

The Day of Atonement

A day of National Significance!

The Churches of God have observed the Day of Atonement as a day of individual fasting and repentance. What they taught for Atonement was only slightly different from Passover except for the total fast on this day.

Is this the total meaning of this day, a repeat of Passover with fasting? Or, is there far greater significance to the rituals of the Old Testament on the Day of Atonement and the spiritual lessons we as a church should learn from them?

Let us study the Bible and let the inspired scriptures supply the answers.

by P. Scott Royer Jr.

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All quotes, except as noted, are from *The New Kings James Version* of the Bible

Tenth Day of Seventh Month

Leviticus 23:26-32 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: “Also the tenth *day* of this seventh month *shall be* the Day of Atonement. It shall be a holy convocation for you; you shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire to the Lord. And you shall do no work on that same day, for it *is* the Day of Atonement, to make atonement for you before the Lord your God. For any person who is not afflicted *in soul* on that same day shall be cut off from his people. And any person who does any work on that same day, that person I will destroy from among his people. You shall do no manner of work; *it shall be* a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. It *shall be* to you a sabbath of *solemn* rest, and you shall afflict your souls; on the ninth *day* of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your sabbath.”

The Day of Atonement is one of God’s seven Holy Days and Feasts. This day should be a spiritual feast as we are commanded to afflict our souls or fast on this day. Let us look into the spiritual significance of this unique Holy Day.

Each Holy Day Has a Different Special Meaning

All of God’s Holy Days should be and are unique in their meaning and spiritual significance. The first three have already been fulfilled historically, but have a deep spiritual significance for all converted Christians, past, present and future. Passover represents the death of our Savior and the shedding of His Holy Blood for the forgiveness of our sins. The Days of Unleavened Bread picture the necessity of putting sin out of our lives through the power of God’s Holy Spirit. In addition, the weekly Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread should remind us of the resurrection of our Living Savior. The Ten Commandments were most likely given on the first Pentecost. The first coming of the Holy Spirit and the official beginning of the New Testament Church occurred on the first Pentecost after Jesus’ death and resurrection. Without the Holy Spirit it is impossible to keep the laws of God. Then we have the four fall festivals and Holy Days that are more futuristic in fulfillment. The Feast of Trumpets pictures war, judgment, the seven trumpets, the First Resurrection and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Skipping the Day of Atonement for now, we come next to the Feast of Tabernacles

or Booths. This seven-day feast represents the coming of the Kingdom of God, both for the resurrected saints in heaven above and Jesus and the saints ruling over this earth for a thousand years. Last we have the "Eighth Day" which many have called "The Last Great Day" and/or "The Great White Throne Judgment Day." We know little about how this day will be fulfilled other than that God is a loving and fair God and will allow all who have lived down through history to have a chance to know and obey Him and repent and have their opportunity to be in the Kingdom of God.

Coming back to the Day of Atonement, the Churches of God have always observed this as a day of humble fasting for the forgiveness of sins. While this is certainly right and good, the meaning of this day differed little from Passover other than the additional requirement to fast for 24 hours. I personally do not remember any sermons about how this day would be fulfilled in the future other than Christians need to be forgiven before entering into the Kingdom of God. While the rituals of Leviticus were often reviewed, I do not remember any spiritual significance attached to these rituals for the New Testament Church. That doesn't mean there were not good sermons, or that other sermons did not cover in whole or part what we are about to discuss in this article. It just means I personally never heard them -- and I heard a lot of them.

As first stated, each of God's Holy Days should be spiritually different and unique. Are we therefore missing the full meaning of the Day of Atonement when we observe it similar to Passover with fasting? And what about the future fulfillment, especially for its relative position between The Feast of Trumpets and the Feast of Tabernacles? Let us review the scriptures and pray for the Holy Spirit of God our Father to lead us to a more complete answer for each of these questions.

Passover and Atonement

Passover is about the sacrifice of Jesus Christ with the emphasis on the forgiveness of an individual's sins by His shed blood. The Day of Atonement is also about the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. However, the emphasis is on what happens afterwards as the result of His shed blood. According to "Dictionary.com," the definition of atonement is:

1. Satisfaction or reparation for a wrong or injury; amends
2. The doctrine concerning the reconciliation of God and humankind, especially as accomplished through the life, suffering, and death of Christ.
3. Christian Science: the experience of humankind's unity with God exemplified by Jesus Christ
4. Archaic: reconciliation; agreement.

Passover is about forgiveness. Atonement is about reconciliation. When we break apart the word atonement, its meaning is as it is stated: at-one-ment, to become at one with God our Father through the shed blood of our Savior and Messiah Jesus Christ. We cannot be at one with God while we remain in our sins. Our sins must first be forgiven through the shed blood of Jesus. However, as important as this is, this is only the beginning of the spiritual significance of the Day of Atonement.

Leviticus 16

We know a lot about the rituals associated with the Passover. The Passover rituals involved individual families taking a lamb, killing it and then roasting it with bitter herbs for a special meal. However, there are far more rituals associated with the Day of Atonement involving the priest, the Tabernacle Moses constructed (and later the Temple of Solomon) and the whole congregation of

Israel. The whole chapter of Leviticus 16 gives us the details of these rituals. Let's study this chapter in depth and look for spiritual significance for God's New Testament Church.

Leviticus 16:1-2 Now the Lord spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they offered *profane fire* before the Lord, and died; and the Lord said to Moses: "Tell Aaron your brother not to come at *just any time* into the Holy *Place* inside the veil, before the mercy seat which *is* on the ark, lest he die; for I will appear in the cloud above the mercy seat.

We see the seriousness God relegates to the Day of Atonement. God reminds Moses and Aaron that Aaron's two sons died because they did not follow the proper procedures and offered "strange fire" with their censers (Leviticus 10). Aaron, and the High Priest that followed, were only to enter the Holy of Holies once a year on the Day of Atonement. And then only after following careful rituals and procedures. Let's take a look at those and see if there are any lessons for ministers today.

