

Evangelistic Newsletter to One and All Atonement, Forgiveness, and the Message of Easter.
Edition 22/2017

Dear readers

Holy Week, the week before Easter starts on the Sunday before Easter, which is also called Palm Sunday. At this time we Christians remember Jesus entering Jerusalem before his Crucifixion.



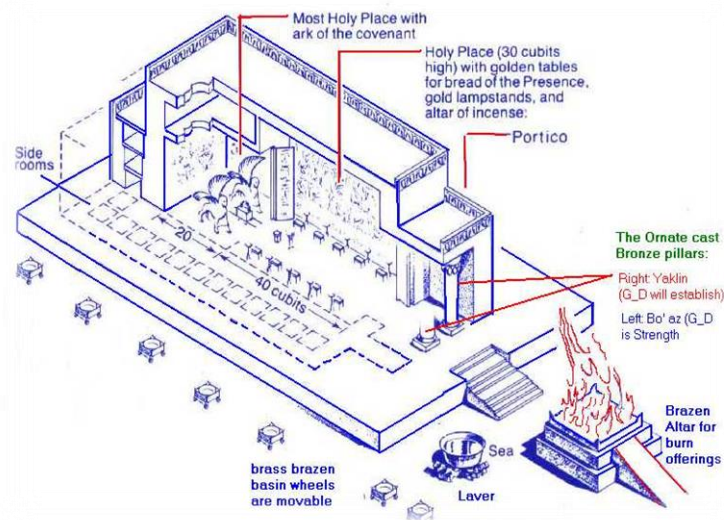
(Saint Julian's, 2017)

As Christians, we only wish good to each other and in the world. However, since time immemorial, we see that humans have inclination to destroy all the “good” that God made and we call this **evil**. A person committing an evil act against another person, causes an injustice and in order for this injustice to be addressed, the one who committed evil needs to make some kind of reparation in order to restore the relationship. Indirectly the impact of injustice and evil create mistrust and suspicion. Evil affects our relationship with one another and the state of that relationship.

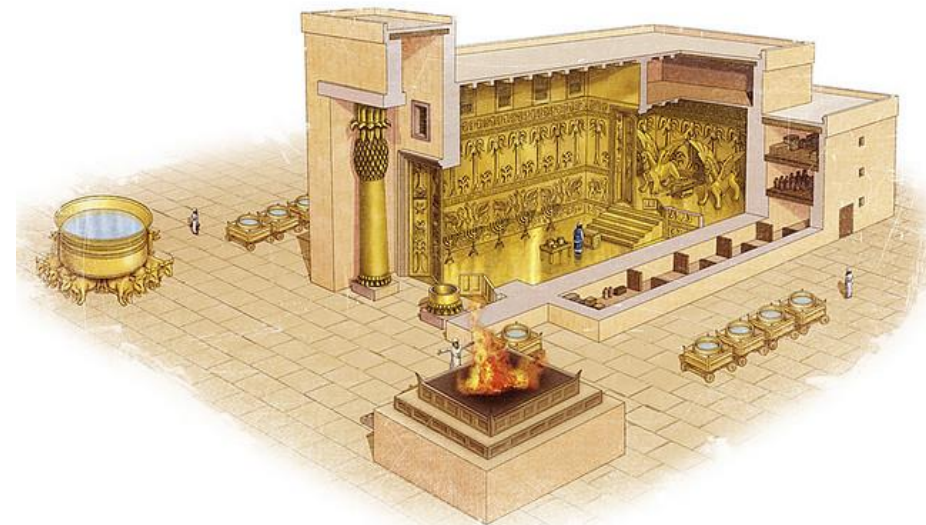
Some post-modernistic (you yourself choose what is right and truth) thinking today advocates that as God made it, He should fix it, thus stop and just remove all evil. However, the evil in the world is the same evil that is in us. So, if God is to get rid of all evil, he has to get rid of us. As our God created all, and created it very good, He created in, out and through love. God was not compelled to create, but did so out of love. There was no violence or evil in the creation, it was all created good. As faith and reason goes hand in hand, it would therefore be logical for us to reason that God would not kill that which he created out of love, especially the highest part of his creation, humans and to which he entrusted stewardship for the rest of creation.

However, as we see through the Bible, the need for forgiveness is a very important aspect of God's relationship with his creation and amongst the people themselves. In the Old Testament there was a possibility for the forgiveness of sin. Still there was nothing about the intercession of a single person between God and man, nothing about the fact that only one authority had the power to forgive sins (Apostle Flor, 2013).

In the Old Testament, during the time of temple worship, when a person sinned against someone else or against God, a sacrifice would be offered to cleanse the person concerned from the effects of that sin (NCRS, 2016). The blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled as a sign that purification had occurred because of the sacrifice (NCRS, 2016). Some of the sacrifice was taken as food for the priest who offered the sacrifice (NCRS, 2016). When the worshipper saw the priest eat the meat without being harmed it was regarded as a sign that God had accepted this act of repentance (NCRS, 2016).



