



The Good News

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The Day of Atonement

By Michael McCleary

In **Lev. 16**, God gives direction to Aaron regarding when he is to enter the Most Holy place within the tabernacle. It is in this text we learn that God appointed a certain day out of the year for Aaron to offer the sacrifices for himself and the people. The scapegoat would bear the sins of the people and be released into the wilderness and the people would continue to be acceptable before God. This event helps each of us to understand how important Jesus' sacrifice was to secure our opportunity for forgiveness of sins. As we learn from the book of Hebrews, the rituals and commands of the Old Testament were simply a "shadow" of what was to come in the New Testament. Using the book of Hebrews as a guide, we ask the question, "What did Jesus' sacrifice do and what does it mean for us?"

What did Jesus' sacrifice do?

1) It provided a sin offering: In **Heb. 9:6-10** we find the Hebrew writer recount for us what would occur under the Old Law on the Day of Atonement. In **Heb. 9:11-15**, we find that Jesus became our sin offering, our offering for atonement, and thereby fulfilled the role of one of the sacrifices from the Day of Atonement. One main difference, of course, is that, in the case of the goat, it had no idea why it was being killed and had no choice in the matter. Christ, on the other hand, knew full well what He was doing and **chose** to give up His life (**John 10:18**) as a sin offering on behalf of those who had been faithful to God (under Mosaical and Patriarchal Laws) and those who would be faithful (those under the New Law). Blood had to be paid, as death is the only answer for the atonement of sins. Therefore, the people and the vessels of worship were sprinkled with blood, to set them apart as holy (**Heb. 9:19-23**). The same is necessary for us by means of baptism, as we find in **Heb. 10:22**, **Heb. 12:24** and **I Pet. 1:2**, being "sprinkled" by the blood of Jesus through emersion in water. Jesus Himself acknowledged "**For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.**" (**Matt. 26:28**)

2) It provided the means of a New Testament that included mercy and forgiveness: We continue reading in **Heb. 9:16-22** to find that when Jesus died, He established a testament that provided for elements such as mercy and forgiveness. This was necessary due to the change of priesthood (see **Heb. 7:12**). While our God "changeth not" (**Mal. 3:6**) and thus has always been a God of mercy and forgiveness, these elements had different forms under the Old Law. While David acknowledged that God "forgives lawless deeds" and "covers sins" in **Psalm 32:1-2**, Paul says in **Rom. 4:6-8** that David was speaking regarding God imputing righteousness to those who are

faithful, apart from the works of the Law (which would include the sacrifices). God chose to "cover" the transgressions of those who sinned under the Patriarchal and Mosaical Laws as they obeyed and offered the appropriate sacrifices, and thus the concepts of mercy and forgiveness under those Laws are defined differently than they are under the New Law. "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins." (**Heb. 10:4**). We know that through the blood of Christ we have a full remission of sins, and so too do those who lived faithfully before Christ.

3) It provided a scapegoat: We go back and read **Heb. 9:15** and we find that Jesus did not bear **all sin** on the tree, but rather He bore the sins of those who lived before as obedient servants of the Lord. This would include people like Abraham, Moses, and David, who all lived and died in faith so that one day they would receive the promise (**Heb. 11:13, 39-40**). If He had borne **our** sins on that cross **right then**, why would we need to be baptized to have them washed away? (**Acts 22:16**). So, what did He do for us? We find that Jesus became the scapegoat for us as well by taking the **punishment** of our sins by dying for us on that tree. Where it should be us dying as a result of our sins, Jesus came and "died once for all" (**Heb. 7:27**) so that His blood can be applied to all those who choose to be obedient in the waters of baptism. And, afterward, should that servant stumble and repent, they may receive forgiveness (again, by the blood of Jesus) by confessing their sin to the Father (**I John 1:9**).

What does it mean for us?

1) We can obtain forgiveness: In **Heb. 10:1-14**, the point is given that the Old Law could not take away or forgive sin, yet Jesus was able to accomplish this in His death as our sacrifice for sins.

2) We can have communion with God: In **Heb. 10:19-25** we find the point given that in this great sacrifice, Jesus opened up the way into the Most Holy by His blood, "ripping the veil" and enabling us to approach the mercy seat ourselves, with Christ as our Mediator, without the necessity for a man to preside in our stead.

When we consider what it was that Jesus did for us, and how much it impacts our way of life and our hope of the next, we can truly appreciate this Day of Atonement in the Old Testament, realizing the promise it held as a "shadow" of what we would one day enjoy in Christ.