High Priest Lessons for Ministers

On the Day of Atonement, the High Priest had to prepare several sacrificial offerings. Let us begin to count them.

Leviticus 16:3-5 Thus Aaron shall come into the Holy *Place*: with *the blood of* a young bull as a sin offering, and *of* a ram as a burnt offering. He shall put the holy linen tunic and the linen trousers on his body; he shall be girded with a linen sash, and with the linen turban he shall be attired. These *are* holy garments. Therefore he shall wash his body in water, and put them on. And he shall take from the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats as a sin offering, and one ram as a burnt offering.

Four offerings are listed in verses three through five:

Sacrificial Offerings

1. A young bull as a sin offering
2. A ram as a burnt offering
3. Two kids of the goats as a (one single) sin offering
4. One ram as a burnt offering

Note that no lambs were among these sacrifices. However, let us also remember that these sacrifices were in addition to the normal daily morning and evening sacrifices. Most likely the Day of Atonement sacrifices occurred between the daily morning and evening sacrifices. These four offerings will be mentioned again as we go through this chapter. Let's begin to see how these are discussed.

Leviticus 16:6 Aaron shall offer the bull as a sin offering, which *is* for himself, and make atonement for himself and for his house.

First, before Aaron, and subsequent High Priest, could enter into the Holy of Holies, the High Priest had to not only wash their body in water (verse four), but he had to offer a young bull as a sin offering. Please take note that this sin offering was not just for himself, but it was for his whole house, and subsequently, for all the families of all priests and descendants of Aaron. In addition, this sin offering is described as an atonement for himself and for his house. There are several specific and separate atonements that will occur in this chapter. Let's begin to keep track of them.

Atonements

1. The High Priest and his house

What is the purpose for this and how should we apply this concept spiritually for the New Testament ministry? Everyone sins and our sins defile us. Before a priest in the Old Testament presented himself before God and entered the Holy of Holies to serve God and His people on the Day of Atonement, he had to cleanse himself and the whole family of Aaron. New Testament ministers should do the same and apply the principle in a spiritual way. Today, we don't offer animal sacrifices after the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. What a minister can do, is get down on their knees and ask for forgiveness of their sins and the sins of all ministers in God's Church before they present themselves before God's people to teach, preach and ask forgiveness for all of God's people on this special day of fasting. This should at least be done every Day of Atonement.

The Two Goats

Leviticus 16:7-10 He shall take the two goats and present them before the Lord *at the door of the tabernacle of meeting*. Then Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats: one lot for the Lord and the other lot for the scapegoat. And Aaron shall bring the goat on which the Lord's lot fell, and offer it as a sin offering. But the goat on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the Lord, to make atonement upon it, *and* to let it go as the scapegoat into the wilderness.

There are a couple of important points in these verses. One, both goats were presented before the Lord. Two, one goat was for a sin offering, the second to make atonement upon it. While there have been various theories on whom the second goat represents, take note of the statement that the second goat was to be "presented alive before the Lord, **to make atonement upon it.**" Think about that statement and give it some very serious study. There is only one Being that makes an atonement for the sins of humanity. Jesus not only died and shed His blood for the sins of all humanity, He was resurrected and appeared alive before God our Father on the first day of the week during the Days of Unleavened Bread as our spiritual wave sheaf offering to make a living atonement for all of our sins. For a much more in-depth discussion of this topic, please read the article "***Atonement – Who Does the Azazel Goat Represent?***" on the website for the Church of God Santa Rosa, www.cogsr.org.

The Hebrew word translated "atonement" in this verse, referring to the live goat, is used 16 times in this chapter. In verse 20 it is translated "reconciling". The other 15 times it is translated "atonement". According to ***Strong's Concordance***, this Hebrew word comes from a primitive root meaning "to cover" – please remember that for later discussion relative to the Mercy Seat. This Hebrew word for atonement itself means: to expiate or condone, to placate or cancel. It can be translated as: appease, make (an) atonement, cleanse, disannul, forgive, be merciful, pacify, pardon, to pitch, purge (away), put off, reconcile or make reconciliation.

Entering the Holy of Holies

Leviticus 16:11-14 And Aaron shall bring the bull of the sin offering, which is for himself, and make atonement for himself and for his house, and shall kill the bull as the sin offering which *is* for himself. Then he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from the altar before the Lord, with his hands full of sweet incense beaten fine, and bring *it* inside the veil. And he shall put the incense on the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of incense may cover the mercy seat that *is* on the Testimony, lest he die. He shall take some of the blood of

the bull and sprinkle *it* with his finger on the mercy seat on the east *side*; and before the mercy seat he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times.

As is sometimes the case in Bible narratives, this discussion goes back to cover the topic in more detail. This Biblical tactic is seen in the very beginning of the Bible. Genesis chapter one has a few verses about the creation of man. Then chapter two goes into much greater detail about the creation of Adam and Eve. Here, starting in verse 11, the discussion again covers in greater detail the atonement for the High Priest and his family. It is repeated that the High Priest must offer a bull for a sin offering to make an atonement for himself and for his house before he can enter the Holy of Holies and not die. In addition, he must take a censer with sweet incense to make a cloud of smoke to surround the Mercy Seat on the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies. The High Priest is not to look directly upon the Mercy Seat of God, lest he die. Next, the High Priest is to take some of the blood of the bull he sacrificed and sprinkle blood on the Mercy Seat seven times. This all must be done before he as High Priest can offer atonements for the people of Israel and Tabernacle of Meeting and its contents. Let us also start to count the number of times the High Priest enters the Holy of Holies.

Entering the Holy of Holies

1. After the sacrifice for the High Priest and his house

The “Tabernacle” or “Tabernacle of Meeting” or “Tent” or what we usually refer to as the “Tabernacle of Moses”, was composed of two separate “rooms”. The first room was the Holy Place where only the priest could enter. They entered this room on a daily basis to take care of their priestly responsibilities. This room contained the altar of incense, the table for the showbread and the candlestick, often called the menorah. A curtain or veil separated the Holy Place from the second room, the Holy of Holies. This room contained the Ark of the Covenant with the Mercy Seat as a “lid”. The High Priest was only allowed to enter this room once a year.



