

The Rod of an Almond Tree in God's Master Plan

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The Rod of an Almond Tree in God's Master Plan (Online Edition)

by Peter and Christie Michas

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Chapter 11

Messiah Yeshua, Eternal High Priest

And having been perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation, being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 5:9-10).

MESSIAH YESHUA ANOINTED HIGH PRIEST BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD

The anointing of Messiah Yeshua by the Spirit of God (Holy Spirit) was revealed at the time of Yeshua's immersion into the Jordan River –

And after being baptized, Jesus [Yeshua] went up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw **the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon Him**, and behold, a voice out of the heavens, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased" (Matthew 3:16-17, bold emphasis added).

And immediately coming up out of the water, **He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him**; and a voice came out of the heavens: “Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well-pleased” (Mark 1:10-11, bold emphasis added).

Now it came about when all the people were baptized, that Jesus [Yeshua] also was baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened, and **the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove**, and a voice came out of heaven, “Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well-pleased” (Luke 3:21-22, bold emphasis added).

And John bore witness saying, “**I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him**. And I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, ‘He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the one who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.’ And I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God” (John 1:32-34, bold emphasis added).

Note that the Spirit of God is described “**as**” or “**like**” a dove, not meaning an actual dove but that the Spirit of God manifested in the form of a dove. According to the prophetic pattern as understood by Peter Michas, this means that the Spirit of God manifested in the form of the Hebrew letter *kaf* (כ), similar to the shape formed by the wings of a hovering dove.

According to this understanding, the Hebrew letter *Kaf* represents the pattern in which the anointing oil was applied to the High Priest, the oil symbolizing the Holy Spirit. Moses anointed his brother, Aaron, as the first High Priest –

“Then you shall bring **Aaron** and his sons to the doorway of the tent of meeting [Tabernacle], and wash them with water. And you shall take the garments, and put on Aaron the tunic and the robe of the ephod and the ephod and the breastpiece, and gird him with the skillfully woven band of the ephod; and you shall set the turban on his head, and put the holy crown on the turban. Then you shall **take the anointing oil, and pour it on his head and anoint him**” (Exodus 29:4-7, bold emphasis added).

According to *The Torah Anthology* commentary on Exodus 29:7 (“Then you shall take the anointing oil, and pour it on his head and anoint him”), the oil was applied in a way to form the Hebrew letter *Kaf* (described in the shape of the letter U) –

This does not mean that oil should be poured over the entire body, from head to foot. Rather, this was the method in which the anointing was done.

At first, a little oil would be placed on the priest’s head. Then he would place a little bit between his eyebrows. Then the person doing the anointing would take his finger and **connect the oil on the head with the oil above the eyebrows, drawing a semi-circular line, like an inverted U ...**

According to another opinion, the first person anointing would place the oil on the priest’s eyebrows and then on his head, and then he would connect the two together as we have said (bold emphasis added).¹

Messiah Yeshua’s anointing by the Holy Spirit signified that God the Father anointed His Son as the High Priest of the New Covenant, the Eternal High Priest in the Order of Melchizedek.

So also Christ [Messiah] did not glorify Himself so as to become a high priest, but He who said to Him, “THOU ART MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN THEE”; just as He says also in another *passage*, “THOU ART A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK.” ... Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, **He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation, being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek** (Hebrews 5:5-6, 8-10, bold emphasis added).

THE PATTERN OF THE MENORAH REVEALED IN THE CRUCIFIXION

As previously explained, Messiah Yeshua and the two criminals were crucified on the same tree (Chapter 7 Messiah Yeshua Crucified on the Almond Tree). In this picture, Peter Michas sees the

¹ Aryeh Kaplan (Translator), *The Torah Anthology*, Vol. 9, p. 227.

pattern of the Menorah, the seven-branched lampstand located in the Holy Place of the Temple – the body of Yeshua forming the central shaft, surrounded by six upwardly stretched arms of the three as they hung on the tree.

