

Better than the Day of Atonement

Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest was allowed to go into the Holy Place inside the veil before the Ark of the Lord (cf. **Leviticus 16**). He had to dress a certain way. He had to bathe a certain way. He had to offer certain sacrifices. All because if he didn't, he would die. It's not in Scripture that I'm aware of, but I'm told that at some point in history the Jews actually started to tie a rope around the high priest's ankle in case he died inside the Holy Place. That way they could pull him out and no one else would die trying to go in and remove his body. None of the other priests were ever allowed to go into the Holy Place. Further, they weren't even allowed to be in the tent of meeting when the high priest was in the Holy Place. If they violated these rules, they would die. Being a priest, especially being the high priest, was a bit of a frightening job.

This makes me so glad that I am under the New Covenant. **Hebrews 10:19-23** is extremely comforting.

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of the faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.

We have a great high priest, Jesus Christ. His sacrifice was offered once for all and broke through to the Holy Place not simply on earth but in heaven. He doesn't have to offer that sacrifice every year. It is still effective even 2000 years later and will be effective as long as the earth shall stand.

But here is what is really amazing. While no one could be in the tent of meeting when Aaron was in the Holy Place, Jesus actually takes us into the holy places by the blood of His sacrifice. God placed all the restrictions in the tabernacle because He would appear in the cloud above the mercy seat (**Leviticus 16:2**). If a mere man comes into the presence of God, all things being equal, he'll die. But we are able to draw near to God in full assurance because our hearts are sprinkled clean and our bodies washed with pure water.

This is all about prayer for us. We can meet with God in prayer, any time, any place. We may be in our bedroom, in our car, in the church's meeting place, or even in our workplace conference room, but we are still in the holy place beyond the veil in the presence of God meeting us above the mercy seat. That is how amazing the sacrifice of Jesus is.

It doesn't matter what we are bringing to Him. God listens and cares. We do not have to fear that He is going to toss us out on our ear or worse, destroy us. We can come into His presence with blessed assurance that Jesus advocates for us. God will extend the kingly scepter and allow us to bring our praise, our confession, even our petitions.

What is even greater is that this is also about judgment. One day we will stand at the bar on high. One day our record we'll see. Facing the sentence of life or of death, Jesus our answer will be. His blood brings us with assurance into the literal presence of God and His judgment. His sacrifice atones for our sins. His death brings us life. He advocates on our behalf. He is our propitiation. Let us walk into God's presence with humbled yet confident heads, knowing that through Jesus Christ we will stand in God's presence for all eternity.

When this is what is offered, why would anyone refuse to be part of Jesus Christ? What a comfort.

—Edwin L. Crozier