiatory in virtue of the Lord's entrance into the holiest as the priestly representative of His own sacrificial work.

The purged worshippers draw near *in*, not *into*, the holiest. They draw near as "having," not *to have*, their "hearts purged from an evil conscience." The exhortation to draw near (to God) with a true heart is not addressed to those who are without, but to those who are within, whose "boldness for entering" is evidenced by their having entered through faith. Nor would such "boldness" comport with an exhortation to enter.

God's throne is now in the holiest and they who draw near are within the holiest. They draw near, not to the holiest, but to the throne (Heb. iv. 16; vii. 19, 25). No unpurged worshipper is within and no purged one is without; and if "once purged," he enters within the veil and is always there as having "no more conscience of sins" (x. 2). For he who enters by "the new and living way" is cleansed as he enters and draws near as one who, as to the conscience, is "perfected for ever" (14).

The blood was not sprinkled on the mercy-

seat to make Atonement for it and for its cleansing, but to identify it with the death of the victim or sacrifice and to abide before God as the holy ground on which He could dwell in the midst of His people and act in grace towards them. As God's throne dwelling in the midst of an unclean people, it was vindicated and its holiness was maintained by the blood which was ceremonially applied to it by sprinkling.

As the ordained means of approach to God and yet as defiled by being in the midst of an unclean people, the cleansing by Atonement of the holy place, of the tent of meeting and of the altar of incense became necessary because of their nearness to the throne. This cleansing was necessary in the sanctuary which was of this world (ix. 1), because of its relation to the people amongst whom it was set up. In the heavenly sanctuary we find no such relation or analogy to the people for whom it is formed. For into it no priest enters who needs, as the high priest in the type, "for himself, to offer for sins" (v. 3; ix. 7), nor one whose offering cannot, as touching the conscience, make perfect him who enters (ix. 9).

To the "better hope" now brought in, that is, to Christianity in contrast with Judaism, pertains "the greater and more perfect tabernacle" associated with the priesthood of Christ. As "minister of the sanctuary" He entered into it "as a forerunner" to make propitiation by His blood and thus to prepare a way into it for the people of God. The "greater" tabernacle of the new and heavenly order contrasts with that which is of the old and earthly order. The material structure was built to set forth in type

the true and spiritual one which the Lord pitched, not man (viii. 2). The rending of the temple veil marked the moment when the anti-type superseded the type. When the "very image" came into being and subsisted spiritually, the material "shadow" passed away.

The law made nothing perfect, or complete. In view of this "the better hope" is brought in which purifies the conscience and enables the worshipper to "draw near with boldness to the throne of grace," to God's throne in the holiest (iv. 16). In thus drawing near to the throne they draw near to God (vii. 19, 25). With boldness they enter the holiest through "the blood of Jesus" (x. 19). They enter as purged worshippers through the *work* of Christ. Then as purged they have boldness to draw near to God through the *present priesthood* of Christ, "*through Him*" who as high priest represents them before the face of God (ix. 24).

The exhortation to draw near "with boldness" and "with a true heart" is based on their having a great high priest Who has passed through the heavens and Who, exalted on high, is over the "house," that is, people of God (iv. 14, 16; x. 21, 22). They enter the holiest in faith, in a spiritual and not in any material sense. Through their great high priest they draw near to the throne on high. In the holiest they are before God in all the perfectness of the Lord's perfected Atonement for them, even whilst treading the desert sands, and their drawing near to God, to His throne in the heavens, is by the priesthood of Christ, is wholly representational in character. It is a drawing near *in faith*, it is constant and abiding.

The priesthood of Christ is "for a continuance" (v. 6; vi. 20; vii. 17), yet not for eternity. When His propitiatory work was done. He "sat down in perpetuity," or "for a continuance" (x. 12). His intercessory work is continued "before the face of God," that is, in His immediate presence (ix. 24). In this service of Christ there is no intermission, nor can there be until the present subjects of His priestly grace are where He now is "in heaven itself." The exercise of His priesthood for them before God will then of necessity cease. Meanwhile as their high priest He representatively appears before the face of God for them and in the knowledge of His priestly sympathy and power they approach with "boldness," that is, with assured confidence to God's throne of grace on high to *receive* mercy and *find* grace for seasonable help (iv. 14, 16).

As common worshippers now the people of God enter the holiest (iii. 1; iv. 16; x. 19). But their approach to God and to His throne in the heavens is alone realized in and by the presence of their great high priest before Him (21). They are not exhorted as if unacquainted or unfamiliar with their high privilege of approach to God, but to draw near after another manner—to draw near in the sense of their perfect fitness to be represented before Him. Their "great high priest" is "Jesus, the Son of God" (iv. 14), Who, as the purger of their sins, is seated in the heavens. For by "such an high priest" (vii. 26; viii. 1) are they now represented before God, and they are invited to draw near to Him in the believing apprehension of this great truth. Hence therefore, drawing

near is by the priesthood of Christ and with us wholly an action of faith, as also, to draw or "shrink" back, is of unbelief (x. 39). It does not consist in worship and other spiritual exercises, though necessarily associated with them. But if we confuse the *truth* with its formative *effect* on Christian character and conduct, we weaken, if we do not lose the truth and its effect.

