



LUNCH-FAST — BREAK FAST @ 18:30hrs

THE CONCLUSION OF SCAPEGOAT ATONEMENT

TODAY'S PASSAGE — HEBREWS 10:16-25 [ESV]

16 “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,” **17** then he adds, “I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.” **18** Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin. **19** Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, **20** by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, **21** and since we have a great priest over

the house of God, **22** let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. **23** Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. **24** And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, **25** not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHTS

The Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16 is ancient Israel's scapegoat liturgy, and it lies behind Hebrews 10:16–25. The sins of the people are named by the priest, his hands placed on the head of a goat. The goat is then released into the wilderness, taking their sins with it. No human blood was shed — God forbade it. God did not require even the goat's blood for satisfaction. This enlightened transference of guilt created a cathartic calm, and the newly cleansed people may have recommitted themselves with joy to faithful observance of the Torah. The scapegoating mechanism remained — until Good Friday.

According to Hebrews, Good Friday's scapegoat, Jesus, has unveiled a “new and living way” (10:20) that renders scapegoating obsolete once and for all. A scapegoat revealed as scapegoat disarms the transfer ritual. As simultaneously the divine high priest and the innocent victim, exonerated by resurrection (Heb. 10:19, 21), Jesus reframes the ancient belief that the blood sacrifice appeases God. In fact, Jesus turns that idea on its head. The victims are not guilty; the accusers are. Bloodthirstiness is not in God; it is in us. Wrong and dangerous are Christian interpretations that claim the bloody execution

of an innocent man made God forget sin. They are a sign that we, not God, have forgotten our sin. The blame game leaves no one justified. This error has led to tragic evil as some Christians scapegoated Jews for the Roman execution of Jesus.

The good news is this: God seeks no retribution whatsoever against the guilty. The divine priest's offering is a divine victim who absorbs violence and returns only forgiveness. God calls sinners to forgive and release the victimised in our midst, as God has forgiven and released us. The myth of divine violence ended once and forever when Jesus bodily endured accusers' abuse (“through his flesh,” v. 20), but refused to respond in kind. Forgiveness, not vengeance, is God's offering. Rejoice, scapegoaters, for Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34 KJV).

We need to realise that atonement is more than just theory on Good Friday. First, we see that the sin problem is in us, no matter how hard we try to transfer it elsewhere. Second, as Jesus pulled back the curtain, we find we stand amazed in the presence of God, simultaneously “sinners and forgiven (Heb. 10:19-20). God in Christ on Good Friday

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reverses scapegoat atonement from external ritual to internal reality (v. 16). Through the curtain of our sin — the lacerated flesh of Christ (v. 20) — we see undying forgiveness, which was always there.

This atonement makes believers bold (v. 19) to desire to imitate Christ, including his redemptive

suffering. This new mimetic desire encourages believers to provoke one another to love and good deeds (v. 24) and not fail to meet together (v. 25), so that this contagion may spread among us deeper, faster, further. Atonement is seeing who we and God have been all along, and acting on that new understanding.

[WM. LOYD ALLEN]

QUESTION TO PONDER ...

Think about what Jesus had done for you on the cross — his obedience to the Father, the humiliation, the suffering, the excruciating pain of being forsaken and separated from the presence of God the Father — all these, because he loves us and want to keep his covenant that he made long time ago. How do you respond to his great love for you?



PRAYER

God of grace and of mercy, full of love and compassion, thank you for what you have done for the human race on the cross. Help me to understand the depth of your love for us and thus respond with gratitude in service to you and your creation. Amen.



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