

A BETTER HIGH PRIEST & A BETTER ATONEMENT

I. Numbers 16:36-50 Numbers 17:1-13

A. As we continue our hike through Numbers, last Sunday we covered the infamous rebellion of Korah, Dathan, & Abiram, plus the 250 chiefs who wanted to be priests. It did not go well for the mutineers. The ground swallowed up the main instigators. The 250 chieftains were devoured by fire. Numbers 16:36-40 (ESV) records the aftermath: **36** *Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,* **37** *“Tell Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest to take up the censers out of the blaze. Then scatter the fire far and wide, for they have become holy. 38 As for the censers of these men who have sinned at the cost of their lives, let them be made into hammered plates as a covering for the altar, for they offered them before the LORD, and they became holy. Thus they shall be a sign to the people of Israel.” 39 So Eleazar the priest took the bronze censers, which those who were burned had offered, and they were hammered out as a covering for the altar, 40 to be a reminder to the people of Israel, so that no outsider, who is not of the descendants of Aaron, should draw near to burn incense before the LORD, lest he become like Korah and his company--as the LORD said to him through Moses. (And after God unleashes His wrath, the grumbling stops--right?)*

B. Since the exodus, God's people have tested the Lord over and over again. There was the golden calf incident. There was the first water from the rock event at Massah. There was *Taberah* where fire consumed many. There was the clamoring for quail episode with the dead buried at Kibroth-hattaavah. There was the Miriam & Aaron incident. Then there was the 12 spy expedition and the subsequent revolt of the 10 spies that nearly got the nation destroyed; instead they were sentenced to 40 years of wandering. Following closely was their first military defeat at the hands of the Amalekites and the Canaanites. And then we have Korah's rebellion. These have all been hard lessons. We might even call them *wakeup calls* on a celestial scale. But did they wake anybody? Did their hearts change?

C. As we step into our text, perhaps the earth is still soft where the rebels were swallowed. Perhaps the ground's still smoldering where the fire fell. Perhaps the bronze censers have all already been hammered into that infamous and ominous altar covering. Perhaps a reverent fear has overtaken foolishness and folly. Perhaps humility has overtaken arrogance and audacity. What do you think?

D. Numbers 16:41-50 (ESV) gives us the answer...

1) V41-45: 1 *But on the next day all the congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and against Aaron, saying, “You have killed the people of the LORD.” (2.5 million grumblers!) 42 And when the congregation had assembled against Moses and against Aaron, they turned toward the tent of meeting. And behold, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD appeared. 43 And Moses and Aaron came to the front of the tent of meeting, 44 and the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 45 “Get away from the midst of this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment.” And they fell on their faces. (Once again Yahweh Elohim is ready to wipe out the whole nation. Once again Moses and Aaron eat more dirt and beg God to relent. Then come instructions...)*

2) V46-49: 46 And Moses said to Aaron, “Take your censer, and put fire on it from off the altar and lay incense on it and carry it quickly to the congregation and make atonement for them, for wrath has gone out from the LORD; the plague has begun.” **47** So Aaron took it **(His censer with incense)** as Moses said and ran into the midst of the assembly. And behold, the plague had already begun among the people. And he put on the incense and made atonement for the people. **48** And he stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was stopped. **49** Now those who died in the plague were 14,700, **(e.g. Circleville + 500; very close to the population of Worthington)** besides those who died in the affair of Korah. **(Numbers is called Numbers because of the censuses God orders. Due to Israel's faithless rebellion the birth numbers are far less than the death numbers!)**

3) V50: 50 And Aaron returned to Moses at the entrance of the tent of meeting, when the plague was stopped. **(Another cataclysmic annihilation is averted.)**

E. Would you like to hear about a greater intervention? Would you like to hear about a greater atonement, one not made with incense or animal blood? Aaron took his censer, ran into the midst of the people, stood between the dead and the living, and God's wrath was averted. But Jesus exterminates the plague of sin! Jesus atones in the midst of the dead and the living.

