

“Is It Finished. . .?”

Objections to the Adventist Teaching of an Ongoing Work of Atonement after the Cross

1. Objection is raised against the Adventist teaching of the dual atonement on account of the supposition that the Lord Jesus had made a full and complete work of atonement on the cross; that Jesus by one sacrifice obtained eternal redemption at the cross (**Heb 9:12**), therefore, the Adventist teaching of another atonement in the heavenly sanctuary in 1844 is redundant and unnecessary
 - a. a fabrication of Ellen White, a “face saving device” to explain away the disappointment of 1844 (in words of Donald Barnhouse);
2. The objection against the Adventist teaching on the dual atonement of Christ is mainly leveled against Ellen White's writings which are thought to be contrary to the Bible: hence, Ellen White will have to be quoted at length in this study to prove that her writings do not contradict the Bible;
 - a. Objectors quote Ellen White below to show that she contradicts the plain teaching of the Bible that believers "have NOW received the atonement" (**Rom 5:11**) in view of Christ's completed work of atonement on the cross;

As the priest entered the most holy once a year to cleanse the earthly sanctuary, so Jesus entered the most holy of the heavenly, at the end of the 2300 days of Daniel 8, in 1844, **to make a final atonement** for all who could be benefited by His mediation, and thus to cleanse the sanctuary. **EW 253.**

- b. Objectors quote Ellen White below to show that her teaching of Christ making another atonement in 1844 makes the atonement Christ made at Calvary **INCOMPLETE**;

Important truths concerning the atonement were taught the people by this yearly service. In the sin offerings presented during the year, a substitute had been accepted in the sinner's stead; **but the blood of the victim had not made full atonement** for the sin. **PP 355-356.**

The intercession of Christ in man's behalf in the sanctuary above is as essential to the plan of salvation as was His death upon the cross. By His death He began that work which after His resurrection He ascended **to complete** in heaven. **GC 489.**

- c. Objectors quote Ellen White below to show that her teaching that sins are not cancelled in forgiveness is contrary to the Scriptures and diminishes the efficacy of the blood of Christ shed at Calvary (**Ps 103:12; Mic 7:19**);

The blood of Christ, while it was to release the repentant sinner from the condemnation of the law, was not to cancel the sin; it would stand on record in the sanctuary until the final atonement; so in the type the blood of the sin offering removed the sin from the penitent, but it rested in the sanctuary until the Day of Atonement. **PP 357.**

3. Indeed, if everything needed to save man was achieved at the cross and atonement was completed there as objectors claim, then it makes the post-crucifixion High Priestly ministration of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary with an ongoing work of making atonement totally unnecessary; it also makes the Seventh-day Adventist denomination a farce for fabricating a faulty sanctuary theology based on a phony atonement in 1844;

Paul versus the Objectors

4. If Jesus had failed to make a FULL and COMPLETE sacrificial atonement at the cross, believers would be in jeopardy every day and the plan of salvation is not guaranteed; Jesus' High Priestly ministration would not even be possible without the blood of the atonement;
5. **FOR CONSIDERATION:** If Jesus made a full and final atonement at the cross and thus completed the work of redemption as objectors teach, then what do we do with the following arguments of Paul's that seem to teach otherwise?
 - a. Did Paul just diminish the work of atonement Jesus supposedly accomplished at the cross by saying that He had to be made like unto His brethren in order that he can be a faithful and merciful High Priest **to make atonement** for His people? **Heb 2:17, NIV**; isn't this text clearly a reference his ministration in the heavenly sanctuary after His ascension and an ongoing work of atonement there?

“We have now received the **atonement**” (**Rom 5:11**) should be properly translated “We have now received the **reconciliation**;” the Greek word “kattalasso” or “katallage” means reconciliation and is translated as such in **Rom 5:10**; in **Rom 5:11** however, the verse in question, it is translated without warrant as “atonement;”

The word “atonement” in the Greek is “hilasterion” or “hilasmos” which is also translated as “propitiation” in the New testament (**Rom 3:25**); a form of this Greek word is used in **Heb 2:17** and incorrectly translated as “reconciliation in KJV;” the NIV translates it correctly though as “atonement;”

- b. Why does Paul make the argument that Christ also needed to be resurrected or else the believer is still in his sins? If all that was needed to save man from sin was the death of Christ, why does Paul include the resurrection of Christ as being vital in man's salvation? **1 Cor. 15:17-18.**
 - c. Why does Jesus have to be raised again for our justification, if justification along with eternal redemption, was already achieved for man at the cross? **Rom 4:25.** Isn't this verse

also clearly pointing to the work of Jesus as Advocate and Intercessor in the heavenly sanctuary? (1 Tim 2:1; Zech 6:12-13; Rom 5:1; Heb 7:25)

