

## Reconciliation Through Christ

The Day of Atonement

Martin G. Collins

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I certainly appreciate being here with you on this Day of Atonement—a day of fasting, and humility, and at-one-ment with God and reconciliation. It is actually a very wonderful day, especially the end result of it.

An article appeared in the February 2001 issue of *Reason* magazine. I very much doubt the title of this magazine (that is, that it has very much reason in it), but this article was entitled "The Sex Exception". The article, by Sarah Rimensnyder, concerned Columbia University's decision to not allow people accused of sexual misconduct 'due process.' I am going to read two paragraphs from this article, and give you an idea of how bad it is getting in this country and where it is starting.

Last fall, Columbia University established a new system of hearings for cases of sexual misconduct. The upshot of the changes is the abolition of 'due process.'

As you know, 'due process' is basically the guaranteed right to a fair trial.

To make the hearings "less adversarial" than a courtroom proceeding, the accused doesn't have the opportunity to confront his accuser, nor may he hear his accuser's witnesses and cross-examine them. The accused cannot have an attorney present at the hearing, and he has to keep details of the proceedings confidential. And while the code is vague on the question, he may even bear the burden of proof [that he is not guilty]. . .

Of course, Satan is our *accuser*. He is our *adversary*. He is our *attacker*. And although these adversaries and attackers in the world are bad enough, Satan has been—for thousands of years—working on us, as human beings, and presenting to God every last sin we do, every last error we make. He is trying to show us, in God's eyes, to be totally inadequate to be in His Kingdom. We have no need to face our accuser, Satan, because we have the best possible legal representation. We have Jesus Christ as our Intercessor, our Advocate, and our Defender!

**I John 2:1-2** My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not

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sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

What a wonderful statement that is! It should give us no end of **hope**. And even though the world does not know it, it gives the world hope as well. In the case of an accuser and a defendant, *atonement* presupposes two parties who are estranged, with the act of atonement being the reconciliation of them into a state of harmony. The theological meaning is the reconciliation between God and His fallen creation, especially between God and sinful human beings.

Atonement is a **solution** to the main problem of the human race. That is, its estrangement and separation from God, beginning with the fall of Adam and Eve because of Satan and sin. The reason for the atoning sacrifice is that the sins of humanity violates the holiness of the Creator God and brought the sentence of death—a sentence that can be averted only by the **substitution** of a sacrifice of death. Through the blood of sacrifice, sinful people are able to receive the blessing of God instead of His condemnation—if they repent of sin and are baptized, and receive the Holy Spirit. So, let us look at a command to keep the statute of the Day of Atonement forever.

**Leviticus 16:29-34** "This shall be a statute forever for you: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict your souls [as we are doing today with our fasting], 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. 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 every year." And he did as the LORD commanded Moses.

The English word **atonement** here is not a translation from the Hebrew word *kippurim* or *kippur*. Nor does the Hebrew word mean at-one with God (as some assume), although a major part of the meaning of the day certainly means to become *at one with God* (as

indicated in the English word "atonement"). The English word atonement is derived from the two words "at" and "onement." Most of you know that, but I wanted to give you some foundational information and knowledge on this, especially for those who are newly baptized, or who are contemplating baptism.

This word **atonement** indicates a state of togetherness and agreement between two people. The word atonement is only an interpretation of the Hebrew word *kippurim*, and it is a purely theological concept. It refers to the process by which physical defilement and sin is covered or set aside. The English phrase "Day of Atonement" is the Hebrew phrase *Yom Kippurim* or *Yom Kippur*. *Yom* means *day*. *Kippurim* comes from a root that, basically, means *to cover up*. It also means *expiation*, which is defined as the extinguishing of guilt by the suffering of a penalty. The term encompasses the means by which a person, who is estranged from God, is placed back into harmony with Him, and the result of being in harmony with Him.

Let us look at the beginning of the detailed instruction for what was involved in the Day of Atonement in the Old Testament.