The First Goat and More Atonements

Next, the first goat selected was killed as a sin offering for the people of Israel. Some of its blood was also to be taken into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled upon and before the Mercy Seat. While a sin offering for the people of Israel occurs now, an actual atonement for them does not occur until later.

Leviticus 16:15 Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering, which *is* for the people, bring its blood inside the veil, do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it on the mercy seat and before the mercy seat.

Please note that the blood of this goat was sprinkled in two places. One, on the Mercy Seat, and two, in front of the Mercy Seat. This is the second time the High Priest enters the Holy of Holies. Let's update our count of that.

Entering the Holy of Holies

1. After the sacrifice for the High Priest and his house
2. After the sacrifice of the first goat

Leviticus 16:16-17 So he shall make atonement for the Holy *Place*, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, for all their sins; and so he shall do for the tabernacle of meeting which remains among them in the midst of their uncleanness. There shall be no man in the tabernacle of meeting when he goes in to make atonement in the Holy *Place*, until he comes out, that he may make atonement for himself, for his household, and for all the assembly of Israel.

In the two verses above we see described two more atonements. One for the Holy of Holies and another one for the whole tabernacle. A major point is also introduced here as why the atonements are necessary – “**because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, for all their sins.**” This is a topic of great importance in this chapter and we will discuss it in detail later in this article. Verse 17 also mentions an atonement for the assembly of Israel. However, this actual atonement takes place later in the sequence of events. Note the wording of the statement “that he may make atonement” – this is a forward looking future statement of an event yet to happen. For now, let's update our count of actual atonements up to this point.

Atonements

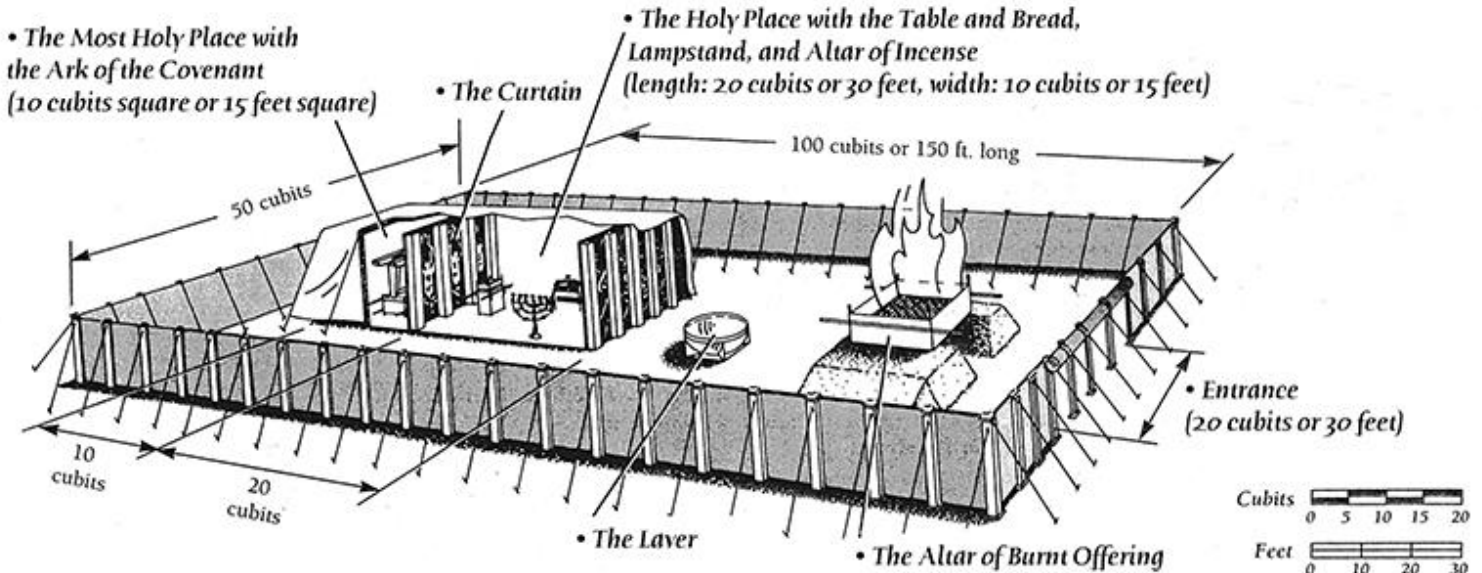
1. The High Priest and his house
2. The Holy of Holies
3. The whole Tabernacle

Leviticus 16:18-19 And he shall go out to the altar that *is* before the Lord, and make atonement for it, and shall take some of the blood of the bull and some of the blood of the goat, and put it on the horns of the altar all around. Then he shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times, cleanse it, and consecrate it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel.

Here we have yet another atonement. All these atonements involve the sprinkling of blood, in this case, blood from both the bull and the first goat. Note again why the atonement is needed – to “**cleanse it, and consecrate it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel.**” This altar is not the altar of incense inside the Holy Place, but the altar outside the Tabernacle Moses built where the animal sacrifices took place. Time for another update of our atonement counts.

Atonements

1. The High Priest and his house
2. The Holy of Holies
3. The whole Tabernacle
4. The altar



The Live Goat

Leviticus 16:20-22 And when he has made an end of atoning for the Holy *Place*, the tabernacle of meeting, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat. Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send *it* away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man. The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness.

Who do we confess our sins to? Who took our sins upon Himself? Who bore our sins? There is only one answer to these questions: Jesus Christ the Messiah and our Savior. Nowhere at any time in the Bible are we told to confess our sins to Satan the Devil. Nowhere at any time is Satan the Devil pictured as taking away our sins.

