

# Atonement (Forgiveness): Purification (Cleansing) Offering



## SABBATH—OCTOBER 26

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** 2 Chronicles 33:12, 13; 2 Samuel 14:1–11; Leviticus 4:27–31; Jeremiah 17:1; Leviticus 10:16–18; Micah 7:18–20.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “The blood of Christ set you free from an empty way of life. That way of life was handed down to you by your own people long ago. You know that you were not bought with things that can pass away, like silver or gold. Instead, you were bought by the priceless blood of Christ. He is a perfect lamb. He doesn't [does not] have any flaws at all” (1 Peter 1:18, 19, NlrV).

**THE SACRIFICIAL SYSTEM<sup>1</sup> IS THE BEST KNOWN PART OF THE EARTHLY SANCTUARY<sup>2</sup> SERVICE.** That is because it is the part that points directly to Christ's sacrifice. The blood of the animal that died for the sinner becomes a symbol for the blood of Christ, who died for us.

This week we will study several ideas about the “purification [cleansing] offering” (also called “sin offering”). This was God's chosen way of helping us to understand better how He is bringing us back to Himself through the only true sacrifice, Jesus Christ. At times, this lesson uses the words *purification offering* instead of *sin offering* to avoid wrong ideas. For example, giving birth was thought of as a sin because the new mother had to present a “sin offering” (Leviticus 12:5–8). But this sacrifice was really a *purification offering* and not a sacrifice made because of sin.

1. sacrificial system—the ritual (practice) of killing animals in the sanctuary as a symbol of the forgiveness of sins.

2. earthly sanctuary service—the offering of animal blood as a payment for sin. The animal blood was offered in place of the sinner's blood. The service represented Jesus' dying on the cross for our sins. After Jesus died, this service was not needed.

**SUNDAY—OCTOBER 27****SIN AND MERCY  
(Deuteronomy 25:1, 2)**

Anyone who knows the Lord can say that sin separates us from God. The good news is that the Lord has started a system to heal the separation caused by sin and to bring us back to Him. At the center of this system is the sacrifice.

There are three kinds of sin described in the Old Testament. Each kind depends on the sinner's level of knowledge of the sin at the time he or she did the sin: for example, was it (1) unplanned sin, (2) planned sin, or (3) rebellious (against God) sin? The "purification offering" in Leviticus 4:1–5:13 was for unplanned sin and several cases of planned sin (Leviticus 5:1). An offering was available for these first two groups of sins. But there was more to be done for rebellious sin, the worst kind. Rebellious sin was done "in the face" of God, and the rebellious sinner deserved nothing less than to be cut off (Numbers 15:29–31). But it seems that God did forgive the worst kind of sins, such as the ones Manasseh<sup>3</sup> had done (read 2 Chronicles 33:12, 13).

**Read Deuteronomy 25:1, 2 and 2 Samuel 14:1–11. What does 2 Samuel 14:9 teach about mercy, justice, and guilt?**

Is God justified (right) in forgiving

the sinner? The sinner is unrighteous (not right) and should receive punishment (read Deuteronomy 25:1). What do you think?

The story of the woman of Tekoa shows the answer. The woman pretended to be a widow at Joab's request. Joab came up with a story about her two sons that he asked the woman to tell David. So, she went to King David and asked for his judgment. One son was supposedly killed by the other. Israelite law required the death of the murderer (Numbers 35:31). It should not matter if he was the only male left in the family. The woman pleaded with David (who served as judge) to let the guilty son go free.

Then she said, " 'No matter what you do, I and my family will take the blame for it. You and your royal family won't [will not] be guilty of doing anything wrong' " (2 Samuel 14:9, NIV). Both the woman and David understood that if the king decided to let the murderer go free, then the king himself would have to accept the guilt of the murderer and that his authority as judge would be in danger. The judge was responsible for what he decided. That is why the woman offered to take over this guilt herself.