1) Ephesians 2:1-5 (NIV) puts it like this: 1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, **2** in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. **3** All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. **4** But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, **5** made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved.

2) Colossians 2:13-14 (NLT) echoes: 13 You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for He forgave all our sins. **14** He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. **(Christ's sacrifice was the atonement to end all atonements!)**

F. Numbers 17:1-13 (ESV) tells us God is not done with affirming Aaron as His chosen priest over the People. This time He acts preemptively...

1) V1-8: 1 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, **2** “Speak to the people of Israel, and get from them staffs, one for each fathers' house, from all their chiefs according to their fathers' houses, twelve staffs. Write each man's name on his staff, **3** and write Aaron's name on the staff of Levi. For there shall be one staff for the head of each fathers' house. **4** Then you shall deposit them in the tent of meeting before the testimony, **(Before the Ark of the Covenant)** where I meet with you. **5** And the staff of the man whom I choose shall sprout. Thus I will make to cease from Me the grumblings of the people of Israel, which they grumble against you.” **6** Moses spoke to the people of Israel. And all their chiefs gave him staffs, one for each chief, according to their fathers' houses, twelve staffs. And the staff of Aaron was among their staffs. **7** And Moses deposited the staffs before the LORD in the tent of the testimony. **8** On the next day Moses went into the tent of the testimony, and behold, the staff of Aaron for the house of Levi had sprouted and put forth buds and produced blossoms, and it bore ripe almonds. **(Talk about an exclamation mark!)**

2) **V9-11: 9** Then Moses brought out all the staffs from before the LORD to all the people of Israel. And they looked, and each man took his staff. **10** And the LORD said to Moses, "Put back the staff of Aaron before the testimony, to be kept as a sign for the rebels, that you may make an end of their grumbings against Me, lest they die." **11** Thus did Moses; as the LORD commanded him, so he did. **(And then what? Joy filled the hearts of the people because God cooled His wrath, preserved their lives, and once again demonstrated He was the One True God? Not so much!)**

3) **V12-13: 12** And the people of Israel said to Moses, "Behold, we perish, we are undone, we are all undone. **13** Everyone who comes near, who comes near to the tabernacle of the LORD, shall die. Are we all to perish?" **(Woe is us! Boo Hoo God! What a sad response!)**

G. But we have a Better High priest than Aaron. He's the one that caused Aaron's staff to bud, blossom, and bear fruit! His name is Jesus! Aaron and the high priests that followed him offered sacrifices year by year, over and over again. Those insufficient sacrifices pointed to THE SACRIFICE Jesus would one day make, the sacrifice that would be good for all time. Listen to some brief verses from Hebrews 9 & 10, though I urge you to read the full chapters...

1) **Hebrews 9:11-12 (NLT)** says this of our Lord: **11** So Christ has now become the High Priest over all the good things that have come. He has entered that greater, more perfect Tabernacle in heaven, which was not made by human hands and is not part of this created world. **12** With His own blood--not the blood of goats and calves--He entered the Most Holy Place once for all time and secured our redemption forever.

2) **Hebrews 10:10-14 (NLT)** affirms: **10** For God's will was for us to be made holy by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all time. **11** Under the old covenant, the priest stands and ministers before the altar day after day, offering the same sacrifices again and again, which can never take away sins. **12** But our High Priest offered Himself to God as a single sacrifice for sins, good for all time. **(Jesus is both the High Priest and the Sacrifice!)** Then He sat down in the place of honor at God's right hand. **13** There He waits until His enemies are humbled and made a footstool under His feet. **14** For by that one offering He forever made perfect **those** who are being made holy. **(I pray you all are among the THOSE!!)**

H. In Werden, Germany there's an ancient chapel. Upon its roof is a lamb carved in stone. Long long ago there was a workman making repairs on that chapel roof when suddenly he lost his footing and fell. Just as his body was about to hit the ground, it landed upon something soft that broke his fall, saving his life. It was a little lamb grazing beside the church. The lamb was killed by the impact but the man escaped death unscathed. As a tribute of gratitude, the workman carved the lamb on the chapel roof. Jesus Christ, *the Lamb of God who was slain but who lives again*, is likewise the One who has saved us from sin and death and hell!

