

THE FEASTS OF THE LORD

Leviticus 23:1-44

Foreshadowing God's plan of the ages from the past eternity to the future eternity

by

Louis T. Talbot

Copyright @ 1943

CHAPTER TEN

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

(Leviticus 23:26-32; 16:1-34)

The last three feasts of the year—the feast of trumpets, the Day of Atonement and the feast of tabernacles—came in the seventh month. Seven is the number that speaks of completion; and these seven feasts of the Lord, observed in the first seven months of the year, set forth, as we have seen, God's great plan of the ages—from the past eternity to the future eternity.

The feast of the trumpets fell upon the first day of the seventh month; the day of atonement, on the tenth day; and the feast of tabernacles, on the fifteenth day, continuing for seven days. Thus we see how closely related they were, even as they pointed on to God's yet future dealings with Israel in a rapid succession of events:

- (1) The re-gathering of His people;
- (2) His appearing unto them as their Great High Priest and King of Kings;
- (3) His millennial reign over the house of Jacob.

The feast of atonement was observed in a single day, while the feast of tabernacles covered seven days, and was the outcome of the single act of the Day of Atonement. So also Israel's Great High Priest will appear in a moment, **“as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west”** (Matthew 24:27).

And the outcome of His glorious appearing will be His millennial reign, covering a complete period of time, typified by the seven days of the feast of tabernacles.

Not only do we read about the day of atonement in Leviticus 23:26-32, where its relation to the other feasts of the Lord is set forth; but all of the sixteenth chapter of Leviticus is given over to the details of the ritual of this most memorable day in the year.

As we read these two chapters carefully, we see certain wonderful truths, unmistakable **“shadows of good things to come.”**

1. A Day of Mourning.

The feast of atonement was possibly the most solemn of all the feasts of the Lord.

Three times in the twenty-third chapter of Leviticus and twice in the sixteenth chapter we read God's commandment to Moses: **“Ye shall afflict your souls . . . whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people.”** It was a time of weeping and mourning in Israel, a time of sorrow for their sins.

Israel's bitterness and grief on the day of atonement was but a shadow of the still future affliction of their souls when **“they shall look upon”** Him **“whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn”** (Zechariah 12:10)

“His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives” (Zechariah 14:4).

“And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends” (Zechariah 13:6).

“Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him” (Revelation 1:7).

In that coming day, of which the feast of atonement was a type, Israel's Great High Priest, even Jesus, will come out of the Holy of Holies, which is heaven itself, to deliver His people from the terrible persecution of the Antichrist.

In great tribulation they will cry unto God, and their God will come down to deliver them. When they see the nail prints in His hands and feet and the print of the wounded side, they will remember the mocking, angry mob who cried out, saying: **“Crucify him, crucify him . . . His blood be on us, and on our children.”**

And their penitential prayer will be the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, a marvelous prophecy of the sufferings of their Messiah and the Saviour of the world. In the affliction of their souls, His ancient people will say:

“We hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows, yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:3-6).

But Israel's mourning will be turned into joy when Jesus comes!

For He will deliver His people, and usher in His long-promised kingdom of peace and righteousness!

2. *A Day of Rest.*

The feast of atonement was **“a sabbath of rest.”** **“Ye shall do no work in that same day,”** God said to Moses, **“and whatsoever soul it be that doeth any work in that same day, the same soul will I destroy from among his people”** (Leviticus 23:28, 30, 32).

Wherever we find the atoning work of Christ referred to in the Word of God, it is always plainly set forth as a work of grace. Man can only remain passive, and accept the finished work of Christ.

It is **“not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost”** (Titus 3:5).

“By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

You cannot do one thing to save yourself, my brother; you must accept what Christ has done for you in His death and resurrection. You must rest in His finished work of redemption!

3. *“Once a Year.”*

“And the Lord said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the vail before the mercy seat, which is upon the ark; that he die not: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat . . . And this shall be an everlasting statute unto you, to make an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year” (Leviticus 16:2, 34).

Let us turn now to the ninth chapter of Hebrews, and read the first fourteen verses. These words explain the **“shadow”** of the Old Testament ritual:

“When these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle (i.e., the Holy Place), accomplishing the service of God. But into the second (the Holy of Holies) went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors (sins of ignorance) of the people: the Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: which was a figure for the time then present . . . But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us” (Hebrews 9:6-9, 11, 12).

In quoting the book of Hebrews in this connection, it is difficult to know where to stop; for the whole epistle is a marvelous explanation of the meaning of the ritualism of Judaism and of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the coming Messiah.

