

“Watchman, what of the night ?”

► THIS ISSUE'S READING

The Sanctuary Truth - Part 3 pg. 2

“The hour has come, the hour is striking, and striking at you, the hour and the end!”
Ezekiel 7:6

Editor's Preface

Beginning with this issue of our ongoing presentation entitled "The Sanctuary Truth", we will start reprinting and re-examining some of the pertinent material on the subject written by Elder William H. Grotheer. For many years, Elder Grotheer's extensive study and research produced a voluminous amount of information about the biblical teaching on the sanctuary. In this installment, we are going to take a look at one of his expositions from a 1998 study on The Eternal Verities entitled "The Atonement".¹

Throughout the Gospel Era, the near unanimous stance within Christianity equated the atonement solely with the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross at Calvary. In contrast, shortly after the Great Disappointment in 1844, the Seventh-day Adventist Movement developed and taught a broader understanding of the atonement. Based upon an extensive study of sanctuary typology and related theology, the atonement was perceived as encompassing more than Christ's earthly redemptive work, culminating in His death. Rather, it involved *all* His salvific work including His subsequent heavenly high priestly ministry. This wider view of the atonement revealed its dual nature:

1. What *was* accomplished by Christ at His first advent.
2. What *is* (and ultimately *will be*) accomplished by Christ in heaven.



Belief in a dual atonement was the basic position held by Seventh-day Adventists up to 1957 when, in the book Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions On Doctrine, it was openly repudiated (see pg. 390).² Consequently, in the debate and confusion which ensued among us, our response has tended toward two opposite extremes:

1. The abandonment altogether of our sanctuary doctrine - which is the foundation that the teaching on the dual atonement (as well as our entire theological structure) is built upon.

2. The retaining of every aspect of our traditional interpretation of the sanctuary message irrespective of whether or not all aspects of it can be genuinely verified by the increasing (progressive) light of Bible truth.

The backlash created by the growing acceptance of either of these opposing and exaggerated approaches has multiplied heresy, fanaticism, hostility, disunity, and even - perhaps worst of all - widespread apathy (the 'middle ground' for many in the absence of balanced reason). We believe this continuing state of affairs within the Adventist community is an additional reason warranting the re-presentation of Elder Grotheer's work. The commentary interspersed throughout his text is supplied by the present editor and italicized within brackets. Its primary purpose is for further emphasis and consideration of certain salient points. Occasionally, minor revisions and updates may also be presented as deemed necessary. ❖

THE SANCTUARY TRUTH

Part 3 : The Atonement - # 1

Reduced to its simplest terms, the Atonement was stated by the Angel Gabriel in his announcement to Joseph regarding the name by which the son of Mary was to be called - "Thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1: 21). Sin had separated man from God (Isaiah 59: 1-2). Separation from sin restores at-one-ment with God. In a sense, "sin" is a compound word involving not only the acts, but the cause for the acts. Full at-one-ment cannot be realized until both of these two aspects of sin are abrogated.

[Does this not reveal that a dual objective is involved in order to bring about the at-one-ment? As shall be noted later on, the services performed in the earthly sanctuary by the Levitical priests ("Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things," - Hebrews 8: 5), accomplished in type this dual aspect of the atonement through the daily and yearly ministrations.]

The atonement is God's initiative. The Gospel of Matthew indicates that the coming of Jesus was in fulfilment of the prophetic promise to Isaiah, that a virgin would conceive and bear a son whose name would be called "Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Isaiah 1: 23). God became us so that in Him by becoming us could be restored the lost oneness caused by sin. This means that Jesus is the sole source by which the atone-

ment was and is to be accomplished. He restored in Himself the lost oneness with God, and by His mediation, He will return "His people" to their lost oneness with God.

[Bible students and scholars have long expounded upon a biblical principle regarding the first advent of Christ. With the coming of Jesus, the promises of God formerly prophesied about the new era the Messiah would usher in, are now in a certain sense here. At the same time however, they are in a certain sense not yet here. This "here" and "not yet" recognition is generally understood as "complete" now in Christ by faith and hope, but also as awaiting "full and total completion" in the future through Christ when faith and hope become empirical reality at His return. This dual tension that now exists between the first and second advents of Christ is the nature of the situation resulting from what theologians refer to as the "Christ Event." Therefore, "Jesus ... the sole source by which the atonement was ... accomplished" (it's "here"), is also "the sole source by which the atonement ... is to be accomplished" (it's "not yet"). Failure to acknowledge and soundly apply this particular hermeneutic in biblical exegesis is a major problem underlying much of the misinterpretation and misunderstanding of numerous scriptural passages.]

In Hebrews, Jesus is declared to be a "surety of a better covenant" (Hebrews 7: 22). The word translated "surety," (Gr. *egguos*) is used only this one time in the

New Testament. However, in legal and other documents of the period the word appears frequently. Moulton & Milligan in their reference work, The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament, cite various incidents of its use. For example - "The father consents to the marriage and is surety for the payment of the aforesaid dowry." Again - "I hold your surety until you pay me the value of the claims" (pg. 179). The surety of Jesus under this better covenant, "established upon better promises" (Hebrews 8: 6), is His own word and accomplishment both as priest and sacrifice.

