

# Atonement Typified

by G.W. North

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*The sermon explains the difference between the Old Covenant's concept of atonement as 'coverage' and the New Testament's understanding of atonement as 'removal' through the blood of Jesus.*

**Scripture:** Leviticus 16:10, Isaiah 53:5, John 1:29, Romans 3:25, Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:14, Hebrews 9:22, Hebrews 10:4, 1 Peter 1:18-19, Revelation 1:5

**Topics:** "Atonement", "The Blood of Christ"

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## Description

G.W. North emphasizes the limitations of the Old Covenant regarding atonement, explaining that it merely covered sin rather than removing it. He contrasts this with the New Covenant, where Jesus' sacrifice provides true and eternal atonement, removing sin completely. North critiques the modern church's reliance on Old Testament terminology and practices, urging believers to understand the transformative power of Christ's blood. He illustrates the significance of the Day of Atonement and the roles of the two goats, symbolizing both the shedding of blood and the removal of sin. Ultimately, he calls for a deeper appreciation of Jesus' sacrifice, which fulfills God's original intention for atonement.

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## Transcript

The limitation of that Old Covenant, which for that reason is now done away, is nowhere better revealed than in the word used to express atonement throughout the Hebrew scriptures. It is a descriptive word meaning 'to cover.' God, in speaking of atonement in the Old Testament, never promised to remove sin, but to reckon it as covered. The blood they shed had no power to cover it, but obedience to God's requirements caused coverage to be imputed to them as they followed His instructions. Always sin was there, unremoved, unremovable, until He should come who would, because He could, shed the Blood that should remove sin once for all. When the blood of animals and birds was shed by law it was God's insistence that without shedding of blood is no remission of sins. Constant remission was only available to them through constant bloodshed, and it was accepted by God as coverage for their sin provided it was done according to the correct order.

Now from this idea of coverage it is sadly true that much erroneous phraseology and practice has been incorporated in the churches, and unwarrantably superimposed upon many present day believers all too unaware of the great mistake. It is an axiom of scripture and manifestly true that the greater includes the lesser, but in this vitally important realm where we can least afford the practice, the lesser has displaced the greater. For all around one hears such conventional phrases as 'cover it with the Blood,' or, 'I put it

under the Blood,' or, 'We sprinkled it with the Blood,' and much other such talk, and this from good Christian people for the most part. These all have unwittingly slipped back into the Old Testament idea of blood and are not moving in the true knowledge of the power of the Blood of the New Testament at all. Knowledge of the truth concerning the power of the Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ will bring about a freedom from such phrases. Better still, as the understanding is enlightened and convinced with regard to the true value and worth of Jesus' Blood and what it accomplished, the whole personality will pass from the realm of ignorance and fear into calm assurance before God: moreover and more importantly, the Sacrifice and Blood of Jesus Christ will be honoured as it ought.

When Jesus came into the world He said, 'Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me.' To this He added his knowledge that His Father had never found any pleasure in the holocausts of blood and bodies and fire He had seen fit to demand of the Children of Israel beforetime. To Him they had been a distasteful necessity imposed upon them until the time of reformation, when He would reshape the whole idea of atonement and reintroduce His original intention concerning the Blood. This is based upon the fact that He would bring into the world His original Lamb. Not Abel's, nor Abraham's, nor the many lambs of Egypt or Sinai or Canaan, were any of them the first and last and eternal Lamb; God had yet to give Him to man. All other lambs given in sacrifice before this had only remotely borne but the faintest typical resemblance to Jesus, God's Lamb, and all their blood in its application had only superficially suggested the atonement for which the Blood was shed. God had decided that with the shedding of the Blood of His Son He would do away with all the ramification of the Hebrew system of atonement(s) and, returning to the original idea first implanted in Genesis, go on to perfect it in practice. Moreover, with the passing of the system He intended its phraseology to die also. That is why it cannot be found anywhere in the New Testament as referring to the sacrifice of Christ.

Upon the occasion of Jesus Christ's manifestation to Israel He was declared by John Baptist to be the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. This, coupled with Jesus' own consciousness that His body was specially given Him in connection with God's distasteful acceptance of unpleasurable animal sacrifices, made John's statement one of the most significant in the whole of the Bible. Those sacrifices had never taken away sins, and their 'stricken,' or 'given,' or 'sprinkled,' or 'poured out' blood was woefully inadequate to reach the inner man. All had left even the very priests who made the sacrifice(s) and atonement(s) with a guilty conscience and miserable consciousness of sin. Guilt and fear created complexes so deep and ineradicable that even the beauties of some of David's greatest Psalms are marred and spoiled by them.