In the same way, God takes over the guilt of sinners in order to forgive them. If we are to be forgiven, God Himself must accept our punishment. This is the legal reason why Christ had to die if we were to be saved.

3. Manasseh—King Hezekiah's son who became king after his father's death. Manasseh was one of the worst kings, but he repented (turned away from sin) at the close of his life.



God took the guilt of the sinner onto Himself.

## MONDAY—OCTOBER 28

### LAYING ON OF HANDS<sup>4</sup> (Leviticus 4:27–31)

**Read Leviticus 4:27–31. What usual religious activities were done along with the sacrifice?**

The goal of the offering was: (1) to remove sin and guilt from the sinner, (2) to transfer (move) responsibility to the sanctuary,<sup>5</sup> and (3) to let the sinner leave forgiven and cleansed. (In very few cases one could bring a certain amount of fine flour as a purification offering. This purification offering was bloodless. But everyone knew that “[w]ithout the spilling of blood, no one can be forgiven” [Hebrews 9:22, NIV].)

The service itself included the laying on of hands, the death of the

animal, blood, the burning of fat, and the eating of the animal’s flesh. The sinner who brought the offering was given forgiveness, but only after the blood service.

A very important part of this service was the laying on of hands (Leviticus 1:4; Leviticus 4:4; Leviticus 16:21). This was done so that “the LORD will accept it in place of him. It will pay for his sin” (Leviticus 1:4, NIV). The offering was good only for the one who put his hands on the animal’s head. According to Leviticus 16:21, the laying on of hands would come with a confession of sin. This would show that sin would move from the sinner to the innocent animal.

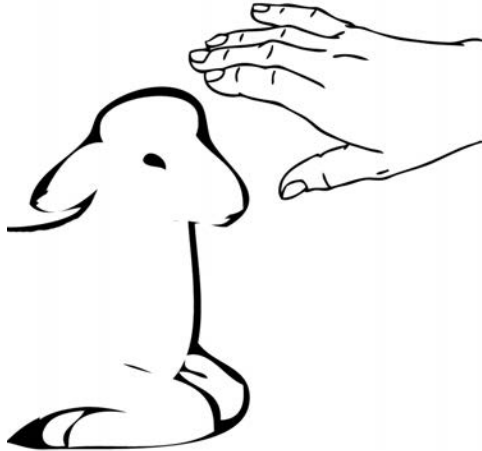
The killing was a part of any animal offering. After the animal was killed, the spilled blood was used to make atonement on the altar (Leviticus 17:11). Because the sins had been moved to the animal by the laying on of hands, we should understand that the animal died as a substitute for the sinner. The animal died in the sinner’s place. This may explain why the act of killing the animal had to be done by the guilty sinner, not by the priest.

**Next time you are tempted to sin, picture Jesus dying on the cross. Then see yourself putting your hands on His head and confessing your sins over Him. How might this “picture” help you to understand**

4. laying on of hands—a ceremony (service) in which a repenting sinner placed his hands upon the head of an animal about to be killed for his sins. The sinner prayed for forgiveness and the cleansing of his or her sins.

5. sanctuary—the home of God on earth in early Bible times. Here the high priest offered prayers and the blood of animals to God for the sins of the people of Israel.

**just what it cost in order to be forgiven? How could this idea help you to not fall into that temptation?**



**The sinner laid his hands on the live offering to show that his sin moved to the innocent animal.**

## **TUESDAY—OCTOBER 29**

### **TRANSFER (REMOVAL) OF SIN (Jeremiah 17:1)**

The laying on of hands and the death of the animal was done first. Then the next activity in the offering was the handling of the blood. The priest put the sacrificial blood on the horns of the altar. Because blood was involved, this service was connected with atonement (Leviticus 17:11). If the sinner was a common person or a leader, the blood was put on the altar of burnt offering (Leviticus 4:25, 30). If the high priest or the entire group was the sinner, the blood was put on the inner altar, the altar of incense (Leviticus 4:7, 18).