* **Hebrews 9:27-28 (NLT)** takes us home: **27** And just as each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment, **28** so also Christ was offered once for all time as a sacrifice to take away the sins of many people. *(Yours' I pray!)* He will come again, not to deal with our sins, but to bring salvation to all who are eagerly waiting for Him.

* **Close with Prayer...**

Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff

Numbers 16:36-50 (ESV)

36 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, **37** “Tell Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest to take up the censers out of the blaze. Then scatter the fire far and wide, for they have become holy. **38** As for the censers of these men who have sinned at the cost of their lives, let them be made into hammered plates as a covering for the altar, for they offered them before the LORD, and they became holy. Thus they shall be a sign to the people of Israel.” **39** So Eleazar the priest took the bronze censers, which those who were burned had offered, and they were hammered out as a covering for the altar, **40** to be a reminder to the people of Israel, so that no outsider, who is not of the descendants of Aaron, should draw near to burn incense before the LORD, lest he become like Korah and his company--as the LORD said to him through Moses. **41** But on the next day all the congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and against Aaron, saying, “You have killed the people of the LORD.” **42** And when the congregation had assembled against Moses and against Aaron, they turned toward the tent of meeting. And behold, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD appeared. **43** And Moses and Aaron came to the front of the tent of meeting, **44** and the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, **45** “Get away from the midst of this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment.” And they fell on their faces. **46** And Moses said to Aaron, “Take your censer, and put fire on it from off the altar and lay incense on it and carry it quickly to the congregation and make atonement for them, for wrath has gone out from the LORD; the plague has begun.” **47** So Aaron took it as Moses said and ran into the midst of the assembly. And behold, the plague had already begun among the people. And he put on the incense and made atonement for the people. **48** And he stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was stopped. **49** Now those who died in the plague were 14,700, besides those who died in the affair of Korah. **50** And Aaron returned to Moses at the entrance of the tent of meeting, when the plague was stopped.

Numbers 17:1-13 (ESV)

1 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, **2** “Speak to the people of Israel, and get from them staffs, one for each fathers' house, from all their chiefs according to their fathers' houses, twelve staffs. Write each man's name on his staff, **3** and write Aaron's name on the staff of Levi. For there shall be one staff for the head of each fathers' house. **4** Then you shall deposit them in the tent of meeting before the testimony, where I meet with you. **5** And the staff of the man whom I choose shall sprout. Thus I will make to cease from Me the grumbings of the people of Israel, which they grumble against you.” **6** Moses spoke to the people of Israel. And all their chiefs gave him staffs, one for each chief, according to their fathers' houses, twelve staffs. And the staff of Aaron was among their staffs. **7** And Moses deposited the staffs before the LORD in the tent of the testimony. **8** On the next day Moses went into the tent of the testimony, and behold, the staff of Aaron for the house of Levi had sprouted and put forth buds and produced blossoms, and it bore ripe almonds. **9** Then Moses brought out all the staffs from before the LORD to all the people of Israel. And they looked, and each man took his staff. **10** And the LORD said to Moses, “Put back the staff of Aaron before the testimony, to be

kept as a sign for the rebels, that you may make an end of their grumblings against Me, lest they die.” **11** Thus did Moses; as the LORD commanded him, so he did. **12** And the people of Israel said to Moses, “Behold, we perish, we are undone, we are all undone. **13** Everyone who comes near, who comes near to the tabernacle of the LORD, shall die. Are we all to perish?”

Ephesians 2:1-5 (NIV)

1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, **2** in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. **3** All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. **4** But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, **5** made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved.

Colossians 2:13-14 (NLT)

13 You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for He forgave all our sins. **14** He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross.

Hebrews 9:11-12 (NLT)

11 So Christ has now become the High Priest over all the good things that have come. He has entered that greater, more perfect Tabernacle in heaven, which was not made by human hands and is not part of this created world. **12** With His own blood--not the blood of goats and calves--He entered the Most Holy Place once for all time and secured our redemption forever.

