

What is Atonement: Day of Atonement

Jesus' crucifixion and death was in atonement for the sins of mankind. Atonement, what Jesus did to reconcile human beings with God has many aspects to it, and this lesson introduces you to one facet of the extent and depth of His work on the cross.

In contrast to Passover, where God's judgment passes over households with the lamb's blood on the door posts, the Day of Atonement uses a goat to atone for the sins of the nation of Israel. John the Baptist associates and connects Jesus Christ with Passover and the Day of Atonement:

On the next day, he saw Jesus coming to him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:29, LSB)

The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) is the only day that the high priest can enter the Holy of Holies and is the only day that the nation of Israel can make atonement for all their sin of the year (Lev 16:1-34). On this day the high priest sacrificed a young bull to atone for himself and his family. For the nation of Israel, two male goats were used. One was sacrificed and the other was the scapegoat. The scapegoat received the sins of the nation, which was released to the wilderness to perish and symbolized the total removal of sin. And the sacrifice made for the whole nation of Israel was made regardless of whether individuals of the nation were Believers or not.

How is Jesus Christ associated with the Day of Atonement? What was John the Baptist saying?

1. Compare the purpose of the Day of Atonement (Lev 17:11) with Isaiah's prophecy of the Messiah (Isa 53:5-6). What do you observe?

For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.' (Lev 17:11, LSB)

But He was pierced through for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our iniquities;
The chastening for our peace fell upon Him,
And by His wounds we are healed.
All of us like sheep have gone astray,
Each of us has turned to his own way;
But Yahweh has caused the iniquity of us all
To fall on Him. (Isa 53:5-6, LSB)

2. When you take the time to do a good study of the Old Testament tabernacle, you'll learn about the Mercy Seat on top of the Ark of the Covenant (Ex 25:17-22). A more accurate translation of Mercy Seat is Seat of Propitiation. The New Testament speaks of propitiation – satisfying the wrath of God through Jesus Christ. What do you observe about the Seat of Propitiation and Jesus Christ?

And he shall put the incense on the fire before Yahweh, that the cloud of incense may cover the mercy seat that is on the ark of the testimony, so that he will not die. Moreover, he shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it with his finger on the mercy seat on the east side; also in front of the mercy seat he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times. "Then he shall slaughter the goat of the sin offering which is for the people and bring its blood inside the veil and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull. And he shall sprinkle it on the mercy seat and in front of the mercy seat. (Lev 16:13-15, LSB)

whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith, for a demonstration of His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; (Rom 3:25, LSB)

and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world. (1 John 2:2, LSB)

In this is love, not that we have loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (1 John 4:10, LSB)

3. On the Day of Atonement, only the High Priest can enter the Holy of Holies alone and apply the blood of the sacrificed bull and goat on the Mercy Seat (Place of Propitiation). The author of Hebrews associates Jesus Christ as the High Priest. What do you observe? How is Jesus the High Priest?

But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation, and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy places once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the trespasses that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. (Heb 9:11-15, LSB)

What is Atonement: Day of Atonement Teacher Notes

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While most people intuitively recognize that God's judicial penalty for sin is death, not many understand the Old Testament sacrificial system using animal sacrifices as a substitute for the atonement of the sins of human beings (Lev 17:11).

Introduce the student to Isaiah's prophecy of the Messiah. Here the Old Testament prophet Isaiah indicates the significance of the Messiah's sacrifice within the context of the Levitical sacrificial laws (Isaiah 53:1-12).

The Servant's sacrifice was for iniquity (Isa 53:5, 6, 11), transgression (Isa 53:5, 8) and sin (Isa 53:12).

The Servant's offering was a guilt offering (Isa 53:10).

The death of the Servant was substitutionary in nature, and it was in substitute for human beings (Isa 53:5, 11, 12).

Substitution was based on God's prescribed method for restoring a relationship with Him that was broken by intentional or unintentional sin. Conferring sin on to the substitute is the basis of the Day of Atonement.

2. When you take the time to do a good study of the Old Testament tabernacle, you'll learn about the Mercy Seat on top of the Ark of the Covenant (Ex 25:17-22). A more accurate translation of Mercy Seat is Seat of Propitiation. The New Testament speaks of propitiation – satisfying the wrath of God through Jesus Christ. What do you observe about the Seat of Propitiation and Jesus Christ?

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As an introduction to the details of the Day of Atonement, ask the student why the cloud of incense was necessary?

The Holy of Holies, which housed the Ark of the Covenant, would have specially prepared incense burning so that a cloud would cover the place of propitiation and provide a smoke screen so that the high priest cannot see the face of God.

Encourage good observation of the text: what parallels does the student see with the blood on the Mercy Seat and with Jesus' crucifixion. Does the more accurate translation "Seat of Propitiation" help with understanding?

Just like the blood of the sacrificed unblemished goat was sprinkled on the Mercy Seat, **Jesus provided the blood** for the place of propitiation (Rom 3:25; Heb 9:12-14).

Just like the Mercy Seat received the blood to appease God, **Jesus was the place of propitiation** (1 John 2:2; 1 John 4:10)

3. On the Day of Atonement, only the High Priest can enter the Holy of Holies alone and apply the blood of the sacrificed bull and goat on the Mercy Seat (Place of Propitiation). The author of Hebrews associates Jesus Christ as the High Priest. What do you observe? How is Jesus the High Priest?

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Ask the student: what do you observe about Hebrews description of Jesus being the High Priest? List all of your observations and summarize what you learn.

Just like the High Priest who alone enters the Holy of Holies and the presence of God with the blood of the goat he sacrificed, **Jesus became the High Priest and mediator of the New Covenant** (Heb 9:15, 24-26)

The Day of Atonement helps us understand what Jesus did in accordance to God's prescribed method of atoning for sin.

Jesus Christ was the High Priest and mediator of the New Covenant.

Jesus Christ, the High Priest, provided His own blood at the place of propitiation.

Jesus Christ, not only provided His own blood, but was also the place of propitiation.

It is in this context that Jesus Christ literally fulfilled the Law of Moses.

"Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished (Matt 5:17-18, LSB)