**Leviticus 16:1-4** Now the LOORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they offered profane fire before the LOORD, and died. And the LOORD 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. 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 the holy garments. Therefore he shall wash his body in water, and put them on.

In order to come before God in a clean manner, he even had to be clean physically and had to wash himself. The Day of Atonement symbolism is all expressed in the account of the events of the Day of Atonement as carried out here in Leviticus 16.

**Leviticus 16:5-8** And he [Aaron, or the high priest] 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. Aaron shall offer the bull as a sin offering, which is for himself, and make atonement for himself and for his house. He shall take the two goats and present them before the LOORD at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. Then Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats: one lot

for the LOORD and the other lot for the scapegoat [Azazel].

The English word "scapegoat" is *not* a correct translation of the Hebrew word that God inspired. Most Bibles with marginal renderings show that the original word there is **Azazel**. Azazel refers to Satan, and is not found anywhere else in the Old Testament. The modern English word "scapegoat" carries an entirely wrong connotation. Today, the English word "scapegoat" signifies one who bears blame or guilt for others. Obviously, that cannot be the case here in Leviticus 16. "Scapegoat" is an English word and is *not* a translation of the Hebrew word *Azazel*. Therefore it is not the word inspired originally. Azazel—representing Satan—will bear his own guilt. And, of course, these two goats were 'types.'

**Leviticus 16:9-10** And Aaron shall bring the goat on which the LOORD's lot fell, and offer it as a sin offering. But the goat on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat [or, more correctly, the Azazel] shall be presented alive before the LOORD, to make atonement upon it, and to let it go as the scapegoat [the Azazel] into the wilderness.

Notice that it was necessary to be decided—by lot—which one was qualified to represent Christ and which one would be the Azazel to represent Satan. So, let us look at the casting of lots for a moment. By looking at a little bit of the history of *the casting of lots*, we can have a better understanding of what was going on here. A "**lot**" was a solemn appeal to God to decide a doubtful matter. It was a sacred religious ceremony that included a supernatural act of God. (That is why lotteries and gambling are of Satan, and not of God. They are an actual profaning of a holy service of appealing to God.)

The casting of lots was used in the Old Testament for the selecting of a goat offering, for dividing the land of Canaan, to determine the cause of a stormy sea (as in Jonah's case). It was also used by David to divide the duties among the priests, as is mentioned in I Chronicles 24:5. And it was also used to detect a guilty person, as is mentioned in Joshua 7:14.

In the New Testament Roman soldiers cast lots for Jesus' garment, and the apostles chose Matthias by lot. However, when the deacons were chosen (as recorded in Acts 6:1-7), lots were not used; but the people chose men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit, who produce good fruit, and who had wisdom. So there were **qualifications** involved. But casting of lots was very common among the Jews on important or difficult

occasions. Although it was an acceptable practice in that society in which the apostles were in, it was not used on every occasion or very often. It was only done very occasionally.

In this society today, the casting of lots is usually viewed as gambling or superstition. If you go out into society at all and you start casting lots, that is the first thing that people are going to think. By definition, **divination** is an attempt to decipher the will of God (or of the gods) through the use of magical techniques. Many times this involves manipulating the physical world. Today, casting of lots is usually perverted into a type of divination if faith is placed in the person casting lots or in the lots themselves. And the "lots" themselves could be a roll of the dice. In reality, there are many ways that lots can be tossed.

Divination is specifically banned in Leviticus 19:26. It says there: ". . . nor shall you practice divination." That makes it quite clear, in that way. Isaiah 44:24-25 tells us that God frustrates the signs of the babblers, and drives diviners mad, and makes their knowledge foolishness. The confidence put in divination reflects unwillingness to trust God's revelation of truth. So also can the casting of lots be a lack of faith in God's power to inspire His ministers to make wise decisions after prayer and fasting. I am not talking about the lots that were cast at the choosing of the Azazel. I am talking about the types of lots that might be casts for individuals for public offices or for religious offices within the church.

