

A New Beginning

Day Of Atonement

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

The last four festivals show the plan God has for completing salvation for the rest of the world. Just as the Passover prepares those who are in the church for Unleavened Bread and Pentecost, so the Feast of Trumpets and Atonement prepare the world for what God is going to do as pictured by the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day. It is impossible to understand the plan of God without the knowledge and understanding of these holy days.

Passover, the beginning of the process of the salvation of mankind, is when the potential firstfruits are reconciled; but it is not until the Day of Atonement, in the plan of God, that the whole world can begin to be reconciled with God at the putting away of Satan for a thousand years. The Day of Atonement represents the end of great conflict and chaos that has been supernaturally inflicted on humanity by Satan the devil for almost six thousand years. It represents a new beginning of reconciliation between God and mankind and freedom for the world from Satan.

Leviticus 23:26-32 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: "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, from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your Sabbath."

God spoke to Moses; then Moses told the children of Israel what God had commanded. We are to afflict our lives on this day for twenty-four hours, from sunset to sunset. We know that the effect of fasting is humbling, as David expressed:

Psalms 35:13 But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I humbled myself with fasting; and my prayer would return to my own heart.

We see there an inspiration by God for David to connect those two—humbling and fasting—as it is in many other places in scripture. Fasting should be for the purpose of humbling oneself to draw closer to God and His righteousness, and fasting on Atonement is a vivid reminder of the state of mind necessary for salvation. It is an attitude of humility, godly sorrow, and earnestly seeking after God and His way. It is this condition to which this world will be brought by catastrophic events culminating in Jesus Christ's return.

When Moses was on the mountain, he was without food and water for forty days. God does not require that of us, but we are to fast this one day as a commanded spiritual feast, in addition to other times during the year whenever it may be necessary.

The commandments for offerings on the Day of Atonement are found in Numbers 29.

Numbers 29:7-11 "On the tenth day of this seventh month you shall have a holy convocation. You shall afflict your souls; you shall not do any work. You shall present a burnt offering to the LORD as a sweet aroma: one young bull, one ram, and seven lambs in their first year. Be sure they are without blemish. Their grain offering shall be of fine flour mixed with oil: three-tenths of an

ephah for the bull, two-tenths for the one ram, and one-tenth for each of the seven lambs; also one kid of the goats as a sin offering, besides the sin offering for atonement, the regular burnt offering with its grain offering, and their drink offerings."

Thus, we see the Old Testament instructions for the offerings for the Day of Atonement. Both Numbers 29 and Leviticus 23 command us that we are not to do *any* work during this twenty-four-hour period. This is very clear and easy to understand, and God said it multiple times.

Leviticus 23:27 "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."

In ancient Israel, the offerings were given to God in the form of unblemished clean animals, grain, and oil; goats were given for the sin offering, and so on. Therefore, whenever we come before God on the Holy Days, we take up an offering. Today, in the church, it is a monetary offering that is taken up. Also, during the course of the year and on the Sabbath, we do give other types of offerings, such as praise to God in the song service. An offering given today, in one sense, is given in terms of dollars in a physical way, but our offerings to God should be a measure of our dedication to Him, our attitude toward Him, and our willingness to serve and obey Him.

God promises that many of the blessings from Him are not counted in terms of monetary equivalence or remuneration. The blessings of God include an overabundance of things—our life, our health, our protection, our family, our employment—as well as the things we are able to do and, especially in this evil world, keeping us from the evil one. All of those are blessings God gives us and things for which we can be very thankful. Going one day without food and water seems insignificant compared to the blessings that God has poured upon us throughout the rest of the year.

What else are we commanded regarding the Day of Atonement?

Leviticus 23:28-31 "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."

I am repeating these verses because God repeats this information over and over again. He wants it instilled in our minds.