Hebrews 10:10-14 (NLT)

10 For God’s will was for us to be made holy by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all time. **11** Under the old covenant, the priest stands and ministers before the altar day after day, offering the same sacrifices again and again, which can never take away sins. **12** But our High Priest offered Himself to God as a single sacrifice for sins, good for all time. Then He sat down in the place of honor at God’s right hand. **13** There He waits until His enemies are humbled and made a footstool under His feet. **14** For by that one offering He forever made perfect those who are being made holy.

Hebrews 9:27-28 (NLT)

27 And just as each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment, **28** so also Christ was offered once for all time as a sacrifice to take away the sins of many people. He will come again, not to deal with our sins, but to bring salvation to all who are eagerly waiting for Him.

Are You Washed in the Blood of the Lamb?

On the ledge of the roof of the ancient and beautiful chapel of the Werden an der Ruhr, in Germany, stands a carved stone lamb. A clergyman relates its history, as he heard it

when he visited the spot in 1865. One day, many years ago, a workman, while making some repairs on the roof, slipped and fell to the ground. Some soft substance received the weight of his body below, and broke his fall. It was a poor little lamb that had wandered near the church and was cropping the scanty grass. This circumstance saved his life, for he escaped with the mere fright, and with not so much as a finger broken. But the poor lamb was killed by his heavy fall upon it. So out of pure gratitude, the man had the stone lamb carved and set up a lasting memento of his escape from so fearful a death, and of what he owed to the poor lamb.

- Rev. E.S. Lorenz, A.M., *Gospel Worker's Treasury: Hymn & Revival Anecdotes*, W.J. Sheuey, 1887.

Bonus Goodies

The Angel of the Lord: Pre-incarnate Appearances of Christ, Christophany, - R.C. Sproul
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wTa6HVmG8MA>

Goodbye Local Church? - John Benton (London Seminary)
<https://www.londonseminary.org/goodbye-local-church/>

The Counsel and Care of the Elderly - Nicholas Batzig
<https://www.feedingonchrist.com/blog/post/the-counsel-and-care-of-the-elderly>

More Verses, Quotes, Excerpts, & Extras

Hebrews 9:1-28 (NLT)

1 That first covenant between God and Israel had regulations for worship and a place of worship here on earth. **2** There were two rooms in that Tabernacle. In the first room were a lampstand, a table, and sacred loaves of bread on the table. This room was called the Holy Place. **3** Then there was a curtain, and behind the curtain was the second room called the Most Holy Place. **4** In that room were a gold incense altar and a wooden chest called the Ark of the Covenant, which was covered with gold on all sides. Inside the Ark were a gold jar containing manna, Aaron's staff that sprouted leaves, and the stone tablets of the covenant. **5** Above the Ark were the cherubim of divine glory, whose wings stretched out over the Ark's cover, the place of atonement. But we cannot explain these things in detail now. **6** When these things were all in place, the priests regularly entered the first room as they performed their religious duties. **7** But only the high priest ever entered the Most Holy Place, and only once a year. And he always offered blood for his own sins and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. **8** By these regulations the Holy Spirit revealed that the entrance to the Most Holy Place was not freely open as long as the Tabernacle and the system it represented were still in use. **9** This is an illustration pointing to the present time. For the gifts and sacrifices that the priests offer are not able to cleanse the consciences of the people who bring them. **10** For that old system deals only with food and drink and various cleansing ceremonies--physical regulations that were in effect only until a better system could be established. **11** So Christ has now become the High Priest over all the good things that have come. He has entered that greater, more perfect Tabernacle in heaven, which was