**Ezekiel 13:6-9** "They have envisioned futility and false divination, saying, 'Thus says the LOORD!' But the LOORD has not sent them; yet they hope that the word may be confirmed. Have you not seen a futile vision, and have you not spoken false divination? You say, 'The LOORD says,' but I have not spoken." Therefore thus says the Lord God: "Because you have spoken nonsense and envisioned lies, therefore I am indeed against you," says the Lord God. "My hand will be against the prophets who envision futility and who divine lies; they shall not be in the assembly of My people, nor be written in the record of the house of Israel, nor shall they enter into the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the Lord God."

Today, it is not always known when a cast lot (or a roll of the dice) is turned up by chance or by miracle. But most likely, in most cases, it is by chance. Almost all cases of doubt can be determined more satisfactorily in some other way than by lot. For example, in the multitude of counselors, as mentioned in Proverbs 11:14.

Using the casting of lots to choose an apostle was not done blindly. The individuals being cast for all appeared to be qualified for the position. And that is a key phrase there. They all appeared to be **qualified**. The question was, "Which one should be chosen for this unique position of service to complete the Twelve?" This was not setting a precedent for choosing replacements when apostles died.

Since Pentecost of 31 A.D., God has given His church the Holy Spirit to enable us to make wise decisions with the "wisdom from above"—that is, godly wisdom. The Holy Spirit helps us use the knowledge that we receive from His Word and to apply it in making decisions in our lives. This includes decisions in leadership. So today there is no need for the casting of lots for the choosing of leaders because we have God's Holy Spirit. That is, the ministry has God's Holy Spirit and has a direct link with God, so to speak, in making decisions in these areas.

I Timothy 3:2-7 lists qualifications for elders, and verses 8-13 lists the qualification of deacons. Upon the choosing of deacons in Acts 13:2, the apostles fasted and the Holy Spirit led them (as it says there) to separate out Barnabas and Saul (Paul) for service. I just wanted to point that out to you, in the way of lots, because in the past some in the churches have had questions on the casting of lots and why we do not do that today. I thought that short insert might be helpful at this time.

In ancient Israel, when men were unable to decide which goat was qualified to represent Christ, this involved an appeal to God in a sacred religious ceremony—one lot for the Lord and the other for the Azazel. The one lot for the Lord chose the goat that typified Christ; but the other lot was not for the Lord and did not typify Christ, but Azazel (which, as I said before, represented Satan). The goat that God selected—through lots—to represent Christ was slain, as Christ (the antitype) was slain. But the other goat—selected by God to represent Azazel—was not slain, but was driven alive into an uninhabited wilderness. "An uninhabited wilderness" is a key as well.

Azazel was not a resurrected goat, symbolizing the resurrected Christ, because it never died. The uninhabited wilderness, to which this goat was driven, could not represent heaven where Christ went—because heaven is neither uninhabited nor a wilderness. The reason I am telling you this is because many of the commentaries—if not most of them—seem to have this all mixed up. But Mr. Armstrong certainly had it right, as he taught us.

After God designated which goat represented Christ and which goat represented Azazel, the high priest killed a bullock for a sin offering for himself. He then took the burning coals of fire and the sweet incense into the Holy of Holies. There he sprinkled

the blood of the bullock before the mercy seat, which was typical of the throne of God, covering the tables of testimony—that is, the tables of the law. The high priest was required to do this in order to purify himself to officiate and to represent Christ as High Priest. Christ, our High Priest, had no need of this purification as the substitutionary priests of the Old Testament did.

**Leviticus 16:11-19** 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. 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. 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. 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.

The Levitical high priest was ready to go out, at this time, and officiate. This is what he had to do to prepare himself and the tabernacle before he could ever think to begin the atonement for the children of Israel. And thus the goat that God selected by lot to represent Christ, as the sin offering of the people, was killed. The sins of the people were borne by the goat, even as Christ rose again from the dead and ascended to the throne of God in heaven. The risen Christ, at the right hand of the throne of God in heaven, is called ***our High Priest***. That is, *the risen Christ* is our High Priest.

