

THE OLD TESTAMENT DAY OF ATONEMENT AND GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

The Old Testament Day of Atonement (Heb., *Yom Kippur*), was a solemn fast day decreed by God to deal with sin under the Old Covenant. It was an Old Testament type of which Christ was the New Testament fulfilment. On the Day of Atonement the high priest had to offer sacrifices first for his own and his family's sins, then for the sins of the people of Israel (CP Lev 23:26-28 with 16:1-34). The animal sacrifices and sin offerings on the Day of Atonement in the Old Testament prefigured the supreme sacrifice of Christ as the sin offering in the New Testament. The blood of the animal sacrifices typified the blood Christ would shed in His atoning death on the Cross. The difference however, is that the blood of the animal sacrifices could not pardon sin. Only Christ's blood can do that. His shed blood put away sin forever (CP Lev 16:6, 11-19 with He 9:1-10; 18).

The sin offering for the people of Israel on the Day of Atonement consisted of two goats. The two goats formed but one offering, but they were both needed to complete the type – Christ's death and resurrection – in God's plan of salvation (CP Lev 16:5, 7-10, 15-16, 18-22). The goat upon which the Lord's lot fell, that was slain as a sin offering to God for the sins of the people of Israel, foreshadowed the death of Christ, who offered Himself to God as a sin offering for the sins of all mankind (CP Isa 52:13 – 53:12; Jn 1:29; Ro 3:23-26; Ga 1:3-4; Eph 5:2; He 10:5-10; 1Pe 2:24; 1Jn 2:2; 4:9-10).

Jesus was the sin bearer for the sins of all mankind. He did not become literally sin, as many Christians believe, but the sin offering or sin bearer (CP 2Cor 5:18-21). *Sin* in V21 simply means that Jesus was treated as if He were a sinner. Just as the goat upon which the Lord's lot fell in Lev 16 was a sin offering in the Old Testament, so Christ was a sin offering in the New Testament, not literally sin. Christ experienced the abandonment and despair of being separated from God on the cross as punishment for the sins He bore for everyone else, not because He became sin Himself (CP Mt 27:45-47). The sin offerings in the Old Testament foreshadowed what Christ would become in the New Testament.

The second goat in Lev 16 – called the scapegoat – had the sins of all the people, including the high priest and his family, transferred to it by the laying on of the high priest's hands. It was then led away into the wilderness (KJV) and let loose (CP Lev 16:20-22). This typifies the complete pardon for sin in Christ's resurrection from the dead. The two goats completed the one Old Testament type of Christ in His atoning death for mankind's sins and His subsequent resurrection for their justification (CP Ac 2:22-36; Ro 4:25-5:1; 14:9; 2Cor 5:14-15; Rev 1:4-6; 5:6-12). If Christ had died and remained dead His death would have been in vain; it would not have atoned for anyone's sin. It was the resurrection that made it effective (CP 1Cor 15:1-4, 12-22; 12:22; He 1:1-3; 2:14-18; 9:24-28; 1Pe 1:3; 3:21).

As there were two aspects of the one sin offering on the Day of Atonement in the Old Testament: the goat

slain for a sin offering and the scapegoat that was let loose, so too there are two aspects of Christ's offering of Himself in the New Testament – His death, and resurrection.

The *wilderness* where the scapegoat was let loose in Lev 16:22 (KJV), is from the Hebrew word **midbar**, which in this context means a pasture or open field, not a desert or desolate waste symbolising hell, as some teach. It can not be made to symbolize hell in any shape or form, because the scapegoat typified the complete pardon for sin in Christ's resurrection, which saves people from hell, not connects them to it. Nor was the scapegoat offered to a desert demon, as others teach. It was simply let loose in the wilderness (CP Lev 16:22).

Even the place where the carcass of the goat that was slain as a sin offering was burned, was an Old Testament type of the location of Christ's death (CP Lev 16:27 with He 13:11-13). As the carcass of the goat was burned outside the camp of the Israelites, so Christ too was killed outside the city gate (CP Mt 27:31-35; Mk 15:20-22; Lu 23:26-27; Jn 19:16-18). Jesus shed His Sacrificial blood outside the city gate in order to sanctify – set apart for God's service, separated from their old sinful life – all who believe on Him. Therefore, as we saw in He 13:13, Paul exhorts believers to “*go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach*”. This means that believers are to reject the corrupt world system and its practices, and be prepared to bear contempt and abuse and shame, and even die if need be, the same as Jesus did (CP He 13:13 with Mt 5:11-12; Lu 6:22-23; 1Pe 2:19; 3:14; 4:14).

The Day of Atonement was itself a reminder to the Israelites of the temporary nature of the Old Testament sacrifices and sin offerings. It was an annual event – the sacrifices and sin offerings had to be repeated every year – thus signifying to the people that they were insufficient to completely atone for sin. They foreshadowed a far superior sacrifice – the Lord Jesus Christ – who would be sufficient. He would put away people's sins once for all (CP He 9:6-28; 10:1-26). The Tabernacle and the Holy of Holies where the blood of the sin offering was sprinkled, were Old Testament types of the heavenly Tabernacle into which Christ entered bearing His own blood after His death on the cross (CP Lev 16:11-17 with He 8:1-2; 9:11-12; 10:19-20). The true Tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man in He 8:2, of which the earthly Tabernacle in Lev 16 was the Old Testament type, is heaven itself. It is the Sanctuary where Christ now officiates of which the Holy of Holies in the earthly Tabernacle was the Old Testament Type (CP Ex 25:8-9; Lev 16:2, 11-19, 32-34 with He 8:1-2; 9:6-15, 22-26).