- d. Did Paul just diminish the efficacy of the blood Jesus shed at Calvary by saying that there more salvation to be achieved apart from that achieved through the death of Christ? Isn't the life Paul speaks of here clearly points to the life of Christ after He resurrected from the dead, during which time also He ascended on high and sat down at the right hand of God to intercede in man's behalf? **Rom 5:10; Heb 7:25; Heb 8:1.**
- e. Why does Paul in the book of Hebrews, constantly point to Christ's High Priestly ministrations in the heavenly sanctuary, if atonement, justification, reconciliation and eternal salvation were completely and fully obtained and received at the cross? Shouldn't Paul be focusing instead on the cross? Could it be that Paul and Ellen White truly understood something the objectors do not:

The intercession of Christ in man's behalf in the sanctuary above is as essential to the plan of salvation as was His death upon the cross. By His death He began that work which after His resurrection He ascended **to complete** in heaven. **GC 489.**

The Key That Unlocks the Meaning of the Atonement

- 6. To correctly understand the nature and scope of the atonement, one needs to study it in the light of the sanctuary service; after all, "**atonement**" is sanctuary service vocabulary and "**making atonement**" is the very essence and lifeblood of the sanctuary service;
- 7. Two important aspects of the atonement surface when seen in the light of the sanctuary service:
 - a. The atonement process goes beyond the death of the sacrifice; that was just the beginning, or the first step in the atonement process;
 - b. The work of atonement has an **objective** aspect and a **subjective** aspect;
 - i. the **objective** aspect of the atonement refers to what the sacrifice and priest did (together) in behalf of the sinner, whereas
 - ii. the **subjective** aspect of the atonement has to do with the application or administering of the merits of the blood of the atonement for the sinner, resulting in the forgiveness of his sins;
- 8. Failing to see the work of atonement within the framework of the sanctuary service naturally results in an overly simplistic view of it, such as what the objectors have because they will not approach the atonement in connection with the sanctuary service;

The Atonement Process

- 9. The work of atonement goes beyond the shedding of the blood of the sacrifice and has greater objectives than just the forgiveness of sins:
 - a. **STEP 1:** an animal sacrifice is accepted and its blood shed **to make atonement** for sin (**Lev 1:4; Lev 17:11; Rom 6:23; Heb 9:23**); this foreshadows the death of Christ on the cross in 31 AD;

b. **STEP 2:** The priest brings the blood of the sacrifice into the sanctuary and proceeds **to make an atonement** for the forgiveness of sin; it was not enough for the sacrifice to die; (**Lev 4:27-31**); this foreshadows the High Priestly ministration of Christ at the right hand of God in the heavenly sanctuary after His ascension, where He continually **makes atonement** for the justification of His people (**Heb 2:17; Heb 9:12; Zech 6:12-13; Heb 8:1; Rom 4:25**, etc.).

c. **STEP 3:** The priest **makes an atonement** to bear the sin of the congregation; both the sanctuary and the priests are defiled in the process (**Lev 10:18; Num 18:1**).

d. **STEP 4:** Aaron **makes an atonement** to cleanse the sanctuary, the priesthood and the congregation at the end of the year on the Day of Atonement (**Lev 16:30-33**).

e. **STEP 5:** Aaron **makes an atonement** to move the sins from the sanctuary to the head of the scapegoat to rid the camp forever of sin (**Lev 16:10**).

10. Paul says all of these "served as examples and shadows of heavenly things" (**Heb 8:5**)

11. Notice then that the 5-step atonement process listed above did not end with the death of the sacrifice; this was just the beginning! Atonement was made continuously throughout the year, until sin was taken out of the camp at the end of the year;

12. Notice also that Ellen White is consistent with the broad and comprehensive Biblical model of the atonement, whereas her critics and objectors are not, because they only see a tiny fraction of the work of atonement:

The people of Israel praised God at the Feast of Tabernacles, as they called to mind His mercy in their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt and His tender care for them during their pilgrim life in the wilderness. They rejoiced also in the consciousness of pardon and acceptance, through the service of the day of atonement, just ended. But when the ransomed of the Lord shall have been safely gathered into the heavenly Canaan, forever delivered from the bondage of the curse, under which "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Romans 8:22), they will rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. **Christ's great work of atonement for men will then have been completed, and their sins will have been forever blotted out. PP 542.**

The Scapegoat: Jesus Or Satan?