What did it mean to put blood on the horns of the altar? In this way, the blood was brought into God's pres-

ence. The horns were the highest points of the altar. This shows how important salvation is for the sinner.

Jeremiah 17:1 is very important for understanding what happens: the sin of Judah is carved "upon the tablet of their heart / And on the horns of their altars" (NASB). The verse is talking about the altars involved in the worship of idols. But the principle (important rule) remains the same: the altar showed the spiritual condition (state) of the people. Blood carried the guilt of sin. The blood put on the horns of the altar moved sin away from the sinner to the sanctuary. This is a very important truth to know. It helps us to understand the plan of salvation as shown in the earthly sanctuary service. This service symbolizes (stands for) the work of Christ in heaven for us.



**The blood on the horns of the altar showed that sin moved away from the sinner into the sanctuary.**

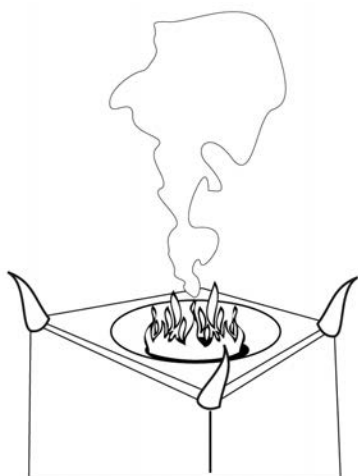
Because the blood carried sin, it also made the sanctuary "dirty." A good example of this is when the

blood of the purification offering was splashed on a robe by accident. The robe needed to be washed, not just anywhere, but “in a holy place” (Leviticus 6:27, NIV).

Finally, the burning of the fat on the altar showed that everything about the purification offering belonged to God (Leviticus 3:16).

These sacrifices symbolized the future death of Christ. Because of His death, our sin has been taken away from us, put on Him, and moved to the heavenly sanctuary.<sup>6</sup> This is a very important part of the plan of salvation.

**How does the sanctuary service help us to understand our full dependence on God for forgiveness of our sins? What comfort does this truth give you? At the same time, what important responsibilities follow for us? (Read 1 Peter 1:22.)**



**The burning of the fat showed that everything about the cleansing offering belonged to God.**

### WEDNESDAY—OCTOBER 30

#### ACCEPTING SIN (Leviticus 6:25, 26)

**Read Leviticus 6:25, 26; Leviticus 10:16–18. What important truth is shown here?**

By eating the offering in a holy place, the priest responsible for the service would “take away the guilt” (NIV) of the sinner. The meat of this offering was not just payment for the priests’ services. (If that were true, then Moses would not have been so angry with Aaron’s sons for not eating it.) Eating it was a very important part of the atonement.

How does the eating of the sacrifice help with atonement? Eating was required only of those offerings. In these offerings blood did not enter the Holy Place. The Bible clearly says that by eating the sacrifice the priests would “take away the guilt.” This would “make atonement” for the sinner. To carry the sinner’s guilt suggests that the sinner now goes free.

In the Hebrew, Exodus 34:7 says that God “carries iniquity [sin].” The same two Hebrew words are used in Leviticus 10:17. They show clearly that the act of the priest’s carrying the sin brings forgiveness to the sinner. Without that transfer (move), the sinner would have to carry his own sin (Leviticus 5:1). And that would lead to death (Romans 6:23).

The priest’s work of carrying another’s sin is exactly what Christ did for us. He died in our place. So, this means

6. heavenly sanctuary—the place in heaven where Jesus works as our High Priest before the throne of God.

that the priestly work at the earthly sanctuary symbolizes Christ's work for us. This is because He has taken upon Himself the guilt of our sins.

"The blessing comes because of pardon. Pardon comes through faith that the confessed sin is carried by the great Sin Bearer [Jesus]. So, from Christ come all our blessings. Jesus' death is an atoning [forgiving and cleansing] sacrifice for our sins. He is the great Substitute. Through Him we receive the mercy and favor of God. He also is the Creator, the Author, and the Finisher of our faith."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, volume 9, page 302.