The Mercy Seat upon the Ark of the Covenant on which the high priest sprinkled the blood of the sin offerings in the Holy of Holies, in Lev 16, emphasises that the forgiveness of sins is possible only by God's grace and mercy. His justice was

The Old Testament Day of Atonement and God's Plan of Salvation

satisfied through the shed blood of Christ who was the true Mercy Seat, the propitiation for sin (CP Lev 16:2, 13-17; 17:11 with Ro 3:25; 5:11; Col 1:20-22; He 5:1-4; 9:11-22; 1Jn 2:2; 4:10). *Propitiation* in Ro 3:25, 1Jn 2:2 and 4:10 is from the Greek word **hilasterion**. It means Mercy Seat. The Mercy Seat was also the Old Testament type of the heavenly throne – the Throne of Grace – where Christ now sits at God's right hand (CP He 4:14-16; 9:24; 10:19-20).

Every part of the Old Testament earthly Tabernacle typified the nature of God dealing with the sinfulness of man: the coming redemption, the means of pardon through grace, and the full reconciliation of man to God. The Ark of the Covenant testified to God's presence in the Sanctuary. It contained the Ten Commandments and was a continual reminder of the Covenant between God and Israel (CP Ex 25: 8-10, 16, 21-22; Lev 16:2, 13 with He 9:1-5). The Ark of the Covenant also contained the manna – the miracle food from God that sustained the Israelites during their forty years sojourn on the wilderness. It foreshadowed Christ, the true bread from heaven (CP Ex 16:4, 16-18, 32-35; Psa 78:23-25; 105:40 with Jn 6:30-35, 47-51, 58). The Ark of the Covenant also contained Aaron's rod that budded and bore almonds, which testified that God had chosen Aaron to be the first high priest of the earthly Tabernacle, an Old Testament type of the New Testament priesthood of Christ (CP Nu 17:1-10 with He 5:1-6; 7:1-3, 11-17, 22-24).

The earthly Tabernacle also contained the showbread (CP He 9:2). It is not known for sure what the showbread represents – scriptures are silent in that regard – but there are two views among Christians. One is that it represents the twelve tribes of Israel, called to be the children of light – the table upon which the showbread lay, had to be positioned in the Holy of Holies where it would reflect the light from the candlestick (CP Ex 25:23, 30-31; 26:35 with Mt 5:14-16). The other view is that the loaves symbolized the fact that on the basis of the sacrificial atonement of the cross, believers are nourished by God in the person of the supreme sacrifice, Christ, who is the true bread of life, which we read in Jn 6:30-35, 47-51, 58. This author holds to the first view because the true bread of life is already represented in the Holy of Holies by the manna in the Ark of the Covenant (CP Ex 16:32-35).

We need to look at one more thing concerning the Day of Atonement and God's plan of salvation before bringing this study to a close (CP He 9:6-15). The teaching here is that the Holy Spirit signified by the fact that the high priest had to enter the Holy of Holies every year to make atonement for sin by sprinkling the blood of the sin offerings on the Mercy

Seat, that the earthly Tabernacle was merely a shadow of the realities in Christ. The Old Testament priests could not provide direct access to God for His people through the blood of animal sacrifices. It is only through the blood of Christ, the supreme sacrifice, that a way was made that leads directly to God (CP Jn 6:27, 33-35, 39-40; 10:9; Ro 5:1-2, 6-11; 2Cor 5:17-21; Eph 2:12-18; Col 1:19-22; He 8:1-13; 9:1-10 with 11-28; 10:1, 12-14, 19-23).

We should note here that *the example and shadow of heavenly things* (KJV) in He 8:5, does not mean that there are actual buildings in heaven, but that the heavenly realities were adequately symbolized and represented in the earthly Tabernacle, the Holy of Holies, the Ark of the Covenant, the Mercy Seat etc. These are *the figures of the true* in He 9:24 (CP He 8:5; 9:24). He 9:15 teaches that Christ not only died to save sinners under the New Covenant, but under the Old Covenant as well (CP He 9:15 with Ac 17:30-31; Ro 3:24-25). Everyone who took part in the sacrificial system under the Old Covenant was vindicated by the death of Christ under the New Covenant. *Those who are called* looks back on them.

The new and living way by which believers can enter into the Holy of Holies by the blood of Jesus in He 10:19 refers to Christ's sacrificial death opening up a way for believers into the very presence of God that was not possible under the Old Covenant. It is a new way because it is only possible under the New Covenant, and it is a living way because Christ lives for evermore, seated at God's right hand, to make intercession for believers with God (CP He 4:14-16 And 10:19 with Jn 14:6; Eph 2:14-22; He 7:19-28). The *Throne of Grace* in He 4:16 is God's throne in heaven – from which all mercy and grace is dispensed to New Testament Christians – where Christ sits at God's right hand where He ever lives to make intercession with God for believers, as He 7:25 teaches. Here, at the Throne of Grace, believers' confessed sins are forgiven (CP He 7:25; 1Jn 2:1 with 1Jn 1:7-9). Believers can come boldly – confidently – to the Throne of Grace knowing also that every petition they desire of God that conforms to His word, will be granted them (CP Jn 14:13-14; 16:23-24; 1Jn 5:14-15). As we learned previously in this study, the Throne of Grace was typified in the Old Testament by the Mercy Seat upon the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies, on which the blood of the sin offering was sprinkled on the Day of Atonement.

This study is now complete. The Day of Atonement and everything pertaining to it in the Old Testament has been fulfilled in God's plan of salvation through Christ and His shed blood, in the new Testament (CP Jn 3:16; Col 1:12-22).