Earlier in this article, the statement was made that while two goats were chosen, they represented **one sin offering**. Jesus died for our sins. However, He was resurrected as our Living Savior now sitting at the right hand of God our Father. How do you represent that with one animal? In this physical world, you can't. God is not going to resurrect and bring back to life a sacrificed goat every Day of Atonement in Old Testament times to represent our Resurrected and Living Savior.

Therefore, two goats were chosen to represent both the forgiveness of our sins through the death of Jesus Christ and the complete removal of our sins through the resurrected life of our Living Savior Jesus Christ. Israel, and specifically the Jews, perverted some of the rituals associated with God's seven festivals. They eventually started to take the live goat into the wilderness and push it over a cliff to its death. This is not what God instructed. The Azazel goat was to be released alive in the

wilderness and left alone to survive. This represents Jesus as our Resurrected and Living Savior who continues to redeem us so we can be reconciled and live at one with God our Father.

For a much more in-depth discussion of this topic, please read the article **“Atonement – Who Does the Azazel Goat Represent?”** on the website for the Church of God Santa Rosa, www.cogsr.org.

One More Atonement

Leviticus 16:23-24 Then Aaron shall come into the tabernacle of meeting, shall take off the linen garments which he put on when he went into the Holy *Place*, and shall leave them there. And he shall wash his body with water in a holy place, put on his garments, come out and offer his burnt offering and the burnt offering of the people, and make atonement for himself and for the people.

After the sins of all Israel were confessed over the Azazel goat and it was let go alive in the wilderness, Aaron was to take off the priestly garments he wore to enter the Holy of Holies, take a bath and put on his regular day-to-day priestly clothing. Before all this, he has offered a young bull and the first of the two goats for sin offerings for himself and to cleanse the items of worship. The blood from these two sin offerings was taken into the Most Holy Place or Holy of Holies and sprinkled on and before the Mercy Seat. Now, we have two more sacrifices, but they are burnt offerings, not sin offerings. Also note that while there are four atonements up to this point, not one of them has actually yet been made for the people of Israel. That will now take place. In one sense, this is the “largest” of all the atonements on this day. There are three items critical to this one atonement for all the people of Israel: the live goat and the two rams. While there are two burn offerings, one for the family of Aaron and one for all the people of Israel, only a single atonement is mentioned. We have one more atonement to finalize our list.

Atonements

1. The High Priest and his house
2. The Holy of Holies
3. The whole Tabernacle
4. The altar
5. All the people of Israel including the family of Aaron

Final Rituals

Leviticus 16:25-28 The fat of the sin offering he shall burn on the altar. And he who released the goat as the scapegoat shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and afterward he may come into the camp. The bull *for* the sin offering and the goat *for* the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the Holy *Place*, shall be carried outside the camp. And they shall burn in the fire their skins, their flesh, and their offal. Then he who burns them shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and afterward he may come into the camp.

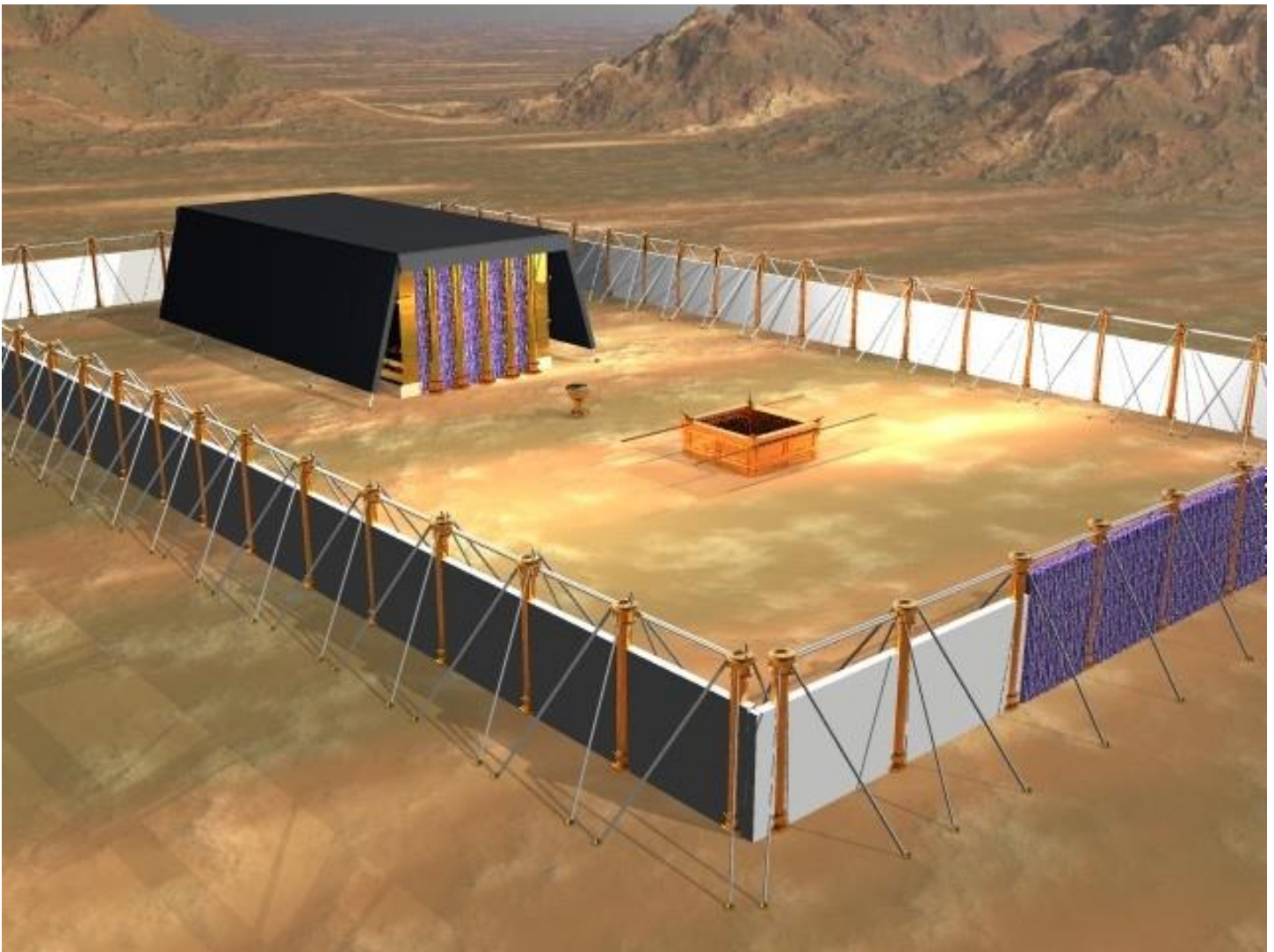
In these verses we see some more details in concluding the rituals of this day in Old Testament times. The two sin offerings from earlier in the day were not yet complete. The fat from those animals was now to be burnt up upon the altar. The individual who took the Azazel goat into the wilderness has now returned. But before he can come back into the camp, he must wash his clothes and take a bath. Meanwhile, continuing to finish up with what remains of the sin offerings, the skins,

