

Jesus Christ's Role In The Day Of Atonement

One of ancient Israel's more unusual rituals given them by God as His chosen people is the Day of Atonement.

The High Priest, having prepared himself physically and put on special garments will present himself before God in the Holy Place with the blood of a young bull and a ram as a burnt offering, [Leviticus 16:1-6], with two kids of goats and a ram for the congregation.

Leviticus 16:7-10 [New King James] *“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.”*

Two goats were then presented before God and lots were cast, **one for the Lord [Hebrew “*jehôvâh*” meaning self-existent and eternal] which was sacrificed as a sin offering.** The other goat was presented before God as the scapegoat, [Hebrew “*âzâzêl*” meaning goat of departure, that is taken out of the camp into the wilderness away from God's chosen people.

This “*âzâzêl*” goat is symbolic of Satan and his binding and being sent away from God's people as recorded in Revelation 20:1-2.

Leviticus 16:20-22 [New King James] *“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.”*

The Hebrew word translated “*confess*” is “*yâdâh*” meaning to show or point out with the hand.

Satan is being pointed out to be the source of all sin because of the way he has blinded humans from Eve onward to God's will for human beings, [2 Corinthians 4:4].

Satan also is a liar and murderer [John 8:44], and is allowed by God to have control over this world until the binding at Jesus Christ's Second Coming, [1 John 5:19].

The Day of Atonement rituals are explained in the book of Hebrews, but there is very little about Satan's removal, for Hebrews focuses on other aspects of the Day of Atonement, on which this article will focus.

Making atonement, paying ransoms –

Leviticus 23:27 [New King James] *“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.”*

The Hebrew word translated “*atonement*” in this verse is “*kippûr*” which is plural, more than one Day of Atonement.

Exodus 30:12 [New King James] *“When you take the census of the children of Israel for their number, then every man shall give a ransom for himself to the LORD, when you number them, that there may be no plague among them when you number them.”*

A ritual of ransom is mentioned, all the Israelites were to pay a ransom for their lives. The Hebrew word used for “ransom” is “*kōper*” [the noun form of “*kāpar*”] meaning a substitute payment. From the meaning of “*kōper*,” that is ransom, the meaning of “*kāpar*” can be better understood.

The word means to atone by offering a substitute.

The life blood of the sacrificial animal specifically symbolised being in exchange for the life blood of the worshipper.

The life of animals and humans is in the blood, [Genesis 9:4; Leviticus 17:11].

This animal sacrifice is the symbolic expression of innocent life given for guilty life.

This symbolism is further clarified by the action of the worshipper in placing their hands on the head of the animal to be sacrificed and confessing their sins over the animal, before it shed its blood.

Restoring relationships –

“*Kāpar*” is also translated – to make reconciliation, to pacify, to forgive, to pardon.

So the Day of Atonement might also be called Day of Reconciliations, Day of Forgivings or Day of Pardons.

These terms deal with relationships between God and human beings.

There is a great need for the relationships between human beings and God to be restored, as it was before the first rebellious sin of Eve and Adam.

The relationship between God and human beings has been betrayed by human disloyalty and can only be restored through “*kāpar*.”

The Day of Atonement celebrates our reconciliation with God the Father being made possible through our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ our High Priest –

Hebrews 6:19-20 [New King James] *“This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”*

Jesus Christ is our High Priest who has gone through the veil into the presence of God the Father in the heavenly tabernacle.

Hebrews 9:5 [New King James] *“and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.”*

In the most holy place, behind the veil, through which only Aaron and only once a year on the Day of Atonement entered, was the Mercy Seat, Hebrew “*kappōret*” which comes from the same root word as atonement, “*kāpar*.”

This is the seat of reconciliation and forgiving.

Hebrews 9:11-12 [New King James] *“But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.”*

Jesus Christ as both our Saviour [Lamb of God] and our High Priest, took His own sacrificial blood into the Heavenly Holy of Holies.

Hebrews 9:15 [New King James] *“And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.”*

Jesus Christ’s blood was the ransom that paid the penalty of our sins.

Jesus Christ approached the great heavenly mercy seat, the seat of reconciliation, cleansing, pardon, where forgiveness was granted by God the Father.

Hebrews 9:14 [New King James] *“how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”*

The blood of Jesus Christ can effectively clean us of the pollution of sin and make us fit to be a servant of our Creator God, [Leviticus 16:30].

We usually associate Jesus Christ’s sacrifice and forgiveness with the Passover, but Christ’s death and forgiveness are clearly pictured in the rituals of the Day of Atonement also, for they are an essential part of our reconciliation with God.

Passover focuses more on the individual forgiveness and escape from death. Atonement focuses more on communal reconciliation with God.

The primary fulfilment of atonement is future for the world but the reconciliation atonement pictures is already effective for all true Christians.

Unity with God –

Now that Jesus Christ is at God the Father’s right hand, seated on the Mercy Seat, [**Hebrews 1:2-3; Hebrews 10:10-12; Romans 8:34**], as our High Priest, we are able to be reconciled to God the Father, we can have unity with God.

Humanity started in unity with their Creator God in the Garden of Eden.

It was God’s garden and Adam and Eve were invited into it, they shared God’s garden home.

Adam and Eve sinned by rebelling against God’s Word and were chased out of the garden, since they were no longer in unity with God.

Isaiah 59:1-2 [New King James] *“Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.”*

All of humanity has continued to rebel against their Creator God, helped by Satan’s influence, and need to return to unity with God.