How many people today used to be in one of the congregations of God's church? Who was converted and who was not is a judgment only God can make—many are called but few are chosen—but how many people have been cut off from God and from among the church because they no longer keep the Day of Atonement? God says His people are to do absolutely no work at all and that it is a statute forever, everywhere. He says He will destroy from among His people the person who works on this day. Obviously, God is very serious about this.

To whom is God speaking, and how long does God mean? This is physically required of all physical Israelites, meaning that this statute is still binding on all descendants of Jacob, whose name was changed by God to Israel. It is binding on the ancient Israelites; it is binding on their children and their children's children and so on down to today and into the millennium—throughout their generations. It is required of the descendants of Israel, all twelve tribes (with the tribe of Joseph splitting into two, Ephraim and Manasseh, as a special blessing from God), and it is binding on those who chose to become part of any of the descendants of Jacob. If we are the descendants of the children of Israel physically, it is required of us from that standpoint even if we are not in God's church.

Far more importantly, however, God is speaking to His church—spiritual Israel. If we are children of Israel spiritually—that is, members of God's church, regardless of whether we are descendants of Israel or descendants of Gentiles—then we are commanded to keep the Day of Atonement. Look how much God reveals to us when we faithfully keep the Holy Days year after year, decade after decade. Every year we learn more, and every year we understand more.

Leviticus 23:29 "For any person who is not afflicted in soul on that same day shall be cut off from his people."

Also, we find it mentioned in verses 27 and 32, "...you shall afflict your souls..." No one here has any doubt of what we are to do on that day. Since God repeats it three times, it is very important. It is so important that anybody who is not fasting—totally refraining from eating and drinking on that day—will be cut off from among God's people. It is a sad thing to think of all those tens of thousands of people who were in the organization that God used to house His church for awhile and how many are cut off.

Of course, young children are taught how to fast gradually, over several years usually starting about school age.

The commandment to observe the fast of the Day of Atonement is a test commandment, to see how committed we are to obeying God. It is a humanly unpleasant day. Nobody likes to go without food and liquids because humans are slaves to the necessity and desire for sustenance and enjoyment.

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."

Biblically, it is very clear that all the Holy Days are called Sabbaths; they are annual Sabbaths. Sadly, most mainstream churches are not interested in what God has to say in His inspired, written word, because it interferes with their non-biblical human traditions, like Sunday worship, Christmas and Easter; and most of the other doctrines. In Exodus 31, God is emphatic that keeping the weekly Sabbath and annual Sabbaths is a sign between God and His people forever. The weekly Sabbath and the Day of Atonement, especially, are days when absolutely no work of any kind can be done. A fire can be kindled on the other Holy Days, but not on Atonement or the weekly Sabbath.

The Day of Atonement is a day of solemn rest, renewal, restoration, release, and forgiveness. It is a new beginning and freedom for the world. We see

this pictured in a physical way in the Year of Release and the Jubilee Year. Every seventh Day of Atonement signaled the Year of Release and the Land Rest. At the end of the forty-ninth year of this seven-year cycle, the Year of Jubilee was also announced. These periods of time had great physical and spiritual benefits and had great prophetic meaning attached to them. Their announcement on the Day of Atonement ended physical and economic bondage in the nation of Israel and began a period of physical and economic freedom. It was a day to which the ancient Israelites really and truly looked forward, because it meant so much in the way of freedom. Every seventh year, debts were commanded to be forgiven and all indentured and purchased servants were to be released. This meant that everyone who was indebted to another person could have a fresh start the next year.

Deuteronomy 15:1-2, 12 "At the end of every seven years you shall grant a release of debts. And this is the form of the release: Every creditor who has lent anything to his neighbor shall release it; he shall not require it of his neighbor or his brother, because it is called the LORD'S release. If your brother, a Hebrew man, or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you and serves you six years, then in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you."

Notice that the period of indebtedness or servitude ended at the completion of the seventh year—an end to bondage and a new beginning. It was a time of joy and hope fulfilled. Previously indebted people were restored to freedom as they were released from economic slavery.