internal organs and dung was all to be taken outside the camp to be burnt up. Whoever carried out this last task also had to wash his clothes and take a bath before coming back into the camp.

Day of Atonement Command

Leviticus 16:29-31 *This shall be a statute forever for you: In the seventh month, on the tenth **day** of the month, you shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, **whether** a native of your own country or a stranger who dwells among you. For on that day **the priest** shall make atonement for you, to cleanse you, **that** you may be clean from all your sins before the Lord. It **is** a Sabbath of solemn rest for you, and you shall afflict your souls. **It is** a statute forever.*

A major point is made in verse 30. The purpose of the atonement for the people was to cleanse them, that the Israelites might be clean from all their sins. We'll discuss this more towards the end of this article.



Leviticus 16 Summary

Leviticus 16:32-34 And the priest, who is anointed and consecrated to minister as priest in his father's place, shall make atonement, and put on the linen clothes, the holy garments; then he shall make atonement for the Holy Sanctuary, and he shall make atonement for the tabernacle of meeting and for the altar, and he shall make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly. This shall be an everlasting statute for you, to make atonement for the children of Israel, for all their sins, once a year. And he did as the Lord commanded Moses.

Let us note how all five atonements are summarily listed in these three verses. 1) the preliminary atonements before the High Priest donned his holy garments, 2) the Holy (of Holies) Sanctuary, 3) Tabernacle of Meeting, 4) the Altar, and 5) the priest and all the people. The priests were actually included in two atonements. Verse 6 tells us Aaron first had to make an atonement for himself and all the priests' families before he could enter the Holy of Holies. In that sense, that is a preliminary atonement that had to be made before the High Priest could offer the other four atonements. Then in verse 24, when an atonement is made for all the children of Israel, that would also include the family of Aaron as it is so stated. That makes for five separate atonements on this special day.

Why Atonement?

Why is there a Day of Atonement? We already have Passover for the forgiveness of sins. However, there are several reasons why the Day of Atonement is necessary for our spiritual relationship with God and our complete understanding of God's Plan of Salvation. Let's look at these one at a time.

Responding to Jesus' Sacrifice

Ron Dart's website, www.BornToWin.net gives one very good answer for why Christians need the Day of Atonement.

Two things are required if we are to be made at one with God: Christ's sacrifice and our response.

Passover pictures Christ's sacrifice - His death in our place. On that side of the equation there is absolutely nothing we can do. Jesus Christ did it all for us.

But on the other side of the equation there are some things we're expected to do. Initially, Peter spoke of it as repentance and baptism. So unless we believe, repent, confess, and are baptized, we are not saved. It seems safe then to conclude that Jesus' sacrifice alone is not sufficient. It requires a response on our part.

It is quite true, then, to note that the Passover pictures the sacrifice of Christ – Jesus Christ is our Passover. There is, however, a response required from us that is not pictured in the Passover itself. Then, when we look at the Day of Atonement, we see a very strong correlation between its ceremony and the response of the repentant sinner. The Day of Atonement involves fasting (Leviticus 23:26-32), which is an outward sign of our remorse and our repentance of our sins. Of old, fasting was the commonly accepted means of expressing humiliation, mourning, and repentance. The full priestly ceremony of the Day of Atonement is described in the sixteenth chapter of Leviticus, and there we find that the confession of sin plays an important role in the

atonement process (Leviticus 16:20-22). Washing, an obvious corollary of baptism, is also prominent in the ceremony of the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:4, 24, 26).

The writer of Hebrews comments extensively on the Day of Atonement in chapters 9 and 10. Having drawn the full analogy with much meaning for Christians, Paul says, "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." (Hebrews 10:22, 23). He is referring to the sprinkling of blood and the washing of water mentioned in the service of the Day of Atonement. His analogy is of Christ's blood and the water of baptism.

So there is a powerful connection between the Passover and the Day of Atonement, but they are still very different in meaning.

Well stated Mr. Dart. We must respond to Jesus' sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins. The Days of Unleavened Bread picture one such response, we must strive to overcome and put out sin. This is a response we each need to make as an individual. The Day of Atonement pictures another response. We must accept the sacrifice of Jesus in humility and repent in order to be reconciled with God our Father, not only as an individual, but as a group, a church or a nation. This is one of many important points for correctly observing the Day of Atonement.

A Day of Cleansing

In order to be at one with God our Father, we must be "clean." The rituals of Leviticus 16 involve several baths or washings. The High Priest had to bathe himself every time he changed clothes before the next event in the series of rituals. The person releasing the live goat and the person taking the remains of the sacrifices outside the camp to be burned, both of them had to bathe before they could reenter the camp of Israel.

More importantly Leviticus 16 tells us they as a people, the place where they worshipped God and the articles of worship all had to be cleansed with the sprinkled blood from the sacrifices. Why were the Israelites and the articles of worship "dirty"? Because of the sins of the Israelites. Let us read again the important verses on this critical topic for the Day of Atonement.

