

The Day of Atonement ... a Closer Look

Let us take a closer look at the meaning of the Day of Atonement, this wonderful day in God's annual Holy Day season that shows us more perfectly the nature of His plan for mankind. First, we will start with the scriptures that name all of the Holy Days in one place: Leviticus 23.

Leviticus 23:26-32

This famous scripture shows us the following characteristics of the day:

1. **A holy convocation** from the evening of Sivan 9 to the evening of Sivan 10
2. **A day of atonement.** *Atonement* (3725) = **kippur**, "expiation"; from 3722, **kaphar**, "to cover up, propitiate, ransom, atone, expiate."

Note this discussion of the Day of Atonement related to the word **kaphar**, from *Strong's Expanded Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, Tennessee, 2001: "The connection of all of the rituals with *kaphar* peaks in the complex ceremony of the annual Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), as described in detail in Leviticus 16. All the sacrifices in the world would not satisfy God's righteousness (e.g., Micah 6:7; Psalms 50:7-15). Hence, God alone can provide an atonement for sin, by which His wrath is assuaged. The righteous God is neither implacable nor capricious, but provides Himself the 'ransom' or substitute sacrifice that would satisfy Him. The priest at the altar represents God Himself, bringing the requisite offering before God; sacrifice is not essentially man's action, but God's own act of pardoning mercy. *Kaphar* is first found in Genesis 6:14, where it is

used in its primary sense of 'to cover over.' Here God gives Noah instructions concerning the ark, including, '*Pitch it within and without with pitch.*' Most uses of the word, however, involve the theological meaning of 'covering over,' often with the blood of a sacrifice, in order to atone for some sin. This means that the 'covering over' hides the sin from God until the death of Christ takes away the sin of the world (cf. John 1:29; Hebrews 10:4).

"As might be expected, this word occurs more frequently in the Book of Leviticus than in any other book, since Leviticus deals with the ritual sacrifices that were made to atone for sin. For example, Leviticus 4:13-21 gives instructions for bringing a young bull to the tent of meeting for a sin offering. After the elders laid their hands on the bull (to transfer the people's sin to the bull), the bull was killed. The priest then brought some of the blood of the bull into the tent of meeting and sprinkled it seven times before the veil. Some of the



blood was put on the horns of the altar and the rest of the blood was poured at the base of the altar of burnt offering. The fat of the

bull was then burned on the altar. The bull itself was to be burned outside the camp.

By means of this ritual, *'the priest shall make an atonement [kaphar] for them, and it shall be forgiven them'* (Leviticus 4:20).

The term 'atonement' is found at least 16 times in Leviticus 16, the great chapter concerning the Day of Atonement. Before anything else, the high priest had to 'make atonement' for himself and his house by offering a bull as a sin offering. After lots were cast upon the two goats, one was sent away into the wilderness as an atonement (v. 10), while the other was sacrificed and its blood sprinkled on the mercy seat as an atonement for the people (v.15-20). The Day of Atonement was celebrated only once a year. Only on this day could the high priest enter the holy of holies of the tabernacle or temple on behalf of the people of Israel and make atonement for them. Sometimes atonement for sin was made apart from or without blood offerings. During his vision-call experience, Isaiah's lips were touched with a coal of fire taken from the altar by one of the seraphim. With that, he was told, *'Thy sin is purged [kaphar]'* (Isaiah 6:7). Isaiah's sin of unclean lips was purged (6:5), [but] not sin purged unto salvation."

Blood sacrifices "cover over", or hide, the sins we commit from God's view until the death of Christ takes away the sin entirely.

John 1:29. *"The next day John saw Jesus coming unto him, and said, Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world."*

Hebrews 10:4. *"For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins."*

Isaiah 53:11. *"He shall see the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied; by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities."*

I Corinthians 15:3. *"For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures"*

Galatians 1:4. *"Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father"*

See also Hebrews 1:3; 2:17; 9:28; I Peter 2:24; 3:18; I John 2:2; 3:5; 4:10; Revelation 1:5.

Without this blood sacrifice of the Perfect One for our sins, we have no hope of a resurrection from the grave.

Genesis 2:16-17. *"And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it: for in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die."*

Ezekiel 18:4, 20. *"The soul that sins, it shall die."*

Romans 6:23. *"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."*

Romans 3:23. *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"*

3. You must afflict your souls, meaning to fast that day. **Afflict** (6031) = **anah**, "to be afflicted, be bowed down, be humbled, be meek." This often refers to harsh and painful treatment, as Sarai dealing with Hagar (Genesis 16:6), and Israel in Egypt (Genesis 15:13), or Joseph in fetters when sold as a slave (Psalms 105:18), or searching out what must be done through wisdom on earth (Ecclesiastes 1:13). Acts 27:9 proves that this day is a fasting day, and fasting, more than perhaps any other action we can take, imparts within us a humble and contrite spirit, which is essential to approach our heavenly Father (Isaiah 66:2).

souls (5315) = **nephesh**, "a breathing

creature, i.e. animal, vitality, life, person, self.”