That is why mercy is the great cry of the Old Testament; they were forever crying out for mercy. God sat upon a Mercy Seat. Sin, fear, torment, only found relief in belief and hope. But now God sits upon a throne of Grace. Grace is the great theme of the New Testament, even the grace of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Sin is removed, taken away: the sacrifice for sin and sins has for ever been made -- it is perpetual, eternal, present, now. The suffering of death, the bearing of sin, the atoning work and deed are over, and the completed act is here, held in the Spirit for ever. As it was, it is, and ever shall be; that is the nature of things eternal. Jesus' atonement is by one sacrifice for sin for ever.

This one great eternal act of Christ accomplished at Calvary had been set into the national life of the Children of Israel as a sacred feast. It took the form of a recurring annual event called the Day of Atonement, kept on the tenth day of the seventh month every year. It was a living picture full of pointed meaning, enacted for around two thousand years regularly before the eyes of the entire nation. The account of it as originally commanded by God is to be found in Leviticus 16. He told the people that upon

the chosen day they were to gather in soul affliction at the entrance to the Tabernacle, bringing with them two goats: these were to become the focal point of the solemn rite. The High Priest was instructed to receive them at their hands and follow God's instructions regarding them with great care, that by these cleansing from all sin may be imputed to His people.

In simple logical order one goat was slain and its blood was sprinkled by the High Priest within the veil upon the Mercy Seat, but the other had to fulfil quite a different role. Upon its head with all solemnity the High Priest was commanded to lay his hands and make confession over it. A complete breast of everything had to be made; 'all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat.' Following that public confession and typical transference of all the sins from the people to the animal, it had to be sent away 'by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness. And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited,' said the Lord. Thus these two goats were combined in one ceremony to set forth two factors in the act of Christ's atonement:

1. Bloodshed and death, and acceptance of the blood sprinkled upon the Mercy Seat.
2. Sins confessed, transferred and borne away.

In this important matter the goats formed a fairly comprehensive type by which God could reveal to the nation something of the meaning of atonement.

All other blood shed for sin in the land was given by God to the people upon the Altar, but this particular blood by God's commandment was carried in and given to Him. It was sprinkled upon the Seat of Mercy, where God sat and accepted (may we say, drank?) it, and because of it could still stay and dwell in the midst of this people which were the nation of the broken law. He personally could only accept the blood of a sacrifice that set forth, however feebly, the active removal of sin. Even in type God would not teach that He accepted (drank) blood that only covered sin. This amazing ministration of blood to God was the High Priest's most important function. Following this, his second most important duty had to be administered, and that before he engaged in the second part of the twofold type. In fact the two administrations of the first part were really one in their implied meaning, but were performed in sequence in their correct order. Just as God personally would only accept the blood that bespoke the utter removal of sin from His Presence, so also the Altar upon which all other blood(s) of 'covering' was given to His people throughout the year had to be sprinkled with the same blood. This was the blood of removal, real atonement. For though in the type it was not the actual blood of the goat that bore away the sin, yet it was reckoned as the same.

For this purpose they both had to be presented to the Lord and stand together before Him as one, that the action of the one and the blood of the other should be as one for the establishing of the type. The Lord was thereby teaching them the truth that He could only allow the continuance of the idea of coverage of sin because the time was coming when He would remove sin altogether. On this basis alone could that present system which consisted in coverage for atonement(s) be at all reconciled to and acceptable by Him. The High Priest's ministry in the second action of the first part of the twofold type was to reconcile to God the entire Holy Place with all its furniture and furnishings, and all the other articles of worship and sacrifice used by the priests for the people. The Holiest of all did not need the reconciliation; it was the Holy of Holies -- entirely without sin or taint of uncleanness because it was entirely God's. But despite the thousands of sacrifices, and volumes of blood consumed upon the Altar throughout the course of the year,

the transgression and sin and uncleanness remained with the Children of Israel unremoved.

It could not be removed by such sacrifices; why, even the very priests who alone could offer them had guilty consciences whilst they were performing their rites, we are told. Hence the necessity for the great Day of Atonement. Not that they or the people were any the more free from sin and a guilty conscience then. They did not know inward removal of sin or its power even though they witnessed most of the solemn sprinkling and reconciliation of the holy things, and watched and listened intently during the ceremony of the laying on of hands, and the sending away of the Scapegoat. All was real enough, forgiveness was genuine, righteousness was imputed to them, reconciliation was effected, but to them their sins were only covered. To us with greater knowledge than they the type is clear, but to them it was still coverage only. God had covered over their sins once again and had forgiven His people, but the memory and conscience of them still remained undying in their hearts.