But the passage quoted above is one of the priceless gems from this portion of the Word of God. (Read the entire epistle carefully, if you would understand the books of Moses).

In these unmistakable words from the New Testament, the Holy Spirit throws a flood of light upon the Old Testament ritual of the Day of Atonement!

Day after day the morning and evening sacrifices were made in Israel, but only on this one day in the year could the high priest enter the Holy of Holies where God dwelt in the pillar of cloud and fire.

Now a year is a full period of time; and typically the Day of Atonement covers all human history. Christ died **“once for all,”** in fulfillment of the types and shadows set forth in every animal sacrifice of Old Testament days.

What a mighty grandeur this gives to the cross of our Lord! There all the ages met! Every other day of the past and future was pressed into that one atoning day. The cross linked the past eternity with the future eternity. Verily, Calvary's cross does tower

“. . . o'er the wrecks of time;
All the light of sacred story
Gathers 'round its head sublime!”

“Such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself” (Hebrews 7:26, 27).

“Now once in the end of the world (or 'age') hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself . . . Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many” (Hebrews 9:26, 28).

“This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God . . . Now where remission of these is, there-is no more offering for sin” (Hebrews 10:12, 18).

4. The Affliction and Humiliation of the High Priest.

Seven days prior to the feast of atonement the high priest in Israel had to be separated from family and home; and on the day of the feast he had to divest himself of his robes of **“glory and beauty,”** putting on a simple linen robe such as that worn by one of the common priests.

How marvelously this speaks to us of how our Great High Priest was for thirty-three and one-half years separated from His Father and Home—a self-denying Servant!

He laid aside His garments of glory and beauty—not His deity—and was **“fashioned”** like unto his brethren, **“that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people”** (Hebrews 2:17).

“Being in the form of God,” He “thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:6-8).

“Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich” (II Corinthians 8:9).

For us He wore the crown of thorns and the purple robe, put upon Him in derision and mockery by wicked men. The affliction and humiliation of the high priest in Israel on the Day of Atonement was but a faint **“shadow”** of the affliction and humiliation of Jesus, our Great High Priest, when He made atonement for our sins on the cross!

5. *“The High Priest Alone once every year” went into the Holy of Holies (Hebrews 9:7).*

For God had said to Moses: **“There shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goeth in to make an atonement in the holy place, until he come out, and have made an atonement for himself, and for his household, and for all the congregation of Israel”** (Leviticus 16:17).

When Christ drank the bitter **“cup,”** He drank it alone! There was none to help! His disciples **“forsook him, and fled.”** Even His Father in heaven had to turn His face away in that dark moment; for a holy God cannot look upon sin—and in His death the holy Son of God took upon Himself the sins of the whole world! **“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”** He cried. And yet, knowing beforehand that this would be, still He had prayed: **“O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt”** (Matthew 26:39).

He willingly went to Gethsemane and to Calvary alone!

6. *The Two Goats.*

We have already considered the significance of the burnt offering and the sin offering, both of which were made on the Day of Atonement. There was a God-ward and there was a man-ward aspect to Calvary.

There was the sweet savour offering when the Son presented Himself without spot or blemish to the Father as the whole burnt offering, delighting to do His will. And there was the non-sweet savour offering, when, as the sin offering, the Holy Son of God became the sinner's Substitute.

We shall not dwell further on these offerings here. But the ritual concerning the two goats was observed only on the Day of Atonement; and it is highly significant.

Turn to the sixteenth chapter of Leviticus, and note the details carefully.

The two goats were to be taken from “**the congregation of the children of Israel**” (verse 5); that is, they were to be purchased from the public treasury.

Aaron, the high priest, presented them “**before the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation,**” and “**cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the Lord, and the other lot for the scapegoat**” (verses 7, 8). The one was slain, and the blood sprinkled on the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies (verse 15). The other was led out into the wilderness, “**unto a land not inhabited**” (verses 10, 22). But before the one was slain and the other was led away, the priest laid his hands upon the heads of the animals and confessed the sins of the people, symbolically transferring their sins to their Substitute, even Jesus, of whom the animal sacrifices were a type.

This is made very clear in the commandment of God concerning the sin offering (Leviticus 4:4)—the slain goat was a sin offering (Leviticus 16:15)—and in the commandment He gave to Moses regarding the scapegoat:

“And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness” (Leviticus 16:21, 22).

How significant is all this ritual!

The two goats represent Christ dying for our sins, and bearing them away, to remember them no more forever. Even as they were purchased from the public treasury, so the thirty pieces of silver given to Judas for selling the Lord Jesus came out of the public treasury, from the officials of the Jews. For the sins of “**the whole congregation**” He died!