Leviticus 16:16 So he shall make atonement for the Holy *Place*, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, for all their sins; and so he shall do for the tabernacle of meeting which remains among them in the midst of their uncleanness.

Leviticus 16:18-19 And he shall go out to the altar that *is* before the Lord, and make atonement for it, and shall take some of the blood of the bull and some of the blood of the goat, and put it on the horns of the altar all around. Then he shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times, cleanse it, and consecrate it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel.

Leviticus 16:30 For on that day *the priest* shall make atonement for you, to cleanse you, *that you may be clean* from all your sins before the Lord.

Our sins defile us and separate us from God (Isaiah 59:2; Isaiah 64:6). When we go to a place of worship, those sins defile the place of worship (Haggai 2:13-14). God in His infinite wisdom has

determined that not only our sins are forgiven by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, but His shed blood must also spiritually be applied to cleanse us (I John 1:7).

In addition, not only must we be cleansed as individuals, the place of worship, the Tabernacle of Moses and then the Temple of Solomon in Old Testament time, and the Church of God in New Testament times, the group of Christian believers, also needs to be cleansed every year on the Day of Atonement. Read again how the Holy of Holies, The Tabernacle and the altar all had to be cleansed every Day of Atonement because of the sins of the Israelite. This is an important spiritual concept we should learn from the physical rituals of Leviticus 16 and apply to the Church of God as a group of believers. God did not give the Israelites the rituals so we could read about them and just say "that's nice." God expects us to learn from them and apply spiritual lessons from them. In New Testament times, the assembly of Christians, not a building, is the congregation of Israel, the Church of God. Once a year on the Day of Atonement, the church should examine itself as a group and ask for forgiveness of the sins of the assembly and the cleansing of the church from their resulting uncleanness. Churches that never admit they make mistakes and never ask forgiveness as a group, always seem to make changes that result in a falling away from the faith once delivered without realizing it. A good way to do this would be for everyone in the congregation to get on their knees and be led in prayer by the leading minister.

Here are just three verses of several Bible scriptures that point out we not only need to be forgiven of our sins, we must also be cleansed from the filth of sin.

1 John 1:7, 9 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 Corinthians 6:11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

Hebrews 10:22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Jesus Died to Cleanse his Church

Ephesians 5:25-27 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

The Church of God is the future bride of Jesus Christ (Revelation 19:7-9). Before this marriage can take place, His bride must be cleansed and without spot or wrinkle. Jesus will become "at-one" with His bride, the church. This is another important meaning we can learn from observing the Day of Atonement.

This is the best reason why the Day of Atonement occurs after the Feast of Trumpets and before the Feast of Tabernacles. In spiritual actuality, the wedding feast we read about in Revelation 19, in the sequence of events as evidenced in God the Father's Plan of Salvation, occurs after the First Resurrection. This wedding occurs after the significance of the Day of Atonement which pictures the cleansing of the church and the future at-one relationship of the church with Jesus. And it occurs before the events that start to begin the actual Millennium. We must become at-one with God before

we as a church can marry His son and enter into the “Millennial Rest.” Preparing for the wedding, the cleansing of the church by the blood of Jesus Christ is a very serious need; hence, the required humble fasting of the church as a group. The wedding in heaven itself will be a supper with much joy and festive celebration.

Transference of Sin

We fast on the Day of Atonement to afflict and humble our souls as a group. This is a symbol of repentance. There is another reason why we need to humble our souls on this Holy Day, so our sins can be transferred to Jesus so He can take them away. This is symbolized by the Old Testament ritual where the High Priest lays his hands on the Azazel goat and confesses all the sins of Israel. Our sins can only be transferred to Jesus Christ if we are in a humble, repentant attitude. God our Father will not allow that transfer to occur if we are in an arrogant, stubborn attitude. Like all of God’s Holy Days, there are many lessons we can learn as we keep them and study the various events and rituals associated with them. While we do not perform the rituals of the past, we can learn by analogy the spiritually important lessons for our daily lives as Christians.

John 1:29 **The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!**

A Day of Reconciliation from Wrath

Atonement, reconciliation and propitiation are all synonyms. Our sins separate us from God (Isaiah 59:2). When we sin, more than a separation with God occurs. We incur the wrath of God. The most difficult of barriers preventing a good relationship with the righteousness and holiness of our Father had to be removed. Jesus’ atonement not only forgives our sins as pictured by Passover, His atonement death reconciles us with God the Father by turning away the Father’s wrath due to our sins. Jesus bore the wrath of God not only by His death, but by His suffering. He was beaten, whipped, spit upon, and a suffered a horrible death by crucifixion with nails driven through His wrists and feet. By this suffering, Jesus took upon Himself the wrath of God because of the sins of all humans who will ever live. When we accept the atonement of our Savior Jesus, the wrath of God is appeased and removed. The Father is simply not “mad” at us anymore because of our sins. The word “propitiation” is used in several scriptures referring to Jesus’ sacrifice. Webster’s dictionary definition for propitiation is: to appease and render favorable, to conciliate and reconcile. The Bible definition is: to turn away wrath by the satisfaction of violated justice.

Hebrews 2:17 **Therefore, in all things He had to be made like *His* brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.**

1 John 2:2 **And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.**

Romans 5:1 **Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,**

Romans 5:8-11 **But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God**

through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only *that*, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

Passover vs. Atonement

On the first Passover, individual families killed a lamb and when in Egypt put the blood on the doorposts to protect them from the death angel. On Atonement, the High Priest offered five animals, four were slain, one let loose, to cleanse the place of worship and all the people of Israel. Here is a summary chart.