This unique word usage in Hebrews suggests another covenant and another surety. At Mount Sinai a covenant was confirmed with Israel on the promises of the people to perform it. At the command of God, Moses read to the whole congregation "the judgments" which God gave to him (Exodus 21: 1 - 23: 33). In this covenant, there was no provision for mercy. It was obey:live; disobey:die (Ibid. 23: 20-21). After hearing read to them this book of the covenant, "All the people answered with one voice and said, All the words which the Lord hath said will we do" (Ibid. 24: 3). It lasted less than forty days.

[The entering into covenant by God with the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai includes much detail that is often overlooked or not given proper consideration. As stated, "there was no provision for mercy" in the original covenant ratified (put into effect) with God and Israel before the apostasy on

their behalf involving the worship of "the golden calf god of the Egyptians." Fidelity to the true God and His law was Israel's obligation under their part of the covenant - which was basically a formal and legally binding agreement between the two parties. When Israel apostatized shortly after its ratification, they broke this covenant thereby effectively nullifying all the provisions stated in the agreement. By violating their obligation to God, God was no longer under any obligation to fulfill the provisions to Israel that was His part of the agreement. This, essentially, voided that covenant. By stepping into the breach caused by Israel's sin, Moses' offering of his life in exchange for Israel's life and forgiveness, resulted in the making of another covenant by God with Moses and with Israel. And though all these arrangements are generally referred to as the "first" or "old" covenant, careful consideration must be given to distinctions in the details revealed herein.]

While Moses was on Mount Sinai receiving from God the Ten Commandments engraved in stone, as well as instructions for the building of the sanctuary, the congregation of Israel pressed Aaron to make the golden calf god of the Egyptians, and worship it as the one who had brought them forth from Egypt (Exodus 32: 1-7). Coming down from the mount and seeing the naked revelry of the people before the golden calf, Moses sensed the enormity and significance of the rebellion. Israel was a lost cause. Into the breach, Moses stepped. Admitting the magnitude of their sin, he

pled with God - "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin--; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written" (Ibid. 32: 31-32). To the pleadings of Moses, God responded - "Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel" (Ibid. 34: 27). Moses became the "surety," a mediator of this covenant which could be called a "type" covenant. Under it the sanctuary was erected and functioned. It prefigured Jesus, the "surety" of a better covenant.

It is this understanding of the covenant with Israel, which makes more meaningful the appearance of Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration. The record in Luke reads that as Jesus prayed in a mountain, even as Moses had so prayed, "behold there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elias (Elijah)." These "spake" to Him "of His decease (Gr. *exodos*) which He should accomplish at Jerusalem" (Luke 9: 28-31). Jesus provided the "way out" - the meaning of the word, "*exodos*" - beginning in Jerusalem, thus He became the surety, a mediator of a better covenant. The "*exodos*" from Egypt was not complete until Israel was secured in the Land of Promise. Our "*exodos*" will not be complete until we stand on the Sea of Glass before the Throne of God. Before that Throne now stands the Lamb as it had been slain, the "Surety" of the better covenant (Revelation 5: 6). The entire at-one-ment is in Him and through Him.

All of this leads to another important concept in regard to the atonement. In the Old Testament the word, "atonement" is used for both the objective achieved in the daily ritual as well as the special service on the Day of Atonement. There is a dual atonement. In Leviticus 4, in each instance where the KJV uses the word, "atonement" (verses 20, 26, 31, 35), the Hebrew verb, *kipher*, is used. Likewise, the same word is found in Leviticus 16 (verses 16, 17, 18, 24, 32, 33). In Leviticus 16, the infinitive form, *kapher*, is also used (verses 17, 20, 30, 33, 34). In Leviticus 23, the noun form in the plural, *kiphurim*, is used as well as the infinitive. This data is cited so as to relate the use of the word to the New Testament as well as to consider how it is translated in the Septuagint (LXX), the Bible of the Apostolic Church.

The word, atonement, as found in Leviticus 4 & 16 (KJV), is translated in the LXX by the Greek word, *exilaskomai* or *exilasqai*, and in Leviticus 23 by *exilasmos*, a noun in the singular for the Hebrew plural. These words do not appear in the Greek New Testament. However, a similar word is used. Two times the word *hilaskomai*, a verb, is used. In Luke 18:13 it is translated, "merciful," and in Heb. 2:17 as "reconciliation." The noun form, *hilasmos*, is used twice in John 2: 2; 4: 10, and is translated, "propitiation." Another word from the same root is used two times - *hilasteron*. In Romans 3: 25 without the article It is translated, "propitiation," and with the article in Hebrews 9: 5 as "the mercy seat." You may ask why these words from

the same root are given different translations; why, not always as "atonement"? The Greek word in the OT for atonement has the prepositional prefix, *ek* (*ex* before vowels) which affects its meaning. For example, the Greek word, *ballw* means, "I throw," but *ekballw* means, "I cast out." What is all of this telling us? Consider the following factors carefully:

1) As noted above, the LXX was the "Bible" of the Apostolic Church. It was the Apostles who contributed to the Church, the New Testament.

