

## **APPENDIX TEN**

References In The New Testament To  
The Day Of Atonement  
Apart From Those In Hebrews And Revelation



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Each use of *hilaskomai* in the New Testament employs the basic image of the Day of Atonement.

Let us consider 1 John 2: in its setting:

If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not live according to the truth; but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. My little children, I am writing this to you so that you may not sin; but if any one does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the expiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.  
(1 John 1:6-2:2 RSV)

We also wish to remind ourselves of the use of *hilaskomai* in Heb. 2:17 in order to rightly understand both passages and their relationship to the Day of Atonement. We will read this also in its context.

But we see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honour because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for every one ... Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage ... Therefore he had to be made like his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people. (Heb. 2:9, 14, 15, 17 RSV)

Let it be closely observed that the passages are not speaking primarily about a work being done in the heavenly sanctuary but about a priestly sacrifice for the sins of the world. The death of Christ is the focus of these verses. Christ became our high priest in order to taste death for every man and thus to destroy the devil and his works. The death on the cross is priestly work, for our Lord was high priest before his crucifixion. Not idly have we spoken of John 17 as his high priestly prayer. Jesus entered "within the veil" after having become a high priest. So says Heb. 6:19, 20. Thus Heb. 9:14 speaks of Him as offering Himself in sacrifice.

1 John 2:2 is an integral part of the pattern of 1 John 1:5-2:6. The antithetical nature of the verses should be noted. Cf. with 1:6 the following verse; with 1:8 its following verse; and with 1:10 compare 2:1 ff. Thus 1 John 2:2 is identical in meaning with 1 John 1:7 and 9. It is speaking of the purification and forgiveness of sins. In the Old Testament we have an intimate relationship between *katherizō* and *exilaskomai*, for the plural *hamartiōn* as we have seen is limited by the LXX in its cultic references to the Day of Atonement. Ex. 30:10; Lev. 23:27f; 25:9 use (*ex*)*ilasmōs* for *kapharim*, and Ex. 29:36 and 30:10 use *katharismos*. See the close juxtaposition of forgiveness and

atonement in Lev. 4:31 — a typical cultic verdict. John thus in 2:2 echoes the well-known cultic sequence of *Yom Kippur*. Compare Lev. 16:24, 34.

Why are these passages (1 John 4:10 but echoes 2:2) significant for our study of the Day of Atonement in Hebrews? Because we have been guilty of separating in our thought “the atonement” from the day of the atonement. While many have recognized the former as applying to the cross, we have balked at applying the second the same way. Yet by Day of Atonement is meant precisely the time of the offering up of the atoning sacrifice. Hebrews, as we have seen, shies from speaking of the sprinkling of blood on the mercy seat lest some lessen the significance of the Calvary offering. The context of Heb. 2:17 and similar passages is the **death** of our high priest. This is what accomplished propitiation and expiation. Our Lord indeed is making intercession for us as heavenly priest, but it is done by His presence, for His atoning work is already finished, and He has sat down as a Conqueror ready to claim the trophies of His victory.

Fundamental still to the thinking of some is the error of our pioneers that the atonement only began at the cross. If we intended by such a belief only the fact that not all the consequences of Christ’s perfect redemptive work at Calvary are yet worked out, such a view would not be harmful. But as usually stated the glory of the cross is eclipsed and the testimony of many New Testament scriptures muted. Consider, for example, the following:

For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. Not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received our reconciliation. (Rom. 5:10-11 RSV)

For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. And you, who once were estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him.

All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Cor. 5:18-21 RSV)

Such statements are in strong contrast to those of Crosier and Uriah Smith. The former wrote:

The atonement was made in the sanctuary, but Calvary was not such a place.

Therefore, He did not begin the work of making the atonement, whatever the nature of that work may be, till after His ascension when by His own blood He entered the heavenly sanctuary for us. (Crosier, *Day Star Extra*, Feb. 7, 1846)

And Uriah Smith:

Christ did not make the atonement when He shed His blood upon the cross. Let this fact be fixed forever in the mind. (*Looking Unto Jesus*, 237).

Such statements have been echoed for over a hundred years as readers of our sanctuary literature know. They are usually linked with other errors, such as the denial that Christ was a priest on Calvary. Smith also writes:

In this case, as in the type, the offering and the usual priestly work precede the atonement. But when Christ suffered for us, in what capacity was He acting? — Not as our priest, but only as the offering; for He was put to death by wicked hands, even as the victims of old were slain by the sinner. It was as the sacrifice and offering that He bore our sins in His body on the tree. Here the blood was provided with which He was to minister. This was an act preparatory to the priestly work He was to perform in the true sanctuary above; the atonement is the last service He renders as priest. Those who make the offering to be the same as the atonement, confound together events that are more than eighteen hundred years apart. The offering was general. Christ died for all the world. The sacrifice was offered to all who would accept of it. But the atonement at the close is specific; it is made only for those who seek the benefits of His redeeming work, by “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” Acts 20:21. (*Ibid.*, 238-239)

C.H. Watson, president of the General Conference, could write similarly in the 1930’s:

In the work of the atonement two essentials are to be observed, a sacrifice, and a priest... The priest’s work began **after** the sacrifice was slain. (*The Atoning Work of Christ*, 92. See also 157.)