not made by human hands and is not part of this created world. **12** With His own blood--not the blood of goats and calves--He entered the Most Holy Place once for all time and secured our redemption forever. **13** Under the old system, the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer could cleanse people's bodies from ceremonial impurity. **14** Just think how much more the blood of Christ will purify our consciences from sinful deeds so that we can worship the living God. For by the power of the eternal Spirit, Christ offered Himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for our sins. **15** That is why He is the One who mediates a new covenant between God and people, so that all who are called can receive the eternal inheritance God has promised them. For Christ died to set them free from the penalty of the sins they had committed under that first covenant. **16** Now when someone leaves a will, it is necessary to prove that the person who made it is dead. **17** The will goes into effect only after the person's death. While the person who made it is still alive, the will cannot be put into effect. **18** That is why even the first covenant was put into effect with the blood of an animal. **19** For after Moses had read each of God's commandments to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, along with water, and sprinkled both the book of God's law and all the people, using hyssop branches and scarlet wool. **20** Then he said, "This blood confirms the covenant God has made with you." **21** And in the same way, he sprinkled blood on the Tabernacle and on everything used for worship. **22** In fact, according to the law of Moses, nearly everything was purified with blood. For without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness. **23** That is why the Tabernacle and everything in it, which were copies of things in heaven, had to be purified by the blood of animals. But the real things in heaven had to be purified with far better sacrifices than the blood of animals. **24** For Christ did not enter into a holy place made with human hands, which was only a copy of the true one in heaven. He entered into heaven itself to appear now before God on our behalf. **25** And He did not enter heaven to offer Himself again and again, like the high priest here on earth who enters the Most Holy Place year after year with the blood of an animal. **26** If that had been necessary, Christ would have had to die again and again, ever since the world began. But now, once for all time, He has appeared at the end of the age to remove sin by His own death as a sacrifice. **27** And just as each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment, **28** so also Christ was offered once for all time as a sacrifice to take away the sins of many people. He will come again, not to deal with our sins, but to bring salvation to all who are eagerly waiting for Him.

Hebrews 10:1-39 (NLT)

1 The old system under the law of Moses was only a shadow, a dim preview of the good things to come, not the good things themselves. The sacrifices under that system were repeated again and again, year after year, but they were never able to provide perfect cleansing for those who came to worship. **2** If they could have provided perfect cleansing, the sacrifices would have stopped, for the worshipers would have been purified once for all time, and their feelings of guilt would have disappeared. **3** But instead, those sacrifices actually reminded them of their sins year after year. **4** For it is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. **5** That is why, when Christ came into the world, He said to God, "You did not want animal sacrifices or sin offerings. But You have given Me a body to offer. **6** You were not pleased with burnt offerings or other offerings for sin. **7** Then I said, 'Look, I have come to do Your will, O

God--as is written about Me in the Scriptures.” **8** First, Christ said, “You did not want animal sacrifices or sin offerings or burnt offerings or other offerings for sin, nor were You pleased with them” (though they are required by the law of Moses). **9** Then He said, “Look, I have come to do Your will.” He cancels the first covenant in order to put the second into effect. **10** For God’s will was for us to be made holy by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all time. **11** Under the old covenant, the priest stands and ministers before the altar day after day, offering the same sacrifices again and again, which can never take away sins. **12** But our High Priest offered Himself to God as a single sacrifice for sins, good for all time. Then He sat down in the place of honor at God’s right hand. **13** There He waits until His enemies are humbled and made a footstool under His feet. **14** For by that one offering He forever made perfect those who are being made holy. **15** And the Holy Spirit also testifies that this is so. For He says, **16** “This is the new covenant I will make with My people on that day, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.” **17** Then He says, “I will never again remember their sins and lawless deeds.” **18** And when sins have been forgiven, there is no need to offer any more sacrifices. **19** And so, dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven’s Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. **20** By His death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place. **21** And since we have a great High Priest who rules over God’s house, **22** let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting Him. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ’s blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water. **23** Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep His promise. **24** Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. **25** And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of His return is drawing near. **26** Dear friends, if we deliberately continue sinning after we have received knowledge of the truth, there is no longer any sacrifice that will cover these sins. **27** There is only the terrible expectation of God’s judgment and the raging fire that will consume His enemies. **28** For anyone who refused to obey the law of Moses was put to death without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. **29** Just think how much worse the punishment will be for those who have trampled on the Son of God, and have treated the blood of the covenant, which made us holy, as if it were common and unholy, and have insulted and disdained the Holy Spirit who brings God’s mercy to us. **30** For we know the One who said, “I will take revenge. I will pay them back.” He also said, “The Lord will judge His own people.” **31** It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God. **32** Think back on those early days when you first learned about Christ. Remember how you remained faithful even though it meant terrible suffering. **33** Sometimes you were exposed to public ridicule and were beaten, and sometimes you helped others who were suffering the same things. **34** You suffered along with those who were thrown into jail, and when all you owned was taken from you, you accepted it with joy. You knew there were better things waiting for you that will last forever. **35** So do not throw away this confident trust in the Lord. Remember the great reward it brings you! **36** Patient endurance is what you need now, so that you will continue to do God’s will. Then you will receive all that He has promised. **37** “For in just a little while, the Coming One will come and not delay. **38** And My righteous ones will live by faith. But I will take no pleasure in anyone who