This picture is even more prophetically significant when viewed in the context of the connection between the Tree of Life and the Crucifixion Tree. The Menorah represents the Tree of Life (Chapter 5 The Tree of Life). As we have shown, according to the prophetic pattern as understood by Peter Michas, the Tree of Life grew on Mount Moriah in the Garden of Eden, the same place God chose for His Temple. Therefore, the Menorah in the Temple on Mount Moriah reveals the picture of the Tree of Life growing on Mount Moriah in the Garden of Eden at the time God fellowshiped directly with Adam and Eve before they sinned.

From the Tree of Life came the miraculously budding Almond Rod, known as Aaron's Rod, that was placed before the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies. As previously explained, Peter Michas believes that King David planted Aaron's Rod on the summit of the Mount of Olives, where it grew into the Crucifixion Tree (Chapter 6 Aaron's Rod, the Tree of Life, and the Crucifixion Tree).

If this is correct, there is a direct link between the Tree of Life and the Crucifixion Tree. Messiah Yeshua can also be seen to represent the fruit of the Tree of Life. Trusting in Yeshua's sacrifice for our sins provides the only way of salvation and eternal life. In this way, the Tree of Life links to the Crucifixion and what Yeshua did for us in His sacrifice both symbolically and literally.

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT PROPHETIC PICTURE POINTS TO MESSIAH YESHUA

As previously detailed, the prophetic picture of Passover points to Messiah Yeshua as God's Passover Lamb sacrificed for the redemption of all humankind (Chapter 9 Messiah Yeshua, God's Passover Lamb). The prophetic picture of the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) also points to Messiah Yeshua, as do all the Appointed Times of the Lord (Leviticus 23).

The Day of Atonement is the holiest day of the year for the Jews. It is a time of fasting and seeking God's forgiveness for one's sins. During Temple times, sacrifices were made for the sins of the entire Israelite nation for the whole preceding year. It was the only day of the year when the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies to offer sacrifices, first for his own sins and then for the sins of the nation.

As we examine the meaning of the activities of this most holy and awesome day, unique parallels emerge in relation to the work of Messiah Yeshua in His death, resurrection, and ascension. The entire picture shows that Yeshua is the Messiah anointed by God and the Eternal High Priest who continually intercedes for us in Heaven. However, complete fulfillment of this Biblical Feast Day is yet to take place at Messiah Yeshua's Second Coming.

THE GOAT FOR GOD AND THE GOAT FOR AZAZEL

God explained the law of atonement to Moses in Leviticus 16. Before the High Priest could make the sin sacrifice for the people, he had to first sacrifice a young bull for his own sins and those of the other priests. Only after this sacrifice was he allowed to enter the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement. In contrast, Yeshua required no such sacrifice for He alone is sinless.

The sin sacrifice for the Israelite nation was chosen by casting lots to select the goat for the sin offering to God. In addition, the goat for Azazel (scapegoat) was selected as the symbolic carrier of Israel's sins into the desert wilderness.² The two goats were required to be taken from the community, purchased at the same time, and alike in appearance, size, and value.³

“And he shall take the two goats and present them before the LORD at the doorway of the tent of meeting [Tabernacle]. And Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats, one lot for the LORD and the other lot for the scapegoat [goat for Azazel]. Then Aaron shall offer the goat on which the lot for the LORD fell, and make it a sin offering. But the goat on which the lot for the scapegoat [goat for Azazel] fell, shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make atonement upon it, to send it into the wilderness as the scapegoat [goat for Azazel]” (Leviticus 16:7-10).

According to this selection process, the two goats were brought before the High Priest – one stood to the right of the High Priest, the other stood to his left. The High Priest then placed his hands into a box containing two identical tablets of gold. One lot was engraved with the name of God, the other with the name of Azazel. Next, the High Priest drew out one of the lots with his right hand and placed it over the head of the goat to his right. Likewise, he drew the other lot with his left hand and placed it over the head of the goat on the left.⁴

² The Hebrew word *Azazel* (Strong's #5799) is translated “scapegoat” (Leviticus 16:8, 10, 26).

