

Lord of the Sabbath

Program #35

Our High Priest

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On the last program, I discussed the two goats used by the high priest of Israel on the Day of Atonement, or in Hebrew, Yom Kippur. I suggested that any hot debate of just who these two goats represent to the church of God may be itself a “red herring.” Whether they both represent our Lord Jesus in some way, or the sacrificed goat represents Jesus and the live goat Satan, this may miss the major message of this high, holy Sabbath day. If so, it may well cause more confusion and division among believers than a “shoe-horned” analogy is worth.

Instead, I suggest that the important focus on the Day of Atonement should be on the high priest AND his role in the forgiveness and removal of the sins of the people of God. What if we envision the goats themselves as simply implements in what the high priest must do on the Day of Atonement? What if they are like the golden censor he also uses having no special symbolism in the plan of God? What if the high priest is the link between this high Sabbath of the LORD made for Israel and the Sabbath made for all men by the Lord of the Sabbath who personally sanctified this Day for mankind forever?

There can be no confusion that the high priest of Israel has been replaced for the church of God by none other than the only begotten Son of God, Jesus, the Christ, our High Priest AND the soon to come Messiah of Israel. This is clearly proclaimed in Heb. 2: 17-18:

Therefore, in all these things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

There is so much relevant to us in the church of God in these two verses, I could probably preach two programs regarding their meaning and application to our lives today. Lacking this amount of time, let me just mention a couple of important distinctions we can see in this scripture that can be easily overlooked.

First, notice that He is our merciful and faithful High Priest “in things pertaining to God.” Last Sabbath, I offered an understanding that Yom Kippur was a cleansing of things pertaining directly to the worship of God: the high priest, the Levitical priests, the Holiest of all, the sanctuary, the alter and the people of God as a nation; the worshippers before a holy God. In other words, this day is clearly focused on the unique role of the high priest in cleansing of sin against the first four of the Ten Commandments. Check carefully and search for yourself where this holy Sabbath is focused on the sins of the people against one another or their neighbors? These are seen as the second of the two great commandments.

When Jesus, as our High Priest, shed His blood and entered the heavenly temple of God, it was not only for the sins of national Israel committed against God...the first Great Commandment. Christ's atonement was for ALL sins committed by ALL the people of God against God AND all the sins they committed against their fellow human-being neighbors...all mankind! We can easily see the enormously greater majesty of our High Priest above that of any high priest of Israel.

Further, while the high priest of Israel had to go into the tabernacle made with hands once each year on the Day of Atonement to cleanse Israel of their national sins, Jesus our High Priest went into the heavenly tabernacle only once with His blood to atone for all PAST sins of the people of God, including the entire church of God who believed in Him

This focus and understanding helps resolve a common source of confusion of how the Day of Atonement, and the sacrificial death of Jesus as our Passover Lamb, relate to one another. We see the clear link to the blood of Jesus to atone for our PREVIOUSLY COMMITTED sins in Rom. 3: 25:

(referring to Jesus), whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,

One of the greatest gospel deceptions around today is called the "Once Saved, Always Saved" doctrine. Nationally known pastors and preachers, probably on this same radio station, readily teach this heresy.

Dear, brethren, the blood of Jesus justified you before God and paid the price for all your PREVIOUSLY committed sins once you repent. But, can you sin the next day and expect to be saved from the penalty of that sin if you have not confessed or repented of it? No way! God forbid!

That is why the Day of Atonement, even for believers in Jesus as their High Priest, must still be observed each year. We no longer need to sacrifice a goat or bull for OUR sin as the people of God and have a human priest sprinkle its blood on an earthly mercy seat. The blood of an innocent and spotless Jesus was offered in the heavenly Temple of God before the very throne of God, our Father, once and for all time. But, we still need to afflict OUR soul each year as we surely continue to sin in our human nature. We need to repent and return to God and His ways even after being justified by His blood and made right before God by accepting His Son as Savior.

Only by continued repentance and confession of our sins to one another each year will our penalty of continued sin be paid by the death of our Savior. Our Christian life of enduring to the end, of repenting from our sins before God and having them taken away by His Son, is a requirement for our salvation and resurrection to eternal life in the Kingdom of God.

