

A Day Without Work

Lest Anyone Should Boast

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Given 13-Oct-05; Sermon #743

Atonement is the most unusual holy day of the year. I do not think that is any surprise to any of you.

Each holy day has its distinctive traits. The Feast of Unleavened Bread has unleavened bread, and Pentecost has counting, which no other holy day has. Trumpets has the trumpets. And the Feast of Tabernacles is The Feast. And, the Last Great Day is like the last Hurrah! It is the last high point of the year; the time of great things happening.

But for outsiders, Atonement is just plain weird.

"What?" They ask, "Do you mean that you do not eat or drink for an entire day? Why would you want to do that?"

Of course, it is in this distinction—fasting or afflicting our souls—that a great deal of the day's spiritual instruction resides. It teaches us to realize just how dependent we are upon God. You know He supplies faithfully—every day, every hour, every minute—everything that we need, every bite or swallow of food and drink. And, if He suddenly failed to do so, or forgot, or stopped caring... how quickly we would soon die. That is one of the things that this day teaches us—we are frail creatures.

If it were not for God supplying all our needs, being the God of our Providence, how soon would we wither away and die? A few days in terms of water. Or a few weeks or so without food.

But then, when we apply this understanding of how much God supplies to our spiritual life, we come to a great realization about how much He has given us. It all begins with His revealing Himself to us, and calling us, and giving all the understanding—and so on. He supplies everything we need for our spiritual life as well.

And this leads to our feeling humble, and full of awe of Him, and eternally grateful for the things that He has done. It should cause us, as shown in Isaiah 58, to treat our neighbors better—sacrifice for them, and give them the things that they need.

Another strange aspect of this Day of Atonement is that it puts two goats front and center.

Now, the one goat in this Old Testament ritual is chosen for the Lord. And it is sacrificed, and its blood is sprinkled by the high priest on the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies. And then, the other goat, the Azazel goat, is left alive. And all the sins of the people are laid upon its head. And, as the King James Version says, a fit man takes him off into the wilderness, and leaves it there. He comes back into camp without the goat, and washes himself.

This ritual, also, contains the heart of this days meaning—the need, and the means of atonement for sin. And then, beyond that, the possibility of unity with God. Without atonement with God, there is no At-One-ment.

Now, speaking of the Azazel goat, this holy day is the only one that deals directly with Satan, and the problem of Satan.

Unleavened bread deals with sin, but it does not deal with Satan himself. It does not answer, "How is God going to get rid of this great deceiver? The one who originally sinned? The one to whom all our sins can be traced back to because we have followed his wavelength?"

We cannot give him all the credit for our sins, because we have much to do with them, too. We give in to weakness. We do give in to our carnal nature, which is Satan's nature, and we sin.

This day pictures mankind's sins being traced back to Satan the Devil, and God placing much of the guilt for them on his head, right where they belong. We also believe that this holy day foreshadows Satan being bound for the 1000 year millennium, and ultimately being bound for all eternity, so that he can no longer influence mankind to sin.

Now, as for solemnity, only Passover is more solemn. This is only natural because Passover and Atonement run on similar tracks. They are very similar days.

True, it is hard to be cheerful when we are empty, and getting emptier by the moment, but it is a lot more than that. If we really understand this day's meaning, Atonement should make us feel humble, it should make us feel guilty, it should make us feel needy, it should make us feel absolutely powerless. That is how you are beginning to feel right about now, as your joints begin to feel weaker, your head maybe begins to buzz a bit with a headache, and as your mouth feels like crud; and your stomach rumbles a lot.

(You get "rumbly in the tumbly" as Winnie the Pooh would say. You need a pot of honey

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to make it feel better! Actually, that would make you feel sick right now, would it not?)

Even though we feel so bad, we also feel, like during the Passover service, a kind of joy—or we should—and a great deal of gratitude knowing that God has provided an effective and powerful means of atonement for us through His Son Jesus Christ.