4. No manner of work is to be done (v. 30 and 31).

Work (4399) = *malakah*, “deputyship, i.e. ministry, employment, work”; from 4397 (*malak*), “messenger; angel”. If one does not afflict himself he is to be cut off from Israel (v. 29), and destroyed (v. 30).

cut off (3772) = *karath*, “to cut off, cut down, or fell, or to sever something from something else by cutting it with a blade.”

destroyed (Strong 6) = *abad*, “the disappearance of someone or something; in its strongest sense, to die or cease to exist.”

Leviticus 16:1-34.

1. The high priest (Aaron) was to go into the “... holy place within the veil before the mercy seat, which is upon the ark ...” (v.2) on this day only of the entire year. Yahweh would appear upon the mercy seat, hidden by a cloud (v.2).

cloud (6051) = *anan*, “cloud, fog, storm cloud, smoke.”

The high priest, picturing us, the saints, His royal priesthood (I Peter 2:9-10), is to annually go into the presence of God Himself, having been “purged of sin” sym-



bolically by the sacrifice of a bullock and the burning of incense (v.11-13) – the shed blood picturing Jesus Christ’s shed blood (Hebrews 9:11-14) – and be with Him for a short time that day. The sins of the Israelites also were symbolically washed away by the sacrifice of the goat upon which the “lot for the Lord” fell (v.8-9) (Leviticus 16:8-10, 14-19).

2. The priest would wear a “holy linen coat”, with “linen breeches”, “girded with a linen mitre” (v.4). White linen is the “*righteousness of the saints*” (Revelation 19:8), worn at the marriage supper of the Lamb. Revelation 19:7-9. The saints are to become kings and priests, reigning on the earth.

Revelation 5:10. “*And has made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.*” See also Exodus 19:5-6 and I Peter 2:9-10.

3. He was to wash himself with water before putting on the linen garments (v.4). Washing one’s whole body with water is a type of baptism with water, which symbolically washes away sin and makes oneself a new creature before God, sinless and perfect. Acts 2:38; 22:16; Hebrews 10:22.

Thus, the priest (us!) is figuratively cleansed of all sin, and is doing (wearing) the righteous thoughts, words, and deeds of a truly converted son of God. He is like Christ Himself, symbolically sinless and spiritual in every way.

4. The “scapegoat” (Azazel goat) had all of the sins of Israel confessed upon it by the priest laying hands on it, and was led by a man to a “land not inhabited”, and let go. This goat must surely represent Satan the devil, who before the millennium is cast by a strong angel into the bottomless pit for 1,000 years (Revelation 20:1-3).

5. On this day the Israelites were to “af-

flict your souls” (v.29), and “do no work” (Strong 4399; v.29), as stated in Leviticus 23. It was to be a Sabbath of rest.

sabbath (7676) = ***shabbath***, “Sabbath, intermission”; from 7673, ***shabath***, “to rest, cease”.

rest (7677) = ***shabbathown***, “sabbatism, or special holiday”, from 7676 (above)

This double emphasis on resting indicates the importance of not overexerting the human body while not eating or drinking, so as not to harm one’s body, which is God’s temple.

Hebrews 8 and 9.

We know that the symbolism of the offerings, shedding of animal blood, the tabernacle, the items within the tabernacle, and the priests and their activities all picture things in the heavenly realm: “...*who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things*”.

Hebrews 8:5. “... *who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, says he, that you make all things according to the pattern showed to you in the mount.*”

Regarding the Day of Atonement, we notice that the high priest going into the Holy of Holies and offering the blood of sacrifice for himself, and for the people of Israel, could not truly wipe away sin and make one perfect (Hebrews 8:7-10). The time for entering the Holy of Holies where Yahweh dwelled was to be at the time of the “reformation” (v. 10), when the veil blocking access to the Holy Place was ripped.

Luke 23:45-46. “*And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst. And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father,*

into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost.”

Jesus Christ, like the high priest of old, entered into the Holy Place, but this time in heaven, “*having obtained eternal redemption for us*” (Hebrews 9:12).

Hebrews 9:15. “*And for this cause He is the Mediator of the new testament, that by means of death for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.*”

That heavenly place, at the Father’s right hand, is what is pictured by the Holy of Holies, where He now is and where we also are destined to go.