**Imagine standing before God in judgment. What would you depend on—your good works, your Sabbath keeping, all the nice things you had done, and all the bad things you had not done? Do you really think this would be enough to make you right in front of a holy and perfect God? If not, what is your only hope in that judgment?**

#### **THURSDAY—OCTOBER 31**

#### **FORGIVENESS (Micah 7:18–20)**

**Read Micah 7:18–20. What picture of God do we find in these verses?**

The last three verses of the book of Micah focus on the relationship of God with His people. The verses

describe beautifully why God has no equal. Nothing or no one can match His forgiving love and grace.<sup>7</sup> Micah shows that the most wonderful part of God's character (who He is) is His willingness to forgive. Micah also focuses on (pays attention to) this point by explaining in many ways God's wonderful character (verse 18) and deeds (verses 19, 20). And these are explained in Exodus 34:6, 7, one of the most beloved descriptions in the Bible about the character of God.

It is interesting to see that several important words in Micah 7:18–20 are also used in the Servant Song in Isaiah 53. These verses show that forgiveness comes from the One who is suffering for the people (Jesus).

Sadly, not everyone will enjoy God's saving grace. God's forgiveness is not cheap or automatic. It requires loyalty. For example, those who have accepted God's grace act in almost the same ways as we see done in Micah 6:8, which is an important verse in the Bible. We must remember that God "delights in unchanging love" (Micah 7:18, NASB); so, He calls His people to "love kindness" (Micah 6:8, NASB). His people will copy God's character. Their lives will show His love, mercy, and kindness.

In the Bible, Micah 7:18–20 focuses on forgiveness. It is followed by Nahum 1:2, 3, with its focus on judgment. This shows the two parts of how God deals with us: (1) He forgives the people who repent; (2) He punishes the wicked. Both sides belong to

7. grace—God's gift of mercy and forgiveness that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

God. He is Savior and Judge. These two parts of God's character work together. A merciful God can also be a just (righteous) God. Knowing this, we can be sure of His love, of His forgiveness, and of His justice.

**Read Micah 6:8. What good is a confession of faith without these principles to show that a confession is true? Which is easier, to claim faith in Jesus or to live out that faith, as shown in Micah 6:8? How can you better do the second?**

### FRIDAY—NOVEMBER 1

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** Ellen G. White, "The Tabernacle [The House of God on Earth] and Its Services," pages 343–358, in *Patriarchs [Leaders and Forefathers] and Prophets [Special Messengers]*.

"Christ went to heaven to appear in front of God. Then Jesus pleaded His blood for repentant [sorrowful] believers. In the same way, the priest in the daily sanctuary service sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice in the Holy Place for the sinner's sake.

"The blood of Christ was to free the sorrowful sinner from the curse of the law. But it was not to cancel the sin. It would stand on record in the sanctuary until the final atonement [cleansing]. In the same way, the blood of the sin offering removed the sin from the sorrowful sinner. But it rested in the sanctuary until the Day of Atonement."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 357.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

❶ Some have argued that the whole idea of Jesus as our Substitute is unfair. Why should the innocent die in the place of the guilty? This is a truth that is very clearly taught in the Bible and is an important theme of the Bible. For this reason, how do we answer that charge? Would the "unfairness" of it all help us to better understand the grace and forgiveness given to us? In what ways would this "unfairness" help to show just how great and merciful and loving our God really is?

❷ As a class, read Micah 6:8. What are we being told there? More important, how can we learn to follow this clear command? How do we learn to do all these things, such as to "walk humbly with your God"? What does that mean? How can the idea of walking humbly with God carry over into the idea of walking humbly with others?

❸ Think about what it means that the only way we could be saved was through the death of Jesus. What does this wonderful truth teach us about just how bad sin is? And why is working hard to save ourselves by our own works useless?

❹ In class, go over the last question at the end of Wednesday's lesson. Discuss your answers according to the gospel and according to what God has done for us so that we may be saved.