Now, I want to pursue along this line, today, a very specific angle—this line of the Atonement through the Son Jesus Christ. I still have not mentioned another of the oddities about the Day of Atonement. Like I said, this is a peculiar day. There are a lot of things that are different about this day than any other day of the year. But, it plays into the solemnity of this day, and the atonement idea, too.

And, this has to do with what we do, or what we do not do on this particular holy day.

We will skip around a bit in Numbers 28 and the next chapter, because I want to pull out a verse here and there to see something among all these holy day offerings. These two chapters contain all the offerings that were given by the Levitical priesthood during the year, beginning with the daily offerings, and the Sabbath offerings; they gave offerings on the new moons; and of course, they gave offerings on the Passover, and all the holy days throughout the year. And, these two chapters talk about them.

We are just going to go through the portions dealing with the holy days.

Numbers 28:17-18 And on the fifteenth day of this month *is* the feast; unleavened bread shall be eaten for seven days. On the first day *you shall have* a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work.

Numbers 28:25 And on the seventh day you shall have a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work.

Numbers 28:26 Also on the day of the firstfruits, when you bring a new grain offering to the LOORD at your *Feast of Weeks*, you shall have a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work.

Numbers 29:1 And in the seventh month, on the first *day* of the month, [Trumpets, obviously] you shall have a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work. For you it is a day of blowing the trumpets.

Numbers 29:7 On the tenth *day* of this seventh month [today] you shall have a holy convocation. You shall afflict your souls; you shall not do any work.

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Numbers 29:12 On the fifteenth day of the seventh month you shall have a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work, and you shall keep a feast to the LORD seven days.

And finally in verse 35:

Numbers 29:35 On the eighth day you shall have a sacred assembly. You shall do no customary work.

Now, from the verses that I have just read, you will see that all of these holy days have two things in common.

One is that there is to be a holy convocation, meaning gathering the people together for a service; and the other one is that it prohibits work. Each one prohibits work.

But, did you notice the difference between the Day of Atonement and the other six holy days? The other six holy days prohibit customary work, while the Day of Atonement says, "You shall not do **any** work."

What is customary work? Or as in the King James version, servile work?

Various translations have, "ordinary work," "laborious work," "work at your occupation," and other similar wordings. The Hebrew word (for work) transliterated as *abodah*, is a hard word to pin down. It covers the same ground as our word "work" also. We use the word work for a lot of stuff. So, it is hard to say.

Sometimes, this word is used for slave labor, sometimes it is used for the work of the Levites, and therefore it is often rendered service instead of work, but it is the same Hebrew word, and it still means work that being done in the Tabernacle. It is also used for labor in the fields. In some places, it is even translated as tilling the ground. And it is used for making cloth.

It is used for all kinds of labor. Generally, though, it covers daily labor. The work that we do to make a living, or what we do in the daily course of life. It is our customary work. It is what we are accustomed to doing on those other days, because that is what we do. We are a plumber, or salesman, or whatever—that is what you do. That is how you make your living. And that is what you are accustomed to doing the other days of the week.

That was the word used in Numbers 29:1. But, if you go down to verse 7, and it says, "You shall not do any work," the Hebrew word is not *abodah*. Moses did not write *abodah*, and God must not have said *abodah*. He said a different word. It is *melakah*.

And do you know this word is just as hard to pin down as *abodah*. This did not work out quite as clearly as I thought it would. I thought, "Wow! This is a different word! I am going to go check this out." And, I found out that its spectrum is even wider than *abodah*.

According to the "Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament," it can mean, "work, occupation, business, something made, property, workmanship. This word is used for God's creative work, as well as for human labor, skilled craftsmanship, and agricultural tasks. It is used for livestock, property, and public and religious business."

So, just like our English word work, which means not only what you do, but what you produce, and the skills you have, it covers everything from God's work in creation all the way down to anybody's old work and labor—public, religious, private. It is a very broad term.

