

MINISTUDY The Day of Atonement in Gods Great Master Plan
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God's annual festivals remind us how He is working out His master plan for mankind, step by step.

The first three festivals - Passover, the Days of Unleavened Bread and Pentecost picture events leading to the first spiritual "harvest" of Spirit-begotten human beings into God's universe-ruling Family. These days portray the preparation, training and final "reaping" of the firstfruits - those few called by God before Christ's return.

The last four festivals show the plan God has for completing salvation for the rest of the world.

We learned from the last study that the fourth festival, the Feast of Trumpets, pictures the triumphant return of Jesus Christ to rescue mankind from self-destruction and to set up the world ruling government of God. It is also at Christ's return that the firstfruits of God's plan are born into His Family, to begin assisting Christ in ruling the nations.

But what about Satan? What happens to him?

The fifth annual festival, the Day of Atonement, reveals the answer. It pictures Christ deposing Satan the devil from his present position as world ruler (II Cor. 4:4) and Satan's removal to a place completely away and apart from mankind. He will be bound for 1,000 years, no longer able to deceive the nations and influence man to sin.

After Satan's imprisonment, the rest of humanity will be reconciled - made at one with God.

Let's understand the hidden meaning in the symbolism of this unique fifth festival of God.

1. What annual Sabbath follows only nine days after the Feast of Trumpets? Lev. 23:26-32, 16:29- 31 . Are God's people commanded to assemble before Him on this day? Lev. 23:27

2. How are we to specifically observe the

Day of Atonement? Verse 32. How does one "afflict" his body on this day? Isa. 58:3, Ezra 8:21.

The Day of Atonement is perhaps the most unusual Holy Day, as far as what God expects us to do. It is the one day of the year on which God commands us to fast -to abstain from food and water (Ex. 34:28, Esther 4:16) - for 24 hours, from sunset on the ninth day of the month to sunset on the tenth day ("from evening unto evening" - Lev. 23:32).

Fasting should be for the purpose of humbling oneself to draw closer to God and His righteous way (Isa. 58:6-1 1). Thus fasting on the Day of Atonement is a vivid reminder of the state of mind necessary for salvation -of the humility, the godly sorrow, the earnest seeking after God and His way -- a condition to which this world will have been brought by catastrophic events culminating in Jesus Christ's return.

3. Does the Day of Atonement also differ from all other annual Holy Days in that no work whatsoever (meaning not even simple food preparation!) is to be done on it? Num. 29:7, Lev. 16:29. Why is this day to be kept so solemnly? Lev. 23:28.

What does atonement mean? Webster says to atone means to "set at one." To join in one to form by uniting. This day actually symbolizes God and man being set at one: literally the Day of At-one-ment! But God and mankind cannot be fully at one -- in full agreement - until Satan is restrained.

The 16th chapter of Leviticus details God's instructions to the Levitical priest hood of ancient Israel concerning the Day of Atonement. Let's briefly examine the activities of this day to see their vital connection with the restraining of Satan after Christ's return.

4. Was the Aaronic high priest to make a special sin offering once a year to atone for all the sins of Israel? Lev. 16:32-34. Was this done on the Day of Atonement? Verses 29-30.

5. But what was the high priest to do before making this atonement? Lev. 16:5-8. Was one of the two goats to be sent into the wilderness? Verse 10. Whom did the banished goat represent? Verse 8.

The English word scapegoat is not a correct translation of the Hebrew word God inspired. Most Bibles with marginal renderings show that the original word was azazel. Azazel refers to none other than Satan the devil!

The modern word scapegoat carries an entirely wrong connotation. Originally it was escape goat - the goat allowed to escape in the wilderness - that the translators took to be the meaning of azazel. But today the English word scapegoat signifies "one who bears blame or guilt for others." As we shall see, azazel - Satan -- will bear his own guilt!

6. Did the high priest next offer the goat chosen by lot for the Lord as a sin offering for all the people? Verses 15-16. Wasn't it Christ Himself who was slain for the sins of all mankind, and who then assumed the office of our perfect, sinless High Priest in heaven? Heb. 2:17, 6:20, 7:26. Did the resurrected Christ begin to do what the Aaronic high priest did in type on the Day of Atonement? Lev. 16:15-19, Heb. 9:7-14.

Throughout the year Israel's sins were symbolically transferred to the Tabernacle and its fixtures. Once a year on the Day of Atonement this mountainous load of guilt was symbolically purged from the nation in order that God might continue to dwell in Israel, for sin separates man from God, who is holy (Isa. 59:2).

And so we can understand today that the slain goat for the Lord actually represented the crucified Jesus. The high priest, by taking the blood of this slain goat through the veil to the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies (a type of God's throne), represented and symbolically did, in a prophetic sense, the work of the risen Christ, who ascended to the right hand of the Father in heaven, where He has been interceding as our High Priest for the past 1,952 years.

7. Did the high priest then seize the live azazel goat? Lev. 16:20. Did he symbolically place the sins of Israel on the head of azazel? Verse 21. Whose sin,; were they, really? John 8:42-44.

Jesus took our guilt - our sins -- upon Himself as an innocent substitution, a sacrifice to pay the penalty of sin, which is eternal death (Rom. 6:23). But the real cause of those sins was Satan the devil. He is the author of the sins of mankind. So here are all of man's Satan-inspired sins symbolically being put right back on Satan's head where they belong.

8. Was the azazel goat to continue living? Verse 22. Where was he taken? Same verse.

Satan, represented by this live goat, is a spirit being and therefore immortal. To signify that fact, the goat was permitted to live. But notice that he was completely removed from the presence of man

9. What will be done to Satan after the Second Coming of Jesus Christ? Rev. 20:12. Where is he cast? Verse 3. Also notice Revelation 18:1-2.

The "bottomless pit" or abyss was pictured by the desert wilderness where azazel was banished. Satan and his demons will be completely restrained by Christ from further leading mankind into sin. No longer will Satan be able to broadcast (Eph. 2:2) his evil attitudes into people's minds.

At the devil's chaining by an angel of God (symbolically, the "fit mar'- Lev. 16:21, Authorized Version), the minds of men, formerly kept spiritually closed by Satan, will be opened by the Spirit of G(d!

For the first time, humanity will be able to understand God's master plan of salvation. People will then want to repent and receive forgiveness, through Christ's sacrifice, of their sins. Only then will man become at one with Christ and the Father, as pictured by the Day of At-one-ment.

The GOOD NEWS August 1981