The earthly type of God's throne is not the uninhabited wilderness. The uninhabited wilderness is where the live goat went. That is, the Azazel, representing Satan. The earthly type of God's throne was the mercy seat in the Holies of Holies. After Christ died, He went to the heavenly mercy seat, interceding for us as our High Priest.

**Hebrews 6:19-20** 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.

In the Levitical ceremony of the Day of Atonement, which was temporarily reenacted year by year, the Levitical high priest signified *the risen Christ*—our High Priest—who went within the veil to God's throne in heaven. The one goat that was slain represented *the slain Christ*. It could not represent the risen Christ. The slain Christ was not our high priest, because the Levitical priesthood (with its high priest) did not end until Christ rose from the dead and ascended to heaven as a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. But the risen Christ was High Priest. As soon as the slain goat was dead, the high priest went within the veil and presented the blood of this goat before the archetypal throne of God.

**Leviticus 16:15-16** Then he [the high priest] shall kill the goat of the sin offering, which is for the people [At this point, the high priest himself typified the work of the risen Christ.], 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. 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.

So the high priest took blood within the veil, to the mercy seat. That typified the risen Christ figuratively taking His blood once for all, within the veil, to the very throne of God in heaven, there to intercede for each and every one of us as High Priest. The right of entrance into the Most Holy Place is one that depends wholly upon **our vital union with Christ**. In this sense, He fulfills the duty of His High Priest office as *Intercessor* with the added idea drawn from the legal advocacy of the Roman court.

The term translated **Advocate**, as in "We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (which we read at the beginning of this sermon, in I John 2:2), is

the Greek word *parakletos*, which in John 14:16 is translated **Comforter**. So in one place, in I John 2:2, it is *Advocate*; and in John 14:16 it is translated *Comforter*. And both of these translations are correct. The word is of familiar use in Greek for the legal advocate, or *patronus*, who appeared on behalf of his client. Thus, in a double sense of priestly and legal representative, Jesus Christ is our Intercessor in heaven. He is both our **priestly** and **legal** representative.

The intercessory work of Christ can be represented in this way: He represents imperfect man before God in His (Christ's) perfect nature, His exalted office, and His completed work. The Scripture term for this is found in Hebrews 9:24, which says "to appear before the presence [face] of God for us."

There is also an active intercession. This is the office of Jesus Christ as Advocate, or *parakletos*. It conveys some connection to the aid and support that a law-breaker receives from an advocate. Christ's intercession as an Advocate is connected with the texts that refer to **justification** and its associated ideas. The high priest going within the veil, into the Holy of Holies, symbolized Christ's return to heaven. The work he did while in the Holy of Holies symbolized Christ's work these 1900 years—interceding for us, presenting His shed blood before the mercy seat in heaven. Then coming back out (symbolizing Christ's return back to earth), the action of the high priest is recorded, again, in Leviticus 16.

**Leviticus 16:20-28** 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 the uninhabited land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness. 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 the 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. The fat of the sin offering he shall burn on the altar. And he who released the goat as the [Azazel] 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

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burns them shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and afterward he may come into the camp.

So you see the serious importance of being **clean**, not just in a physical sense, but especially in a spiritual sense. The Azazel goat is not our sin bearer. Jesus took our guilt—our sins—upon Himself as an innocent substitutionary sacrifice. The real cause (the actual author of those sins) is Satan. It would not be justice for Christ to bear guilt that was not His while Satan goes free. God's great plan will finally work full justice by placing the original blame and guilt on the Azazel (on Satan) where it belongs.