Now, the commentators and word geniuses, say that if this word [*melakah*] emphasizes anything, it is skilled labor of a craftsman, or the labor of an artist, or the labor of a professional—someone who is really well trained for his task. That is really the only major distinction it has with *abodah*.

But, really, in the final analysis, the difference between these two terms is that *melakah* is more encompassing than *abodah*. And, this has some significance for the Day of Atonement.

Why did God use a different term? Because, *abodah* is work, generally, and work that you would do customarily. But, in verse 7, I think God is trying to get across to us that He does not want us to do any work—anything that could be called work, whether customary, or not; normal or abnormal. He does not want us working at anything on this day.

So, he does not want us to do any crude labor, nor does He want us to do fine artistry; or anything in between. He does not want us to work. This is a day of no work.

Let us back this up in Leviticus 23, verses 26 through 32, where the general instructions for the Day of Atonement are made.

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Leviticus 23:26 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:

Now just look at how many times He tells us not to work here:

Leviticus 23:26-32 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 [as the sun is going down], from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your sabbath."

Now, it is easy to see the emphasis once it is pointed out to you.

God mentions not doing any work on this day three times. He says, "No work," "not any work," and "no manner of work." That is pretty specific. Not just generally "no work," but He emphasizes it two more times, "not any work," and "no manner of work."

That should tell us that this is a day in which we are to be completely at rest. And once, He even threatens to kill us if we do any work on this day.

And if we are going to use just evaluate it based upon the number of times that it is mentioned (not doing any work), it is just as important as "afflicting our souls." on this day. They are both mentioned three times.

And in the same way, they both have the threat of death for transgression. So they are seemingly equally important.

And, if you wanted to, we could make an argument, believe it or not, that the prohibition against work on the Day of Atonement is even more important than the fasting.

Now, you are asking me, "How can you say that?" Well, it is something we cannot see, necessarily, in the English translation. Let us read verse 32 again:

Leviticus 23:32 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.

Now, if you looked at it in the English, like we just did, it would be very difficult to come up with the idea of "no work is to be done." But, the word "Sabbath" is mentioned three times in this verse. And, the first two times are especially important.

If you will notice, in the New King James, the word "solemn" is in italics. What this means is that the translators inserted it because it is not there in the Hebrew, but they wanted to try and give you the idea of the meaning of it.

I think that they should have left it as it was, because when you leave it as it is, it makes you think of possibilities beyond what they have interpreted it to mean. They have interpreted this phrase to mean a solemn rest. But, this word is in the superlative in the Hebrew.

Hebrews had a way of speaking that is different from us. If we want to say that something was really great, we would say, "It was the most exciting thing that happened," or "It was the biggest thing to ever hit the town."

Well, the Hebrews did not construct their words that way. They stacked the same word one on top of itself so you got the impression that it was double of what it normally is.

And so, in this case, it is, "a Sabbath of Sabbaths." It is the very same format as "Holy of Holies," which many modern translations would call, "the most holy place." It is also like the book, "Song of Songs." It is the greatest song, or the best song, or the most important song—the Song of Songs.

God calls this day of Atonement, "The Sabbath of Sabbaths."

Think about this in terms of what the Hebrew means, we know that Sabbath means, "to cease, or stop." This is the stoppage of stoppages. This is the ceasing of ceasings. This is the day in which we are to stop the most, of all days of the year.

The command not to work is even more prohibitive on this day than it is on a normal Sabbath day. For the Sabbath it just says that you shall do no work. This time, it is a Sabbath of Sabbaths. It is a day that you had better be careful that you not to any work of any kind. It is a very important day both to us, and to God.

Now, the Contemporary English Version—I do not recommend this version for everything—has not a bad translation of the first part of this verse, and it says, "This is a time of complete rest." Then, they ruin it by saying, "just like the Sabbath," because it is not just like the Sabbath, but is more, and is beyond. It is the Sabbath of Sabbaths.