Jesus Himself made it clear that those who continue to practice sin without sincere repentance and a return to God and His will shall in NO WAY see or enter the Kingdom of God. Take to heart what the Apostle John wrote to already baptized and Holy Spirit-filled believers in 1 John 1-8:

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Is there any doubt that the cleansing of sin is associated with the Day of Atonement? Let us make sure we understand the role of our High Priest in heaven. He is there before the Father as our Advocate and our Intercessor. Check these roles in your concordance! Why would He need to continue to be our Advocate before the Father if His shed blood was all we needed for any sin we would yet commit this year or during the rest of our lives? Please ask your “Once Saved, Always Saved” preacher this simple question.

Why is this doctrine wrong and so dangerous to the people of God? Because Satan is the Accuser of the brothers and sisters in Christ and continually points out the sins of the people of God, the church of God, to our Father day and night as seen in Rev. 12: 10:

Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, “Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.

This is Satan, who until it is time for the Kingdom of God to begin when the ruling power of His Christ will come as King, is finally cast out from heaven down to the earth in a rage knowing his time is short before he will be led chained into the abyss. But, until then, Satan is before the throne of God accusing the brethren of their daily sins and trespasses.

It is helpful to recall how Satan accused Job of loving God only when he was blessed of God. However, even when wealth, health and family had all been taken away from Job by Satan as God allowed, Job continued to love and trust God as his Savior. He was then blessed double fold! If Job had cursed God, would he have been saved as the false eternal security teachers preach? Why a test of enduring belief and faith for Job who was already saved no matter what he did in the future?

Fortunately, even though we continue to sin after being born of God from above and having received the Holy Spirit, our faith in Jesus as our High Priest allows Him to continually make atonement for us. For Jesus, as our High Priest, will not die again. He will not need to be replaced as were all the high priests of Israel who died.

When the Father looks to see if Satan’s accusations about our sins are true about us, the blood of His Son will cover the sins for those who believe in Him and follow Him. We must continue to endure in humble repentance counting on the blood of Christ to

completely wash away our unintentional but continued sins as fallen human beings still with a sinful nature even after having been justified by the righteousness of Christ.

Well, what about the taking of sin away? Having had the national sins of Israel atoned for and the people cleansed of sin by the action of its high priest and his sin offering of the first goat, why does the high priest need to also put the sins of Israel on the scapegoat to be let go alive into the wilderness?

The amazing answer may be in understanding that the sins cleansed by the blood of the first goat were those already committed by Israel in the past year. But, the goal of the LORD, was to remove the future sins from Israel so that it would be God's holy nation before all men. That is why their sinful ways were symbolically placed on the head of the live goat and taken away NOT to be seen again in Israel.

Unfortunately, this did not happen. National sin kept recurring in Israel among God's chosen people. The high priest of Israel could not prevent future sin through the giving of the law written in stone to the Israelites. This would be impossible due to the hardness and evil of the natural human heart.

What could complete the desired plan of God was a new and more powerful priesthood. It was of an entirely different order. Scripture explains this quite well. Let's look for ourselves in Hebrews 7: 11-16 and try to understand God's marvelous future plan:

Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law. For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man officiated at the altar. For it is evident that the Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood. And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life.

Is it any wonder that the law about annual animal sacrifices by a human and mortal high priest was annulled? Is it clear why Jesus prophesied that every stone of the Temple in Jerusalem would be thrown down and worship there would cease? For it was clear that the future sins would not be eliminated from the people of Israel through the Levitical priesthood. The cleansing of past sin by the blood of bulls and goats would not change the CONSCIENCE of the high priest or the people to be able to keep the law of God. Changing their hearts was the only way.

Is the picture of the way sin in Israel would be handled becoming more clear via the annual actions of the high priest of Israel on the Day of Atonement? What would change the conscience and the desires of the heart of mortal men that sin could be taken away; removed forever and NEVER return in Israel?

Our High Priest provided the answer and the way. We find it in the promise of the New Covenant with the House of Israel and Judah. Listen to the words first written by the Prophet Jeremiah in Chapter 31. Take them into your mind and heart. They are repeated in Heb. 8: 7-10 for a testimony to us who are in Christ:

For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Because finding fault with them, He says: "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah---not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the LORD. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

It is the time of the refreshing of the earth, and the return of Christ. Of course, Israel will see His second coming as His first. But, those who accept Him as the Messiah, will have their hearts circumcised by the Holy Spirit of God. It will be on the Day of Atonement.

