

Holy of Holies Housekeeping

By Roelf L. Ruffner

“What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.” (Hymn: “Nothing But the Blood” by Robert Lowry)

Imagine if you will, this picture: Around the year 1450 B.C. an eighty-three year old Hebrew man named Aaron carefully washes his body in the Israelite tabernacle. He then puts on his High Priestly garments of linen and places his turban on his head. He is about to enter into the “most Holy Place” of the tabernacle or the “Holy of Holies” to offer the blood of atonement for his sins and the nation of Israel’s sins before the Mercy Seat of the Ark of the Covenant. (The Mercy Seat was located on the lid of the Ark where the two cherubim faced each other.) He carries with him the blood of a young bull and of a goat. It was to sanctify the Holy of Holies for the presence of God (Lev. 16:2). Why? The blood of a young bull and a goat had to be offered because Aaron, his family and his nation needed forgiveness of their sins in order to serve God. “For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul” (Lev. 17:11). He probably did this with a heavy heart because recently two of his sons, Nadab and Abihu, had used “strange” (unauthorized) fire to burn incense to God in the tabernacle. They had been executed by God with fire coming forth from the Lord for violating the sanctity of that holy place (cf. Lev. 10:1-3).

For generations afterwards Israelite High Priests would go through this annual ceremony of sprinkling blood from the bull seven times before the Mercy Seat with their finger and then repeating the procedure using goat’s blood. This would continue for the next eight hundred and sixty four years until the year 586 B.C. when the Babylonians destroyed Solomon’s Temple and the Ark disappeared from history. That is approximately 12,096 drops of blood (There may have been an interruption of this ceremony during the reigns of the evil Judean Kings Manasseh and his son Amon – 1 Kings 21.) No one was allowed into the Holy of Holies except the High Priest and then only once a year. One can only imagine the accumulated blood on that beautiful golden chest, its magnificent golden cherubims on the Ark’s lid and on the floor. Of course no cleaning lady with Bonomi and a brush could come and clean up the mess because if you touched the Ark you died. To the high priests who entered in year after

year that blood stained Ark and floor must have had profound meaning. Perhaps they thought: “Once again I must make atonement for my sins and the sins of Israel. Will this continue on forever?” It was obvious that something better was needed to clean up this messy reminder of sinful humanity. A remission or removal of the stain of sin was needed. “Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” (Micah 6:7).

Only a divine sacrifice of blood could accomplish this. Thanks be to God that He provided such a sacrifice! “But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God” (Heb. 10:3-7).

The willing participant in this sacrifice, Jesus Christ, is our High Priest (Heb. 3:1). He did not have any sins to be forgiven of. Yet He willingly and lovingly provided His own blood, not the blood of bulls and goats, for my sins and the sins of the world. He spiritually cleaned up that mess before God’s throne once and for all! “For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (Heb. 9:24-26).

Dear reader, have you come in contact with the atoning blood of Christ and had your sins remitted? This happens when one obeys the Gospel and is baptized for the remission of sins. “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). When we are buried with Christ in the watery grave of baptism, we come into contact with that cleansing blood (Rom.6:4; Col. 2:12). Nothing else can cleanse us of our sins.