So, my own little paraphrase would be, "It shall be to you the ultimate Sabbath day."

This day is to be most unlike any other day of the year. That is why there are so many peculiarities about this day. The day of Atonement is supposed to be strange. It is supposed to get our interest; these little strange things are supposed to jump out at us, and make us dig for their meaning, because this day is different from any other day.

Let us go back a few pages to Leviticus 16. Try to figure out why this day is so superlative. Of course, we are eventually getting to why this day emphasizes no work at all, but part of the answer, at least, can be found here in Leviticus 16. You may want to put a book mark here because we will be jumping back and forth for a good bit of this next section.

Leviticus 16:29 *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...*

Notice how they are all right behind each other. They are very important. They go together.

Leviticus 16:29 ...*whether* a native of your own country or a stranger who dwells among you.

This was for everybody in the whole land of Israel.

Leviticus 16:30-31 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 LOORD. It is a sabbath of solemn rest for you, and you shall afflict your souls. *It is* a statute forever.

Now, like I said, why does this day emphasize no work at all? Here it says in verse 29,

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"no work at all," and then it repeats in verse 31 that this is a Sabbath of Sabbaths—Sabbath of solemn rest, as it has here.

We have been stepping around the answer to this for this whole time. I have actually mentioned it a couple of times. But, I think in pursuing other areas of this day, we sometimes avoid the magnitude of meaning in the central idea of this holy day. We do not always do this. I am not saying that we always do, but sometimes we seem to emphasize fasting, and we seem to emphasize how atonement takes care of Satan in God's plan, and we sort of work our way around rather than directly talking about the idea that an atonement has to be made for us.

This holy day has a great deal to do with sin, and the fact that we no longer have to worry about a sacrifice for our sins. It has been done, and it continues to be done through the blood of Jesus Christ.

We do no work at all because this day, like Passover, commemorates that our High Priest makes atonement for us, and cleanses us from sin, so that we can appear before our God.

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 LOORD.

That is what the Day of Atonement is all about—the fact that we are now clean, and the fact that it has been done for us.

Now, if I can speculate as to the major difference between Passover and Atonement (and this is just my speculation in the way that I have looked at all this in my own mind), I would say that Passover emphasizes the historical and spiritual fact that Jesus died for our sins, as Paul says in Hebrews 9:12, and 25-27. But, he says that Christ came and died once for all. It is a done deal.

The Lamb of God was slain, and our sins are passed over. It has been done. That was done 1970+ years ago. It was done historically at a certain time, at a certain place. It was done right on time, and according to everything that God had set out for the way that it should be done. Everything was done, and we have the opportunity to reap the benefits of that one sacrifice.

John the Baptist said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29)." And that is what happened. It is now a passed portion of the plan of God. It

is done.

But Atonement, on the other hand, (This is just the way I look at it; I am not saying that it is entirely correct.) reminds us of His continuous work of Atonement, not just the blood sacrifice done once for all, but the fact that He is continually atoning for us. In other words, if Passover applies most directly to our justification, then Atonement applies most directly to our sanctification.

I am not saying that this is 100 percent true, I am just saying that this is one way to look at it. Because, you know that after you were baptized, after I was baptized, we continued to sin. We continued to need the blood of Jesus Christ to cover us so that we could continue in the transformation process into the image of Jesus Christ. And it is only through the efforts of Christ as our High Priest that we continue to have access to the Father. It is the high priest that brings us together, and continues making sure that we are acceptable before the Father.

Remember that when John wrote I John toward the end of the first century, he was writing to people who were converted, probably back in the church at Ephesus. There may have been people in the church there for a long time.

We will start in chapter 1, verse 7. He says to these converted people:

I John 1:7 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.

I John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

These are the terms used in the Day of Atonement—cleansing, reconciliation, and atonement.