Such statements have been multiplied despite the plain testimony of Scripture in such passages as Heb. 10:1, 12; 9:14; 7:27.

Crosier, Smith, Watson, and others wrote as though the priest worked chiefly within the holy places. But repeatedly the Old Testament says otherwise. See Num. 18:3, 5, 7, which show that the priest’s work was continually by the brazen altar of sacrifice. Ellen White never copied the errors of her associates but spoke plainly of Christ as priest at His death. See *Desire of Ages*, 25, 757.

Dan. 9:24 plainly foretold the atonement (“to make atonement for iniquity”) as falling within the seventy weeks prophecy, being accomplished in the midst of the last week, and thus confirming the eternal covenant, and causing sacrifices and oblations to cease.

The Old Testament chapter which has most to say about atonement is Lev. 16. Compare its 14 usages with the total of 48 in the book of Leviticus. We err if we separate the atonement from the Day of Atonement — the latter symbolized the former. “Cleansing” is never an empirical moral transaction in Leviticus, but a “declaring clean” on the basis of faith in the shed blood of a sacrifice. The case is identical in 1 John 1:7.

Some have criticized the KJV rendering of Rom. 5:11 which speaks of our having received the “atonement.” It is true that the original word here is *katallege* — but this is precisely the term used in the LXX for the Hebrew *kippur*. Atonement in Scripture has three dimensions: towards God it is propitiation; towards sin it is expiation; towards sinners it is reconciliation. Rom. 3:25 speaks of Christ as our mercy seat, i.e. as the place of atonement. The text speaks of expiation which implies propitiation. See RSV

rendering. Rom 5:18 assures us that the righteous act of Christ has brought “acquittal and life for all men.” Could language be stronger than that in expressing a completed atonement?

But the evidence is much stronger still. Scripture asserts that Christ’s resurrection was the evidence of our Lord’s finished work of propitiation. Read Rom. 4:25. Compare also 1 Cor. 15:17. Similarly, Pentecost spoke of the Father’s acceptance of that finished work and was symbolic of the anointing of the heavenly sanctuary made possible by the cross. See Acts 2:33.

Nor is the testimony of Hebrews contrary to that of the other epistles. Chapter 13 assures us that God brought Christ from the dead “by the blood of the eternal covenant.” This agrees with Rom. 4:25.

But the witness of Hebrews to a completed work by Christ on the cross is not left to the closing chapter. It is found in the introductory verses, and then frequently repeated thereafter. It was after Christ “had made purification for sins” that He “sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” (1:4). Compare 2:9; 10:12, 13; 12:2. These passages assure us that Christ’s heavenly enthronement was the evidence and reward of an accomplished propitiation. In Heb. 9:22 it is the shedding of blood, not its sprinkling, that guarantees remission of sins. The sprinkling is but emblematic of application of the remedy — not the remedy itself.

The emphasis on the Day of Atonement in Hebrews is most significant for the issue under discussion. The services of that day symbolized the finding of a way of access to God’s presence through the complete expiation of sin. The work of sprinkling upon the mercy seat followed the right of access through the shed blood, and the worshippers expected a speedy reappearance of their Representative, not a prolonged work in the second apartment. When Christ left His grave-clothes in the tomb and appeared to His believers with the claim that all power in heaven and earth had been given to Him — He was enacting the work of the High Priest who after making the atonement, changed His garments and reappeared to bless the people.

Thus in Hebrews we find such passages as 2:17. This reconciliation is identical with the “eternal redemption” spoken of in 9:24 as something already obtained in the first century. He entered the presence of God “through His own blood” 9:12. Compare 9:14. These verses are important as they show conclusively that Calvary was the ground of entrance into the heavenly sanctuary. He did not enter to make atonement but to claim the benefits of an already accomplished atonement. After the veil was rent in the Jerusalem temple symbolizing Christ’s completion of the sacrifice which shattered the barrier between sinners and the holy God, He could never again be like the Levitical high priest outside the veil with the work still undone. We do not read of Melchizedek as priest ever sacrificing. Rather, we find him blessing. He communicated the fruits of prior sacrifice. So it is with our great King Priest after the order of Melchizedek. Every Lord’s Supper with its reminder of the blessing of sins forgiven tells the same story of a sealed covenant, sealed by the blood of Christ’s sacrifice.