The Azazel goat carries away the sins of all the people already forgiven. These sins were already fully paid, because of Christ's substitute sacrifice, symbolized by the killing of the innocent goat before those same sins were finally laid on the live goat. They had been previously paid for by the death of the slain goat. Satan is the real author of all sins. Can we then finally be made at-one with God as long as this instigator of sin is still with us? It would not be **justice** with God unless Satan's own guilt in our sins was placed right back on his head. It would not be justice for Christ to bear Satan's sins as well as our own guilt for our sins. Christ has carried our sins, so we do not have to continually carry them. They must be removed entirely from us and from the presence even of God, because sin separates us from God.

**Isaiah 59:1-2** 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.

The prophet Isaiah was inspired to record that sin separates the person from fellowship with God. It is because of this separation that God devised a method by which this *barrier of sin* between Him and His people could be removed. The removal of this barrier makes it possible for communication and fellowship between God and humans, otherwise we cannot have a relationship with God, because sin separates us from God.

The Scriptures show that, when the presence of God comes into contact with impurity, the impurity is destroyed. So, as impure human beings, the world certainly would not want to come within direct contact with God because they would be burned up and destroyed. Therefore the Israelites were given very strict rules as to how to perform the necessary rituals to remove physical contamination in order to be **protected from destruction** while being in close contact with God's presence.

It must have been an awesome presence that those Israelites saw—the fire by night over the tabernacle, and the cloud by day. But there still must have been a huge intensity—a wonderful and fantastic intensity—to God's presence, one that we just cannot imagine.

Through the sacrificial system and the rituals of purification, God is able to alter, transform, or shield people and things from the power of His presence in order to dwell or commune with them in His spirit form, as He did with the Israelites. Thus the killing and sprinkling of the blood of the first goat visibly set forth the means of **reconciliation with God** through the substituted sacrifice of an innocent victim.

So finally the sending away of the second goat, laden with those sins (the expiation of which had been signified by the first goat), no less vividly sets forth the effect of that sacrifice and the complete removal of those expiated sins from the presence of God.

Satan is the accuser of the brethren. His power over human beings is founded on sin. When these sins, of which he is the author, are laid back on him (after being removed from us, by Christ), then Satan will have lost his claim on us and no longer can accuse us. Thus, finally (as the acceptance of the blood of the first goat, Christ symbolized complete propitiation and pardon of Israel's sins), the sending of Azazel bearing away those expiated sins symbolizes the complete removal of all sins, deliverance by atonement from the power of the adversary.

I am sure that when this happened in Israel, in the days when this was finally done, in the days when it was sent out, that the people just cheered because their sins were taken from them, at that point; and they were able to reconcile with God.

The sacrifice of the first innocent victim was the means of reconciliation with God, but not yet complete justice. The driving away of the second goat shows the final atonement by placing the sins on their author, where they belong, and the complete removal of their sins and their author from the presence of God and His people—and thus the complete deliverance of the people from the power of Satan.

Remember that, after laying both his hands on the live goat (Azazel), Aaron had to wash and cleanse himself before coming into contact with the people. He had come into contact with Satan and sin, in this representation. Azazel was driven away from the Holy of Holies—a symbol of God's presence. This act of putting these already forgiven and expiated sins on the head of this live goat does not take place until after the high priest returns from the Holy of Holies, within the veil. So this typified an act that takes place after the second coming of Christ to this earth.

The first goat represented the innocent Christ, who died for our sins. The high priest represented the risen Christ going within the veil, to the mercy seat (or, the throne of God in heaven). For over 1900 years, Christ has been interceding for us. And the high priest returns to place the sins finally on the head of the live goat—representing the return of Christ, who will place the sins He bore on their author (Satan) and who will send him away, alive, into a desolate and uninhabited wilderness. This is what we know of as the bottomless pit, or abyss, of Revelation 20:3.

In Revelation 19, we have the prophecy of the second coming of Christ. Then at the beginning of Revelation 20, we find exactly the same thing happening as in Leviticus 16. Satan is sent away. The bottomless pit symbol used here is of an uninhabited desolate wilderness, and he is sent there by a "fit man." That is, an angel from heaven. Now, Satan is not killed. He does not die at this time. He is still alive 1,000 years later, after the Millennium, as Revelation 20:7 tells us.

