

Introduction

What Does "Yom Kippur" Have to Do With End-Time Bible Prophecy? You've probably heard of that Jewish holy day. Every fall around September or October you hear on the news that Yom Kippur is coming up. The literal meaning of that Hebrew phrase is the "day of coverings." It is the holy day closing out the Jewish year of observances. It is the last opportunity to clear away one's sins against God and against others.

Today's Yom Kippur comes to us from the Bible's "Day of Atonement." Christians have sometimes neglected those ancient religious holidays, feeling that any such observances are limited to Judaism or were finished at the Cross. It is thought that they hold but little insight for us today. I suppose that that would be convenient. Yet things seldom are that convenient. *In truth, the Day of Atonement figures prominently in the end-time prophecies of Daniel and Revelation.* If we really want to understand those apocalyptic end-time Scriptures, then we need to acquire a basic understanding of the ancient Hebrew sanctuary and of the Day of Atonement—the climactic yearly resolution of all right and wrong in the Jewish nation.

The book of Revelation, for the ultimate finish, as Yom Kippur for the year, outlines the final resolution of right and wrong, the very last scenes of the battle between good and evil. During these meetings we'll look at several texts in both Daniel and Revelation showing the intimate link between the Hebrew sanctuary and those prophecies.

In our second meeting ([God's Day-Planner](#)) we considered the prophetic stone kingdom of Daniel chapter two, in the third the important prophecy that in the end-times, the issue of sin would be the [Axe of the Ages](#); and in our last meeting, we took a startlingly close look at [The Lamb of God](#), and His importance. Tonight, we're going to get a grip on the Hebrew sanctuary and the Day of Atonement, in preparation for our next meeting, covering the Longest Time Prophecy in the Bible. Remember, if we're going to understand the closing issues in the Bible, we need to get (at least) a basic understanding of the earlier items. The Bible builds on itself. Instead of imposing our own ideas upon Scripture, we need to let the Word of God teach us what He wants to teach us. We need to let Him speak to us through His Bible-prophets.

Our Cleansing From Sin Now

In the beginning, Adam and Eve were sinless. Not having gone against God's moral code, their relationship with Him was good; not being out of harmony with God, they had no need of a Savior. Every delight in the garden was open to them. In the cool of the evenings they even walked with their Creator. *Genesis 3:8.*

But sin changed all that.

After their sin, they were expelled from the garden, and cherubim were stationed (angelic guardians) at the entrance preventing their re-entry. (*Genesis 3:24*). What was the problem? They had sinned against God.

Four thousand long years later, when the second Person in the godhead came to this world, the angel instructed His parents that He receive a certain name. The command given Joseph is recorded for us in *Matthew 1:21*: "And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins."

Did you notice that Jesus' very name (Jesus, or Yeshuah, meaning "salvation") has to do with the fact that His mission is to save His people *from* their sins? Not *in* them--*from* them. Neither prophecy nor gospel ever suggested saving man in sin or with sin, but of saving and delivering him from sin. And that deliverance from sin is not a forever-over-the-horizon, pie-in-the-sky, but is so very much in the here and now.

Humankind had a great deal to learn about God though. They had a lot of growing to do. They needed to understand the deep significance of sin and of what salvation from sin was. They needed to learn how to trust God, and why sin is incompatible with the unselfish government of the Creator. And so, over the passage of time and through His prophets, the Father introduced a system of sacrifices meant to aide in the spiritual education of His people. These sacrifices would show that sin leads to death and that accepting the Savior and His heartwork gives life. We are very privileged today to be able to dig into the Bible and explore some of this more deeply for a few moments. Far from being a dry and narrow and dusty conglomeration of odd-seeming and obscure technical details, these rituals provide great enrichment to our sometimes overly simplistic understandings of salvation. I have frequently been amazed how little interest professed Christians seem to have in these expressions that give insight into what Jesus does for us.

Let Them Make Me a Sanctuary

The sacrifice of Christ for us is called "the atonement." That's especially interesting for us tonight, because we are talking about the Yom Kippur--the Day of Atonement. Jesus died on the cross, right? He made an atonement. The word "atonement" comes up exactly 77 times in the Bible. We might expect most of those to be in the New Testament, since Jesus' sacrificial death on the Cross occurs then. But the fact of the matter, is that 76 of the 77 occurrences of "atonement" are in the Old Testament, the neglected book of Leviticus using the word fully 45 times!