Apart from an isolated reference in Acts, the didactic treatment in Hebrews, and the allusions in the Apocalypse, we have still another didactic reference to the Day of Atonement in Rom. 3:25 according to many scholars, and further allusions in the gospel record. To these we now turn.

Rom. 3:25 has long been a storm centre. It is in some respects the most important of all passages hailed as a *Crux interpretum*. Part of the Acropolis (so-called) of the New Testament — Rom. 3:25 — its testimony must not be overlooked. As a *locus classicus* this verse is not susceptible of slick ready exegesis and we will not presume to attempt the cutting of all the Gordian knots involved. Rather, we wish to make some suggestions for which there are strong grounds, and which if accepted will contribute towards the purpose of this document, but which if rejected will in no wise be damaging to our central theses.

We refer the reader to F. Buchsel (*TDNT* III, p. 320ff), and to the comments of G. Friedrich, O. Kuss, P. Althaus, O. Michel, K. Barth in their expositions on Romans, particularly Rom. 3:25. These are German scholars who oppose the view popular in Germany since Deissmann. Outside Germany the view that Rom. 3:25 is strongly linked to the Day of Atonement is not only widely recognized but almost taken for granted. A Nygren, T.W. Manson, P.J. Leenhardt, A.M. Hunter, C.K. Barrett, F.F. Bruce, and D.E.H. Whiteley fall into this category. However, we are not engaging in a numbers game to establish a truth of biblical exegesis, and therefore will briefly indicate the evidence for this position.

First, it is impossible to deny that Paul was fully aware of the relationship of *hilasterion* to the ancient tabernacle, and special to *Yom Kippur*. Exclusively in the LXX *hilasterion* signifies the place of sacrificial expiation. (Twenty-one of the twenty-seven occurrences of *hilasterion* in the LXX are translations of כַּפֶּרֶת. Even the five occurrences in Eze. 43 probably are because the altar ledge there referred to paralleled *kapporeth*. See Eze. 43:20. The final instance, that of Amos 9:1, is almost certainly an error from misreading the Hebrew. Thus as Young says, “the likelihood of this LXX usage being the source of Paul’s designation of Christ as a *hilasterion* borders on certainty.” *Op. cit.*, 337.) In the Pauline context the reference to “by his blood” certainly points us to the Day of Atonement when the mercy seat, the *hilasterion*, received the expiating blood. Dr. Young has written:

In a context which has so powerfully expounded a doctrine of universal sin, reaching its climax in Rom. 3:25, it is natural for a Jewish writer to fall back upon the key terms of the only Old Testament institution where such community sin was dissolved. (N.H. Young, *Ibid.*, 295)

He further adds:

The Day of Atonement ritual with the blood sprinkled upon the *hilasterion* by the high priest is the most likely parallel textually, the most informative parallel exegetically, and the closest parallel linguistically. Textually, the Pauline affinities with the LXX are undisputed; exegetically the Day of Atonement gives a mass of suggestive and profound interpretations; and linguistically only the Day of Atonement texts can explain the joining of “by his blood” to “*hilasterion*.” (*Ibid.*, 297)

If Buchsel, Michel, Barth, Nygren, etc. are correct, what significance has their conclusions for us in our present study? According to C.F.D. Moule, the lack of the article before *hilasterion* is due to its being an accusative used predicatively. **Philo** is known to have parallels to such construction. This would imply that it is primarily the function of the mercy seat that Paul alludes to rather than identity. But it is quite certain that the mercy seat was the most important cultic item of the sanctuary. This was where

atonement was made for the sins of the people of God, and it is not possible to think that Paul was unaware of that fact. Our “so-what” inquiry is answered by the evidence that Paul saw in Calvary the antitype of the entrance into the Most Holy where the mercy seat was located.

Nygren, Manson, and others have suggested certain parallels and contrasts in their elucidation of the *hilasterion*. The ancient mercy seat was hidden from view, but now Christ is publicly set forth to the whole world; the blessings of the mercy seat once were claimed by cultic ritual, but now they are received through faith alone; the tabernacle mercy seat was sprinkled with animal blood, but both Hebrews and Romans imply that the redemptive accomplishment is through the applied blood of the Son of God.

The blood sprinkled on the mercy seat was warm. It had to be un-coagulated, or sprinkling would have been impossible. It is just as impossible to separate the antitypical blood-shedding and entrance to the Most Holy. Rom. 3:25 tells us that our Lord entered the Most Holy Place in immediate connection with His death. While Adventists have realized that the slaying of the goat on the Day of Atonement was not fulfilled in 1844, they have endeavoured to separate the aspersion on the mercy seat till that time — something exegetically, theologically, and logically unsound.

The reader should look again at our comment in Chapter 2, section Heb. 13:10-13 regarding the significance of the word “atonement” in this manuscript. See also our comments on Dan. 9:24 in chapter three.

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