³ *The Torah Anthology*, Vol. 11, p. 338.

⁴ *The Torah Anthology*, Vol. 11, p. 338.

The goat designated for God was sacrificed and its blood offered for the sins of the people in the Holy of Holies by the High Priest.⁵ The goat designated for Azazel became the symbolic bearer of the sins of the people. A skein of scarlet thread was tied between its horns and the High Priest placed both hands on this goat, confessing the sins of the people. God commanded that the scapegoat be released into the wilderness –

“And the goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a solitary land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness” (Leviticus 16:22).

The goat for Azazel was led out through the Eastern Gate of the Temple Mount and into the Judean wilderness, a desolate desert area considered to be a place of demons.⁶ The name Azazel refers to the leader of the evil spirits (demons) of the wilderness.⁷ As the leader of demons (fallen angels), Azazel can be understood to be Satan. Significantly, the desert wilderness where Satan tempted Yeshua is the same place the goat for Azazel was led (Luke 4:1-2).

Part of the scarlet wool tied to the goat’s horns was removed and attached to a rocky protrusion on a high cliff. Previously, part of the scarlet wool was also attached to the door of the Temple. Although the Word of God states that the goat was to be released into the wilderness, by tradition the goat for Azazel was cast over a high cliff. As its body shattered against the rocks, it was reported that the scarlet wool on the rocky cliff, as well as that on the door of the Temple, miraculously turned from red to white. This sign was interpreted as symbolizing the forgiveness of sins, according to Isaiah 1:18 – “Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow.”

Peter Michas sees a prophetic picture of the two goats relating to the two criminals crucified on the same tree with Yeshua. As Eternal High Priest, Yeshua’s hands stretched out over the heads of the two criminals crucified at His sides, just as the High Priest held his hands over the two goats. One man turned to God in repentance, while the other man refused to do so –

And one of the criminals who were hanged *there* was hurling abuse at Him, saying,

⁵ Note: God ordained sacrifices to Him to be carried out in the most humane way possible in order to minimize pain and suffering of the animals. This is consistent with what the Word of God shows for humane treatment and care of animals in general, which was and is in marked contrast to the ancient pagan world as well as much of the world today – Proverbs 12:10; Jonah 4:11; Numbers 22:27-33; Matthew 10:29, 12:11; Luke 13:15, 14:5.

⁶ *The Torah Anthology*, Vol. 11, p. 348.

⁷ Merrill C. Tenney (Editor), *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 1, p. 426.

“Are You not the Christ [Messiah]? Save Yourself and us!” But the other answered, and rebuking him said, “Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.” And he was saying, “Jesus [Yeshua], remember me when You come in Your kingdom!” And He said to him, “Truly I say to you, today you shall be with me in Paradise” (Luke 23:39-43).

By their own freewill choices, the individuals determined to whom they belonged – God or Satan (Azazel). The individual who repented of his sins and asked Yeshua to remember Him in His Kingdom belonged to God. Surely, this man recognized Yeshua as the true Messiah. On the other hand, the unrepentant man challenged Yeshua to prove He was the Messiah by saving them from a physical death. His only concern was for his physical condition, not his spiritual condition.

The Word of God explains that Yeshua bore the penalty for humanity’s sins and His righteousness is imparted to those who receive and trust in His sin-atonement sacrifice –

Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ [Messiah], and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ [Messiah] reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ [Messiah], as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ [Messiah], be reconciled to God. **He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him** (2 Corinthians 5:18-21, bold emphasis added).

It is essential to understand that Yeshua did not literally become sin, for He is sinless –

Let’s take a closer look at the word “sin” in 2 Corinthians 5:21. ... First, scholars agree that the word “sin” in this passage is used in an abstract sense. They are virtually unanimous in pointing out that the phrase “to become sin” as used here is a *metonym* (a word or phrase substituted for another associated word or phrase) for Christ “bearing the penalty for our sins.” ...