(NCRS, 2016)



Solomon's Temple



(Wood, 2007).

Holy of Holies



Arc of the Covenant



Once a year, on *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement, the whole nation of Israel confessed their sin and asked for God's forgiveness and cleansing (NCRS, 2016). The high priest, dressed in white linen, first offered a sacrifice for his own sin and sacrifice for the sin of the people. The high priest went into the Holy of Holies, the most sacred part of the Temple (NCRS, 2016). He would then take a goat, known as the scapegoat, and after laying his hands on its head, he would send it out into the wilderness as a messenger to all that atonement has been established. On the Jewish Day of Atonement, it was the high priest who appeared as this person. At other times, before the building of the temple in Jerusalem, possibly in David's time, a prophet acted as mediator between God and man. The Day of Atonement was a powerful symbol of God's justice and grace for the Israelites.



2016). The high priest, dressed in white linen, first offered a sacrifice for his own sin and sacrifice for the sin of the people (NCRS, 2016). On this, the only day when the high priest would go into the Holy of Holies, he would sprinkle blood from the sacrifice in the inner sanctuary. He would then take a goat, known as the scapegoat, and after laying his hands on its head, he would send it out into the wilderness as a messenger to all that atonement has been established. On the Jewish Day of Atonement, it was the high priest who appeared as this person. At other times, before the building of the temple in Jerusalem, possibly in David's time, a prophet acted as mediator between God and man.



Once a year, the high priest, through the laying on of hands, transferred the sins of the Jewish people to an animal, a goat (NCRS, 2016; see also The Bible Project (TBP), 2015). "For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for Lord" (Leviticus 16:20-34). The goat with the blood on wandering in the wilderness was a sign for all that the people's sins had been taken away.



(scapegoat), and then drove it into the desert (NCRS, 2016; see also The Bible Project (TBP), 2015). "For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for Lord" (Leviticus 16:20-34). The goat with the blood on wandering in the wilderness was a sign for all that the people's sins had been taken away.

The biblical word for this is "atonement", which means to cover over someone's debt. As evil not only defiles people's relationship, but the whole of God's creation, the High Priest would wash away this defilement by means of sprinkling the blood of the sacrificed animal in the temple. Blood at this time was a symbol that represented "life". Through the sprinkling of blood, God was indirectly cleaning the consequences of evil, the defilement and pollution of everything in in society (TBP, 2015). This process is called purification. Now

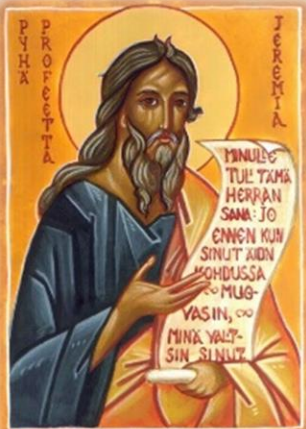
the people and the land can live in peace and harmony as all has been purified by God. Through this there is reconciliation between God and the Israelites and do they experience God's love and mercy. In being forgiven, the expectation was that the Israelites will respond to others with the same love and mercy. So when this does not happen, the prophet Isaiah states that God has considered that the animal sacrifices have become meaningless as they continued to live in evil.

Apostle Flor teaches that in antiquity, **blood** was considered the vessel of life as it was believed that the soul dwelt in blood (2013). Consequently, **Jews were not allowed to handle any blood when preparing meals,** "No soul of you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger that sojourneth among you eat blood" (Leviticus 17:12). This command had already been in force since the time when the laws were given to Moses. The punishment for breaking this law was **death** (Leviticus 17:14).



The spilling of blood was considered a terrible sin as we read in Leviticus 17:1, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood". In Deuteronomy 12:23 we further read, "Only be sure that thou eat not the blood for the blood is the life". The blood of sacrificial animals was not allowed to be shed; it was simply used to sprinkle the altar. "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:" (Leviticus 17:11).

Apostle Flor refers to when King David had committed a grave sin, the prophet Nathan reproached him for it. In those days one needed a lot of courage to do such a thing! It could have cost the prophet his life. But David acknowledged his guilt: "I have sinned against the Lord". So Nathan was able to say: "The Lord also hath put away thy sin" (2 Samuel 12). In Psalm 32, David raised a song of praise for the blessing of confession, and the forgiveness of sins (2013).



In the Old Testament Jeremiah too already referred to the remission of sins: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, ... for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." (Jeremiah 31: 31-34).

The prophet Isaiah tells of the new king that will come from the line of David and who will finally destroy the impact of sin. In order to do this, this new king would become a servant and would die, giving his life as a final sacrifice. Jesus is this king of Israel from the line of David who suffers and dies on the cross (Mark 10:35)¹. Jesus's death became an atoning sacrifice for us as it covered the debt that we owed to God for contributing to all the death and evil in the world. Jesus's blood also had a purification role; having the ability to wash away the vandalism and defilement that evil has caused in us and around us and we can be

reconciled back to God.



