

# **The Sanctuary**

## **Atonement: Purification Offering**

Lesson #5 for November 2, 2013

Scriptures: 2 Chronicles 33:10-13; 2 Samuel 14:1-20; Leviticus 4:27-31; 10:16-18; Jeremiah 17:1; Micah 7:18-20.

1. This lesson will focus on the purification offering also known as the sin offering which was an essential and central part of the ancient Jewish sanctuary service. As Seventh-day Adventists, we are unique in our understanding of the sanctuary doctrine. We believe that much of what was typified in the Old Testament under the sanctuary services is representative of what has happened or is happening in heaven right now.
2. Read 1 Peter 1:18-19. There is a great deal of focus on the handling of blood in this lesson. There are three different levels of sin. Our *Bible Study Guide* describes this whole process from the ancient sanctuary as a way for us to better understand God through the only true Sacrifice, Jesus Christ. Read Leviticus 12:1-8. We must recognize that the same kinds of offerings which were presented for dealing with sin were also presented for purification—for example after a woman gave birth. Why was that true? Surely, we do not believe that giving birth is equal to sinning! Is it that the whole idea was for cleansing?
3. Isaiah 59:2 clearly tells us that sin separates us from God. No doubt, every one of us could confirm this reality if we have had any experience in the Christian life at all. So, what are we supposed to learn about sin and about God and about reconciliation which is sometimes called at-one-ment? This lesson will focus on the implications primarily for the sinner himself—how to deal with past sins. But, what about the implications for our understanding of God?

There are basically three kinds of sin depicted in the Old Testament, each corresponding to the sinner's level of awareness while he or she committed the transgression: [1] inadvertent or unintentional sin, [2] deliberate or intentional sin, and [3] rebellious sin. The "purification offering" prescribed in Leviticus 4:1-5:13 applied to cases of unintentional sin, as well as some cases of deliberate sin (*Lev. 5:1*). While an offering was available for these first two categories, none is mentioned for rebellious sin, the most heinous kind. Rebellious sin was done "in the face" of God, with a high hand, and the rebel deserved nothing less than to be cut off (*Num. 15:29-31*). However, it seems that even in these cases, such as with Manasseh, God offered forgiveness (*see 2 Chron. 33:12,13*). (*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, for Sunday.) [Read Numbers 15:22-31 as well as 2 Chronicles 33:1-13. Wasn't Manasseh a very rebellious sinner for 50 years?]

4. How many of your sins are inadvertent or unintentional? How many are deliberate or intentional? Do you have any sins that are openly rebellious? How does this fit with 1 John 3:4 which says that sin is lawlessness or rebelliousness?
5. Read 2 Samuel 14:1-20. What is implied by 2 Samuel 14:9? Does this imply that if a judge declares a guilty person innocent, he takes the guilt of that person on himself? Would that damage the reputation of the judge? This raises a troubling question about God Himself!
6. The widely accepted theory of **forensic atonement** suggests that "justice" demands the death of the sinner. In that view, in order to save sinners, God the Father agreed to accept the death of His Son in payment of the price of sin and pronounced that justice was satisfied, thus removing the legal barrier so that He can accept sinners back again. Wouldn't a human judge be errant if He condemned the Innocent in order to free the guilty? As asked by the literary character Bozo/Boso in Anselm's (ca. 1033-1109) *Cur Deus Homo*: **If God could only save sinners by condemning the Innocent, is He truly omnipotent? If, on the other hand, He could, but is not willing to do so, how are we to think of Him as wise and just? What justice could there possibly be in accepting the death of the most innocent Man who ever lived in place of the guilty? No human legal system would accept that. So, how can God do such a thing?** And if this "legal" transaction makes it possible for God to save sinners because they are "covered with the righteousness of Christ," would that suggest that we are taken into heaven without God

the Father realizing that we are still sinners? Is that legal fiction? Are we guilty because of Adam and Eve's sins? Or, just separated from God because of those sins? (Romans 5:12)