2) Every scripture quoted in the book of Hebrews was from the LXX, not the Hebrew text.

3) Nowhere in the New Testament are the words used which are used in the LXX for the "atonement" in either describing the daily services as outlined in Leviticus 4, or in the outline of the yearly service as found in Leviticus 16.

This permits but a simple conclusion. The concept of "atonement" as emphasized in Adventism was not spelled out in the New Testament. Does this nullify the position of Adventism? No! This fact has both an upside and downside.

First the upside: This means that in the book of Hebrews, which quotes solely from the LXX, the use of the words used for "atonement" in the LXX were purposely avoided, thus telling the reader, the material presented was not to be understood

as speaking of the antitypical Day of Atonement. That "day" was approaching (Hebrews 10: 25). Jesus had not entered upon His ascension into the ministry depicted by the typical Day of Atonement. Rather, He is presented as a "surety of a better covenant," "as a Son over His own house," and as a priest-king sitting on "the throne of grace" (Ibid. 3: 5-6; 4: 14-16).

[The facts expounded upon by Elder Grotheer in this section of the study, have been given little or no consideration by most - either inside or outside of Adventism. The root of the challenge facing us, firmly held by the majority of professed Christians, understands the death of Christ on the cross as the antitypical fulfillment of the festal Day of Atonement. The New Testament book of Hebrews is cited as the basis for teaching this belief. The observations carefully outlined up to this point, clearly expose the groundless nature of this mistaken position. As stated, "the material presented {in the book of Hebrews} was not to be understood as speaking of the antitypical Day of Atonement." In addition, the rest of the New Testament explicitly links the events and timing surrounding the crucifixion of Jesus with the antitypical fulfillment of the Passover festival (see 1 Corinthians 5: 7-8; compare Exodus 12: 43-46 with John 19: 33,36; also John 18: 28,39; 19: 14-16 with Exodus 12: 3,6 and Luke 23: 44-46). Simply put, the Passover is the festal type foreshadowing the death of Jesus on the cross, not the Day of Atonement!]

Now the downside: The New Testament

does not give the basis for the final atonement which is one of the fundamental pillars of Adventism.

Where does that leave us? To put it very plainly; it leaves us with a theology based on the typology of the wilderness sanctuary services and related to the book of Daniel as it focuses on the closing events of time. This gives significance to the fact that the book of Daniel was set aside - sealed - for the time of the end. Does this diminish in any way the centrality of the Sacrifice of the cross? No, it merely relates the sacrifice of Christ to the dual aspect of the Atonement, the daily service - forgiveness - and the yearly service - cleansing.

Even in the New Testament where the word "atonement" is used once in the KJV (Romans 5: 11), the Greek word is *katalaghn*, meaning "reconciliation," and so translated where the word is used elsewhere in the NT. While it is true that a concept of at-one-ment is embodied in the word reconciliation, it is a reconciliation of "enemies" to God (Ibid. 5: 10), not the coming to God of an errant child confessing his sin seeking to be again at-one-ment with his Father. Reconciliation is outside the covenant relationship. It brings us into that accord. The atonements were for those already in a covenant relationship with God. It must ever be recognized that the sanctuary type was set up and functioned under the covenant which God made with Moses and with Israel, with Moses as the mediator.

Paul in Romans 5: 10-11, is emphasizing who the Reconciler is - "Christ by whom we have received the atonement" (KJV) - "the reconciliation." He also blends two concepts - the death and resurrection of Jesus. We are "reconciled to God by the death of His Son," but having been reconciled, "we shall be saved by His life" who "is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7: 25). This "saving work" is stated in the context of Christ as "a surety of a better covenant" and as having "an unchangeable priesthood." (See Ibid. 7: 22, 24).

The covenant concept is an essential concept for us to understand in relationship to the atonement. In the Old Testament, those who accepted the God of Israel as their God are described as taking "hold of My covenant" (Isaiah 56: 4, 6). The promise to them was that their "sacrifices shall be accepted upon My altar" (Ibid. 5: 7). In the New Testament there is a "new" Israel. Paul describes the Ephesians as at one time being "Gentiles" and "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, and having no hope, and without God in the world" (Ephesians 2: 11-12). But a "naturalization" took place. He wrote - "Now in Christ Jesus ye who were sometimes far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Ibid. 2: 13).

Observe - "in Christ Jesus" there is a new Israel. All that come unto God by Him - for no man cometh to the Father except by

Him - are extended hope and the promises of the new covenant. He is the Surety, having accomplished a new *exodos* at Jerusalem by the cross. To the foot of the cross - "the highest place to which man can attain" - all must come to receive "the blood of sprinkling" (See Exodus 24: 8), and thus come under the covenant of which Christ is both the surety and mediator. These are members of "the general assembly and church of the firstborn" whose names are written in the Lamb's "book of life." To these belong the "atonements" under the covenant (Hebrews 12: 22-24).

» *To be Continued.*

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