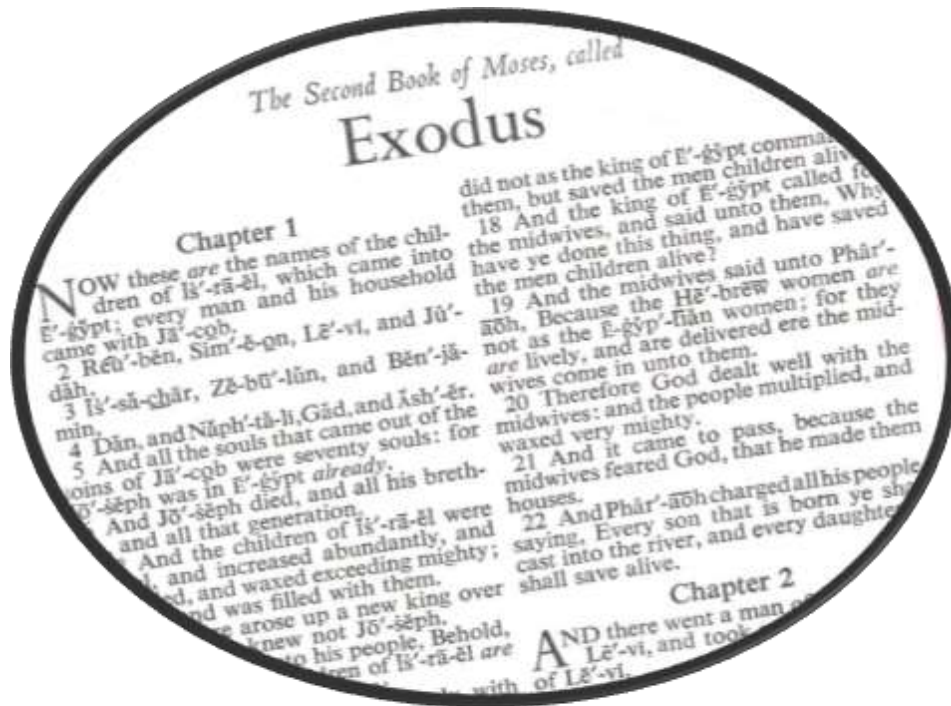


# EXODUS – WEEK 20

## ATONEMENT DOESN'T COME CHEAP



F. Michael Slay  
*A DEEP Study*

**The Fellowship of Ailbe**

## *Exodus 29:19–30:16 – Atonement Doesn't Come Cheap*

It takes a lot of sacrifice and ceremonial anointing of blood to make sinful men ready to be priests. Only then are they qualified to represent the people in the holy temple. It takes even more sacrifice to atone for the people's sin.

This provides a model for us of the seriousness of worship.

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Thank you.

Exodus 29:19–30:16 – Atonement Doesn't Come Cheap  
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1 Exodus 29:19-21 (ESV)

*“You shall take the other ram, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the ram, and you shall kill the ram and take part of its blood and put it on the tip of the right ear of Aaron and on the tips of the right ears of his sons, and on the thumbs of their right hands and on the great toes of their right feet, and throw the rest of the blood against the sides of the altar. Then you shall take part of the blood that is on the altar, and of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it on Aaron and his garments, and on his sons and his sons' garments with him. He and his garments shall be holy, and his sons and his sons' garments with him.*

Why are they anointing all these places on their right side with blood?

Well, we know that the right hand signifies honor, blessing and authority.

*Jesus said to him, “You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.” – Matthew 26:64 (ESV)*

*When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him, and he took his father's hand to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. And Joseph said to his father, “Not this way, my father; since this one is the firstborn, put your right hand on his head.” But his father refused and said, “I know, my son, I know. He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great. Nevertheless, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his offspring shall become a multitude of nations.” – Genesis 48:17-19 (ESV)*

The anointed places on the right side represent the whole. The direct anointing with blood consecrates Aaron's sons specifically as individuals. They are purified by the blood of the sacrificial ram.

It turns out that God will later prescribe the same procedure for something else.