Leviticus 25 is a parallel account to Deuteronomy 15, stipulating that very seventh year, the land was to rest from intensive agricultural production. This land rest was to be a time of renewal of the land as well as a time of rest for those who farmed the land.

Leviticus 25:4-7 "But in the seventh year there shall be a Sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a Sabbath to the LORD. You shall neither sow your field nor prune your vineyard. What grows of its own accord of your harvest you shall not reap, nor gather the grapes of your untended vine, for it is a year of rest for the land. And the Sabbath produce of the land shall be food for you: for you, your male and female servants, your hired man, and the stranger who

dwells with you, for your livestock and the beasts that are in your land—all its produce shall be for food."

With the land rest came the prospect of a greater harvest—a new beginning.

The announcement of the Year of Jubilee, which came with the forty-ninth Day of Atonement, was a special blessing to the entire nation of Israel. The Jubilee Year ensured that economic equilibrium could be maintained in the nation. All indebtedness was to be forgiven; indentured or purchased servants were to be released from their debt and/or servitude; and all lands were to be returned to their rightful owners, which allowed the economy to be brought back into balance.

Leviticus 25:8-9 "'And you shall count seven Sabbaths of years for yourself, seven times seven years; and the time of the seven Sabbaths of years shall be to you forty-nine years. Then you shall cause the trumpet of the Jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement you shall make the trumpet to sound throughout all your land."

It represented a new beginning for people in ancient Israel. Every seventh year, the Day of Atonement signaled the end of physical and economic bondage and the beginning of a new sabbatical cycle of years. Every forty-ninth year of this sabbatical cycle of years, God declared the next year a year of jubilee. The fiftieth year was a sacred year that was set apart as a year of physical and spiritual freedom and renewal.

Leviticus 25:10-12 "'And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a Jubilee for you; and each of you shall return to his possession, and each of you shall return to his family. That fiftieth year shall be a Jubilee to you; in it you shall neither sow nor reap what grows of its own accord, nor gather the grapes of your untended vine. For it is the Jubilee; it shall be holy to you; you shall eat its produce from the field."

The association of the number fifty with liberty as well as rest emerges in God's establishment of the Year of Jubilee. Every seventh year is to be a

Sabbath year in which the land lies unplanted; but after seven Sabbath years have passed, Israel is to observe the fiftieth year as a second Sabbath year—a Year of Jubilee. In this year, a trumpet blast on the Day of Atonement signals the return to the original owner any land that had been sold and the freedom of any Israelites in the land who had been sold as servants.

Leviticus 25:28, 40 "But if he is not able to have it restored to himself, then what was sold shall remain in the hand of him who bought it until the Year of Jubilee; and in the Jubilee it shall be released, and he shall return to his possession. As a hired servant and a sojourner he shall be with you, and shall serve you until the Year of Jubilee."

Ideally, a Jubilee year would occur at least once in the lifetime of every Israelite. The greatest significance of a Year of Jubilee is its associations with Sabbath rest and liberty. This is exactly what is going to happen to this world after the tribulation and the Day of Lord: The earth and the people will enter into a Sabbath rest and liberty.

Regarding Israel's exile in Babylon recorded in Ezekiel, Israel returned from exile in accordance with a year of Jubilee. Although God had given Israel to Babylon as a gift, it was only a temporary one that must be returned in the "year of liberty" which is the same as the Jubilee year.

Ezekiel 46:16-18 "Thus says the Lord GOD: "If the prince gives a gift of some of his inheritance to any of his sons, it shall belong to his sons; it is their possession by inheritance. But if he gives a gift of some of his inheritance to one of his servants, it shall be his until the year of liberty, after which it shall return to the prince. But his inheritance shall belong to his sons; it shall become theirs. Moreover the prince shall not take any of the people's inheritance by evicting them from their property; he shall provide an inheritance for his sons from his own property, so that none of My people may be scattered from his property.""

