

Day of Atonement



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. 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. For whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people. And whatsoever soul it be that doeth any work in that same day, the same soul will I destroy from among his people. Ye shall do no manner of work: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. 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. Leviticus 23:27-32

What does the word “atonement” mean according to a dictionary?

The Day of Atonement was a very serious and sacred day to the Jewish people. They believed it to be the most holy day of the entire year. All the other annual Festivals were times of celebration and joy, but this was a day for sober reflection. It was a day of searching one's soul and life to make sure all sins were recognized and made right and forgiven. The people began fasting at sunset on the ninth day and fasted till sunset on the tenth day. It was a solemn Sabbath when no work was to be done. This was the one day in the year when the High Priest would enter the very presence of God in the Most Holy Place of the Tabernacle to make full and final Atonement for the sins of the people.

A full description of the activities of the High Priest is given in Leviticus 16. Here is a brief summary:

The High Priest bathed himself and changed from his usual gorgeous robes into plain white linen robes like an ordinary Priest wore. He brought a bullock as a Sin Offering and a ram as a Burnt Offering for himself and the other Priests and two young goats as a Sin Offering and a ram as a Burnt Offering for the whole congregation of the people. He chose one of the goats to be killed as the Lord's goat and the other to be the Scapegoat, the “goat to be sent away.” He took a large quantity of incense into the Most Holy Place to create a cloud of incense, like a smoke screen, around the Mercy Seat on the Ark of the Covenant. He killed the bullock and took its blood into the Most Holy Place to sprinkle on the Mercy Seat and then killed the Lord's goat and did the same with its blood. He came out of the Most Holy Place and applied some of the blood of each of the animals to the horns of the Altar of Incense in the Holy Place. Through these rites he cleansed the Tabernacle of all the sin that had been “stored” there. Then he came out of the Tabernacle, symbolically carrying that sin, and placed it all on the head of the Scapegoat, which was then sent away to be abandoned and die in the

wilderness. The High Priest bathed himself again and changed back into his gorgeous robes and then offered the two rams as Burnt Offerings for himself and his fellow Priests, and for the people. In this way he consecrated everyone for a clean start to a new year. When everything was finished, the people rejoiced in their renewed Covenant with God.

Let's look at some of the deep significance of this day.

The blood of Christ, while it was to release the repentant sinner from the condemnation of the law, was not to cancel the sin; it would stand on record in the sanctuary until the final atonement; so in the type the blood of the sin offering removed the sin from the penitent, but it rested in the sanctuary until the day of atonement.⁴⁷

Many people believe that everything Jesus needed to accomplish for our salvation was finished at the Cross. But the Tabernacle and its services tell us otherwise. The Sacrifice of an animal that was brought as a Sin Offering at any other time of the year transferred the person's guilt to the Tabernacle, but the sin was not gone completely until the final Atonement was finished. Full Atonement has two phases.

In the great day of final award, the dead are to be “judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.” Revelation 20:12. Then by virtue of the atoning blood of Christ, the sins of all the truly penitent will be blotted from the books of heaven. Thus the sanctuary will be freed, or cleansed, from the record of sin. In the type, this great work of atonement, or blotting out of sins, was represented by the services of the Day of Atonement—the cleansing of the earthly sanctuary, which was accomplished by the removal, by virtue of the blood of the sin offering, of the sins by which it had been polluted.

As in the final atonement the sins of the truly penitent are to be blotted from the records of heaven, no more to be remembered or come into mind, so in the type they were borne away into the wilderness, forever separated from the congregation.

Since Satan is the originator of sin, the direct instigator of all the sins that caused the death of the Son of God, justice demands that Satan shall suffer the final punishment. Christ's work for the redemption of men and the purification of the universe from sin will be closed by the removal of sin from the heavenly sanctuary and the placing of these sins upon Satan, who will bear the final penalty. So in the typical service, the yearly round of ministration closed with the purification of the sanctuary, and the confessing of the sins on the head of the scapegoat.

Thus in the ministration of the tabernacle, and of the temple that afterward took its place, the people were taught each day the great truths relative to Christ's death and ministration, and once each year their minds were carried forward to the closing events of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, the final purification of the universe from sin and sinners.⁴⁸

What will the Lord do that shows His righteousness?

Psalms 9:7, 8

How many shall be judged in righteousness?

Verse 8

What will the Lord's judgment be based on?

Ecclesiastics 12:14

What is one of the things for which we will give account in the judgment?

Matthew 12:36

Who is our Judge?

John 5:22

In the Jewish legal system the Judge was not only the one who pronounced the final verdict but was also the Defender of the accused person. It was the Judge's responsibility to provide all the evidence he could find in favor of the person on trial. Jesus is a Judge to the wicked, but to His people He is both Judge and Defender. We do not have to fear His judgment. But we must make sure we have confessed our sins so that they can be erased from our personal record and the guilt transferred to the Tabernacle for later disposal.

Who is the "Scapegoat" that ultimately receives the guilt of the sins that were removed from the righteous and stored in the Tabernacle in Heaven.

Revelation 20:10

What color is the Throne in the Judgment?

Revelation 20:11

This color symbolizes God's righteousness and purity in all judgments that He makes.

What are the wicked judged by?

Revelation 20:12, 13

What is the final punishment of the wicked?

Revelation 20:15

Who will be judged worthy to inherit all things?

Revelation 21:7

Who will be judged unworthy of eternal life?

Revelation 21:8

What is their final destiny?

Verse 8

What will the wicked become?

Malachi 4:3

There are many who believe that the wicked suffer forever in the fire of hell as punishment for their brief life of sin here on earth, but this is not what Scripture tells us. God is a **consuming** fire to sin and sinners. (Hebrews 12:29) They do not burn forever. The fire is eternal because God is eternal, but sinners are not. They will be burned up and become ashes, for they are mortal. But God is not cruel. Neither He nor the righteous would want to see anyone tortured forever and ever.

What does God say about His feelings toward the wicked?

Ezekiel 33:11

Oh, how God wants each person to repent. He loved everyone in the world so much that He gave His only Son to save us from being destroyed. (John 3:16) He loves each of us with a love that is beyond our comprehension. He does not want anyone to be lost. You are very, very precious to God. He will be very sad if you refuse His offer of love. Why not give Him your heart today. He wants to spend eternity with you.