*And he shall kill the lamb of the guilt offering. And the priest shall take some of the blood of the guilt offering and put it on the lobe of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed, and on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot. – Leviticus 14:25 (ESV)*

But Leviticus 14 is about cleansing lepers! What a stark portrait of how serious this is. To make Aaron and his sons fit for service in the temple, they have to undergo the same purification rites as a leper.

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We all recite how we are steeped in sin, but can we stomach the idea that our sin is this ugly?

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leprosy>

Jesus made it possible for us to stand before God without going through all those purification rites. That's a wonderful blessing, but we lose a reminder of just how awful we are.

Thank Jesus for being our Lord and for saving us. He who has been forgiven much loves much.

2 Exodus 29:22-28 (ESV)

*“You shall also take the fat from the ram and the fat tail and the fat that covers the entrails, and the long lobe of the liver and the two kidneys with the fat that is on them, and the right thigh (for it is a ram of ordination), and one loaf of bread and one cake of bread made with oil, and one wafer out of the basket of unleavened bread that is before the LORD. You shall put all these on the palms of Aaron and on the palms of his sons, and wave them for a wave offering before the LORD. Then you shall take them from their hands and burn them on the altar on top of the burnt offering, as a pleasing aroma before the LORD. It is a food offering to the LORD.*

*“You shall take the breast of the ram of Aaron's ordination and wave it for a wave offering before the LORD, and it shall be your portion. And you shall consecrate the breast of the wave offering that is waved and the thigh of the priests' portion that is contributed from the ram of ordination, from what was Aaron's and his sons'. It shall be for Aaron and his sons as a perpetual due from the people of Israel, for it is a contribution. It shall be a contribution from the people of Israel from their peace offerings, their contribution to the LORD.”*

“Fat tail” is the fat that some sheep have on their hindquarters, which functions like a camel’s hump.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tail\\_fat](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tail_fat)

Previously, in this consecration of the priests, they completely burned up the bull as a sin offering and the first ram as a burnt offering. Then the second ram’s blood was put on their right ears, thumbs and big toes (the same sin offering used to cleanse a leper). Now, the fat is removed from the second ram (*the ram of ordination*) and burned in the manner of a peace offering. Then the priests eat of the breast and the thigh. This is declared *as a perpetual due from the people of Israel ... from their peace offerings*.

*Then from the sacrifice of the peace offering he shall offer as a food offering to the LORD its fat; he shall remove the whole fat tail, cut off close to the backbone, and the fat that covers the entrails and all the fat that is on the entrails and the two kidneys with the fat that is on them at the loins and the long lobe of the liver that he shall remove with the kidneys. – Leviticus 3:9-10 (ESV)*

This whole ceremony is filled with symbolism. The priests are symbolically taking on the people’s sin.

Just as burning the bull outside the camp set the standard for Jesus being crucified outside the city, so the priests eating part of the sacrifice sets the standard for future peace offerings.

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We tend to forget the symbolism of crucifixion. Wearing a cross around your neck is like wearing an electric chair around your neck – only worse. Rome had capital punishment that was less severe than crucifixion – for lesser crimes. Crucifixion was for only the worst criminals.

To take the punishment for our sin, Jesus had to endure more than the ultimate pain and death.

He had to endure the ultimate humiliation. Only that could fully represent our sin.

3 Exodus 29:29-37 (ESV)

*“The holy garments of Aaron shall be for his sons after him; they shall be anointed in them and ordained in them. The son who succeeds him as priest, who comes into the tent of meeting to minister in the Holy Place, shall wear them seven days.*

*“You shall take the ram of ordination and boil its flesh in a holy place. And Aaron and his sons shall eat the flesh of the ram and the bread that is in the basket in the entrance of the tent of meeting. They shall eat those things with which atonement was made at their ordination and consecration, but an outsider shall not eat of them, because they are holy. And if any of the flesh for the ordination or of the bread remain until the morning, then you shall burn the remainder with fire. It shall not be eaten, because it is holy.*

*“Thus you shall do to Aaron and to his sons, according to all that I have commanded you. Through seven days shall you ordain them, and every day you shall offer a bull as a sin offering for atonement. Also you shall purify the altar, when you make atonement for it, and shall anoint it to consecrate it. Seven days you shall make atonement for the altar and consecrate it, and the altar shall be most holy. Whatever touches the altar shall become holy.”*

There is to be only one set of *holy garments*.