"Atonement," or "covering" is a key issue for sinful people desiring to live in the presence of a holy God, just as it is for a holy God desiring to live in the presence of His wayward children. God spoke to them in *Exodus 19:4*, saying, "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagle's wings, and brought you unto Myself." After expressing the Ten Commandments to His people (*Exodus 20:1-17*), He shares His desire and His command with His people. Consider *Exodus 25:8*: "And let them make Me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them." After bringing His people out of Egypt, unto Himself, the sin problem

remains. But there is a solution. A sanctuary will be made—a dwelling place for God. He will manifest His presence among His people, in a holy place for a holy God.

The foremost issue between God and man is sin--man's sin. The sanctuary which God commissioned His people to construct on the earth was more than a closet for God; it was to be the center of His system for removing sin from His people. His "covering" is not just "covering up" a continuing problem. It involves His full provision for dealing with sin so that when He is finished it will have been eliminated once and for all. God's solutions are always complete and perfect, never partial. He saves His people from their sins, not in them.

Let's take a look at this sanctuary structure.

The Sanctuary Described

It stood at the very center of the camp of Israel. The tents of the nation gathered round it on every side, in 12 carefully organized groups, separated by a vast open space (about two-thirds of a mile). Between the open space and the sanctuary itself stood a linen boundary marking the court--a rectangular area immediately surrounding the sanctuary structure. The length of it was oriented east-west, with the entrance opening on the eastern side. There was only one opening--only one means of resolving the sin problem.

Upon entering through the linen borders bounding the courtyard, one would see directly in front of oneself the bronze altar of sacrifice, standing between you and the sanctuary structure on the opposite side. If you were a priest, you could walk past the altar toward the sanctuary encountering the laver, a round, fountain-like structure containing water to wash in. Priests were required to wash before approaching the altar or entering the sanctuary, on penalty of death. The washings symbolized the cleanness necessary when approaching God.

If you were a priest you might, in the process of your ministry, enter the sanctuary structure itself. Just as a veil marked the entrance of the courtyard, another veil marks the entrance into the sanctuary building. Upon passing through this veil one would immediately see the dazzling reflection of light on the gold-encrusted wall-panels. To your immediate left you would see the seven-branched golden candlestick, alight with seven oil-lamps brightly burning as they consumed their fuel. The reflection from the seven flames bathed the interior in an ever-shifting yellow glow. These seven flames provided light for the "holy place," the windowless first room of the structure. Turning to your right side, positioned directly northward on the opposite side of the room you would see the table of shewbread oriented lengthwise along that wall.

Looking straight ahead, directly westward again, you would see the final veil separating you from the most holy place, and the altar of incense standing directly in front of it. Upon that veil were woven images of cherubim—angels. Just as the garden of Eden had been protected by cherubim at its entrance, the walls and veils of the sanctuary were inwrought with these representations, always to remind those who ministered of the truths here reflected: of the unseen presence of ministering angels, the departure from Eden caused by sin, and the necessity of resolving the alienation between humankind and the spiritual realm.

If you were the high priest, then once a year, you could pass through that final veil and into the second apartment--the most holy place. Upon so doing, you would discover that that room had only one item of furniture in it: the ark of the covenant. Directly in the center of the room stood the ark, within which were kept the tablets of God's Ten Commandment Law. On the top of the ark rested the lid or the covering, also called the "mercy seat." Upon the north and south ends of the lid stood two cherubim—the sculpted representations of angels--each looking toward the center of the room and downward.

Finally, appearing in mid-air, above the mercy seat and between the two angels, you would see the intense, electric, holy, glowing shekinah glory--the visible presence of God manifested in His sanctuary. Remember, the whole purpose of the structure was to make possible the dwelling of a holy God with a people caught in the problem of sin. By making cleansing from sin possible, the sanctuary system made possible the presence of YHWH.

The sanctuary structure and surroundings really was *not* like our present churches or religious buildings. At the Hebrew sanctuary the congregation gathered outside in prayer at appointed times, but never entered. Entry was reserved for the priests and the high priest as they persisted in their work, "serving unto the example and shadow of heavenly things" (*Hebrews 8:5*), ridding God's people of sin in symbol, in anticipation of the coming of the true sacrifice, Jesus Christ.

Now we know something of what the structure looked like. But what did the priests do there?

The Daily Service

Today we only have time to cover the most basic operation of the sanctuary. But that will be enough to understand what it was about, and what we can apply to our understanding of end-time prophecy.

We've seen that the sanctuary is all about God "covering" His children--enabling people who have sinned to be changed, and to come into the presence of a holy God. But how was this done? How could God get sin out of His people, and ultimately, out of the whole camp of Israel? Listen . . .