turns away.” **39** But we are not like those who turn away from God to their own destruction. We are the faithful ones, whose souls will be saved.

Romans 3:21-26 (ESV)

21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— **22** the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: **23** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, **24** and are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, **25** whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in His divine forbearance He had passed over former sins. **26** It was to show His righteousness at the present time, so that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

1 Peter 1:17-21 (ESV)

17 And if you call on Him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, **18** knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, **19** but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. **20** He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you **21** who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

Revelation 5:11-14 (ESV)

11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, **12** saying with a loud voice: *“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!”* **13** And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: *“Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!”* **14** Then the four living creatures said, “Amen!” And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.

Quote by Oswald Chambers

"We trample the blood of the Son of God if we think we are forgiven because we are sorry for our sins. The only explanation for the forgiveness of God and for the unfathomable depth of His forgetting is the death of Jesus Christ. Our repentance is merely the outcome of our personal realization of the atonement which He has worked out for us. It does not matter who or what we are; there is absolute reinstatement into God by the death of Jesus Christ and by no other way, not because Jesus Christ pleads, but because He died. It is not earned, but accepted. All the pleading which deliberately refuses to recognize the Cross is of no avail; it is battering at a door other than the one that Jesus has opened. Our Lord does not pretend we are all right when

we are all wrong. The atonement is a propitiation whereby God, through the death of Jesus, makes an unholy man holy."

Justification Only Through Atonement

For several generations the Edinburgh review has carried on its cover the Latin epigram, "The Judge is condemned when the guilty is acquitted." The guilty is sometimes acquitted in human courts, but this never happens in the Divine Court. There, if man is justified, or, to put it in plain present-day English, acquitted or found not guilty, it is in strict harmony with the law of right, of justice. How, then, shall mortal man be just with God? Man is a sinner. The penalty upon sin as announced by God is death, eternal death, spiritual death; and God will by no means clear the guilty. The only way whereby God can remain Just, and still become the Justifier of the guilty, is through the atoning death of Jesus Christ. - Author Unknown.

The Atonement

The Reformation Study Bible

An atonement is a reconciliation of alienated parties, the restoration of a broken relationship. Atonement is accomplished by making amends, blotting out offenses, and giving satisfaction for wrongs done.

According to Scripture every person sins and needs to make atonement, but lacks the power and resources for doing so. We have offended our Creator, whose nature it is to hate sin (Jer. 44:4; Hab. 1:13) and to punish it (Ps. 5:4-6; Rom. 1:18; 2:5-9). Those who have sinned cannot be accepted by and do not have fellowship with God unless atonement is made. Since there is sin in even the best actions of sinful creatures, anything we do in the hope of making amends can only increase our guilt or worsen our situation, for the *"sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord"* (Prov. 15:8). There is no way to establish one's own righteousness before God (Job 15:14-16; Is. 64:6; Rom. 10:2, 3); it simply cannot be done.

But against this background of human hopelessness, Scripture reveals the grace and mercy of God, who Himself provides the atonement that sin has made necessary. God's amazing grace is the focus of Biblical faith; from Genesis to Revelation it shines out with breathtaking glory.