Scripture does say that man’s sin was laid to the account of Christ (see Isaiah 53:4,

5). To put it another way, our sins were imputed to Christ and His righteousness is imputed to us. **Clearly, the Levitical concepts of substitution and imputation are the background of 2 Corinthians 5:21. Jesus did not literally become sin; sin was *imputed* to Him.** The Bible insists that the sacrifice of Christ was a sufficient substitutionary offering *precisely* because it was a sinless sacrifice (bold emphasis added).⁸

Yeshua did not literally become sin, but the totality of humanity's sin was imputed to Him. According to the prophetic picture as understood by Peter Michas, because Yeshua was sinless and could not retain sin, the sin was symbolically sent back to Satan through the man who rejected Him as Messiah and Redeemer.

As mentioned above, the miraculous turning of the wool from scarlet to white indicated God's acceptance of the Day of Atonement sacrifice for sin atonement. Remarkably, the Talmud records that the wool no longer turned from red to white during the forty-year period from the Crucifixion to the destruction of the Temple (Yoma 39b). This confirms Yeshua's sacrifice as the final and complete fulfillment of the Day of Atonement sin sacrifice. Thereafter, God did not accept animal sacrifices for sin.

The Talmud also records that every year, for forty consecutive years before the destruction of the Temple, the High Priest drew the lot for God in his left hand (Yoma 39b). Just as drawing God's lot in the right hand was considered an auspicious sign, drawing it in the left hand was considered an ominous sign. For this lot to be drawn in the left hand on forty consecutive years during the Day of Atonement selection of the two goats was against the odds of random chance and struck fear into the hearts of the Jewish people. These were not the only ominous signs occurring at this time.

Two other signs reported by the Talmud occurred in the Temple (Yoma 39b). In one, the westernmost light of the menorah, which is thought to be the light used to light the other lights, refused to burn. In addition, the doors of the Temple began to open by themselves. The rabbis interpreted this sign as imminent fulfillment of Zechariah 11:1, "Open your doors, O Lebanon, that a fire may feed on your cedars," prophesying the destruction of the Temple by fire. Forty years later, this is exactly what happened when the Romans destroyed the Temple.

⁸ Hank Hannegraff, *Christianity in Crisis*, p. 159.

THE DAY OF ATONMENT PROPHETIC FULFILLMENT BY MESSIAH YESHUA

According to the Biblical calendar, the forty-day period beginning on the 1st of Elul leading up through the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur on the 10th of Tishri) is a time of repentance (*teshuvah* - turning to God). The ten days beginning with Rosh HaShanah (Feast of Trumpets – 1st of Tishri) and culminating with Yom Kippur are referred to as the Days of Awe or Days of Repentance.⁹

The Jews understand that God has “books” in which the names of those who shall live or die are written. The Book of Revelation tells us about the Book of Life that contains the names of those who have salvation in Messiah Yeshua (Revelation 20:12). The Jews hope to be written in the Book of Life, with the understanding that the books are sealed on the Day of Atonement. This understanding fits the prophetic pattern and timetable that God’s judgment will fall on the world during this period of time (Revelation 16).

After His baptism (immersion into the Jordan River), Yeshua fasted in the wilderness for forty days (Luke 4:1-13). This forty-day period coincides with the period beginning just before the 1st of Elul and continuing the rest of the month (29-30 days), with sufficient time for Yeshua to return to Nazareth by the Day of Atonement. This fits the prophetic pattern and timetable of the days of repentance.

Yeshua began His public ministry on a Biblical Sabbath day, on the Day of Atonement, proclaiming the year of Jubilee (Luke 4:16-21). At His First Coming, Yeshua did not come to judge but to save. He came as Redeemer and Savior to pay the price for sin, fulfilling the Day of Atonement sin-atonement sacrifices as the Eternal High Priest in the Order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 5, 6, 7). He made all-sufficient complete atonement for humanity’s sins by His once-for-all-time sacrifice.

According to the prophetic picture and timeline, Messiah Yeshua’s Second Coming takes place sometime during the Ten Days of Awe (Ten Days of Repentance). At that time the Rapture (Catching Up) and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb take place (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17;

⁹ <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/holiday3.html> - Jewish Virtual Library, article: Days of Awe – accessed November 21, 2016.