**Revelation 20:1-3, 7-8** 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, 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. . . . Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea.

The Day of Atonement is instituted forever to keep continually before God's children and His church the plan of redemption to occur after the second coming of Christ. This annual holy day, of course, is recognized in the New Testament. In Acts 27:9, it is recorded that Paul was on his perilous sea voyage to Rome, "When. . . sailing was now dangerous because the Fast was already over." The marginal references here commonly show this Fast to be the Day of Atonement.

There is no doubt that the apostles kept the Day of Atonement, that Christ did, and that we should. But this is something that this world just does not understand. Not mainstream Christianity, which claims to be "Christian" in this country. No one but God's church and a few others who seem to understand a little bit of this (like Jews For Christ, and a few other groups as well). Fasting on the Day of Atonement is for the purpose of humbling ourselves, to grow closer to God and His righteous way. In Isaiah 58 we will

read a good summary of the reasons for fasting.

**Isaiah 58:6-9** "Is this not the fast that I have chosen: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh? Then your light shall spring forth speedily, and your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry, and He will say, 'Here I am.' If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and the speaking wickedness. . . ."

This is advice here that we can certainly take at this time, as we head off for the Feast of Tabernacles, where we are in close proximity with each other. We can develop that unity and not point the finger or be easily offended, so that we really get the true meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day and especially the Day of Atonement by **applying** what we are learning here in this fast—in the sense of humbling ourselves and not pointing the finger.

**Isaiah 58:10-11** If you extend your soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul, then your light shall dawn in the darkness, and your darkness shall be as the noonday. The LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and strengthen your bones; you shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail."

An interesting comparison is made there. On a day that we are the most thirsty, it mentions "a watered garden." That is, a refreshing watered garden—of course, in a spiritual sense. Fasting on the Day of Atonement is a vivid reminder of the state of mind necessary for salvation. That is, the humility and the godly sorrow, the earnestly seeking after God and His way. A condition to which this world will have been brought to by catastrophic events culminating in the return of Jesus Christ.

What will **Atonement** mean to this world? Satan will be imprisoned in the bottomless pit for one thousand years. But before that, he tries to destroy mankind. Long term, he is always trying to destroy mankind; and he especially steps up his efforts as his imprisonment nears. We can certainly see that today—that Satan and his demons have stepped up their efforts, especially (no doubt) on the church of God.

We feel the heavy burden on us, in some cases, with all of the afflictions that we have and the sickness, and the trials and pressures that we are feeling—from financial ends, as well as events in our nation in the past week. We are certainly feeling, in a sense, oppressed from these events. If we do not look to the hope that God has given us and to the faith in Jesus Christ—that is, the faith of Christ that is in us—if we do not look to that, we can let ourselves get depressed. But there is much to look forward to.

**Daniel 9:27** Then He [the Christ] shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate [Of course, that is Satan.], even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate.

The word translated *desolate*, in various versions of the Bible, should be translated **Desolator**. The primary desolator of the earth, of course, is Satan—also called **Abaddon** and **Apollyon**, meaning *the destroyer*.

**Revelation 9:11** And they had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit [Satan], whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon.

Getting back to Daniel. Daniel was told it would take 3 ½ years for the returned Christ to complete the task of bringing the world to **at-one-ment with God**. All through this very familiar prophecy in Daniel 9—which predicted the exact year of the first coming of Jesus (the Messiah) preaching to the Jews in 27 A.D.—the "year for a day" principle was used. Thus, a week becomes seven years in fulfillment. Christ was to confirm the covenant for one week—7 years. We know that. We have heard it many times. But I wanted to cover some of the basics here as well.