13. Objectors teach that the scapegoat points to Jesus as Sin-bearer and faults Seventh-day Adventists for teaching that the scapegoat points to Satan;

14. Consider the following points:

- a. The scapegoat was "**presented alive before the Lord**" (**Lev 16:10**); it was not sacrificed; its blood was not shed like that of the Lord's goat; instead it is led into the wilderness to die of itself; therefore the scapegoat cannot properly represent Christ in His sacrificial dying;
- b. "**To make an atonement with him**" (**Lev 16:10**) as opposed to "**make atonement for him**" in the case of the sin and trespass offerings (**Lev 4:20, 31, 35; Lev 5:10**); "**for him**" or "**for his sin**," meaning the animal acted as the sinner's substitute which took the penalty of his sin upon itself;

- c. This is not so in the case of the scapegoat; the scapegoat is not acting the sinner's sin-bearer or substitute; "**make atonement with him**," means the scapegoat makes atonement with its own blood; this is the position the wicked will find themselves in when they are thrown in the lake of fire; the wicked will make atonement "with themselves" (with their own blood) in the lake of fire; no one will make atonement "for their sins;" Satan ultimately is responsible for the sins of the redeemed and he himself makes atonement for their sins with his own blood in the lake of fire;

The Objective and Subjective Aspects of the Atonement

15. The work of atonement must also be understood both in its OBJECTIVE and SUBJECTIVE aspects in order to correctly grasp its meaning:
16. IMPORTANT: The **objective** aspect of the atonement consisted of:
 - a. the animal bearing the sin of the sinner and being sacrificed in his behalf;
 - b. the priest bringing the blood of the atonement into the sanctuary and making atonement to forgive the sin of the sinner;
 - c. both were necessary to make atonement for sin
17. These functions foreshadowed the work of Christ both as **Sacrifice** and **High Priest** in the heavenly sanctuary;
18. Jesus cried "**It is finished**" at the cross primarily because His work as Sacrifice had been completed (**John 19:30**);

"The great sacrifice had been made. . ." **DA 756**

"the great work of redemption had now been accomplished. . ." **DA 758.**

19. The death of Christ also brought the entire sacrificial system of the Jews to an end as prophesied in **Dan 9:27** ("in the midst of the week, he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease. . ."); this is why he cried "It is finished." (See also **DA 757**)
20. His work making atonement as High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary would begin after His ascension and inauguration (**Heb 1:9**); following the type, Jesus then takes His own blood with Him into the heavenly sanctuary just as the priests brought the blood of the sin offerings into the sanctuary to make an atonement (**Heb 9:12**);
21. The **subjective** aspect of the atonement is just as important as the **objective** aspect of the atonement; it refers to the subjective experience of the sinner as the priest makes an application of the blood of the atonement to forgive the sinner;
22. **REMEMBER:** The objective part of the atonement does no one any good unless it is not applied subjectively to benefit the sinner:

- a. In the night of the Passover, it was not enough for the animal to be slain in order to be spared by the destroying angel; the blood also had to be applied or sprinkled on the doorposts; this has tremendous spiritual application and teaches us as to the nature of the atonement;
- b. In the typical sanctuary, it was not enough for the victim to be sacrificed in order to receive forgiveness for sin; forgiveness for sin was achieved only after the priest ministered the blood of the atonement by bringing it into the sanctuary and sprinkling it on the altar of incense and before the veil (**Lev 4:20, 31, 35**)

23. The objective aspect of the atonement—is both a COMPLETED and an ONGOING work

- a. **Completed** because the sacrificial dying of Jesus on the cross, which is crucial to the process of making atonement, has been accomplished; it is a FINISHED work which means that Jesus needs to be offered once (**Heb 9:26, 28; Heb 10:10, 12, 14**); His sacrifice was PERFECT, COMPLETE and FULL (**Heb 9:12**);
- b. **Ongoing** because Jesus continues the work of making atonement with His shed blood as High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary, and making applications of its merits for the forgiveness of sins; the high priestly ministration of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary follows the that of the type which begins with a daily service and a final ministration on the Day of Atonement:
 - i. **It is in this context that we are better able to understand why Ellen White wrote the following:**

As the priest entered the most holy once a year to cleanse the earthly sanctuary, so Jesus entered the most holy of the heavenly, at the end of the 2300 days of Daniel 8, in 1844, **to make a final atonement** for all who could be benefited by His mediation, and thus to cleanse the sanctuary. **EW 253.**