When God brought Israel out of Egypt, He set up as part of the covenant relationship a system of sacrifices that had at its heart the shedding of the blood of animals *"to make atonement for your souls"* (Lev. 17:11). These sacrifices were "typical"; that is, as "types" they pointed forward to something better. Sins were forgiven when sacrifices were faithfully offered, but it was not the blood of animals that blotted out sins (Heb. 10:4). It was the blood of the "antitype," Jesus Christ, whose death on the cross atoned for sins already committed, as well as sins that would be committed afterwards (Rom. 3:25, 26; 4:3-8; Heb. 9:11-15).

According to the New Testament, Christ's blood was shed as a sacrifice (Rom. 3:25; 5:9; Eph. 1:7; Rev. 1:5). Christ redeemed His people by means of a ransom; His death was the price that freed us from guilt and from enslavement to sin (Rom. 3:24; Gal. 4:4, 5; Col. 1:14). In Christ's death, God reconciled us to Himself, overcoming His own hostility that our sins provoked (Rom. 5:10; 2 Cor. 5:18, 19; Col. 1:20-22). The Cross propitiated God. That is to say, it quenched His wrath against us by expiating our sins, and so removing them from His sight (Rom. 3:25; Heb. 2:17; 1 John 2:2; 4:10). The Cross had this effect because in His suffering Christ assumed our identity and endured the retributive judgment due to us, that is, *"the curse of the law"* (Gal. 3:13). He suffered as our substitute, with the damning record of our transgressions nailed by God to His cross as the list of crimes for which He died (Col. 2:14; cf. Matt. 27:37; Is. 53:4-6; Luke 22:37).

- Theological note, Romans 3, *The Reformation Study Bible*, Reformation Trust, p.1617.

What is Substitutionary Atonement?

By S. Michael Houdmann

<https://www.gotquestions.org/substitutionary-atonement.html>

Question: *"What is the substitutionary atonement?"*

Answer: The substitutionary atonement refers to Jesus Christ dying as a substitute for sinners. The Scriptures teach that all men are sinners ([Romans 3:9-18, 23](#)). The penalty for our sinfulness is death. [Romans 6:23](#) reads, *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

That verse teaches us several things. Without Christ, we are going to die and spend an eternity in hell as payment for our sins. Death in the Scriptures refers to a "separation." Everyone will die, but some will live in heaven with the Lord for eternity, while others will live a life in hell for eternity. The death spoken of here refers to the life in hell. However, the second thing this verse teaches us is that eternal life is available through Jesus Christ. This is His substitutionary atonement.

Jesus Christ died in our place when He was crucified on the cross. We deserved to be the ones placed on that cross to die because we are the ones who live sinful lives. But Christ took the punishment on Himself in our place—He substituted Himself for us and took what we rightly deserved. *"God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God"* ([2 Corinthians 5:21](#)).

"He Himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed" ([1 Peter 2:24](#)). Here again we see that Christ took the sins we committed onto Himself to pay the price for us. A few verses later we read, *"For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit"* ([1 Peter 3:18](#)). Not only do these verses teach us about the substitute that Christ

was for us, but they also teach that He was the atonement, meaning He satisfied the payment due for the sinfulness of man.

One more passage that talks about the substitutionary atonement is [Isaiah 53:5](#). This verse talks about the coming Christ who was to die on the cross for our sins. The prophecy is very detailed, and the crucifixion happened just as it was foretold. *“But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed.”* Notice the substitution. Here again we see that Christ paid the price for us!

We can only pay the price of sin on our own by being punished and placed in hell for all eternity. But God’s Son, Jesus Christ, came to earth to pay the price of our sins. Because He did this for us, we now have the opportunity to not only have our sins forgiven, but to spend eternity with Him. In order to do this, we must place our faith in what Christ did on the cross. We cannot save ourselves; we need a substitute to take our place. The death of Jesus Christ is the substitutionary atonement.