In the New Testament, Jesus alone has the power, from God to forgive sins, since "... he is the propitiation² for our sins" (1 John 2:2). Moreover, whenever the apostles empowered in His name, forgive sins, it occurs solely through His authority (John 20:21-23).

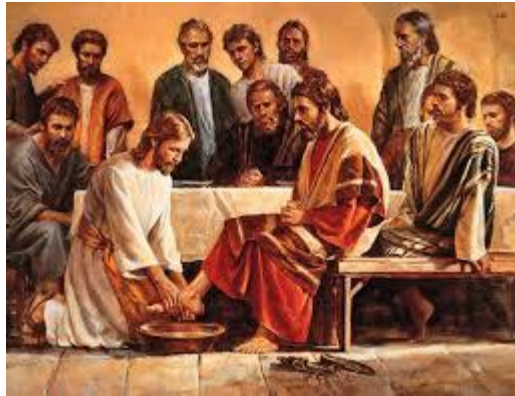
21 Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father has sent me, even so send I you.

22 And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit:

23 Whosoever's sins you remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever's sins you retain, they are retained.

¹ Mark 10:35 Jesus has come to serve and give his life as a ransom for many

² 1John 2:2 ; 4:10 , Christ is "the propitiation," because by him becoming our substitute and assuming our obligations towards the law, he covered our guilt, by the punishment which he endured. He therefore made reconciliation between God and humanity possible.



Through the institution of communion shortly before His death, Jesus made bread and wine the symbols of His atonement (Matthew 26:26-28). Through the celebration of this communion, which is performed at His command in remembrance of Him, the unity of His followers with Him and among themselves is revived and assumes new form and content. Whoever receives justification after forgiveness of sins, and the remission of those sins, and reconciliation with God and **is accepted by God through grace**, is separated from the world and can be led along the path to his final destiny. In the Biblical sense, he is **"holy"**.

In Jeremiah 33:8 we find the same promise repeated. Paul too reminded the Romans of this promise of the New Covenant, with the words: "For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins". But he added that it was Zion's redeemer who would deliver them from ungodliness (Romans 11:26-27). In the epistle to the Hebrews the passage from Jeremiah 31 is taken up again – a pointer to its importance (Hebrews 8:8-12; 10:16-17).

Apostle Paul emphasizes clearly that **atonement of human beings before God is not possible without faith**. Because the Lord's Supper is a sacred act, in which the faithful experience a union with Christ, it is necessary for everyone who believes in Christ's mission to participate in this meal with a sincere and pure heart (Flor, 2013).



In the parable of the marriage feast Jesus tells of a guest who appeared at the wedding feast not wearing a wedding garment. The king had this man cast into outer darkness (Matthew 22:1-14). Jesus gave here a clear instruction before participating in the Lord's Supper; one must have purified one's "spiritual" clothing. This is why, in church services of the Apostolic church, sincere repentance and forgiveness of sins precedes Communion (Flor, 1993; 2014). **So that this remission of guilt does not become an empty and hence meaningless ritual.** A particular attitude on the part of the believer is necessary.

Jesus death and glorious resurrection shows that His life as a sacrifice finally broke the shackles of death and evil and He

now lives on and offers his life and his love as means to all to overcome death and evil.



Early Christians then stopped with animal worship. One of the new rituals sacraments that Jesus taught his followers to perform was that of baptism and Holy Communion. Christians sharing in the Lord's Supper now share and participate in the power of Jesus death. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is the same power that allows us to deal with evil in our own lives and transform us into Christians worthy of the name.

Tot wedersiens. God bless, Nag Ou Grote, Fluit-Fluit, my storie is uit.

Br Theo PhD

References

Alexander, P. & Alexander, D. (2002). *The Lion Handbook to the Bible*. Oxford: Lion Hudson

Flor, C. (Apostle). (2012). Apostle Divine Service 26 December 2012. *The Apostolic Church of Queensland Herald*, 13(1), p.13.

Flor, C. (Apostle). (2013). *Understanding our Faith*. Bundaburg: Apostolic Church of Queensland.

National Centre for Religious Studies. (2016). *Sinfulness and Reconciliation*. Wellington: Author.

St Julian's Parish. (2017). *Holy Week & Easter 2017*. Retrieved from <https://stjuliansparishchurch.co.uk/2017/03/01/holy-week-easter-2017/>

The Bible Project. (2015). *Animated Explanation of Sacrifice and Atonement*. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G_OIRWGLdnw&t=142s

Os Cavaleiros Templários e a Arca da Aliança. (2016). *The Arc of the Covenant*. Retrieved from <https://thoth3126.com.br/os-cavaleiros-templarios-e-a-arca-da-alianca-parte-6/>

Wood, S.W. (2008). *King Solomon's temple*. Barton street: Hamilton.