24. That Christ's sacrificial atonement at the cross was FULL and COMPLETE, Ellen White is in total agreement with:

Christ's sacrifice in behalf of man was full and complete. The condition of the atonement had been fulfilled. The work for which He had come to this world had been accomplished. He had won the kingdom. He had wrested it from Satan and had become heir of all things. **AA 29.**

He [Christ] planted the cross between Heaven and earth, and when the Father beheld the sacrifice of His Son, He bowed before it in recognition of its perfection. "It is enough," He said. "**The Atonement is complete.**"—**RH Sept. 24, 1901.**

The precious blood of Christ was of such value that a full atonement was made for the guilty soul, and this was to Paul his "glory." It was through the blood of Christ that he had redemption, even the forgiveness of sins. **ST, November 24, 1890.**

Not one sin has yet been blotted out from the book of God only through the faith of the believer who holds the beginning of his confidence firm unto the end. **We may have hope in anticipation of the full and entire atonement made;** for this is efficacious if sin is put away. **20MR 202.**

As the sin bearer, and priest and representative of man before God, He entered into the life of humanity, bearing our flesh and blood. The life is in the living, vital current of blood, which blood was given for the life of the world. **Christ made a full atonement**, giving His life as a ransom for us. . . **7BC 925.**

Children of the Lord, how precious is the promise! **How full the atonement of the Saviour for our guilt!** **4T 124.**

Christ had declared that he would be raised from the dead on the third day; and at the appointed time a mighty angel descended from heaven, parting the darkness from his track, and resting before the Saviour's tomb. "His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men." Brave soldiers, who had never been afraid of human power, were now as captives taken without sword or spear. The face they looked upon was not the face of mortal warrior; it was the face of a heavenly messenger, sent to relieve the Son of God from the debt for which he had become responsible, and for which **he had now made a full atonement.** . . **YI May 2, 1901.**

25. **IMPORTANT:** When the great work of atonement is finally over and the earth is free of every vestige of sin and sinners, Jesus will say "It is done." (**Rev 21:6**);

. . . Christ's great work of atonement for men will then have been completed, and their sins will have been forever blotted out. **PP 542.**

26. **Subjective reality of the atonement—an ONGOING work:** When the sinner turns to Jesus in repentance and faith, as High Priest He immediately applies the blood of the atonement in forgiveness and justification; also following the type, Jesus cleanses the sinner of all his sins and blots them out on the antitypical Day of Atonement;

27. Ellen White's comment below which objectors question, applies to the subjective aspect of the atonement, not to the objective aspect:

Incomplete subjective application of the atonement in the type

Important truths concerning the atonement were taught the people by this yearly service. In the sin offerings presented during the year, a substitute had been accepted in the sinner's stead; **but the blood of the victim had not made full atonement for the sin.** It had only provided a means by which the sin was transferred to the sanctuary. By the offering of blood, the sinner acknowledged the authority of the law, confessed the guilt of his transgression, and expressed his faith in Him who was to take away the sin of the world; but he was not entirely released from the condemnation of the law. On the Day of Atonement the high priest, having taken an offering for the congregation, went into the most holy place with the blood and sprinkled it upon the mercy seat, above the tables of the law. Thus the claims of the law, which demanded the life of the sinner, were satisfied. **PP 355-356.**

Incomplete subjective application of the atonement in the Antitype

The blood of Christ, while it was to release the repentant sinner from the condemnation of the law, **was not to cancel the sin**; it would stand on record in the sanctuary until the final atonement; so in the type the blood of the sin offering removed the sin from the penitent, but it rested in the sanctuary until the Day of Atonement. **PP 357**.

Conclusion

28. Just as the death of the sacrifice did not complete the cycle of the atonement in the sanctuary, the death of Christ on the cross was just the beginning of a long process of making atonement for sin;
29. **IMPORTANT:** The atonement Jesus made at Calvary was complete, meaning it was satisfactory and full, and need not be repeated; Jesus need not offer up Himself again; however, the work of the atonement was not completed at the cross; it will be completed only when sin no longer exists in the lives of the believers and when sinners no longer walk on earth;
30. The sanctuary service teaches us that the work of atonement began with the death of the sacrifice and ended only when sin was taken out of the camp at the end of the year;

31. Ellen White's inspiration will now be appreciated when it is realized that there is more to the work of making atonement than just the death of Christ on the cross:

The intercession of Christ in man's behalf in the sanctuary above is as essential to the plan of salvation as was His death upon the cross. By His death He began that work which after His resurrection He ascended to complete in heaven. **GC 489**.