But the prophecy also states that He was to be cut off "in the midst of the week," leaving another 3 1/2 years to be fulfilled after His second coming. He spent 3 ½ years (from autumn of 27 A.D. to the Passover of 31 A.D.) confirming the covenant by personally teaching and training a first group of true Christians who are to be given the overlordship of the world that the covenant promised. At His return, He will continue what He began by actually putting them in power over nations, bringing all into subjection to the government, the Kingdom, of God. The apostle Peter proclaimed that, when Jesus Christ returns to earth, the government of God is to be restored.

**Acts 3:19-21** Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.

A whole new way of life needs to be restored to mankind. It was once offered to Adam and Eve, in the Garden of Eden; but they quickly rejected it, being taken in by the serpent's subtle deception. And ever since then, Satan has had reign over mankind through his deception and his wiles. The world needs *obedience to God's revealed will—faith* (instead of skepticism), relying on the superior wisdom and experience of our Creator (instead of human wisdom, which we see so much of in this world). Obedience, instead of human reasoning, feelings, desires, and emotions based on the pulls of the flesh.

The first step for **restoration** of a perfect world is *reinstitution of God's authority*. There will be a worldwide system of mayors, judges, lesser and greater kings, and such. Jesus referred to these offices in the parables. One will be given rule over ten cities, another will be given rule over five, and so on and so forth.

**Luke 19:16-19** Then came the first, saying, "Master, your mina has earned ten minas." And He said to him, "Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities." And the second came, saying, "Master, your mina has earned five minas." Likewise He said to him, "You also be over five cities."

So we have a lot to look forward to, in that our efforts today and the intercession that Christ is making in heaven for us, and our efforts to overcome sin, and to repent of sin, and to be obedient to God, will end up rewarding us ***according to our efforts***.

**Revelation 5:8-10** Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth."

God's government is to be restored at the same time Satan's part in sins is to be transferred to his own head. At-one-ment will not be completed with merely putting Satan away. The greatest work will still remain. People will still be hating and killing each other. Man's mind and nature has to be **re-taught** the way of God, his character **reshaped** and **remolded**, until it becomes "at one" with God. Then the fully confirmed *new covenant* will be completed.

"In that time," according to Jeremiah 31 and 50, the attitude of Israel and Judah will be one of repentant weeping, and everyone will know of God, wanting to join with Him. God blames their shepherds (their ministers) for their past sins and wrong attitudes. This is Azazel's doing—of corrupting these ministers—through his counterfeit ways of deception. But "in that time" Israel and Judah will have no more sin.

**Jeremiah 50:5-6** They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces toward it, saying, "Come and let us join ourselves to the LORD in a perpetual covenant that will not be forgotten." My people have been lost sheep. Their shepherds have led them astray. They have turned them away on the mountains, they have gone from mountain to hill; they have forgotten their resting place.

**Jeremiah 50:18-20** Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: "Behold, I will punish the king of Babylon and his land, as I have punished the king of Assyria. But I will bring back Israel to his home, and he shall feed on Carmel and Bashan; his soul shall be satisfied on Mount Ephraim and Gilead. In those days and in that time," says the LORD, "the iniquity of Israel shall be sought, but there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, but they shall not be found; for I will pardon those whom I preserve."

God says, "I will pardon those whom I preserve"—those who He brings back alive through the Great Tribulation. Then there will be at-one-ment between God and Israel. That is an exciting time, a wonderful time to look forward to. A time that this nation and other Israelitish nations today have no clue that it is going to happen.

Zechariah 3:9 says, "For behold, the stone that I have laid before Joshua: Upon the stone are seven eyes. Behold, I will engrave its inscription," says the LORD of hosts, "and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day." Israel will have been brought to her knees—and **to repentance**—by the terrible national punishments to be inflicted on her (that is soon to be coming).

This is the attitude pictured by fasting on the Day of Atonement. That is, humility and sorrow before God that is necessary to be at-one with God. The Day of Atonement is a vivid illustration of ***the state of mind necessary for salvation***. That is, one of humility and godly sorrow and earnest seeking of God's right way of life. It is also a warning of the state to which God will be forced to reduce Israel—by war, captivity, disease, slavery, and persecution. The twelve nations, or tribes, of Israel will not have any more disagreements or jealousies of one another once they are brought to this state of mind—of humility and godly sorrow.