Sin separates us from God, denying us access, much as the cherubim blocked Adam and Eve’s return to God’s garden and the veil in the tabernacle and future temple kept the people away from the Mercy Seat.

How can we regain contact with our Creator God?

The sins that separate us must be removed from the record.

God's plan allows for this to happen, using the analogies of payment to explain the forgiveness of sin, redemption, ransom, payment of debt.

For us to be reconciled to God, the debt of sin must be paid.

This payment is larger than we can pay and still live, [Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8].

All that our personal efforts can earn is death, [Romans 6:23].

God graciously offers a way to be reconciled to Him.

Jesus Christ, His only Son, is greater value to all who have or will live, also the whole universe, for He is their Creator, [John 1:1-3, 14] and Sustained, [Colossians 1:13-17].

Note that in **Colossians 1:16** it tells us that all things were created **for** Jesus Christ as well as by Him.

We should also meditate of **Acts 20:28** that tells us we were "*purchased*" by Jesus Christ, and Paul reminds us that we do **not** own our lives because we were purchased, [**1 Corinthians 6:19-20**].

Add this to the ransom paid by Jesus Christ and we have a basis from which our relationship with our Creator God can be lived.

So Jesus Christ is able to pay the penalty for all human sin.

Psalms 65:3-4 [New King James] "*Iniquities prevail against me; as for our transgressions, You will provide atonement for them. Blessed is the man You choose, and cause to approach You, that he may dwell in Your courts. We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Your house, of Your holy temple.*"

God's elect are invited into His presence.

Our need to respond to God's merciful offer –

All of humanity can be reconciled with God the Father through accepting in faith the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 10:10, 14 [New King James] "*By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*" ... "*For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.*"

This eventually will be all humanity who have ever lived, if they choose to accept the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and respond with practical thanksgiving to the Triune God.

Romans 12:1 [NIV] "*Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship.*"

This is the least we can do to show God just how thankful we are for the sacrifice [mercy] of God.

Romans 12:2 [NIV] "*Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.*"

The Holy Spirit will then begin to re-educate us to create in us a being that is in the "*likeness*" [**Genesis 1:26-27**] that is character of Jesus Christ, [**Galatians 5:22-23**].

2 Corinthians 5:14-16 [New King James] *“For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer.”*

Instead of exclusive self-concern, the true Christian, who seeks to show their gratitude for what God has done for them through Jesus Christ, will turn their focus outward towards all who as yet do not know the great Merciful Creator God.

2 Corinthians 5:17-20 [New King James] *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.”*

The true Christian who is reconciled to God is not the same person, we have been given a new all-encompassing life.

The true Christian should be approachable, easy to be entreated, willing to be reconciled with others. There should be no walls or barriers of vanity and ego, but empathy and concern for others.

Philippians 2:1-8 [New King James] *“Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfil my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”*

Here is the example we should be to others whom we meet on a day-to-day basis, thus being a faithful ambassador for Jesus Christ, [2 Corinthians 5:20] and a light to this darkened world.

Matthew 5:14-16 [New King James] *“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”*

That in the end God may be glorified as more people are reconciled with Him.

The people of this world need help, they need examples to follow, so that they can know of the reconciling sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

If we have any doubts about the reconciling mercy of God, Jesus Christ has given us some parables of reconciliation on which to meditate.

The parable of the lost sheep, [Luke 15:4-7].

The parable of the lost coin, [Luke 15:8-10].

The parable of the prodigal son, [Luke 15:11-32].

God promises us access to Him –

Romans 8:1 [New King James] *“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.”*

Jesus Christ has come and been sacrificed for our sins, also as High Priest, He helps us through the veil to stand before God cleansed of all sin, [Isaiah 43:25] even forgotten by the Almighty God we stand before.

If Christians at times feel still cut off from God, they need to read what Paul said to encourage the persecuted Church in Rome.

Romans 8:31-35 [New King James] *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?”*

We **cannot** decide that our sins have **not** been forgiven for God tells us they have when we in faith accept Jesus Christ as our Saviour.

We **cannot** decide that God has cut Himself off from us, for He tells us we have been reconciled through accepting the sacrifice of His Son Jesus Christ.

If our faith in Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Lord has weakened, we can meditate on the parables of reconciliation that Jesus Christ gave us.

The Day of Atonement is a Day of Reconciliations –

It concerns relationships, first with God but leading also to our relationships with other human beings.

Reconciliation is a major theme of the Christian Bible.

It begins with God through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and continues as true Christians carry on the ministry of reconciliation, for that is the reason for our calling by God at this time.

Satan and all that he represents, needs to be removed for the world to be reconciled to God.

Satan’s removal is **not** an end in itself, it is a means towards a larger goal, reconciliation with God.

Satan and his way of thinking needs to be removed from our minds as we reject our old life, [Romans 12:2].

We also need to resist what Satan is doing still in this world, [2 Corinthians 4:4].

Revelation 12:7-12 [New King James] *“And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, ‘Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. **And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.** Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.’”*

Note how true Christians overcame the influence of Satan in the present world.

By preaching the reconciling power of the blood of Jesus Christ and being an example of one who is reconciled to God even if this brings persecution and death.

Hebrews 2:5 [New King James] *“For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels.”*

This includes Satan the fallen angel, for the new world to come will be ruled by Jesus Christ and all true resurrected Christians.

Revelation 20:1-6 [New King James] *“Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while. And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.”*

If we are reconciled to God now, we can be part of this first resurrection.