*And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty.* – Exodus 28:2 (ESV)

These garments are initially for Aaron, but will pass to whoever succeeds him as head priest. Each time there is a new head priest, another seven day consecration ceremony must be performed.

*The son who succeeds him as priest, who comes into the tent of meeting to minister in the Holy Place, shall wear them seven days.*

One would think that becoming the next head priest would be pretty exciting, but the ceremony is a big letdown. A bull must be sacrificed on each of the seven days. On the first day, some of a ram can be eaten but no leftovers are allowed.

These special procedures are designed to make things holy. They're designed to make an unworthy person clean enough to do this job. This should humble them as it hammers home that they're unqualified.

That's a far cry from a grand introduction to adoring crowds.

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Christians have a personal relationship with God. Unfortunately we get used to it and forget how our sinfulness should preclude such a relationship. We need to get back to the humiliation of sin. Ask God to help you see your sinfulness for what it is. And don't expect some great embarrassing crash-course from the college of hard knocks either. That's how secular people learn secular humility.

Real humility doesn't usually come from events; it comes from having your eyes opened.

4 Exodus 29:38-46 (ESV)

*“Now this is what you shall offer on the altar: two lambs a year old day by day regularly. One lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight. And with the first lamb a tenth measure of fine flour mingled with a fourth of a hin of beaten oil, and a fourth of a hin of wine for a drink offering. The other lamb you shall offer at twilight, and shall offer with it a grain offering and its drink offering, as in the morning, for a pleasing aroma, a food offering to the LORD. It shall be a regular burnt offering throughout your generations at the entrance of the tent of meeting before the LORD, where I will meet with you, to speak to you there. There I will meet with the people of Israel, and it shall be sanctified by my glory. I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar. Aaron also and his sons I will consecrate to serve me as priests. I will dwell among the people of Israel and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them. I am the LORD their God.”*

Two lambs a day, every day, forever. And that's just to keep the doors open. Sacrifices for specific people and specific sins are extra (see most of Leviticus).

Let's play word association. I say the word “sin.” What word do you think of?

Evil. Hell. Corrupt. Selfish. Blind. Stupid. Deceitful. Universal. Original.

Did you think of “expensive”?

That's what this passage is about. Two lambs a day will eventually add up to more than the staggering cost of building and furnishing the tabernacle. And the whole thing is just to atone for sin. In fact, it's just to set the place up to for someone to atone for sin.

This symbolizes the incredible cost that sin has laid on the world. Just try to imagine the sum total of all the pain and grief caused by sin.

That's what drove Christ to the cross.

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OK, but that still doesn't make sense. The whole of creation isn't worth five minutes of pain suffered by the creator. Why would He choose to go there?

We're not going to figure that one out (in this life anyway). All that's left is to celebrate it. Lots of God's priorities are beyond understanding, and accepting that often means accepting things we'd rather argue with.

But not this priority. In the biggest choice of all, we catch the ultimate lucky break.

Remember that the next time you feel like questioning something unpleasant. His love is a wonder.

5 Exodus 30:1-10 (ESV)

*“You shall make an altar on which to burn incense; you shall make it of acacia wood. A cubit shall be its length, and a cubit its breadth. It shall be square, and two cubits shall be its height. Its horns shall be of one piece with it. You shall overlay it with pure gold, its top and around its sides and its horns. And you shall make a molding of gold around it. And you shall make two golden rings for it. Under its molding on two opposite sides of it you shall make them, and they shall be holders for poles with which to carry it. You shall make the poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. And you shall put it in front of the veil that is above the ark of the testimony, in front of the mercy seat that is above the testimony, where I will meet with you. And Aaron shall burn fragrant incense on it. Every morning when he dresses the lamps he shall burn it, and when Aaron sets up the lamps at twilight, he shall burn it, a regular incense offering before the LORD throughout your generations. You shall not offer unauthorized incense on it, or a burnt offering, or a grain offering, and you shall not pour a drink offering on it. Aaron shall make atonement on its horns once a year. With the blood of the sin offering of atonement he shall make atonement for it once in the year throughout your generations. It is most holy to the LORD.”*

Since this altar doesn't have to handle a lot of heat, it can be made of wood covered in gold. This golden altar of incense is closer to the ark than the other furnishings in the tabernacle and is thus most holy. Depictions of its design are more consistent than those of the bronze altar – though not perfectly consistent.