I John 2:1-2 My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation [atoning sacrifice] for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

He is not sitting up there to the right of the Father's throne doing nothing. He continues

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His work. It is not that He has to die again, and suffer again for our sins, but because He has done what He has done, His blood continues to be efficacious in the cleansing of us throughout our lives. It does not just open the way into the Holy of Holies for us, and cover us with His righteousness, but it also keeps the door open continuously so that we have instant access to the Father at all times. And, we are constantly being cleaned.

So, John is showing that if we sin—and we do—if we have a relationship with the Father through Christ, then He continues to be our atoning sacrifice. He never stops. He continuously cleanses from all sin, and this is part of His job as High Priest. He is constantly before the Mercy Seat, sprinkling the blood on the mercy seat so that we will be forgiven and cleansed, because, sadly, we all continue to sin.

But, we need that open door, we need that constant atonement so that we can have the opportunity to be transformed into His Image. That relationship is what does it. And He provides the bridge so that relationship can continue with Him as our High Priest.

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.

We have read that before.

Leviticus 16:32 And the priest, who is anointed and consecrated to minister as priest in his father's place...

Is that not interesting? He is talking about the high priest, the position being passed down from father to son. But, in the spiritual application, who is the High Priest? And who is the Father? Just think about it. It is very interesting in the analogy.

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.

Now, in this chapter alone, if we were to go back, and I have actually done this in my Bible, I have marked all the times where it said, "make atonement" in this one chapter. It is the number of completion (3) times the number of grace (5)—15 times that the phrase "make atonement" appears in this one chapter. It should tell you something. God does not use numbers indiscriminately. And, in this one chapter alone—just look in the last three verses we just read at how many times "make atonement" appears. And this is all the work of the High Priest. He is constantly making atonement here on this day.

And notice the things that He makes atonement for. Everything from the Holy of Holies itself, to the tabernacle (the holy place), the altar, the priesthood themselves, and all the people for all their sins this one time, The Day of Atonement. He does this every year.

Everything that comes in contact with humanity is contaminated, including the holy of holies. And that is why he had to make atonement for it, because sinful men had interaction with it, even if it was just himself, the high priest. He had to make atonement for everything, and consecrate it once again to the service of God because it had been defiled. It just shows you how bad things really are. Everything needed to be cleaned again.

So, everything that sin had touched had to be atoned for on this Day of Atonement, even the Holy of Holies. And this had to happen every year, because people continued to sin. They never stopped.

This is the actual command about what he is supposed to be doing. This is after he had killed the bull, and atoned for his own sins, and his house's sins. Then he was able to go into the holy place because before the sin offering of the bullock, he was not fit to enter.

Leviticus 16:15-17 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.

This is the passage in which the high priest is instructed about entering the Holy of

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Holies. And he is going into the holy of holies with the blood of the goat that was slain for the sin offering. And he takes that blood and sprinkles it on the mercy seat using the specific ritual for this, and also sprinkles it in front of the mercy seat, and while this was going on, the incense altar was billowing smoke—it is said that if it were not billowing smoke he would likely die—and he had to go through this very specific ritual.

Now, there are two main points in this particular passage that I want to bring out.

First, notice in verse 16 that the sins of the people are really emphasized. It says, "because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, because of their transgressions, and for all their sins."

Now the idea I get from all of this is that God wants to make sure we understand that this atoning sacrifice covers everything. All the sins of whatever stripe of whatever magnitude, from uncleanness, to transgressions, to sins. Everything is covered by this sacrifice. There is nothing left out.

Secondly, in verse 17, no one accompanied the high priest when he did this. He was entirely alone because it was his duty alone. No one else could do this except the high priest.

Now with those two thoughts in mind, turn to Hebrews, the great New Testament book of the priestly service. We are going to begin in chapter 9, starting in verse 6, and we will be hopping around a bit here too. He had just talked about all the accoutrements of the tabernacle:

Hebrews 9:6 Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing *the services*.

