

The Day of Atonement – Just a fast day?

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Does the Day of Atonement have any relevance to Christianity? What has it got to do with salvation?

The Day of Atonement is best known as a fast day. That's what God commanded Israel to do every year. It is the only Holy Day that is not a feast day. However, the Day of Atonement is much more than simply a fast day, and fasting does not give us salvation. We can't earn salvation no matter how much we fast, but while we fast, we can reflect, we can humble ourselves and acknowledge that our lives are fleeting and that only God is the sustainer of life. The Day of Atonement was commanded a fast day to reflect that this physical life is only temporary. We eat to sustain our physical life, but only God can sustain our spiritual eternal life. The concept of fasting is to acknowledge that without God sustaining us we will die.

[Leviticus 23V26](#) And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

[V27](#) Also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD.

[V28](#) And ye shall do no work in that same day: for it is a day of atonement, to make an atonement for you before the LORD your God.

[V29](#) For whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people.

[V30](#) And whatsoever soul it be that doeth any work in that same day, the same soul will I destroy from among his people.

[V31](#) Ye shall do no manner of work: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

[V32](#) It shall be unto you a sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth day of the month at even, from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath.

Much more than a fast day

The Day of Atonement is much more than simply a fast day, it depicts something that God does that makes eternal life, free from Satan, possible for us. In fact, the Day of Atonement, becoming one with God (At Onement), is an extension of the Passover. It solemnly celebrates Christ's death by the shedding of His life blood for all sins, but goes one step further, and places those sins on the author of sin, Satan.

When God commanded ancient Israel to enact physical rituals on this day, He was having them rehearse a dramatic performance that pictures what God is going to do to remove sin from humanity. By looking at the events of this performance God shows us how to understand the events after Christ's return as set out in the book of Revelation.

[Leviticus 16V29](#) And this shall be a statute for ever unto you: that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger that sojourneth among you:

[V30](#) For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the LORD.

[V31](#) It shall be a sabbath of rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls, by a statute for ever.

[V32](#) And the priest, whom he shall anoint, and whom he shall consecrate to minister in the priest's office in his father's stead, shall make the atonement, and shall put on the linen clothes, even the holy garments:

[V33](#) And he shall make an atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make an atonement for the tabernacle of the congregation, and for the altar, and he shall make an atonement for the priests, and for all the people of the congregation.

[V34](#) And this shall be an everlasting statute unto you, to make an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year. And he did as the LORD commanded Moses.

Here in Leviticus 16 the last few verses are like an epilogue, they explain what we are told in the preceding part of this chapter. Now that we know that this chapter is talking about what the high priest was to do on the Day of Atonement, let's start reading from verse 2.

God sits on a *Mercy* seat

[Leviticus 16V2](#) And the LORD said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the vail before the mercy seat, which is upon the ark; that he die not: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat.

Why does Aaron go into the holy place within the vail before the mercy seat? This occurred once a year on the Day of Atonement and pictures Jesus Christ making intercession for us before God the Father.

[Romans 8V33](#) Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.

[V34](#) Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

God had his presence behind the vail and figuratively sat on the mercy seat. Note that it is a *mercy* seat, not an *accusation* seat or a *vengeance* seat that God sits on, it is a *mercy* seat. Jesus Christ as our High Priest make intercession for humanity to God the Father who in Himself is mercy, He encompasses mercy.

[Hebrew 4V14](#) Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

[V15](#) For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

Christ is the ultimate High Priest, but the appointed human high priest stands in for Christ on the Day Of Atonement. As such, the high priest must symbolically be sinless as Christ, so he is commanded to undertake rituals representing the removal of sin through Christ's sacrifice.

[Leviticus 16V3](#) Thus shall Aaron come into the holy place: with a young bullock for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering.

[V4](#) He shall put on the holy linen coat, and he shall have the linen breeches upon his flesh, and shall be girded with a linen girdle, and with the linen mitre shall he be attired: these are holy garments; therefore shall he wash his flesh in water, and so put them on.

[V5](#) And he shall take of the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering.

[V6](#) And Aaron shall offer his bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and make an atonement for himself, and for his house.

Note that Aaron had a sin offering for himself, to cleans himself before he appeared before God. Note also that the two goats were both a sin offering.

[V7](#) And he shall take the two goats, and present them before the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

[V8](#) And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for the scapegoat.

The casting of lots

Let's pause for a moment and take a look at why lots were cast. These two goats are both to do with sin, but one was to be sacrificed for the redemption of sin, while the other was to have the sins laid upon it.

Could you tell Christ and Satan apart if you saw them?

[2 Corinthians 11V14](#) And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

So we know that Christ is the light of the world, but Satan transforms himself into an angel of light. How are we to know the two apart. Easy you might say, but Jesus said of the end times:

[Matthew 24V24](#) For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

Therefore, Aaron needed to appeal to God to know which goat was which.