[http://www.bible-history.com/tabernacle/TAB4The\\_Golden\\_Altar\\_of\\_Incense.htm](http://www.bible-history.com/tabernacle/TAB4The_Golden_Altar_of_Incense.htm)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HEhHQbGWLgW>

Verse nine specifically warns against offering *unauthorized incense on it*. This portends the death of Nadab and Abihu in Leviticus 10.

But what about their incense was *unauthorized*? The proper incense will be specified in verse 34.

*The LORD said to Moses, “Take sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum, sweet spices with pure frankincense (of each shall there be an equal part), – Exodus 30:34 (ESV)*

This passage specifies the proper times for worship, which could also be what Nadab and Abihu violated.

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Worshipping God is what we were created for, but we can't just do whatever feels good. What do we know about how He wants to be worshipped?

A lot. Passages like this one instruct us. God wouldn't leave us in the dark on something this critical.

This is important stuff – stuff we should study. Unfortunately, proper worship often doesn't get enough attention. Here's a worthy reference,

<https://www.ailbe.org/component/content/article/19-bookstore/kingdom-outcomes/1939-the-highest-thing?Itemid=239>

6 Exodus 30:11-16 (ESV)

*The LORD said to Moses, “When you take the census of the people of Israel, then each shall give a ransom for his life to the LORD when you number them, that there be no plague among them when you number them. Each one who is numbered in the census shall give this: half a shekel according to the shekel of the sanctuary (the shekel is twenty gerahs), half a shekel as an offering to the LORD. Everyone who is numbered in the census, from twenty years old and upward, shall give the LORD's offering. The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less, than the half shekel, when you give the LORD's offering to make atonement for your lives. You shall take the atonement money from the people of Israel and shall give it for the service of the tent of meeting, that it may bring the people of Israel to remembrance before the LORD, so as to make atonement for your lives.”*

OK, but why is the LORD threatening a plague? And why does He call this a ransom, instead of a tax?

First, some background. The ransom is just for males over twenty (see Numbers 26:2).

*“Take a census of all the congregation of the people of Israel, from twenty years old and upward, by their fathers' houses, all in Israel who are able to go to war.”*

Only men *able to go to war* are counted. This will show that they're a formidable army. That's a problem.

*And Joab gave the sum of the numbering of the people to the king: in Israel there were 800,000 valiant men who drew the sword, and the men of Judah were 500,000. But David's heart struck him after he had numbered the people. And David said to the LORD, “I have sinned greatly in what I have done. But now, O LORD, please take away the iniquity of your servant, for I have done very foolishly.” – 2 Samuel 24:9-10 (ESV)*

The problem is overconfidence. The Israelites are learning to trust themselves instead of depending on God. That's why the “tax” is called a ransom and why the LORD threatens a plague on anyone who doesn't pay. It's a ransom because it's *to make atonement for your lives*.

And what's wrong with their lives? Sin. Despite the Israelites daily dependence on manna, they need to be reminded of their dependency on God. This answers another question. Why is the ransom the same for all, rich or poor?

Because everyone is sinful.

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This one-size-fits-all principle sets the stage for the cross. No one is so bad that the cross can't cover their sin. No one is so good that they don't need it. Christianity views everyone as equals in what matters most. We're all created in the image of God and we're all guilty of sin. This basic equality is so foundational to our civilization that we have formally declared it to be obvious.

*“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights.” – The Declaration of Independence*



*Questions for reflection or discussion*

1. Do you feel “clean” enough to stand before God?
2. When you think about your sinfulness, is your main emotion humiliation?
3. Why do you think God would want a personal relationship with you?
4. Do you celebrate communion or just take it?
5. What's essential to proper worship in a modern church?
6. In what ways does our society fall short of treating everyone equally?

*Items for prayer:*