7. Our *Bible Study Guide* suggests that sin cannot be just forgiven; it has to be transferred. Thus, it says God carries the guilt of sinners in order to declare them righteous. For us to be forgiven, God Himself must bear/carry our punishment. This is the legal reason why Christ had to die if we are to be saved. Does that logic make Jesus a sinner?
8. Read Zechariah 3:1-5. What do the filthy clothes that Joshua was wearing represent? Do they not represent the sins of the people? How can God just tell the angel to remove those clothes and replace them with clean white clothes and a clean linen turban?
9. Read Leviticus 4:27-31. Compare Leviticus 5:7-13. Notice that while the standard means for transferring sins to the sanctuary or to the priest involved a lot of handling of blood, it was also possible that the sacrifice that a person could bring was nothing more than fine flour—if he was poor. Does this mean that a bloodless atonement could work? Or, was it necessary for purification to be bloody? What are we supposed to learn from this model?
10. Note carefully the sequence of events: 1) The laying-on of hands and confession of sin; 2) The death of the animal; 3) The blood manipulation; 4) The burning of fat; and 5) The preparation and eating of the animal's flesh. Was the sinner's sin transferred to the animal before he took the animal's life? Or, only after the fat was burned and God smelled the "pleasing aroma"? There are reports suggesting that up to 2 million people went to Passover in the days of Jesus. If this elaborate ceremony was to take place for each person who wanted to confess his sins (remember that sins could only be confessed at the temple in Jerusalem), it would have been impossible to even come close to taking care of all those people. It is said that up to 10 people could bring a single animal for sacrifice. Did each put his hands on the animal at the same time? Did they confess their sins in unison? Did Jesus ever offer an offering for His "sins"? And when an offering was made on behalf of the whole congregation, who was allowed to put his hands on the head of the animal?
11. In a previous lesson, we discussed Leviticus 17:11 which says that "blood, which is life, takes away sins." (*GNB*) If we are to follow the symbolism, it would appear that the sins were transferred to the blood which was then sprinkled outside the holy place on the altar of burnt offering if for a common person or even a political leader. The blood was sprinkled on the altar of incense inside the holy place if it was for the sin of a priest or for the entire congregation. Is there some sense in which the sin was actually transferred to the blood? Or, was that only a symbol?

Next time you are tempted to sin, envision Jesus dying on the cross and see yourself putting your hands on His head and confessing your sins over Him. How might this concept, played out in your mind, help you to understand just what it cost in order to be forgiven? How could this idea help you to resist succumbing to that temptation? *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Monday, October 28. [Would that help us do what is right?]

12. Read Leviticus 6:27. In what way would a garment be defiled by having some blood splattered on it? Wouldn't that happen fairly frequently as people who were not familiar with cutting the throats of a lamb did so? Who had to purify those garments "in a holy place"?
13. How does God actually carry sin? Can sin be moved around? In the typical understanding of this service, are we to believe that a constant stream of sins is being transferred through Jesus to the heavenly sanctuary? And how does that relate to the plan of salvation? Read 1 Peter 1:22. Notice that purification comes only after obedience to the truth! Does that suggest that we are not truly forgiven until we love fellow believers with all our hearts?
14. After the blood had been handled, the meat had to be dealt with. Read Leviticus 6:24-30; 10:16-18. In cases where the blood was sprinkled only on the altar of burnt offering—for a common person or perhaps a political leader—then the priest must have properly prepared the meat and eaten at least a portion of it so that the sins would be transferred to himself. Then, symbolically, he would carry those sins into the sanctuary in his body.

What does it mean to carry sin? Read Exodus 34:7 and compare Leviticus 10:17. In the original language, both of these verses suggest that sin can be carried. Exodus 34 talks about God carrying sins. In Leviticus 10:17, the priest carried the sin. Without this special transfer, would the sin remain on the guilty party? (Leviticus 5:1) Do we understand this?

The blessing comes because of pardon; **pardon comes through faith** that the sin, confessed and repented of, is **borne** by the great Sin-bearer. Thus from Christ cometh all our blessings. His death is an atoning sacrifice for our sins. He is the great medium through whom we receive the mercy and favor of God. He, then, is indeed the Originator, the Author, as well as the Finisher, of our faith.—Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 9, p. 302.

15. It is interesting to note that this paragraph comes after discussing David's sin with Bathsheba, his confession of sin, and his repentance as he humbly asked God's forgiveness. Was that an unintentional sin, an intentional sin, or a rebellious sin?
16. Since pardon comes through faith/believing/trusting that the sin is born by the great Sin-bearer, what would happen if you were not sure? Does faith take the place of the animal sacrifice in our day? When was the last time you heard sin mentioned on national television?
17. The *Bible Study Guide* asks us to imagine ourselves standing before the judgment seat of God. After hearing Satan recount all of our sins—as much as he can remember—and then hearing God's response, would you be able to vote for yourself? On what basis could God justify you in that setting?
18. Read Micah 7:18-20. It is interesting to notice that Micah was reflecting some of the ideas from Exodus 34:6-7. Aren't you glad you worship a God like that?
19. But, earlier in his book in Micah 6:6-8, Micah made it very clear that it is not just sacrifices—even the sacrifice of one's own child or rivers of oil—that bring justification. We must change our behavior! We must come to be more like God by following the example of Jesus. We need to change our behavior.
20. Immediately following the book of Micah is the book of Nahum. Nahum talks about God's judgment on the wicked. Is it important to your understanding of God's character that He not only forgives and saves the repentant but also that He punishes the wicked? Do these two aspects of God's character seem contradictory to you? Is He both a Savior and a Judge? How does God punish the wicked?

