

"God So Loved The World" Bible Study

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16 (NIV)

Study #22: The Day of Atonement

In lesson #20, we discovered that the Sanctuary was God's visual aid, His "show and tell," revealing the total plan of salvation in Christ. The daily services of the Sanctuary ended every year with the Day of Atonement. This was, and still is, the most solemn feast day in the Jewish calendar. It represented the culmination of the plan of redemption. It pointed to the time when sin would be totally eradicated from the universe and when everlasting righteousness would be ushered in.

The Day of Atonement pointed to the final day of judgment, the consummation of the ages, when all that the Sanctuary and its services pointed to would be fulfilled. It was the only time of the year God required His people to keep it as a solemn day of fasting and prayer. On that day no strong drink was allowed to be consumed and the women were required to remove all their jewelry. This feast day pointed to the moment in time when the great controversy between Christ and Satan would finally be brought to an end.

Besides the Investigative Judgment, which vindicated the believers and which we studied in our last study, the purpose of the Day of Atonement is to vindicate God's holy and righteous name as well as to eradicate the sin problem. When the Day of Atonement will be accomplished in reality, Satan and his angels, along with all those who have refused the gift of salvation in Christ, will be destroyed forever. God will then create a new heaven and a new earth for the saints.

In this study we will examine the significance of this solemn Day of Atonement, what is required of God's people, and the meaning of the main ceremony that took place on this feast day. This ceremony, which centered around the two goats, pointed to the end of the great controversy between Christ and Satan. This controversy began in heaven when Lucifer rebelled against God and became Satan.

1. When did the Day of Atonement take place in the Jewish calendar?

Leviticus 23:27 _____

Note: The word Atonement is a combination of three separate words joined together, AT-ONE-MENT. Its meaning is synonymous with the word "reconcile." This solemn feast day pointed to the end-time when the whole universe will once again be AT-ONE-MENT with God. At that time everlasting peace will be ushered in.

2. What did the high priest do to God's people on the Day of Atonement?

Leviticus 16:30 _____

Note: This cleansing of God's people before the Lord prefigured the Investigative Judgment ([lesson #21](#)) when Christ, our great and faithful High Priest, will vindicate the saints from all the accusations Satan has been making against them.

3. Besides God's people, what else was cleansed on the Day of Atonement?

Leviticus 16:33 _____

Note: Besides the saints, God's sanctuary will also be cleansed on the Day of Atonement. It will be cleansed of all the blame that has been heaped against God by Satan. Since God justifies sinners who believe in Christ (see Romans 4:5), not only do the believers have to be vindicated but God Himself has to be vindicated. When this is accomplished, the whole universe, including Satan and his angels, will confess to God that "just and true are your ways."

4. When, finally, the sin problem is brought to an end and everlasting righteousness is ushered in, what will the saints declare in song?

Revelation 15:3 _____

Note: When all that the Day of Atonement pointed to is fulfilled, all doubt about God and the way He has dealt with the sin problem will be removed. Then, and then only, will we see things clearly. As the apostle Paul stated to the Corinthian believers, "now we know in part" (1 Corinthians 13:12), but in heaven we shall see God as He truly is, a God of love, mercy, and justice.

5. What two things were the people of God required to do on the Day of Atonement?

Leviticus 23:32 (i) _____

(ii) _____

Note: The reason why the Day of Atonement was required to be kept as a solemn day of Sabbath rest was in order to remind God's people that only those who were resting in Christ's righteousness — i.e., justification by faith alone — would experience the ultimate rest God is offering to mankind. (see Hebrews 4:10,11). "Afflicting the soul" simply means denying oneself all of our self-righteousness (see Philippians 3:7-9). Together, these two requirements pointed to the gospel formula of "Not I, but Christ."

6. What two animals were used on the Day of Atonement to cleanse God's sanctuary and His people?

Leviticus 16:7 _____

Note: According to the law given by God through Moses, both the goats had to be spotless or without blemish. These two goats symbolized the ultimate issue in the great controversy between Christ and Satan, who is responsible for the sin problem.