**Isaiah 11:12-13** He will set up a banner for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. Also the envy of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off; Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not harass Ephraim.

What we see there is a state of mind—a humble state of mind. We do not see that in this nation today. In the reaction to the terrorists' attacks, it was one of arrogance and defiance by the United States. "We're a powerful people. We will stand, and we will overcome."—and no mention of God. And least not the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But they will then **cooperate** to convert Gentile nations to the government of God. That is, Israel will.

**Isaiah 11:14** But they shall fly down upon the shoulder of the Philistines toward the west; together they shall plunder the people of the East; they shall lay their hand on Edom and Moab; and the people of Ammon shall obey them.

By seeing Israel's right example, the Gentile nations willing—of their own volition—seek to **God's nation** for the way of peace and at-one-ment.

**Deuteronomy 4:6-8** Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the LORD our God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon him? And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?

We go through the **internal cleansing** of a fast, both physically and spiritually. Passover is a cleansing on the outside, by the washing of feet. The Day of Atonement is a cleansing on the inside, in humility, by fasting.

**Ephesians 2:11-16** Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.

When the Gentiles have learned the truth and realize that "the father of lies" had deceived them, they will forsake the ways of their ancestors.

**Jeremiah 16:19-21** O LORD, my strength and my fortress, my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come to You from the ends of the earth and say, "Surely our fathers have inherited lies, worthlessness and unprofitable things." Will a man make gods for himself, which are not gods? "Therefore behold, I will this once cause them to know, I will cause them to know My hand and My might; and they shall know that My name is the LORD."

So, the encouraging news is that the Gentile nations will see the wonderful blessing of being brought near to God and made at-one with Him. They will see it in Israel, and they will want it for themselves—at least, most of the Gentile nations. Some, if not many, will still want to fight God. When Satan is put back on earth, after the thousand years, there will be quite a few who will want to fight God.

Let us begin to summarize a few things. The imagery surrounding the Bible's teaching on **atonement** is overwhelmingly rich and abundant in its importance to the salvation of mankind. Not just to the church, not just to Israel, but to the Gentiles as well—all of mankind.

Much of the biblical explanation can be summed up with five main conditions, or transactions (Remember that 5 is the number of *grace*):

One is the bearing of sins by an innocent Christ so that, upon repentance, sinners can be freed from the penalty they have incurred.

Second is the financial image of a ransom that is paid in exchange for sinners.

Third is the Substitute, who takes the place of sinners, suffering the punishment, that stems from God's justice, in their place—with its emphasis on Christ as the second Adam (the representative of the human race who affects redemption for it).

Fourth, the Old Testament sacrifices and Christ as the fulfillment of those sacrifices are a satisfaction (not simply a waiving) of the offense that the human race has committed against God by virtue of its sinfulness, and an appeasement of the just anger of God against the human race for its offense.

Fifth, atonement is a legal and juridical meeting of the requirements of the law so that sinful people can stand acquitted before God, the Judge.

The result of all these transactions, finally, is **reconciliation** between an offended holy God and a sinful rebellious humanity.

**II Corinthians 5:18-20** Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation [and restoration], 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 Day of Atonement pictures Christ deposing Satan from his present position as world ruler 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*

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*with God.* Such an exciting and wonderful time!

For ***the elect of God***—thanks to the sacrifice and intercession of our Savior Jesus Christ (our High Priest and our Advocate)—God the Father has reconciled us to Himself. What a wonderful, wonderful blessing we have to be among the firstfruits, to have the potential and be given the chance to be among ***the firstfruits*** of the Kingdom of God. I can think of no greater blessing, or no greater hope to look for, than being **at-one** with God the Father and Jesus Christ—with Them in Their Kingdom. We should be so thankful for this.