Now, what he is saying is that the average priest would be able to go into the holy place, and do what they needed to do, whether to put incense on the altar, or to change the showbread, or whatever it was that their duties were. They could go into the holy place. Now there are two chambers. Beyond the holy place (1) is the holy of holies (2) and we get to that in verse 7.

Hebrews 9:7-8 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.

Now Paul is making a point here that you could not enter into God's presence in the old covenant. Only the high priest could, but only once a year, and only with the blood of a goat, as well as the blood of a bull for himself, and he was only able to go in there to offer for the sins of the people. He could do nothing else there. He was very much restricted in his duties in the holy of holies. That is all he could do.

And so, as Paul explains, the way to God was not open. Something else had to happen for the way to God to be opened. But, the ritual that was done on the Day of Atonement was a type of what would happen so that everyone could eventually have access to the Father.

So, what you have here is all of Israel being outside the tabernacle altogether. The priests could come into the first part of the sanctuary (the holy place) and do only their duties, and the high priest alone out of all Israel was able to go behind the veil. But this was to change.

Hebrews 9:11-15 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. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, 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?

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.

You see, when Christ came and entered The Most Holy Place in heaven through His own blood, having lived a perfect life, that proved super efficacious. Not only did it allow Him to enter into the Most Holy Place, it rent the veil. And all who followed after Him, then, had access to God. They had atonement, reconciliation, with God.

And as John the Apostle said, "His blood cleanses (present tense) us from all sin." It

continues to do so.

Hebrews 9:23 Therefore *it was* necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

He is making a comparison between what happened on earth, and what happened with what Jesus did.

Hebrews 9:24 For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, *which are* copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;

For us! He did not do it for Himself. He did it for our atonement.

Hebrews 9:25-26 ...not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another—He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

That is the atonement.

Now, let us go back to chapter 7. When Jesus went into the holy of holies in heaven, he cleansed all sin for all time through that one act.

Now, we have to accept Him as our Savior for that blood to work for us, but it has been done. The act has been done. But, He continues to work for us.

Hebrews 7:20-24 And inasmuch as *He was* not *made priest* without an oath (for they have become priests without an oath, but He with an oath by Him who said to Him [this is Christ's appointment as High Priest]: "The LORD has sworn And will not relent, 'You *are* a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek'"), by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant. Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood.

Now, what I am trying to get at here is that Jesus is high priest right now, and He is continuing to do His job right now. And He never stops, because He is not a man anymore.

Hebrews 7:25-8:2 Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. For such a High Priest was fitting for us, *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, *appoints* the Son who has been perfected forever.

Now *this is* the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.

Can we grasp the enormity of the atonement? Now we would probably be uneasy here. We are not used to blood sacrifice. And even the killing of the bull and the goat would maybe turn our stomachs. Or, cause us to turn away.

But, this sacrifice went far beyond the blood of a bull or a goat. This was the sacrifice of the perfect man—the Creator. The God who has always had intercourse with humanity. The One that we knew. And He volunteered Himself to come down to this place and die for our sins. He willingly submitted to the Father's requests that He do this for all humanity.

Now, we talk about this at Passover time, but it is good that we talk about this at the time of Atonement as well because this day is a reminder of the absolute enormity of what He did, but with the emphasis on what He continues to do. He is ever there. He is every living. He is ever ready to make atonement for us because we continue to sin.

Now, He was so willing and dedicated to this job that He said some astounding things. Now, a normal human being would have reacted much differently. I know that had Peter said this to me, I would have probably said, "Naw! I really do not want to do this! But it is something that needs to be done."

Matthew 16:21-23 From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!" But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."

In a way, He was saying, *"I have got to do this! This is why I came! Everything is ruined if I do not do this! I am going to do this to the best of my ability! I am not going to let you, Peter, or you, Satan the Devil, stop me from this! I am willingly giving myself as an atonement for all of mankind's sins for all time."*

Satan wanted to get Him off the track. He wanted the Azazel goat to win. This is just hours before He would be arrested, and Peter is still trying to dissuade Him a bit. I am sure that he did not do it in any meanness of spirit, however, look at verse 8 and the foot washing:

John 13:8 Peter said to Him, "You shall never wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."