Recommended Resource: [Making Sense of Salvation by Wayne Grudem](#)

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The Significance of Aaron's Rod

By S. Michael Houdmann

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Aaron-rod.html>

Question: *What was the significance of Aaron’s rod?*

Answer: Aaron’s rod, or staff, played an important part in God’s plan to lead the Israelites out of Egypt and into the Promised Land. In ancient Israelite culture, a rod was a symbol of authority. Shepherds used rods to guide and correct their flocks ([Psalm 23:4](#)). When God called the shepherd Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, He demonstrated His power by performing miracles using Moses’ rod ([Exodus 4:1–5](#); [Numbers 20:11](#)). God also chose Moses’ brother, [Aaron](#), to perform miracles with his own rod ([Exodus 7:19](#); [8:5](#), [16](#)).

Aaron’s rod was the one that turned into a snake in Pharaoh’s court; when the Egyptian magi also turned their staffs into snakes, the snake that had been Aaron’s rod swallowed theirs up ([Exodus 7:8–10](#)). It was Aaron’s rod that God used to turn the water of Egypt into blood ([Exodus 7:19–21](#)). And it was Aaron’s rod that summoned the [plagues](#) of the frogs ([Exodus 8:5–6](#)) and gnats (verses 16–17). After Moses and Aaron had led the Israelites out of captivity, God set apart Aaron and his sons as priests ([Exodus 28:1](#); [Numbers 18:1](#)). The rest of the Levites were to minister to the Lord in the tabernacle, offer sacrifices, and hear from God for the good of the whole nation.

The most famous story of Aaron's rod begins with a few of the Levites becoming disgruntled about the extra authority given to Moses and Aaron. In [Numbers 16](#), Korah, who was also a Levite, joined with two others, [Dathan](#) and Abiram, to incite a rebellion against Moses and Aaron. In verse 3 [Korah](#) says to Moses, "You have gone too far! The whole community of Israel has been set apart by the Lord, and he is with all of us. What right do you have to act as though you are greater than the rest of the Lord's people?" Because of this defiance of the Lord's authority, God caused the earth to open up and swallow these three men and their families (verses 28–33).

However, rather than submit to the Lord, the other tribal leaders joined the revolt. [Numbers 16:41](#) says, "But the very next morning the whole community of Israel began muttering again against Moses and Aaron, saying, 'You have killed the Lord's people!'" The Lord desired to wipe out the whole company, but Moses and Aaron fell on their faces and pleaded with Him not to destroy them. God relented and, instead, sent a plague throughout the company of rebellious Israel; the plague killed 14,700 of them (verse 49).

To put an end to the unrest, God once again used Aaron's rod for a miracle. God commanded Moses to have the leader of each tribe of Israel bring his rod or staff to the tent of meeting, with Aaron's rod representing the tribe of Levi. Each of the twelve leaders was to have his name inscribed on his rod. The Lord told Moses, "Buds will sprout on the staff belonging to the man I choose. Then I will finally put an end to the people's murmuring and complaining against you" ([Numbers 17:5](#)). They left their rods before the Lord, and in the morning "Aaron's staff, representing the tribe of Levi, had sprouted, budded, blossomed, and produced ripe almonds" (verse 8). Aaron's rod didn't just sprout buds; it brought forth flowers and fruit, a clear demonstration of the power of the One who gives life. Verse 10 says, "And the Lord said to Moses: 'Place Aaron's staff permanently before the Ark of the Covenant to serve as a warning to rebels. This should put an end to their complaints against me and prevent any further deaths.'"

[Hebrews 9:4](#) tells us that Aaron's rod remained in the [Ark of the Covenant](#) as a testimony of God's choice of Aaron and Moses to lead His people. Aaron's rod was also a reminder that God does not put up with rebellion against Himself or His chosen representatives on earth ([1 Corinthians 10:10](#)). Those who murmur, complain, and cause division within the Body of Christ are to be rebuked ([James 5:9](#); [1 Timothy 5:20](#); [2 Timothy 2:23](#)). God's plans on this earth are far beyond any single human being. He desires that we work together, in one accord, to obey Him and reflect His glory.

For Further Study

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