Azazel – the goat of departure

We also need to look at the language here. The translators typically use the word scapegoat for one of the goats. In modern English scapegoat typically means someone to takes the blame undeservedly. This is a blatant perversion of God's word by Satan. The original Hebrew word translated here is Azazel. In Strongs concordance [H5799](#), Azazel is *the goat of departure*. It is also believed that Azazel is another name for Satan the devil.

To help us get the real meaning of what is being depicted in the verses I'm going to use the phrase *the goat of departure* whenever the word scapegoat is used.

[Leviticus 16V9](#) And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the LORD'S lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering.

[V10](#) But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the *goat of departure*, shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a *goat of departure* into the wilderness.

[V11](#) And Aaron shall bring the bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and shall make an atonement for himself, and for his house, and shall kill the bullock of the sin offering which is for himself:

[V12](#) And he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the LORD, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the vail:

[V13](#) And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not:

[V14](#) And he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times.

[V15](#) Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the vail, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat:

This is the goat upon which the LORD'S lot fell as we read in verse 9. It represents Jesus Christ being sacrificed for all sin. It is an enactment of the Passover. It is Christ who *takes the blame undeservedly*, though willingly, by the pouring out of His blood unto death.

[V16](#) And he shall make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remaineth among them in the midst of their uncleanness.

[V17](#) And there shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goeth in to make an atonement in the holy place, until he come out, and have made an atonement for himself, and for his household, and for all the congregation of Israel.

[V18](#) And he shall go out unto the altar that is before the LORD, and make an atonement for it; and shall take of the blood of the bullock, and of the blood of the goat, and put it upon the horns of the altar round about.

[V19](#) And he shall sprinkle of the blood upon it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it, and hallow it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel.

[V20](#) And when he hath made an end of reconciling the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat:

The blood of the goat representing Christ is sprinkled before God the Father to be accepted as the sacrifice for the sins of all humanity. This all ties in with the Passover where Christ had to ascend to heaven to appear before God the Father to have His sacrifice accepted. It is also depicted in the Passover sequence by the sheaf of the first grain of the harvest being waved before God.

[V21](#) And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness:

[V22](#) And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.

There we have it, Christ gave His life for our sins, but He does not bear our sins forever, they are not His sin, rather they are laid upon Satan, the author of our sin. Note the wording here, the sins of the world are confessed over Satan, Satan has to acknowledge that the sins are his, and then Satan is banished from the world, from having any contact with the world. The goat representing Satan, the *goat of departure*, is taken into the wilderness, depicting Satan being thrown into the bottomless pit, and shut up, and a seal set upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more. We'll read that in a minute.

[V23](#) And Aaron shall come into the tabernacle of the congregation, and shall put off the linen garments, which he put on when he went into the holy place, and shall leave them there:

[V24](#) And he shall wash his flesh with water in the holy place, and put on his garments, and come forth, and offer his burnt offering, and the burnt offering of the people, and make an atonement for himself, and for the people.

[V25](#) And the fat of the sin offering shall he burn upon the altar.

[V26](#) And he that let go the *goat of departure* shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward come into the camp.

[V27](#) And the bullock for the sin offering, and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the holy place, shall one carry forth without the camp; and they shall burn in the fire their skins, and their flesh, and their dung.

[V28](#) And he that burneth them shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp.

The sin is taken away from humanity

Another meaning of the Hebrew word Azazel, *the goat of departure*, is *total removal* (Strong's [H5799](#)). God's plan is for the *total removal* of sin from humanity.

[Psalms 103V10](#) He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

[V11](#) For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.

[V12](#) As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

The *goat of departure* represents Satan, so the “fit man” must cleans himself from having contact with the goat, with Satan. In a similar manner, bullock which was the sin offering for the High Priest and the goat representing the sacrifice of Christ are taken outside the camp, away from the people. The sins were taken away from the people, just as Christ was crucified outside of the city walls on Golgotha.

[Revelation 19V1](#) And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:

[Revelation 19V11](#) And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

[V12](#) His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.

[V13](#) And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.

This is Christ's return to Earth as King of Kings and Lord of Lords to set up God's Kingdom on earth. It is after this that the event pictured by the *goat of departure* takes place. Just as the goat representing Satan is removed from the people of Israel, so too is Satan removed from having influence over humanity.

[Revelation 20V1](#) And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

[V2](#) And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,

[V3](#) And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

God is perfect, His plan is worked out in minute detail, and His physical representation of His plan has the same detail. Just as the physical *goat of departure* could find its way back from the wilderness and be amongst the Israelites again, so too will Satan have influence over humanity again as we just read in verse 3.

The Day of Atonement is second Holy Day in the third holy day season. After it comes the Feast of Tabernacles or Feast of Booths as it is often called, and then the Eight Day or Last Great Day. There is so much more to God's Plan of Salvation. In fact, as we just read in [Revelation 20 verse 3](#), Satan will be released out of the "bottomless pit" at the end of the 1000 years, the Millennium. Why God allows this and what it means for humanity is a whole new area of study. But what Atonement shows us is that sin is Satan's responsibility, he has to own them, they will be placed on him, and ultimately *all sin* will be placed on Satan and he and sin will be removed forever, he is only loosed a little season.