The services of the sanctuary were divided into two sections: those occurring daily throughout the year, and the yearly service, occurring on only one day at years' end. Through these services, God taught the elimination of sin from His people.

The daily service of the sanctuary began in the morning as the nation gathered outside and the priest offered the morning sacrifice upon the altar in the courtyard.

Every morning and every evening a young lamb was burned upon the altar, symbolizing the daily consecration of the nation to YHWH and their constant dependence upon the atoning blood of Christ. The lamb was offered and incense was also offered up at the golden incense altar inside of the sanctuary just in front of the veil of the most holy place.

The other aspect of the daily ministry at the sanctuary was the offerings performed in behalf of individuals. Now don't miss this crucially important point: when he had sinned, the repentant sinner must bring his offering to the door of the sanctuary. He must place his hand upon the victim's head, confessing his sins, thus symbolically transferring them from himself to the innocent sacrifice. Not the priest, but he himself then slew the animal. The priest collected a portion of the blood in a cup as it drained from the neck of the sacrifice. The remainder of the blood was the "spilt" blood, simply falling upon the ground next to the altar to congeal in the dust. That blood did nothing for the sinner. But the blood that the priest carried into the sanctuary was sprinkled before the inner veil, behind which stood the ark in the most holy place. That blood brought reconciliation. Thus were the sins transferred from the guilty individual, to the sacrifice, to the blood, to the priest, and finally to the sanctuary. Thus *the offerer walked out of the courtyard a forgiven person.*

It was in this manner that the sins of Israel accumulated throughout the year in the sanctuary. The people were forgiven, but the holy places were defiled. It became necessary that a special work be undertaken to remove the record of their sins so that the sanctuary might be cleansed. Heaven commanded that an atonement be made for each of the sacred apartments and for the altar, cleansing and hallowing them from the uncleanness of the children of Israel. *Leviticus 16:19*. This ultimate "closure" for their sins occurred only once a year, on the Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.

The Yearly Service

The day of atonement was the day of the "cleansing of the sanctuary." On this day, once a year, the high priest brought two young goats to the door of the sanctuary. Lots (like dice), were cast to assign the goats, one for the Lord, and the other for the scapegoat, also called the "azazel"--"the one that bears away." (If you ever wondered where the term "scapegoat" came from, now you know.) The goat that thus became "the Lord's goat" was slain as a sin offering for the people. The high priest then brought its blood within the holy and on into the most holy apartment, within the innermost veil of the sanctuary. It was then sprinkled upon the lid of the ark—the mercy seat.

Read *Leviticus 16:16* with me...

And he shall make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remaineth among them in the midst of their uncleanness.

Now listen to the action of the high priest as represented in *Leviticus 16:21-22*:

And Aaron [he was the first high priest] 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.

It wasn't until the goat was sent away as God had commanded, that His people considered themselves entirely freed from the burden of their sins. And while the solemn ceremony of the Day of Atonement was underway, it was understood that as the work of reconciliation went forward, every individual in the camp of Israel was to afflict their soul. (*Leviticus 16:30-31*). Everything common was laid aside; everything else beside the action at the sanctuary on the day of atonement sunk away into insignificance! The whole congregation spent the day in solemn humiliation before God—praying, fasting, and searching their hearts in deep self-examination.

They understood that the sin offerings presented through the year had merely been substitutions. The blood of the innocent sacrificial victims had not made full atonement for sin. Those offerings had only provided the means through which the sin was transferred to the sanctuary. Offering the sacrifice, causing the blood to be ministered in his behalf, the sinner showed his submission to the authority of God's law; he confessed his own guilt for his sin, and demonstrated faith in the true Sacrifice that would one day come: Jesus, "the Lamb of God." *John 1:29*.

So what about Jesus then?

The blood of Christ, when finally offered on Calvary, while it would release the repentant sinner from condemnation (pay attention now . . .), did not cancel the sin or wipe away the law. The sin continued to stand on record in the sanctuary until the final atonement. So in the ministration of the sanctuary, and of the earthly temple on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem that took its place, day by day the people were taught the great truths pointing to Christ's death and ministration. Once each year, in a most special sense, their minds were carried forward to the closing action in the great controversy between Christ and Satan: the final purification of the universe from sin and sinners.

Yom Kippur Linked to the Apocalypse

Let us turn to one of the last texts for this meeting; a tantalizing one: *Daniel 8:13-14*:

Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.