"It has got to be done! I have got to go through with this and clean you up!" Otherwise, there would be no access to God, Peter would not be in His Kingdom, no one would be in His Kingdom who did not allow Jesus Christ to cover them and cleanse them. Jesus was determined, and He was committed. And, He was going to do it.

We have come all this way over the past 30 minutes or so, since I last asked the question, and we really have not answered it directly yet. "Why, then, does God prohibit us to work, and so strongly too?"

Now, think of this. I watched a football game the other day. And, someone had been running up and down the field all day, he was a wide-receiver, and been able to pretty much run the opposing team's secondary ragged, but in one critical play he was hit, really jarred, but it was enough to knock the ball out of his hands, and the opposition picked it up, and ran it back 30 to 35 yards to get into scoring position.

This really is not so important as what the announcer said. The announcer said, "Well,

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there are two periods to go. He will have time to atone for his mistake." That got me to thinking.

This football player—if everything works out well, if he does some last minute heroics—he could still win the game, and his team almost did. But, I thought about that because of the upcoming Day of Atonement. The announcer used the word atone—that this man could atone for his mistake.

And I was thinking, "I wonder if he thinks in any way that we can atone for our sins?" There is no way. As much work as you want to do, between now and the time you die, that you could ever pay for one sin. We might still have "two quarters to go," but that does not make any difference. If we fumble, we cannot get it back. We cannot make up for it. We cannot score a touchdown and win the game at the end. It just does not work that way.

In God's system, once you make a mistake, you cannot ever go back and correct it, or make up for it. It is done. The consequences begin to happen. It is a law of the universe.

But, He does not leave us there. He provides an atonement for us. See? It comes out from beyond us. There is nothing in us that can effect the atonement.

But, God provided His Son to be the Atonement for us, and there is no work whatsoever that we can do. And on The Day of Atonement, there is no work whatsoever that we should be doing, because He is trying to get us to realize that it has been done, and continues to be done for us.

The Apostle Paul takes great pains to explain this to us. And, unfortunately this world's Christians have taken this too far, because they do not understand where things go, and how things are set up. Notice how much of this is done for or unto us:

Ephesians 2:1-3 And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air [the Azazel goat again], the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience [we did that], among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

We seem to be able to do those sorts of things very easily—works that we should not do

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but end up doing every so often out of weakness. They are called works of the flesh. Paul calls them exactly what they are, just as Galatians 5 shows.

Ephesians 2:4-6 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus...

Notice, too, how often it is "in Christ." He is so important to the working out of God's purpose in us.

Ephesians 2:7 ...that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

That is the glorification and the rewards to come in the future, but it is in Christ Jesus as well. We are going to be His Bride, and everything we do, has to do with Him.

Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God...

Even the faith is the gift of God. God does everything for us in this particular part of our salvation.

Ephesians 2:9-10 ...not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

We have been saved by grace. Or, to put it into today's language, our atonement is fully by grace. It was an act of love on God's part to allow the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to cover our sins. Our works have nothing to do with atonement. Or, even with the continuing work of Christ as our Mediator and Advocate, our High Priest before God.

Any kind of work on this day would suggest that works have a part in our redemption, and our forgiveness, and our acceptance before God. And that would be a lie.

It would, in a way, be a slap in God's face, in Christ's face, as if they needed our help to

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do this wonderful work of atonement.

But no, God and Jesus Christ want us on this day every year to realize through not working and through fasting that they have done the job for us.

It forces us, fasting in particular, to realize how much we depend upon God for everything. And once we are in this particular attitude, humble and poor in spirit, and eternally grateful for what God has done, then we realize the awesome God that we have.

And then, we can commit ourselves to doing His will, because by this day, Jesus Christ and God the Father show us that the atoning work of Jesus Christ is a work we could never have done ourselves.