

Atonement and the Holy of Holies

An unusual Event, occurring in the afternoon of the day Christ Died, poses a greater Significance than it is Usually Given. Harking back to the time of Abraham, THE Focal Point of the Ongoing Covenant is Developed to its Fullest Degree as the Veil in the Temple was torn “from above”!

© Rich Traver, 81520-1411, 9-22-07 [# 123] DAT Stte # 139

It isn't difficult to understand that we, with our non-Jewish backgrounds, could easily overlook the subtleties contained within the New Testament narratives. The early Church would likely have recognized them, having been of Jewish persuasion for most of that first generation.

Three Hours of Darkness

It is often difficult to sever the full meaning of the Day of Atonement from the event of Christ's sacrifice as 'the Lamb of God', our Passover, and thus we find the accounts of Christ's death and the major New Testament narrative regarding this observance to be heavily intermingled with the ceremonial functions performed annually on the Day of Atonement. Not surprisingly, the two observances are seen illustrating a singular achievement.

In Matthew 27:45, we read, *“Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.”* That would correspond to our hours of noon to three p.m. It would be easy to accept the simple fact of a period of unusual darkness as an unrelated event, but if we're familiar with the Abrahamic Covenant and the Temple Services, we should realize this was not an event without significance. Especially when realizing this was **the True** 'Atoning Sacrifice', without which there is no remission of sins on any account!

Two important parallels exist, which we should ponder with regard to these three hours of darkness. First, in late afternoon of the fourteenth day of the first month, Abraham, during the occasion of the Maledictory Oath, by which Elohim formally ratified His Promise to Abraham, is described as experiencing a powerful premonition of what Genesis describes as *'a horror of great darkness'*. This vivid premonition happens to have occurred on the same calendar date and the same time of day

as did the impending death of the Lamb of God on the cross: the afternoon of the fourteenth day of the first month. We can know that from Exodus 12:40-42, which explains that the Exodus began on the 430th anniversary of the Promise made to Abraham. Numbers 33:3 states that the date was the fifteenth day of the first month, on the morrow after the Passover. So the Maledictory Oath and its Divine procession is identified as having occurred after dark, as the **fifteenth** day had begun.

Another parallel we should consider is that not only would these same three hours of darkness have put a **total hold** on all ceremonial activities that day, but also that these are the same hours corresponding to the hours in which the High Priest would have served in the Temple on the Day of Atonement, that **only** day of the year when the Holy of Holies was entered. The High Priest entered into that Most Holy Place, within the veil, only on the Day of Atonement, these four times between noon and mid afternoon.¹

The First: He brought in the incense

The Second: Sprinkled blood of **bull**

The Third: Sprinkled the blood of the **goat**

The Fourth: Retrieved censer & incense dish

Between each of these enterings-in, the High Priest performed ritual washings of his own body before donning his priestly apparel. This will gain in significance as we read the Atonement narrative.

¹ Rabbi Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple, Its Ministry & Services*, Hendrickson Publishers, Updated Edition, June, 1998, p. 250-261,. (The Jewish Rabbi Edersheim converted to Christianity in the late 1800's, and is regarded as one of the leading authorities on doctrines and practices of Judaism in the early Christian era.)

The Holy of Holies was an inner chamber without natural light, separated from the Sanctuary by a heavy veil, and the High Priest worked in complete darkness, except for a lamp which he brought with him. As Christ's atoning sacrifice was being made, the illustration of Him entering into a corresponding darkness is not easily missed. A darkness incorporating that 'horror of great darkness' we see in Genesis 15, of impending death, the sacrifice of Himself in order to make the Atonement.

Also, the High Priest was prohibited from partaking of any intoxicating beverage prior to performing his service, which is another detail that casts light on Christ's response to the offer of potentially pain-dulling 'vinegar' or bitter wine on the cross. (Matt. 27:34 & compare John 19:28-30)

The Veil is Torn

But with the True Atonement accomplished, the veil on earth was **no longer necessary**. Its tearing, as a result of the earthquake, occurring at the time of Christ's decease, illustrated that a significant change had taken place with regard to our being able to access God's Mercy Seat. Not the physical representation, but the actual one, in Heaven! In practical fact, this tearing of the thick veil, 'from top to bottom', (or as some translations render it, 'from above'), rendered the Temple area suddenly off limits, stopping all further sacrificing or ceremonial performance then and there! The afternoon sacrifice, normally performed later in the afternoon, on a Passover day was moved earlier to accommodate the start of Passover sacrificing in mid-afternoon. It and the traditional Passover observance that year were promptly suspended! What to do with all those sheep!?

With these factors in mind, we can proceed to the Atonement Narrative, found in chapters 6 thru 10 of the book of Hebrews. As we'll see, veiled references to the Passover and its resultant Atoning Sacrifice are heavily intertwined.

The Atonement Narrative

Hebrews 6:13 *"For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself,*

14: Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.

15: And so, after he had patiently endured, he

obtained the promise.

16: For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.

*17: Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by **an oath**:*

18: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

*19: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and **which entereth into that within the veil**;*

*20: Whither the **forerunner** ² is for us **entered**, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.* (This order preceded and is higher than the Levitical priesthood.)