Israel looked forward with hope to the approaching fiftieth year of exile as the end of domination by Babylon, a Jubilee Year. Just as the land and individual Israelites are God's possessions, so also the entire nation belonged

solely to God, who would take it back at the Jubilee. Exiled Israel remembered her past glory and hope for future restoration by God. This is also a promise of hope for Israel following the return of Christ. On a Jubilee Year—on the Day of Atonement—Israel will receive her inheritance back.

As the prophecy in Ezekiel 37:16-28 shows, Judah and the other tribes of Israel will be brought back together when Christ is King over the whole earth, and David will be king over Israel. All the tribes will have one Shepherd, walk in God's judgments, and observe His statutes. The Day of Atonement is a statute, a law. Webster's Dictionary says that a statute is an established rule, a formal regulation, a law passed by a legislative body (God and Christ) and set forth in a formal document.

Old Testament scriptures explain that we need the Spirit of God in order to keep the laws of God. God was stating this way back when He first dealt with Israel and gave the Law:

Deuteronomy 5:29 "Oh, that they [the children of Israel] had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!"

Ezekiel 37 shows that they will have a new spirit-led heart.

The Day of Atonement paves the way for the beginning of the Millennium. All the things that were announced on the Day of Atonement prophetically foretold the time of mankind's release from physical and spiritual bondage through the effects of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, Christ's victory over Satan, and Satan's removal from the earth and his binding in chains in outer darkness. The Day of Atonement and the Jubilee Year pictured a new beginning, the beginning of blessings for those in the world who would listen to the announcement of their salvation and obey the voice of God to enter into His rest by allowing Him to purge their sin and make them holy through the blood of Christ.

The Jubilee Year is all about hope, rest, and forgiveness. It represents the restored relationship between God and the sinner that occurs with forgiveness, the reconciliation of people who once were separated from and

hostile to God. Seven times in scripture He is described with the phrase "merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love." God is eager to forgive.

Leviticus 23:28-29 "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."

The Day of Atonement is an application of forgiveness. If a person is not keeping the Day of Atonement, he is missing out because he is cut off. We, as members of God's Church, have forgiveness with Passover, but the world is going to have forgiveness beginning with the Day of Atonement. The Passover is for us, and although the Day of Atonement also has a direct meaning for us, but it is going to have tremendous meaning for the people in the world, as well.

One of the worst things that can happen is to be cut off from God. The people who do not keep the Sabbaths of God and do not keep the Holy Days of God do not realize that they are cut off from God. That is why the Day of Atonement is so important. We want to be at one with God, but the world cannot be until after the return of Christ. The opposite of being cut off from Him is to be at one with Him, and we cannot be at one with God unless we do what He says.

This day of fasting is very important for us because it shows that we are just made of flesh, and flesh does not last long. It also emphasizes to us that we cannot trust in the flesh because we realize how weak and helpless humans are, unable to do anything against Satan, the powerful spirit being. In addition, it teaches us total reliance on God, since everything we have comes from God. Satan cannot be overcome with physical means, but that is exactly what Satan wants us to try. If he can get us to try that, then he has got us. Satan is only overcome by spiritual means, which shows that sin can never be totally removed while Satan is around.

What is our responsibility in the Day of Atonement? How do we become at one with God? How do we combat Satan? We are very eager for Satan to be bound for a thousand years and then, after the Great White Throne Judgment, for eternity.

The great paradox of the life of faith to which we are called is that blessing comes through self-denial. We receive through giving, and we gain our lives by laying them down. The only repentance that counts with God is the sort that can be seen in the way that we live, especially in how we treat other people.

The reason we fast is to humble ourselves and to add and exhibit faith, which helps our understanding of the gospel. Humility comes from recognizing what we truly are. Faith is displayed when we realize what God truly is and, as a result, trust and reverence Him.

Hebrews 4:2 For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.