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Passover</u>	<u>Atonement</u>
Sacrifice	One <u>lamb</u> per family Eat lamb with bitter herbs Eat lamb in own dwellings	<u>Bullock</u> for sin offering for all priests <u>Ram</u> for burnt offering for all priests <u>Goat</u> for sin offering for all the people <u>Ram</u> for burnt offering for all the people Fast, afflict soul Gather at the Tabernacle / Temple Only High Priest enter Holy of Holies once a year High Priest had to wear special priestly clothes People saw sacrifices from a distance Holy Convocation commanded A Holy Day
Blood & Water	Painted on <u>everyone's</u> door post Death angle passed over On door posts or die Remove the penalty of sin (death) Frees us from bondage of sin Protection from judgment of God Bread & Wine	sprinkled on <u>single</u> tabernacle objects, one at a time Tabernacle, etc. sprinkled with blood to cleanse Priest, scapegoat person had to bathe Remove our uncleanness as result of sins Free us from the "dirt" of sin Reconciled to God Fasting
Jesus	Is our Passover Lamb Our personal savior	Is our High Priest Savior of church, church being His body, He is the head
Forgiveness	None associated with first Passover Jesus now our sacrifice for sin	Sins confessed with laying on of hands on live goat Jesus now our High Priest to reconcile us with God
Calendar Historical	First month of religious year Exodus Crucifixion	First day of Jubilee, 7 th year land rest, third tithe years None. Looking forward to being at-one with God None. Looking forward to marriage of Church to Jesus
Notes	Passover celebrates an actual historical event Jesus died on Passover, not Atonement To the Jews, Passover did not represent the forgiveness of sins. Probably a major part of the reason why they didn't recognize that the Messiah needed to die for sins in a first coming. Jews think Passover was God's judgment against the false gods of Egypt.	
Summary	Emphasis on <u>individual</u> Forgiveness Redemption We show Lord's death	Emphasis on <u>group</u> (church or nation) Reconciliation Purification (clean conscience, free from guilt) Become at one with God (through removal of sin and the uncleanness it causes)

Exodus 25:17-22

In Exodus 25 God gives Moses instructions on how to build the Tabernacle, including the Ark of the Covenant. Actually the Ark of the Covenant is the box itself and the “lid,” usually referred to as the Mercy Seat, are in reality, considered two separate items. Read again Leviticus 16:2. Interestingly, however, in the original Hebrew, the words “Mercy Seat” do not appear. The *Hebrew Interlinear Bible* has it as “propitiatory-shelter.” The *Hebrew Bible in English* has it as “ark-cover.” While most translations prefer “mercy seat,” a few modern translations use “atonement cover.” Several translations just use “lid” or “cover.” The *New International Version* uses “atonement cover.” The *Jubilee Bible 2000* states it as “seat of reconciliation.” Let’s quote **Exodus 25:17-22** from three more translations.

NET Bible You are to make an atonement lid of pure gold; its length is to be three feet nine inches, and its width is to be two feet three inches. You are to make two cherubim of gold; you are to make them of hammered metal on the two ends of the atonement lid. Make one cherub on one end and one cherub on the other end; from the atonement lid you are to make the cherubim on the two ends. The cherubim are to be spreading their wings upward, overshadowing the atonement lid with their wings, and the cherubim are to face each other, looking toward the atonement lid. You are to put the atonement lid on top of the ark, and in the ark you are to put the testimony I am giving you. I will meet with you there, and from above the atonement lid, from between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you about all that I will command you for the Israelites.

New Living Translation Then make the Ark’s cover—the place of atonement—from pure gold. It must be 45 inches long and 27 inches wide. Then make two cherubim from hammered gold, and place them on the two ends of the atonement cover. Mold the cherubim on each end of the atonement cover, making it all of one piece of gold. The cherubim will face each other and look down on the atonement cover. With their wings spread above it, they will protect it. Place inside the Ark the stone tablets inscribed with the terms of the covenant, which I will give to you. Then put the atonement cover on top of the Ark. I will meet with you there and talk to you from above the atonement cover between the gold cherubim that hover over the Ark of the Covenant. From there I will give you my commands for the people of Israel.

The Message Now make a lid of pure gold for the Chest, an Atonement-Cover, three and three-quarters feet long and two and one-quarter feet wide. Sculpt two winged angels out of hammered gold for either end of the Atonement-Cover, one angel at one end, one angel at the other. Make them of one piece with the Atonement-Cover. Make the angels with their wings spread, hovering over the Atonement-Cover, facing one another but looking down on it. Set the Atonement-Cover as a lid over the Chest and place in the Chest The Testimony that I will give you. I will meet you there at set times and speak with you from above the Atonement-Cover and from between the angel-figures that are on it, speaking the commands that I have for the Israelites.

Perhaps this will help emphasize the Day of Atonement with the Holy of Holies containing the Ark of the Covenant with its covering “lid of Atonement.” Mercy Seat has more of a connotation of forgiveness and the Passover. Atonement Cover relates more to our reconciliation to God and the Day of Atonement. Both are valid and true meanings. However, let us remember, the High Priest could only enter the Holy of Holies once a year where the Ark of the Covenant and Atonement Cover were kept, on the Day of Atonement. There has to be special reasons and significant explanations for these combination of events.

Additional events associated with Atonement

Leviticus 25:9 Then you shall cause the trumpet of the Jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement you shall make the trumpet to sound throughout all your land.

The Jubilee year began on the Day of Atonement. While not directly stated, by reading this whole chapter, it is implied that the Seventh Year Land Rest also was to begin on the Day of Atonement. As the third tithe years are years three and six of every seven-year cycle, it is also implied third tithe years are best calculated from Atonement to Atonement.

Acts 27:9 Now when much time had been spent, and sailing was now dangerous because the Fast was already over, Paul advised them,

Here we see it is implied that the New Testament Church was still keeping the Day of Atonement. "The Fast" refers to the Day of Atonement and was used as a chronological reference date that all Christians would understand.

Jesus Our High Priest for Direct Access to Father

Matthew 27:50-51 And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split,

Why did God the Father have the temple veil torn in two? This is very symbolic. In the Old Testament, only the High Priest, and only once a year, could appear before the Mercy Seat or Atonement Cover. Our Father is now stating through the death and shed blood of Jesus, we have direct access to His Mercy Seat in heaven above at all times.

Hebrews 9:6-8 Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing *the services*. But into the second part the high priest *went* alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and *for the people's sins committed* in ignorance; the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing.