It's interesting that the apostle begins this subject with the 'immutable' Covenant made with Abraham and the Promise made that 'selfsame' evening. An event which also foreshadowed those **four distinct eras** in which God is dealing with humanity from Abraham's time to the end of the ages as seen in the **four types of sacrifices** laid out beside the path through which representations of the two Divine God Beings passed in the darkness of the fifteenth. ³

Heb. 7:15 *"And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest, (not a Levite)*

16: Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.

17: For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. (In Psalm 110:4)

*24: But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an **unchangeable priesthood**.*

*25: Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth **to make intercession** for them.*

*26: For such an **high priest** became us, who is holy,*

² The choice of the word: *forerunner*, suggests others are to run the same course thereafter, even entering the Holy place.

³ See my article "**The Abrahamic Covenant**" for further explanations of this noteworthy occasion. Those four sacrificial animals were: the **heifer** (representing the patriarchal era) the **she goat**, (representing the Old Covenant era), the **male sheep**, (representing the Christian era) and the **two birds**, (representing both types of beings God will be working with by His Spirit during the Millennial Age, those converted and those in process of being converted).

harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;
27: Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.

OUR High Priest

Hebrews 8:1 “Now of the things which we have spoken **this is the sum:** We have such an **high priest**, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;

2: A **minister of the sanctuary**, and of the **true** tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.
3: For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.
4: For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law:
5: Who serve unto the **example and shadow** of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.
6: But now hath he obtained **a more excellent ministry**, by how much also he is the **mediator of a better covenant**, which was established upon **better promises**.

Hebrews 9:1 “Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.

2: For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary.
3: And **after the second veil**, the tabernacle which is called **the Holiest of all**;
4: Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant;
5: And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing **the mercyseat**; of which we cannot now speak particularly.
6: Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always (daily) into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God.
7: **But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood**, which he

offered for himself, and for the errors of the people:
8: *The Holy Ghost* this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing:
9: Which was **a figure for the time then present**, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that **could not make him that did the service perfect**, as pertaining to the **conscience**;

(The time then present being the ‘Old Covenant’ era, represented by the she goat sacrifice of Genesis 15:9, itself succeeding the Patriarchal era, represented by the bull.)

10: Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until **the time of reformation**. (The new form being that of the male lamb, representing the Christian era.)

11: *But Christ* being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;

12: Neither by the blood of **goats and calves**, but by **his own blood** he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

(We should note the several times here ‘*the blood of bulls and goats*’ is mentioned. Never stating the blood of lambs, which is representative of the **next** era. It was the blood of bulls and goats that was offered in the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement. The blood of the Lamb wouldn’t be employed in that service until the new third era.)

13: For **if** the blood of **bulls and of goats**, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:

14: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

15: And for this cause he is the **mediator** of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are **called** might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

24: For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the **figures** of the true; but **into heaven itself**, now to appear in the presence of God for us:

Hebrews 10:4 “ *For it is **not possible** that the blood of **bulls and of goats** should take away sins.*
5: *Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me:*

6: *In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure.*

7: *Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) **to do thy will**, O God.*

8: *Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law;*

9: *Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.*

He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.

10: By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

11: *And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes (regularly) the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:*

12: *But this man, after he had offered **one sacrifice for sins for ever**, sat down on the right hand of God;* (Referencing Ps. 110:1)

13: *From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.*

14: *For by **one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.***

15: *Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before,*

16: ***This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;*** (Hebrews 8:10 quoting Jeremiah 31:31)

17: *And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.*

18: *Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.*

19: Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, (We who are thus sanctified now have direct access into the heavenly Holy of Holies.)

20: *By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, **through the veil**, that is to say, his flesh;*

21: *And having **an high priest over the house of God;***

22: *Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our **hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.***

(The symbology in this verse reflecting on the ritual sprinkling and washings performed by the High Priests prior to his Holy of Holies services. Leviticus 16:4 & 24)

23: *Let us **hold fast** the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)*

24: *And let us consider one another to **provoke unto love and to good works:***

25: ***Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.***

Now, Paul's first summation in Hebrews 8:1, that we have a perpetual High Priest, serving in the True Holy of Holies, offering the True Sacrifice, needs to expand to point out that as a result of this effective Sacrifice, we have now moved into a New Covenant era. – An era which corresponds to that third offering in the Abrahamic progression, that of the male lamb. – The era beyond that one represented by the female goat. (Unrepentant Israel)

Atonement Available

Christ's Paschal Sacrifice accomplished the Atonement. Those previous physical offerings were not effective in producing remission of sins, but merely represented the ongoing need for an effective and perpetual offering.

The conclusion of this Atonement Narrative exhorts us to 'hold fast to the Faith in full assurance, to provoke the right responses in one another, and to not discontinue assembling together, especially as times become more difficult'.

But the key consideration is the fact that we are now authorized to, and emboldened to, ourselves enter into the Holy of Holies, approaching the Throne of Grace, but wholly on the basis of what Christ did and is doing for us, not anything we could do ourselves to effect remission of our sins.

We need to be constantly aware of where we enter into when we pray, coming before God's Throne of Grace. We recognize the future assignment of Saints to offices of Priests of God (Rev. 20:6), but we should appreciate the fact that our sanctification makes us priests serving on our own behalf under our High Priest even at this present time! This is the practical effect of the Atonement! **Ω**