As Christ at His ascension appeared in the presence of God to plead His blood in behalf of penitent believers, so the priest in the daily ministration sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice in the holy place in the sinner's behalf.

The blood of Christ, while it was to release the repentant sinner from the condemnation of the law, was not to cancel the sin; it would stand on record in the sanctuary until the final atonement; so in the type the blood of the sin offering removed the sin from the penitent, but it rested in the sanctuary until the Day of Atonement.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 357.

21. What is your understanding of how Christ pleads His blood in the presence of God? Does it help to read Daniel 7:9-13 and Zechariah 3:1-5? In light of all these passages, is there a pile of sins somewhere in heaven, sins waiting to be dealt with?
22. We all agree that Christ was innocent. And yet, we believe He died in the place of the guilty. Is that in any way fair? And more importantly, what does it say about God? Remember Bozo's question! (See #6 above in this handout)
23. In light of all this, is it clear in your mind why Jesus had to die? And specifically, how does the death of Christ almost 2000 years ago affect my sins committed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Let us review once again the steps in the sin offering:

The repentant sinner (1) brought his sin offering to the sanctuary, (2) laid his hand upon the innocent animal, and (3) killed it. The animal sacrifice (4) was eaten by the priest (for the commoner or ruler), or (5) its blood was carried inside the Holy

Place (for the priest or congregation). Thus (6), the sinner was cleansed from his sin, and (7) the sanctuary was defiled by the record of the sin. What does each of these steps prefigure in the antitype? *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, page 60.

24. After studying this lesson, do you think you could feel justified after having cut the throat of a lamb following confessing your sins over its head? Many of these ideas seem very strange to us living in our modern environment and culture. Were these symbols and types a way of trying to make the message of salvation clear to people who could think only in concrete terms? Did they have to visually see something happening before they could believe their sins were dealt with? Clearly, we do not think it is necessary to take the life of lambs in our day. So, what are the steps we need to go through to deal with our sins? Modified from comments in the *Adult Teachers Guide*, p. 62:

1) We must recognize our guilt. Leviticus 4:13,22,27. This implies that we recognize that we are legally guilty and that we acknowledge that guilt.

2) Christ takes our place. We repent of our sins, confessing them to God.

By the act of bringing the offering to the sanctuary, the individual confessed himself a sinner, deserving the wrath of God, and signified his repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, whose blood would remove the guilt of the transgressor.—Ellen G. White, in *Signs of the Times*, July 15, 1880.

3) In the typical service, the sinner would lay his hands on the head of the sacrifice. Can we symbolically place our hands on the head of Christ?

4) In type, the animal was then sacrificed. In our Christian era, we believe that our sins ultimately led to the death of Jesus Christ the Lamb of God. (Isaiah 53:4-6; Romans 4:25; 1 Corinthians 15:3) It is very important to notice that Isaiah 53:4 suggests that it was our sins that caused His punishment and not God. As we suggested earlier, the death of Christ was to teach us about the deadliness of sin. Was that the lesson they were supposed to learn from the ancient sanctuary services in the desert?

5) There was a difference in what happened next based on whether or not the sin was for the priest or congregation rather than for a ruler or common person. In the case of the priesthood or the congregation, the blood had to be carried inside the holy place and sprinkled on the altar of incense. In the case of an individual—ruler or common person—the blood was sprinkled on the horns of the altar of burnt offering. Then, the fat from the animal had to be burned on the altar of burnt offering. After burning the fat, if this offering was for a priest/congregation, the remainder of the animal had to be carried outside of the camp and burned. (Leviticus 4:12,21) If the offering was for the sin of a ruler or other individual, the priest was to eat a portion of the meat of the sin/purification offering. (Leviticus 6:25-30) In both cases, the sin was carried, in type, into the sanctuary.

25. Does that imply that if we do not go through exactly the right steps, God will not forgive us?
26. As we will see in future lessons, Jesus became not only the Lamb but also the Priest-Mediator. (John 1:29; Hebrews 8:1-2) Because He had no sin in Himself, He could do both.
27. If all of this takes place not only typically but antitypically and if the sins of all the repentant are transferred to Christ, how would you understand the following statement from Ellen White?

We are not to be anxious about what Christ and God think of us, but about what God thinks of Christ, our Substitute. (*Selected Messages*, book 2, pp. 32,33)

28. In this passage Ellen White was responding to a group of people in Indiana who believed that they could become “holy flesh.” Has this lesson helped you to understand the process of dealing with sins? Or, are you more confused than ever?

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