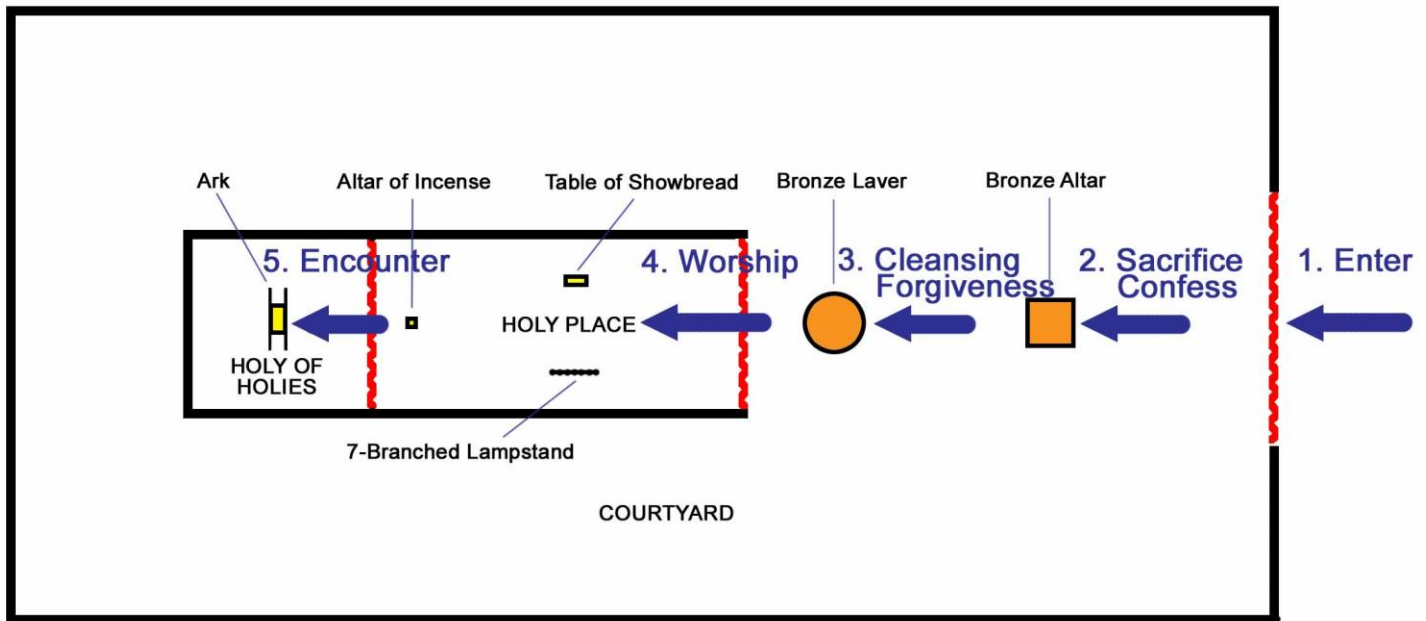
Hebrews 4:14-16 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Christians can now boldly come before God the Father and His Throne of Grace and Mercy at any time, but only through the blood of Jesus, not our own merits. What a privilege we have as Christians, direct access to God the Father. In Hebrews chapters 9 and 10, the Apostle Paul discusses Jesus Christ in relationship to the Day of Atonement. Read it again on your own with that in mind, we won't take time to do that in this article. Let's just read four verses on the topic at hand.

Hebrews 10:19-22 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and *having* a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full

assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Flow of Worship



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Final Thoughts

2 Peter 3:18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

We must move forward in our understanding of the Bible. However, without destroying the foundation of the faith once delivered. If we don't move forward in our spiritual understanding of the Bible, we will stagnate and people who stagnate almost always end up going backwards and changing the foundation of the faith once delivered.

How do we do that? How do we tell the difference between growing in grace and knowledge and forsaking the faith once delivered? It cannot be done without the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes it is simple, sometimes not so simple. It is simple if there are no scriptures to support the belief and/or there are scriptures that contradict that belief. Such beliefs are "traditions of men". Traditions of men are not always bad, but sometimes they are and completely wrong. Jesus gives two such example in Mark 7. One regarded the washing of hands. The second withholding money to take care of one's parents in order to give it to the temple and priestly service.

Mark 7:7-9 *And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.* For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men — the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do." He said to them, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.

Hopefully, this article helps us all grow in grace and knowledge about the meaning of the Day of Atonement and how better to observe it. We have not destroyed the foundation. We still keep this day as holy time, fast and gather together for a church service. But we have discarded the tradition of

men that the Azazel goat represents Satan. There is not one scriptures that states that Satan is an atonement for our sins or that we are to confess our sins over Satan or that Satan takes away our sins. On the contrary there are dozens and dozens of scriptures that state Jesus Christ is our atonement. We confess our sins to Him and He promises to remove ours sins from us as far as the east is from the west (Psalms 103:12).

We have discussed the similarities and just as important, the differences between Passover and the Day of Atonement. We have taken into consideration that the Day of Atonement is more than a day of individual fasting and repentance. From our study of the Old Testament rituals we have understood the importance of this Holy Day as a day of group fasting, group repentance, group cleansing and group reconciliation with God our Father by the shed blood of our Savior Jesus Christ.

The many meanings and spiritual lessons from the Day of Atonement are an important and integral part of God's Plan of Salvation. After the forgiveness pictured by Passover, Atonement pictures our response to and our acceptance of Jesus' sacrifice. The result is the cleansing and reconciliation of God's people to Jesus and God the Father, not just as individuals, but as a group, the Church of God in New Testament times. Our sins are transferred to Jesus who takes them away so we can be free from the wrath of the Father. Once we humble ourselves by fasting and are cleansed, we can join the God Family in the First Resurrection. And as the Church of God, we will be invited to the wedding supper with Jesus Christ. We could say, above all else, the Day of Atonement pictures the future perfect unity we will have with God our Father and Jesus our Savior.