Then, the House of Israel will be gathered from the scattered nations and be returned to the Promised Land. With the Ten Commandments now written not on tablets of stone, but in their hearts and mind, the sin of Israel will be finally be taken away for 1,000 years. Their High Priest will then also be Christ. Their King will be Christ. Prophecy and the Feast and Holy Days of the LORD will finally all be fulfilled in Christ.

I hope you can sense how the Day of Atonement has special ramifications for Israel, for the Gentiles and for the church of God. Not understanding the prophecies through the Holy Days of the LORD for these groups, when Yom Teruah and Yom Kippur are finally fulfilled in Christ, has led to enormous confusion over prophecy in the church of God.

I know from personal discussion that some disciples of Jesus are convinced they will go through the Great Tribulation on the earth. I know other disciples of Jesus who are convinced they will go to heaven when they die. I don't believe that either are prophesied in the Bible. But, the tangles in their words and prophetic times are so strong that it is easy to get confused.

While I don't have the time to get into prophecy in depth now, I do hope to eventually cover the important understandings that one can add to the prophesies of the Old Testament Prophets AND to the new testimonies of Jesus from the Feasts of the LORD. They contain types and shadows about Israel that help clarify the future of not only the first chosen people of God under the Mosaic Covenant but also the last called to the promises of God through Christ under the Abrahamic Covenant.

We witness in both the Old and New Testaments the scoop on the terrible end of this age and the fate of the unbelieving Gentiles and the unrighteous and evil people who have

heard the good news of the coming Kingdom of God but have rejected it.

It is in the punishment of the wicked that we see the justice of God revealed. It is in the separation of the goats and the sheep that we see His love and His wrath for the holy and the unholy nations. The Day of Atonement is one that I cherish. It will be quite a sight to see when every knee in every nation will bow and every tongue finally confess that Jesus is now not only Lord of all, but was the Lord of the Sabbath which He made for all men.

Let us review the main aspects of the Day of Atonement for the church of God. First, those who have accepted Jesus as the promised Messiah still need to afflict their soul on this commanded Holy Day of the LORD. This is more than a physical fast from food and drink. It should be a fast pleasing to God where we humble ourselves and deny ourselves of personal pleasure, convicting our mind and hearts to be generous and kind to the least of our brothers while still obeying the commandments of God throughout the year. We still need His atonement for the sins we still keep committing as flawed and sinful people against God and against our neighbor each year.

We patiently wait for last trump to sound on Yom Teruah when the church of God will be resurrected to meet the Lord, our Bridegroom, in the air. We, the bride of Christ, cleansed and made pure, as He is pure, will then follow Him to His Father's house where He has been preparing a place for us since His ascension some 2,000 years ago.

Judgment of mankind will indeed begin in heaven with the resurrected church of God, the saints, the first fruits in the harvest of souls. The marriage supper of the lamb will be consummated in heaven. The eternal rewards and our roles in the Kingdom of God will be given out based upon our works and deeds in this life.

We, the church of God, realize how when Jesus willingly sacrificed His sinless body and shed His precious and pure blood for us when he died on Calvary, that the heavy curtain which veiled the Most Holy Place from the people of God was ripped down the middle. No more would only the high priest of Israel be allowed to approach God to atone for the sins of the people against God during the past year. Through Christ's atonement, we can now with boldness have access to the Father by the Son without the involvement of any man or priest on earth. This is so marvelous to understand my dear brethren.

It is said so well in Heb. 10: 19-22:

Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with the true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

I think you can spot the words in this verse that fit right in with the Day of Atonement with our new High Priest over the house of God. If you have any doubt about the need to still assemble on all the Sabbaths of the LORD, perhaps continuing on to Verse 23-25

will bring you to this conviction:

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much more as you see the Day approaching.

Dare we stop assembling together each holy and commanded Sabbath as we see the Day of the LORD approaching? Dare we ignore the Day of Atonement, picturing when Jesus will return as He promised? This is in reference to the fulfillment of the seventh-day rest for the people of God, the seventh thousand-year period in the history of man on earth.

