

God's Appointed Times

Yom Kippur – Day of Atonement

Day of Atonement – *Leviticus 23:26-32, Leviticus 16:1-34 [29-34], Hebrews 7, 9, 10*

Purpose

Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, is considered the holiest of the holy days. It is on this day that the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle/Temple and offer sacrifices to make atonement for the sins of the entire nation. Celebrated on the 10th day of Tishri (the seventh month), and following *Rosh HaShanah*'s purpose of repentance, gathering and preparation – *Yom Kippur* points to God's model of substitutionary and vicarious sacrifice and atonement for sins.

Practice (Old and New Testament)

The practices, sacrifices and offerings surrounding the Day of Atonement are described in detail in Leviticus 16:1-28 and Numbers 29:7-11. However, three primary elements emerge as unique to the Day of Atonement – fasting, the scapegoat and the High Priest/Holy of Holies.

1. **Fasting** – literally “*you shall afflict your souls*”. No other holy day or festival required fasting. Although there are numerous references to fasting in the Scripture, it is particularly fitting for this day as a sign of self-denial and consecration of oneself to the Lord.
2. **The scapegoat** – Leviticus 16:7-10, 21-22 describes “a tale of two goats”. The High Priest would take two goats - one would be designated as the sin offering (*chatat*) and sacrificed before the Lord, and the other would be designated as the “escape goat” (*azazel*). The High Priest would lay his hands on the *scapegoat* and confess the sins of the people. Instead of this goat being slain, it was released into the wilderness symbolically taking the sins of the people with it. Both are wonderful foreshadowings of the sacrifice for and removal of sin that would be fulfilled by Christ.
3. **High Priest** – The High Priest was the only individual who could enter the Holy of Holies to offer the corporate/national sacrifices for the sins of the people on this annual holy day. But first he had to make atonement for his own sins before he could even enter the holy place on behalf of the people (*Leviticus 16:3-14*). His role was critical and central to obtaining God's forgiveness.

Prophetic Fulfillment by Christ

As we have already seen, Christ fulfilled the role of atonement (propitiation) for and removal of our sins by his **blood** sacrifice (*Romans 3:23-26*). Christ further fulfilled and even exceeded the role of the High Priest (*Hebrews 4:14-16*). Hebrews describes Christ's fulfillment and superiority in a number of ways:

- Christ's priesthood is forever (*Hebrews 7:23-25*)
- Christ and His priesthood are perfect (*Hebrews 7:26-28*)
- Christ served *both* as High Priest and the atonement sacrifice (*Hebrews 9:11-14*)
- Christ's sacrifice is permanent (*Hebrews 10:1-4, 11-14*)

By becoming our atoning sacrifice and High Priest, Christ serves as the ultimate fulfillment of the Day of Atonement.

Practical Applications, Observations and Challenges

Today's religious worldview will tell us that there are many ways to God, there many types of salvation and that it doesn't matter what we believe as long as we believe in something. Biblical truth tells us - “*nor is there is salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*” (*Acts 4:12*). What are we doing to remember and celebrate Christ's atoning sacrifice for our sins and honor him as our High Priest who made it possible to enter God's presence directly and “*come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help us in time of need.*” (*Hebrews 4:16*)?