Again, the casting of the lots, to determine which goat was to die and which was to be the scapegoat, reminds us that it was God who made this decision. Likewise, Christ was not the victim of circumstance; He came into the world to die, “**delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God**” (Acts 2:23).

“I lay down my life, that I might take it again,” He said. **“No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself”** (John 10:17, 18).

The blood of the goat which was slain was brought by the high priest “**within the veil,**” into the Holy of Holies, and sprinkled “**upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat**” (Leviticus 16:15).

“But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come . . . by his own blood . . . entered in once into the holy place (even heaven itself), having obtained eternal redemption for us” (Hebrews 9:11, 12).

This is the heart of the message of the Gospel, my friend.

It explains to us the meaning of the rent veil. Until Christ died, no man except the high priest dared enter the Holy of Holies where God dwelt in the Shekinah Glory; and even he went in only once a year, **“not without blood.”**

The veil shut the sinner out from the presence of God. Why? Because a full atonement had not been made for sin. The animal sacrifices were only **“shadows of good things to come”**; and sinful man could not stand in the presence of a holy God until the full atonement was made. But Christ came; He died; He shed His own precious blood; He rose again, and entered into heaven itself, bearing in His glorified body the marks of Calvary. He presented His own blood before the mercy seat, which is the throne of God. He changed the judgment throne into the mercy seat, on the ground of the sprinkled blood!

That is why the veil of the temple was rent in twain when He died on the cross; **“the way into the holiest”** was forever opened; and the weakest sinner was invited to **“come boldly unto the throne of grace”** (Hebrews 10:19-22; compare Hebrews 9:8; 4:16).

That is why we no longer need an earthly priest to confess our sins for us; we have a Great High Priest, and to Him we may go in prayer!

“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith” (Hebrews 10:19-22).

In shedding His blood for our sins, the Lord Jesus bore them away into **“the wilderness,”** as it were, **“unto a land not inhabited.”** The place of no habitation is the grave.

“The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6).

And in His death He has taken away our sins!

“As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us” (Psalm 103:12). And His promise is sure: **“Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more”** (Hebrews 10:17).

God not only forgives; He forgets! **“What a wonderful Saviour!”**

7. The Coming Forth of the High Priest from the Holy of Holies.

After Aaron came out from the presence of God, and before he appeared again unto the people, he took off the linen clothes of humiliation and put on once more his robes of **“glory and beauty.”**

And when our Lord returns, when He appears once more to His people, Israel, He will come in all His glory, His eternal glory which He had with the Father before the world was (John 17:5).

He laid aside that glory, in order to become a merciful and a faithful High Priest; but He took it up again, after He had made a full atonement for sin. When He rose from the grave, He put on His robes of glory. And very soon perhaps He will come out of the Holy of Holies! **“Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him!”** (Revelation 1:7).

Then the work which He did on that Passover feast nearly two thousand years ago will find its complete fruition.

At the feast of the Passover the Israelite sprinkled the shed blood upon his own lintel and door posts, but then there was no Holy of Holies; there was no sprinkling of the blood on the mercy seat.

The Passover sets forth the man-ward aspect of Calvary. Each sinner must, by his own volition, allow the Holy Spirit to apply the shed blood of the Lamb of God to his sinful heart. On the Day of Atonement, however, it was the high priest who sprinkled the shed blood in the presence of the Shekinah Glory. This is the God-ward aspect of Calvary, and shows us in a faint picture what Christ has done for the sinner.

Thus the feasts of the Passover and atonement dovetail perfectly, setting forth also Israel's special relation to the Lord God, in that Christ will appear on the Day of Atonement, as it were, to establish His promised kingdom over the house of Jacob.

On the basis of the shed blood of the Paschal Lamb **“all Israel shall be saved.”** Just as God heard the cry of His people in Egyptian bondage, so also He will hear the cry of Israel during the great tribulation. As He sent Moses to deliver them long ago, so He Himself will arise from **“the marriage supper of the Lamb,”** and He will come out of the Holy of Holies to deliver His people in their hour of great affliction. Then Israel will receive Him as her Great High Priest and King of Kings!

Are you ready for His coming, my brother? He has died for you; He will bear all your sins away, and remember them no more forever, if you will only trust Him. He has opened the way into heaven, into His glorious presence, by His own shed blood. But you must accept His great salvation. It is a free gift; but you must take it if you want access before the throne of grace—now and throughout the endless ages.

~ end of chapter10 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>