Revelation 19:7-9). Within a period of days (not years), Messiah Yeshua returns from Heaven on the Day of Atonement to destroy the Islamic armies invading Israel (Joel 2:15-16). This is the culmination of the War of Gog-Magog (Ezekiel 38) at Armageddon (“Har Magedon” Revelation 16:16). During the Ten Days of Awe, the Seven Bowls of God’s Judgment Wrath are poured out on the world, including the Apostate Roman Church (Revelation 16, 18, 19:11-21). (See *A New Look at the Books of Revelation & Daniel End-Time Prophecies*, Part 2 The 70 Weeks Prophecy of Daniel – The New Covenant Is the Covenant of Daniel 9:27, section: The Biblical Calendar and the Biblical Holy Days, subsection: The Biblical Holy Days – God’s Prophetic Pattern and Timetable; Part 12 The Seventh Trumpet: The Rapture and Second Coming of Messiah Yeshua, free study at www.messengers-of-messiah.org).

YESHUA’S DESCENT INTO SHEOL PARADISE, NOT SHEOL TORMENT (HELL)

The fate of the unrepentant man, represented by the goat for Azazel, was to go to a place of desolation and separation from God. On the other hand, the repentant man who asked Yeshua to remember him in His kingdom was given a promise that he would be in Paradise that very day.

And he was saying, “Jesus [Yeshua], remember me when You come in Your kingdom!” And He said to him, “Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise” (Luke 23:42-43).

In Luke 16:19-31, Yeshua tells the true story about where a rich man and a poor man (Lazarus) went after death. This gives us the answer to what Yeshua meant when he told the repentant criminal that he would be with Him in Paradise.

“Now there was a certain rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, gaily living in splendor every day. And a certain poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores, and longing to be fed with the *crumbs* which were falling from the rich man’s table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores. Now it came about that **the poor man died and he was carried away by the angels to Abraham’s bosom [Sheol Paradise]**; and the rich man also died and was buried. And **in Hades [Hell – Sheol Torment] he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away, and Lazarus in his bosom**. And he cried out and said, ‘Father

Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue; for I am in agony in this flame.’ But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you there is **a great chasm** fixed, in order that those who wish to come over from here to you may not be able, and *that none may cross over from there to us.*’ And he said, ‘Then I beg you, Father, that you send him to my father’s house — for I have five brothers — that he may warn them, lest they also come to this place of torment.’ But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ But he said, ‘No, Father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!’ But he said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead’” (Luke 16:19-31, bold emphasis added).

Yeshua reveals the existence of Sheol, the Hebrew name for the underworld place of the dead. Before Yeshua paid the price for sin, Sheol was divided into Sheol Paradise (“Abraham’s bosom”), the place for those who trusted in God, and Sheol Torment (Hades or Hell), the place for those who rejected God. Although the rich man could see Abraham and Lazarus and even communicate with Abraham, he could not cross the “great chasm” that separated Sheol Paradise from Sheol Torment.

When Yeshua promised the repentant man that they would be in Paradise that day, He meant that they would go to Sheol Paradise, not Sheol Torment (Hell). For the three days and nights that Yeshua was in Sheol Paradise, He revealed Himself as the Son of God and the promised Messiah who gave His life as the sin-atonement sacrifice for humanity –

For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to *the will of God* (1 Peter 4:6).

Prior to Yeshua’s sacrifice, there was no final and complete sin atonement to allow the souls of those who trusted in God to be brought into the presence of God. Sheol Paradise was the temporary holding place for them until Yeshua paid the full price for humanity’s sins and took them with Him when He ascended into Heaven forty days after His resurrection (Acts 1:9-11).

After His resurrection and for forty days before His ascension into Heaven, Yeshua appeared to His disciples and followers. During the same time, many who were raised from Sheol Paradise also appeared to many in Jerusalem, bearing witness that Yeshua is the Messiah –

And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom, and the earth shook; and the rocks were split, and the tombs were opened; and **many bodies of the saints [believers] who had fallen asleep [died] were raised**; and coming out of the tombs **after His resurrection they entered the holy city [Jerusalem] and appeared to many** (Matthew 27:51-53, bold emphasis added).