No other than cleansed worshippers are or could be represented by Him Who is "holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (vii. 26). Essentially, "He is before all things" (Col. i. 17), "whether thrones, dominions, principalities or powers" (16). Positionally and incarnate, He was "made a little lower than the angels." He is now gone up on high and though we see not all things put under Him, we see Him crowned in the highest and prospectively all things subjected to Him (Heb. ii. 7-9).

Under the law we must distinguish between the blood carried by the high priest into the holiest to make Atonement for the people, and "the blood of the covenant" sprinkled upon them as a sign and to witness their acceptance of that which its breach would entail upon themselves. With the blood "the book itself and all the people" were sprinkled, not to cleanse them from sin or defilement, but as the seal of the covenant to witness that the penalty of death would follow its violation. In this manner the covenant of law was dedicated with the blood and to speak of the penalty that would follow their breach of it, and not of the cleansing nor of the remission (or forgiveness)

of sins. In no way, not even typically, was it the blood of atonement (ix. 18-20). Doubtless, the water, scarlet wool and hyssop each had its own voice in the solemnities of the dedicatory service, and the blood was the blood of "burnt offerings" and "peace offerings" offered on that occasion (Ex. xxiv. 5). But these were all in relation to the *dedication* of the covenant and not to the people themselves. For the covenant was not "dedicated without blood" (Heb. ix. 18).

Believers now, in contrast, are *themselves* dedicated, being sanctified by the Spirit "unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. i. 2). In a true and spiritual sense His blood is upon them to speak, not of the penalty of sin and disobedience, but of mercy and forgiveness, of justification and peace with God through its atoning virtues. They are not only cleansed by Atonement, they are dedicated by the blood of Christ "to serve the living God" (Heb. ix. 14).

For the tabernacle itself and for all the vessels of the ministry dedicated to its "ordinances of divine service," Atonement, that is, a propitiatory covering was made. They were cleansed by Atonement. By the blood sprinkled upon them they were cleansed and dedicated to the "divine service." Yet if even only ceremonial in character it must be effected by blood. For this "the blood of calves and goats" was "necessary." The tabernacle and its vessels were not in themselves unholy nor unclean, but for their dedication to the holy service in which man had to do with God, cleansing by Atonement was required. In this sense alone "the heaven-

ly things themselves" are "cleansed" and with the blood of a better character of sacrifices than of bulls and of goats (23). For the ceremonial law everywhere bears witness that for man, Atonement is the only ground of approach to, and communion with God.

The "heavenly things" are those which, in the antitype, correspond to the tabernacle and its vessels in the type. These (the types) were cleansed, not by the high priest, but by the mediator, once only and for their dedication to the appointed service (19-23).

The holiest was reserved for the exclusive service of the high priest on the day of Atonement, to make Atonement therein before God. Year by year it was atoned for, and as often as he entered into it on that day. For the holy place, for the tent of meeting, and for the altar, no less than for the high priest himself, for his house and for the people, continual cleansing by Atonement was required. Such cleansing was ceremonial only. It perfected nothing. It was the taking away of sins in figure only, not in truth; yet its constant repetition was required to vindicate, in an outward manner, God's claims in respect of sin and in order that the tabernacle as His dwelling might be holily maintained in the midst of His people.

But Christ is not only "minister," that is, high priest of the sanctuary (or holies), He is also mediator of the new covenant that is to be made with the house of Israel in a day to come. As the first covenant was not made without blood, so now, His blood has been shed to make good the terms of the new covenant, and though it is not yet made, He (the mediator)

has dedicated the heavenly things by His own blood.

As God's dwelling the tabernacle was the *place* of approach to Him for His people. It was designed to set forth, not what they were to Him as worshippers, but what He could be to them on the ground of sacrifice. Its ordinances were the appointed *means* of approach to Him and "the vessels of the ministry" (or service) were the things required for their due observance.

The things referred to as "in the heavens" were the things seen "in the mount" (viii. 5), and the tabernacle and its vessels were "copies" of those things (ix. 23). Both were types and pointed onward to "the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this (material) creation" (ii), but of another and spiritual order, set up by the Lord (viii. 2) and founded upon His sacrificial and atoning work. The vessels of the service typify spiritual blessings known to faith now and these also rest on the same foundation.

Christian worshippers now "have an altar," a place of sacrifice whence they derive spiritual food (xiii. 10) and priestly privileges are theirs far beyond those of Aaron's house. For them everything is centred in Christ. In Him and in His accepted sacrifice they have the "very image," the substance of the good things foreshadowed by the law (x. 1, 12, 14). By Him, "therefore," they are exhorted to "offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to His name" (xiii. 15).