The gospel the world heard was not mixed with faith. This is the same with tares in the church. They have ears to hear but not eyes to see. Job realized this principle after his grueling ordeal of losing everything and ending up on a soft bed of ashes because of agonizingly painful boils that covered his entire body.

Job 42:5-6 "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

On the Day of Atonement, this is the attitude to which we are to come. We are not brought to this point—we have to fast and afflict our souls for only twenty-four hours—but this gives us just a slight inkling of what Job went through and what he learned from it. Without going through all of that, we can learn the lesson that Job learned: to see God how He really is and what He requires.

Repentance does not come easily to any of us, and it is hardest of all for people who have become accustomed to using religion as a cover for sin. When their prayers go unanswered, they find it easier to blame God than to take a long, hard look at themselves. It is not God who is the problem.

Isaiah records God's instructive words on how not to fast, and why and how we should. Verses 1-5 is an exposure of wrong fasting. Verses 6-12 are a description of the kind of fasting that truly pleases God.

Isaiah 58:1-3 "Cry aloud, spare not; lift up your voice like a trumpet; tell My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek Me daily, and delight to know My ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and did not forsake the ordinance of their God. They ask of Me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching God. 'Why have we fasted,' they say, 'and You have not seen? Why have we afflicted our souls, and You take no notice?' In fact, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, and exploit all your laborers."

These are two main infractions of Sabbath law: "seeking your own pleasure" and "working." This is something of which to take note.

Isaiah 58:4 "Indeed you fast for strife and debate, and to strike with the fist of wickedness. You will not fast as you do this day, to make your voice heard on high."

The Israelites were fasting to try to force God to bring punishment and expose that with which they disagreed. This selfish way of fasting gained them nothing and actually made God disgusted with them

Isaiah 58:5-14 "Is it a fast that I have chosen, a day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head like a bulrush, and to spread out sackcloth and ashes? Would you call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the LORD? 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? [This is represented by the Jubilee, as you remember.] 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 break forth like the morning, your healing 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 speaking wickedness, 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. Those from among you shall build the old waste places; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; and you shall be called the Repairer of the Breach, the Restorer of Streets to Dwell In. If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the LORD honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words [That is a little hard to understand, but what He is saying there is that if you go on a journey, be careful how far and for what your travel], then you shall delight yourself in the LORD; and I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the LORD has spoken."

Verses 6-14 explain the right way to fast, the right attitude to have while we are fasting.

Isaiah warned that all who desire these good things and even back up their requests with fasting cannot expect to be heard until they change the way that they are living. The command to observe the Sabbath, like the command for true fasting, is a command for a changed heart and life, not just the more meticulous observance of a ritual. The observance is also important because God commands it but not as important as the right heart with humility. There is no short cut to spiritual joy and victory; they come through repentance and a willingness to live God's way.

The Old Testament prophets make it clear that sacrifices are ineffectual without faith and sincere repentance. For us today, we exhibit sacrifices in the form of prayer, fasting, praise, service, offerings, and good works. In fact, the practice of sacrifice apart from appropriate inward commitments stirs the judgment of God. For instance, Isaiah reports God's rebuke: "...I do not delight in the blood of bulls.... Bring no more vain offerings."

Isaiah 1:11-13 "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?" says the LORD. "I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed cattle. I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs or goats. When you come to appear before Me, who has required this from your hand, to trample My courts? Bring no more futile sacrifices; incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies—I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting."

People who go to worship God yet still habitually sin nauseate Him. Amos responded to Israel's hypocrisy in much the same way. Again we see God's disgust with Israel:

Amos 4:1-5 "Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, who are on the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to your husbands, "Bring wine, let us drink!" The Lord GOD has sworn by His holiness: "Behold, the days shall come upon you when He will take you away with fishhooks, and your posterity with fishhooks. You will go out through broken walls, each one straight ahead of her, and you will be cast into Harmon," says the LORD. "Come to Bethel and transgress, at Gilgal multiply transgression; bring your sacrifices every morning, your tithes every three days. Offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven, proclaim and announce the freewill offerings; for this you love, you children of Israel!" says the Lord GOD.