When the rich man asked Abraham to send someone back from the dead to warn his brothers, Abraham said that if they did not believe the Word of God given through Moses and the Prophets, they would not believe even if someone rose from the dead. It may well be that Abraham was specifically referring to the resurrection of Messiah Yeshua after three days and three nights, in accordance with the sign of Jonah –

But He [Yeshua] answered and said to them, “An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and *yet* no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; for **just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth**” (Matthew 12:39-40, bold emphasis added).

The condition of a person’s heart determines whether he or she acknowledges God, repents (turns to God and away from sin), and trusts in God’s one and only way of salvation through Messiah Yeshua (John 14:6). Those who reject God are held in Sheol Torment (Hell) until the final judgment at the Great White Throne Judgment, at which time they are cast into the Lake of Fire for eternity (Revelation 20:11-15).

YESHUA’S FIRST ASCENSION INTO HEAVEN ON RESURRECTION DAY

Prior to His ascension into Heaven forty days after His resurrection, Yeshua ascended into Heaven the first time on the day of His resurrection. He told Mary Magdalene that He had to ascend to Father God in Heaven –

Jesus [Yeshua] said to her, “Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren, and say to them, ‘**I ascend to My Father** and your Father, and My God and your God’” (John 20:17, bold emphasis added).

Messiah Yeshua, Eternal High Priest and Mediator of the New Covenant, ascended into Heaven and entered the Heavenly Tabernacle.

But when Christ [Messiah] appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, **He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle**, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but **through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption**. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ [Messiah], who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason **He is the mediator of a new covenant**, in order that since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were *committed* under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance (Hebrews 9:11-15, bold emphasis added).

Messiah Yeshua entered the Heavenly Tabernacle to appear in the presence of Father God on our behalf, offering Himself once for all time for the sins of humanity –

And according to the Law, *one may almost say*, all things are cleansed with blood, and **without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness**. Therefore it was necessary for the copies [earthly Tabernacle and Temple] of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these [earthly sacrifices], but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ [**Messiah**] **did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us**; nor was it that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood not his own. Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment, so Christ [Messiah] also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without *reference to sin*, to those who eagerly await Him (Hebrews 9:22-28, bold emphasis added).

Clearly, the Word of God teaches that there is a spiritual reality upon which the earthly Tabernacle, Temple, and sacrifices were patterned. The earthly things were symbolic of the reality of the Messiah, who by His work would accomplish what no human priests or earthly sacrifices could — the atonement for all humanity’s sins once and for all time. By examining the pattern of the earthly sacrifices instituted by God, we are able to better understand God’s one and only way of salvation for humanity through His Son, Messiah Yeshua.

First we need to understand the reason why blood was required for sin atonement:

‘For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement’ (Leviticus 17:11).

It was because of the unique quality of harboring life that God accepted blood as atonement for sin. Even so, God does not delight in the sacrifices of innocent animals; rather He prefers repentance, righteousness, and obedience (Psalms 51:16-17; Proverbs 21:3). The shedding of the blood of animals could provide only temporary covering for atonement but was insufficient to provide perfect and complete atonement. The blood of the sinless Messiah, however, was sufficient as the one and only perfect and complete sacrifice for all time.

In the Tabernacle and First Temple, the High Priest entered the earthly Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement and sprinkled blood once on the Mercy Seat (cover of the Ark), and seven times in front of the Ark of the Covenant. In the Second Temple, the High Priest sprinkled the blood on the Foundation Stone upon which the Ark had rested, since the Ark itself was no longer present. Through His own blood, Yeshua entered the heavenly Holy of Holies on the day of His resurrection as the sole Mediator between humanity and God (1 Timothy 2:5). Through His redemptive work, all who trust in His perfect and complete sacrifice for sin atonement are fully spiritually restored to their Creator.