Our time for tonight is almost up, but that verse we just shared is what we will be discussing in our next meeting, and I wish to tell you a few things about it. This verse announces the longest time prophecy in the Bible--one that stretches down through the ages to impact our day. And I want you to notice something else: *this prophecy has to do with the cleansing of the sanctuary*. In our next meeting, I'm going to share with you the Bible evidence giving us the starting date for this time period, the means of interpreting its length, and its linkage with several passages in the book of Revelation. And, we'll discover exactly what the cleansing of the sanctuary has to do with the mark of the beast.

But tonight we have to address one last issue. Is there only a sanctuary on earth? Let's look at the book of Hebrews in the New Testament. Turn with me to *Hebrews 8:1-5*:

Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A Minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this Man have somewhat also to offer. For if He were on earth, He should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law: Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith He, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount.

The author of Hebrews is summing up his first seven chapters. And he says, in reference to Jesus, that He is our high Priest, that He is "a Minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." He points out that the earthly priests served "unto the example and shadow of heavenly things," and that the sanctuary that Moses built was constructed "according to the pattern" shown him in the mount. The Scripture he refers to is found in *Exodus 25:8-9, 40*. There, God shows Moses a pattern according to which he is required to build the earthly sanctuary structure. Consider also the confirmation of a heavenly structure's existence found in *Hebrews 9:23-24*:

It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.

It should be plain, friends, that the earthly sanctuary was only a photocopy of the heavenly place where God dwells. *The pattern Moses built from was the blueprint from the original sanctuary in heaven, the one "which the Lord pitched, and not man" (Hebrews 8:2).*

But what does He (Jesus) do there? First, He lives a sinless life *here* and dies on the cross, that He might have somewhat to offer *there* (*Hebrews 8:3*); then He offers that precious life to the Father. "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 9:12*. The result is that "now, once, in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." *Hebrews 9:26*.

So we see that the ministry of Christ clearly has two main phases. By His death on the Cross and His ministry of its benefits to us through faith in His heavenly intercession, He *is completing* the atonement. He has "obtained" eternal redemption for us. But we must receive it by faith in order that it become effective in us. Atonement was not completed at the Cross, just as the offerings made through the Levitical priesthood and the Hebrew sanctuary were not completed when the victim had been slain and offered. The blood still had to be ministered through the sanctuary system, transferring the sin to the sanctuary, so that the blood of the "Lord's goat" could be applied in atonement in the most holy place.

So when Christians see the mighty sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross they are doing well, but when they stop there and fail to see the full Biblical plan of atonement, they are missing important truth. Jesus' death on the cross *provides the full sacrifice* for atonement--100% of it in fact. But the only power that can change us must still be applied to one's life, and *that is what He is doing now*. That is what has caused this whole plan of salvation to linger on for so long. Christians haven't allowed Jesus to remake them. Jesus didn't die to cover-up our sin, but to remove it. His "covering" for man is not just spray-painted onto the outside, but it is *a complete "covering" of the whole of the sin problem*. It impacts our entire heart and mind.

There are two kinds of Christianity. One kind says that God enlightens your conscience, shows you how wicked you are, and then makes you live in that depressing soup throughout your life. It says that the *actgual* inward change comes only later. But the other kind of Christianity says that God reveals your wickedness and sinfulness to you, *but then He begins to radically change you here and now*. He promises to empower you to live *here and now* in true holiness "without which no man shall see the Lord." (*Hebrews 12:14*).

Which version of Christianity do you want?

Conclusion and Preview

Today, we've learned that Jesus has two roles in the cleansing of the sanctuary. He both, is sacrifice, and high Priest. He both must die in order to provide the sacrifice that brings our salvation, and He must minister for us as our high Priest. We've learned how the Hebrew sanctuary structure is designed, along with what happened there in the earthly building. We've learned that the earthly version is a copy of the heavenly original, "which the Lord pitched, and not man." *We've learned that Jesus' ministry for us there is just as important as His death upon the cross*. That blood must be applied to us through the sanctuary service--not merely spilled beside the altar.

We've covered a great deal of material. But tomorrow night we'll see how important this is, as we discover [The Longest Time Prophecy in the Bible](#) and its bearing on the days in which we now are living. We will also discover that Jesus is cleansing His sanctuary in heaven *right now*. And what comes after that? That's right! The second coming arrives when Jesus leaves the heavenly sanctuary and returns to earth!

Don't miss tomorrow night. May God bless you all. We look forward to seeing you tomorrow evening. Let us close in prayer .

Larry Kirkpatrick, 27 October 2000