They were going through the motions of making offerings and attending Sabbath services and things like that, but it was in hypocrisy because their lives were in such disarray. Sacrificial rituals atoned for those who had genuinely turned from sin and humbled themselves before God in faith. Even

with Christ's atoning sacrifice, nothing less than an inward sincerity accompanying sacrifice will bring about reconciliation between God and sinful humanity. Reconciliation is necessary to heal the separation between an offended, holy God and a sinful, rebellious person. We are reconciled by God through Christ's sacrificial death. However, as tremendous as that is, it only makes reconciliation available to us. For it to benefit, us we have to be faithful, humble, sincere, and repentant.

Romans 5:7-11 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

Reconciliation is the restoring to favor of those who have fallen under displeasure. It contains the idea of an atonement, or covering, for sin and involves changing thoroughly from one position to another. Reconciliation means that someone or something is completely altered and adjusted to a required standard. This is what God has done for us through His Son, Jesus Christ.

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, 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.

Even with the breathtaking sacrifice and death of Jesus Christ for our sins, we still have a huge responsibility to live righteously to accept that reconciliation. However, merely going through the motions of obedience and conformity does not complete the process of reconciliation.

God and humans are alienated from one another because of God's holiness and man's sinfulness. Through the sacrifice of Christ, humanity's sin is atoned for and God's wrath is appeased. By Christ's sacrifice, a relationship of hostility and alienation is changed into one of peace and fellowship; God Himself has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ.

The English word *atonement* is derived from the two words "at one-ment" and represents a state of togetherness and agreement between two people. Atonement presupposes two parties that are estranged, separated, or on bad terms, with the act of atonement being the reconciliation of them into a state of harmony. That separation is caused by sin and enmity against God, which Satan has instigated and fueled. This is why he must be put away in chains in outer darkness, unable to influence humanity. Atonement is the solution to the main problem of the enmity of humanity against God, provoked and instigated by Satan. This is the cause of humanity's separation from God beginning with the sins of Adam and Eve.

Romans 8:5-8 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

God's Holy Spirit is extremely important, and one who does not have God's Holy Spirit cannot be at one with God.

For God's church, 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 a thousand years, no longer able to deceive the nations and influence man to sin. After Satan's

imprisonment, the rest of humanity will be reconciled and made at one with God. They will have that opportunity after Christ's return. Right now, the only people that have the opportunity to take part in that reconciliation are those whom God calls. For the elect of God—thanks to the sacrifice and intercession of Jesus Christ, our High Priest and Advocate—God the Father has reconciled us to Himself.

In the epistle to the Hebrews, Paul shows that observing the Day of Atonement is a type of the atoning work of Christ. He emphasizes that the perfection of Christ is in contrast to the inadequacy of the former earthly service.

Hebrews 9:6-15 Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing the services. 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. It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience—concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation. 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.

As a physical type, the high priest of the Old Covenant entered the Holy of Holies with the blood of his sacrificial victim. In spiritual fulfillment of this, Jesus entered the throne room of God the Father—the Holiest of All—to appear before the Father on behalf of His people. The high priest had to offer sin offerings each year for his own sins and the sins of the people. This was an annual reminder that perfect atonement had not yet been provided. Later, Jesus, through His own blood, achieved eternal redemption for His people.

Simply put, redemption is deliverance by payment of a price. It refers to salvation from sin, death, and the wrath of God by Christ's sacrifice. We have redemption in Jesus Christ, in whom we have redemption through His blood (an atoning sacrifice), the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace. Paul urges us to remember the price of our redemption and use it as a motivation to cleanse our conscience with good works. It is not enough to think to do good; we must be doers of the word of God.

Redemption will continually occur until everybody who is willing is made a spirit being in the kingdom of God—we, as the firstfruits, and the rest of the world later. Atonement makes this possible for the rest of the world who have been totally under the influence of Satan.