From that time forward, every person has direct spiritual access to God through Yeshua. There is no other mediator or co-mediator required or possible, heavenly or earthly, for this relationship.

In fact, to choose a route other than the one provided by God is contrary to God's plan of salvation, futile and without efficacy, no matter how "good" one strives to be. God desires a direct personal relationship and has provided the way. It is up to each individual to either receive or reject this gift of God's grace.

YESHUA'S ASCENSION INTO HEAVEN FORTY DAYS AFTER HIS RESURRECTION

For forty days after His resurrection, Yeshua appeared to His disciples and continued to teach them. He also promised that God's Holy Spirit would be sent to empower them for the work He commissioned them to do –

“but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.” And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and **a cloud received Him out of their sight.** And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was departing, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them; and they also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus [Yeshua], who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven” (Acts 1:8-11, bold emphasis added).

The word “cloud” in Acts 1:9 is translated from the Greek word *nephele* (Strong's #3507) but is not referring to an ordinary water-vapor cloud. This word appears in several New Testament passages dealing with the Shekinah, the Glory Cloud of God's Presence (Matthew 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:34; 1 Corinthians 10:1; Revelation 14:14). The Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) describes the Shekinah as “a pillar of cloud by day” and “a pillar of fire by night” that protected and guided the Israelites in the wilderness, and indwelled the Tabernacle (Exodus 13:21; 14:19, 24; 33:9-10). The Shekinah also indwelled Solomon's Temple (1 Kings 8:10-13).

The Shekinah surrounded Yeshua and all the believers He brought out of Sheol Paradise as they ascended into Heaven. This great multitude of believers included all those who received Yeshua as Lord and Savior — from Adam and Eve to the repentant man on the crucifixion tree – whether Patriarch, Prophet, King, or ordinary man and woman. Their souls rose with Yeshua in the Shekinah as He ascended to take –

... His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister in the sanctuary, and in the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, not man (Hebrews 8:1-2).

This, however, was not the only manifestation of the Shekinah associated with Yeshua. The “bright cloud” that manifested at Yeshua’s transfiguration was the Shekinah (Matthew 17:5, Mark 9:7; Luke 9:34-35) –

While he was still speaking, behold **a bright cloud overshadowed them**; and behold, a voice out of the cloud, saying, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!” (Matthew 17:5, bold emphasis added).

The Shekinah is also associated with the Catching Up (Rapture), when all believers on the Earth indwelt with the Spirit of God will be caught up to Heaven immediately before the Seven Bowls of God’s Judgment Wrath pour out on the Earth (Revelation 16) –

Then we who are alive and remain shall be **caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air**, and thus we shall always be with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:17, bold emphasis added).

When this happens, believers on Earth will hear the call to join Messiah Yeshua in the air, and their physical bodies will be instantaneously transformed into incorruptible spiritual bodies. They will join those believers already with the Lord in Heaven, whose souls will likewise instantaneously receive their spiritual bodies at the same time. All those with Yeshua will then enter the Heavenly Tabernacle for the Marriage Feast of the Lamb.

For in the day of trouble **He will conceal me in His [heavenly] tabernacle; In the secret place of His tent He will hide me**; He will lift me up on a rock (Psalm 27:5, bold emphasis added).

“Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.” And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints [believers]. And he said to me, “Write, ‘**Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.**’” And he said to me,

“These are true words of God” (Revelation 19:7-9, bold emphasis added).

The brilliance of the Shekinah will also be associated with Messiah Yeshua’s Second Coming (Matthew 24:30; Mark 13:26; Revelation 1:7) –

And then they will see **THE SON OF MAN COMING IN CLOUDS** with great power and glory (Mark 13:26, bold emphasis added).

BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. Even so. Amen (Revelation 1:7, bold emphasis added).

(See *A New Look at the Books of Revelation and Daniel End-Time Prophecies*, Part 12 The Seventh Trumpet: The Rapture and Second Coming of Messiah Yeshua, free study at www.messengers-of-messiah.org.)

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