The precision of the type is wonderful even by suggestion, for anticipating at this point the truth that was (at that time) later to be revealed, we may notice the utter exactness and consistency of God when pictorially He does but suggest eternal realities. Considering the relevant significance of quantities, we note again that hundreds of gallons of blood must have been poured upon the Altar during a year's offerings and sacrifices, yet on the Day of Atonement God only asked a few drops of blood for His own personal consumption. Outside great quantities, inside a few drops.

When Aaron, or later his successor, went in to God to bring Him His blood in a bowl it must have been an awe-inspiring experience for him. There was the Lord God sitting upon His throne, yet no form did Aaron see, only glory. God was there waiting to receive the blood. Aaron, carrying the bowl of blood in one hand and a censer in the other, must slip round one edge of the veiling curtain, swinging the censer, that the cloud of incense from the fire may fill the little room of skin with the sweet scent of Jesus. Then he placed aside the still smouldering fire and, dipping his finger into the bowl of blood, advanced toward the Mercy Seat sprinkling the blood on the ground as he went. The One he came to satisfy sat all glorious on His throne, immobile, inscrutable: waiting. Blood in a bowl or sprinkled on the earth could not satisfy Him, He waited until man, this man, should behold and see the miracle for which all the blood shed by His command was shed. So, careful lest he tread on the blood just sprinkled, Aaron, taking his last step forward, once again dipped his finger into the bowl and, lifting his arm forward and upward, put his hand into the glory and sprinkled the blood in all he knew to be God. The man watched it drop down in a short crimson cascade and darken into scarlet upon the gold, but God had drunk the blood He required at the hand of man.

Aaron's instructions had been explicit enough. He must not sprinkle the life-drops at random, fearful to be there, hastening to be gone, but in the prescribed manner under the Lord's direct command. The Tabernacle had always to be pitched from East to West, having its articles of furniture set out in simple cruciform pattern with the Ark of the Covenant at the head within the Holy of Holies. From it, extending in straight line through the Holy Place to the entrance of the outer court, stood the Altar of Incense, the Laver and the Brazen Altar of sacrifice. Within the Holy Place and on either side of the golden Altar of Incense, North and South respectively, stood the Table of Shewbread and the sevenfold Lampstand. Thus was the clear course of Aaron's ascent to the throne levelly marked out and set, all prepared for him as he took the blood from the place of death and sacrifice westwards and proceeded eastward along the line that led to the Mercy Seat. There, in all grace and patience, God sat waiting during the few minutes that must elapse while Aaron paused awhile in the soft light and fragrance of the Holy Place to change from his elaborate outward garments to the simple inward habit of pure righteousness in which he must present God's blood

to Him as He wanted it.

Moses upon Sinai had been allowed to see God's backward parts. Aaron also, in company with others of the nobility of Israel had been privileged for a moment at the law-giving to see God, but none had ever gazed upon His face. But here in His chosen sanctuary God had elected to sit thirsting for the blood of atonement facing the people. Aaron could not, must not see His face; it was not visible to human eye in any case. But the clouding incense, sweetly rising, warm from the glowing fire, would both please His heart and sufficiently veil the brightness of His glory; all was perfect as could be for His purposes under the circumstances. So with His backward parts toward the east and His face toward the west He awaited Aaron's ministrations. He had chosen to drink the blood; so Aaron, taking the last wondering step to the throne, put his hand into God and sprinkled the blood. Eastward, directly eastward, from the front to the back of the sacred seat his hand moved. Not sideways, not diagonally, not in a circle but in line, straight, the purpling drink went into the invisible God. Not much, just a little, a few drops, a sip, but it was all He wanted; it was enough. He was satisfied. Quantity did not matter. Neither the amount nor the substance really counted, for the blood eventually became only a stain on the throne. A Spirit, God, could not drink blood; He commanded and received it as the medium of the life of the one in whose veins it flowed, that the invisible life may be drunk in while the medium dropped away upon the gold. The type, though fragile, is nonetheless exceeding full of suggestive truth to the mind that sees and the heart that knows and understands God. He had never departed from His original intention and the idea He had set in the scripture in the beginning.

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