Don't be like the five foolish virgins who had let their lights go out and were not ready for the return of the Bridegroom. They did not have the Holy Spirit stirred up in their hearts and mind to keep their lamps burning with the light of love and good works toward the lost and needy neighbors for the world to see.

We need more than ever a fast, a denial of self-love, to stir up love and good works toward those of the faith and others which God expects from His faithful servants. To them, and the wise virgins, who have the oil of the Holy Spirit when He comes, they will receive their rewards from Him and enter heaven before the gate is closed on Yom Kippur.

On the Day of Atonement, at the sound of the Great Trump, the King of kings will return to the earth in great power and majesty riding the white horse of prophecy. He will bring His army of angels with Him to do battle with the nations led by the Satan-empowered Anti-Christ which are gathered around Jerusalem to destroy Israel once and for all. Of course, we can rejoice in the knowledge of who will win this battle of all battles against a human army of 200,000,000 soldiers.

As High Priest, the King will also bring the resurrected saints dressed in white robes with Him to rule and reign with Him as priests and kings in the Kingdom of God on earth for a thousand years. These priests will be of the order of Melchizedek, not of the order of the tribe of Levi and the family of Aaron.

Jews who have not accepted Jesus as the Messiah before the last trump is blown on Yom Teruah will not be part of the first resurrection. However, they will have a chance to repent and accept Him during the ten days of awe and during the Great Tribulation on the earth before the gates of heaven are finally shut on Yom Kippur.

It is during this time when the two witnesses will appear in Jerusalem. They will die and lie in the streets for three days and then be resurrected to eternal life as the Jews and the Gentiles remaining alive will observe in great fear. It is during this time that the seven seals of Revelation will be opened. It is during this time that the 144,000 of the twelve tribes of Israel will be sealed and escape from, or be divinely protected from, the great

devastation to come upon the entire world, which has never been nor ever will be again.

Shortly before the Day, the seven trumpets will be blown and finally the terrible seven vials of the wrath of God will be poured out with their mind-boggling plagues on the unbelievers. I suspect that it is the wrath of God combined with the miracles of the two witnesses and the sealing of the 144,000 of Israel that will fuel the anger of the goat nations stirred up by the beast and false prophet to unite the great whore of Babylon to come against Israel and try to destroy it completely and forever.

In conclusion, each Day of Atonement, as I fast and afflict my soul, my body begins to yearn for food and drink. My stomach sends up pangs of hunger for some food to sustain me. It reminds me of the prophesied birth pangs of a woman about to give birth. Great pain before great joy. My mouth will become dry as it yearns for a cool drink of water. It reminds me of the living water of life that only our High Priest can give me which He promised to the Samaritan woman at the well. But, she would have to go and sin no more to receive it. He told her that she would soon need to worship God in Spirit and Truth and that the true worshippers would no longer worship at God's Feasts in Jerusalem.

As the hours of the whole day finally wind down, the yearnings grow stronger and stronger. I may check the paper to see the exact time of sunset, when I can be fed and refreshed with drink. I may watch the sky if it is clear to see the sun set in the west knowing that I have finished my fast, ended my race and endured until the end. Now, my agony will turn to joy as I join my brethren in a community meal of great joy.

Even though I did not hear the sound of the last trumpet on Yom Teruah, I remind myself of the joy that awaits me on perhaps the next Yom Teruah, when my mortal body, whether dead or alive, will be changed to an eternal spirit body that will never hunger and thirst again as I finally meet the Lord in the air and see Him as He is face to face.

I know that on the soon coming Day of Atonement I will have the opportunity to be "at one" with the King. I will mount my own white horse, and follow the King of kings on His white horse, riding back to earth in great glory. And every eye shall see Him return with me ready to rule and reign over all the nations of the earth for a thousand years.

This great time ahead is pictured in the last Feast of the Lord: the Feast of Tabernacles. It will be that wonderful time when Satan is put in the wilderness led away by a mighty angel and sealed in the abyss where he cannot deceive or tempt the nations and people to sin for a thousand years. Our temporary body tabernacle will be replaced with an eternal one.

Until next Sabbath, when we will explore the Feast of Tabernacles, pray brethren that "thy Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven!"