Hebrews 9:23-28. “*It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.*”



For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: nor yet that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest entered into the

holy place every year with blood of others; for then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once in the end of the world has He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.”

Mark 16:19. “So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.”

Revelation 3:21. “To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with My Father in His throne.”

Romans 8:29. “For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.”

The Conclusion of the Matter

What, then, does the Day of Atonement



Christ's return to gather the saints: ("Stage I"). Acts 1:9-11; Matthew 24:30; I Thessalonians 4:13-17.

picture in the grand scheme of God's plan for mankind?

1. We see the kings and priests – the saints – having direct access to the temple in heaven, by the veil separating us from the Holy Place being ripped apart and opened at the crucifixion of Jesus Christ ... by the atonement of His shed blood.

2. We see the saints made clean by the washing in water through baptism before entering that Holy Place.

3. We see saints wearing white linen – righteousness – from head to toe before entering the Holy Place.

4. We also see the resurrection at the Seventh Trumpet, and the saints meeting Jesus Christ in the air (Acts 1:11; I Corinthians 15:51-52; I Thessalonians 4:16-17; Revelation 11:15).

Putting all scriptures together, there appear to be “two phases” of Christ's return, since Acts 1:9-11 indicates that Christ will return to meet the saints in the air in the same manner that He left the earth to go up to heaven. In that situation “... He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight”. It is assumed that this “cloud” is a vast number of angels who come with Jesus to collect the saints at His return from “... one end of heaven to the other” (Matthew 24:30-31), a rather benign ascension compared to the violent return He later lead after the marriage supper.

This reality of the angels being the clouds has its roots in knowing how many angels there must be that will return with Jesus Christ to collect the saints at the resurrection. Over the course of history there have been perhaps many millions of saints whom God has called and chosen as first-fruits, those written in the Lamb's Book of Life and destined to be kings and priests to reign on the earth during the millennium (Romans 8:29; Revelation 5:10; 20:4). The angels are “... all ministering spirits sent

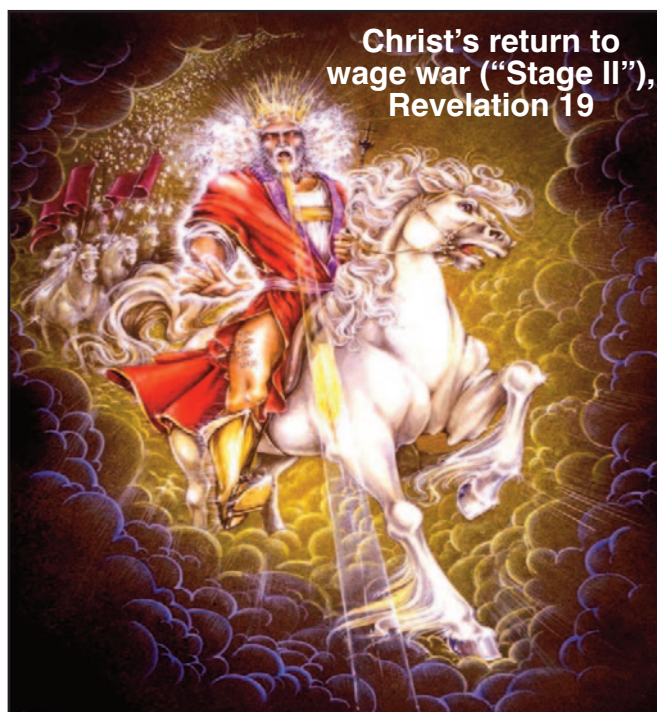
forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation” (Hebrews 1:14), so if there is one angel per saint — and that is merely a presumption, for there could be more than that — then the number of angels would likely be many millions as well ... and would appear as clouds when they returned en masse with Christ in the air (Matthew 24: 30).

At the heavenly throne the Marriage Supper of the Lamb takes place, the saints in their white linen (Revelation 19:7-9). It is an utterly joyous occasion as the saints, in their new spirit bodies, meet with Christ in the Father’s presence for an unspecified period of time.

In the second phase of His return, He will return to earth with angels and saints on white horses, to destroy the Beast and the False Prophet (Revelation 19:11-21). At this point the millennial reign of Jesus Christ with the saints will begin, once all nations have become His, within His governmental jurisdiction.

Revelation 11:15. *“And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever.”*

What an incredibly wonderful future we have to look forward to. The present governments in the world do not know the way to peace and prosperity, but instead are bent on destroying humanity if the citizens will not bow down to these human leaders.



Matthew 24:21-22. *“For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened.”*

Our brilliant future is assured, with the sure prophecy of **Revelation 20:4.** *“And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”*