Atonement is basically a process of bringing those who are separated into a unity. It is the work of Christ in dealing with the problem posed by the sins of humanity and in bringing sinners into right relationship with God. Jesus Christ is going to return to earth to complete the atonement He began with us as the firstfruits of His Kingdom. Satan must be cast into outer darkness and restrained from influencing anyone, because Satan promotes sin and sin separates us from God.

Paul's epistle to the Hebrews tells us that the Levitical offerings could achieve only the purification of the flesh. They ceremonially cleansed the sinner, but they could not bring about inward cleansing, the prerequisite for fellowship with God. The offerings served as a type and a prophecy of Jesus, who, through His better and supreme sacrifice, cleanses the conscience from dead works.

The Old Testament tabernacle was designed, in part, to teach Israel that sin hindered access to the presence of God. Only the high priest—and he only once a year—could enter the Holy of Holies, and then not without taking blood offered to atone for sins. Jesus, however, through a new, living way, has entered the throne room of God, the true Holy of Holies, where He lives to make intercession for His people. The elect of God no longer have to stand afar off, as did the ancient Israelites, but may now, through Christ, approach the very throne of grace.

In Hebrews 13:11-12, we are reminded that the flesh of the sin offering of the Day of Atonement was burned outside the camp of Israel. Jesus, also, suffered outside the gate of Jerusalem, that He might redeem His people from sin.

Hebrews 13:11-16 For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come. Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

We have to be a living sacrifice in offering up praise and thanks. These are pleasing sacrifices to God and are very appropriate for the Day of Atonement.

Unlike the way that was established on the altars of the Israelites and ministered by priests of the Aaronic line, the way that was established by Christ in His death is permanently valid. It will never be altered or lose its effect. Christ has dealt completely with the penalty of sin.

Sin, and the removal of sin, has everything to do with the Day of Atonement. Just the removal of sin alone without the removal of Satan the devil is not sufficient. At Satan's chaining by an angel of God, the minds of human beings that were formerly kept spiritually closed by Satan, will be spiritually

opened. For the first time, humanity will be able to understand God's master plan of salvation. Multitudes of people will then want to repent and receive forgiveness of their sins. Only then will human beings become completely set at one with Jesus Christ and the Father—completely unified—as pictured by the Day of Atonement.

In a very personal way, the Day of Atonement is a vivid illustration of the state of mind necessary for salvation. It pictures an attitude of humility, of faith, of godly sorrow, and of seeking the right way of life. The ultimate goal is that spiritual Israel will become at one with God the Father and Jesus Christ. In order for us to be at one with God, we have to have the Spirit of God; we have to be sanctified by God.

Jesus' prayer to His Father just before His arrest is recorded so that we may understand the spiritual importance of this Day of Atonement. This understanding is important because it shows us that, in order to be in the Kingdom of God, we must be at one with God as this day pictures.

John 17:13-23 "But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth. I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me."

This Day of Atonement pictures perfection and pictures when we will no longer have any sin at all, but we will be totally at one with God. Jesus was

not praying about a unity of organization or group affiliation; He was praying about a unity of personal relationship. The relationship between Jesus and God was and is one of love and obedience. Jesus prayed for a unity of the spirit guided by God's love. He was showing that it was not the world's time yet to receive the Holy Spirit. That would come in another age: the Millennium!

This at-one-ment of each individual member of the church with Jesus Christ and God the Father was to be a witness to the rest of the world at a later time. Jesus prayed to His Father, "that the world may know that You ... have loved them as You have loved Me." Immediately following this prayer, Jesus was betrayed. He went to the mock trial and was crucified as an atoning sacrifice so that the church first, and then later the rest of humanity, could become at one with His Father and Him. It is a wonderfully precious encouragement to realize that before these terrible hours, His last words were not of hopelessness and discouragement but of glory: "And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one."