7. By casting lots, who did these two goats represent?

Leviticus 16:8 _____

Note: The goat selected for the Lord represented Jesus Christ, who bore on the cross the guilt and punishment of the sins of the world. The second goat represented Satan, who must ultimately take the blame of the sin problem he has created. That is why this goat is called the “scapegoat” or the “goat of removal.”

8. What two groups are represented by the sheep and the goats in this passage?

Matthew 25:31-34, 41

Sheep _____

Goats _____

Note: The sheep represent the believers who have accepted Christ as their sin bearer. The goats represent the unbelievers who have refused the gift of salvation in Christ. Please notice that while the kingdom of heaven was prepared for humanity from “the foundation of the world,” the fire that will consume and destroy God’s enemies forever was only prepared for “the devil and his angels.” The reasons why unbelievers will be included in that fire is not because of God’s choice but because of their own (see John 3:18, 36).

9. How many were reconciled to God through the redeeming work of Christ?

2 Corinthians 5:19 _____

Note: At the cross the whole human race was reconciled to God. Therefore, there is no excuse for anyone to be lost. Those who will ultimately be lost, will be lost because they have deliberately and willfully refused and rejected the free gift of salvation in Christ.

10. In order to save mankind from sin, what did God make Christ to be?

2 Corinthians 5:21 (first part) _____

11. In exchange, what did God make us to be in Christ?

2 Corinthians 5:21 (second part) _____

12. How many of us have gone astray and on whom did God lay our iniquity?

Isaiah 53:6 _____

Note: This is what the Lord’s goat represented on the Day of Atonement: Christ our sin bearer. Therefore, all who are resting in Christ’s righteousness for their salvation

(symbolized by their Sabbath-keeping) and deny themselves of all their own self-righteousness (the significance of afflicting the soul) will be vindicated in the solemn Day of Atonement. This is the good news of the Investigative Judgment.

13. How perfect or complete was Christ's sacrifice for our sins on the cross?

Hebrews 10:12-14 _____

Note: When Jesus cried out at the cross "it is finished," He meant His work of saving sinful mankind had now been accomplished. All those who have accepted this salvation by faith and are sanctified by that sacrifice stand perfect in Christ.

14. According to this text, who is the originator of the sin problem?

Ezekiel 28:14, 15 _____

Note: When God created Lucifer he was created flawless, absolutely perfect. But how could a perfect being sin? This is a mystery that our finite minds cannot comprehend. Only when we go to heaven will our eyes be opened and we will fully understand how sin could enter a perfect world. That is why the Bible declares Satan's fall as "the mystery of iniquity."

15. What did Lucifer say in his heart that caused his downfall?

Isaiah 14:12-14 _____

Note: When Lucifer decided to exalt himself and take the place of God, he brought about his own downfall. At the core of every sin is the problem of self, which completely contradicts God's *agape* love that "seeketh not its own" (1 Corinthians 13:5). It is the principle of self, which Satan inflicted the human race with at the Fall, that is the source of all human problems.

16. Because God is Sovereign, what is one thing He assumes the blame for?

Isaiah 45:7 _____

Note: Since God is Sovereign, Lord of the universe, nothing happens without His permission. It is for this reason that God assumes the blame for all the bad things that have happened and that are happening in this world. In the fulfillment of the Day of Atonement, however, the blame will be put on Satan, the one who is really responsible for the sin problem. This is whom the scapegoat represents, the one who truly deserves the blame for our sin problem.

17. Who did Adam and Eve ultimately blame for eating the forbidden fruit?

Genesis 3:9-13 _____

Note: Ultimately, Adam and Eve blamed God for their sin. Adam accused God for giving him a defective wife, while Eve put the blame on God for creating the serpent. Since then, God has assumed much of the blame for the sin problem. He will, however, settle this matter, once and for all, on the Day of Atonement, when every knee will confess to God, “just and true are your ways.”

18. When did David say he will praise God with uprightness of heart?

Psalms 119:7 _____

Note: On the great Day of Atonement, in that final Judgment, God will be vindicated. All the blame He has assumed since the Fall will now be placed on the real culprit, Satan. Only then will God be able to eradicate sin and usher in everlasting righteousness. May you be found to be on God’s side in that final Day of Atonement.

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