

God's Great Plan to Eradicate Sin

Jesus Died for What?

The New Testament teaches that Jesus Christ died for our sins so that we may inherit eternal life through Him.

“That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:15).

“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3).

When Paul said that “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures,” he was referring to the Old Testament, which predicted that Jesus would die for the sins of humanity. Isaiah spells out the affliction and suffering that the Messiah would have to go through to atone for our sins:

He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and 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 every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:3-6).

What is Sin?

The Bible has only one definition of sin: “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4).

Sin is the transgression of the law of God, which carries a penalty of death. In Christ the penalty is paid and we can have eternal life: “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

Sin separates us from God, which means being separated from the source of life. God is the author and maintainer of life. “But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear” (Isaiah 59:2).

Since we have all transgressed the law of God, we all need salvation. “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

Salvation, Grace, and the Law

According to Scripture, we all need salvation because we have all sinned (Romans 3:23). Salvation is a gift from God that we receive by grace. Our own works cannot save us. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8).

“And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work” (Romans 11:6).

This saving grace is wonderful news. But does it free us from obedience to God’s law? No. In fact, grace establishes the law. The law cannot save us, but it can warn us by telling us what sin is.

“Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law” (Romans 3:31).

For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness (Romans 6:14-16)?

Simply then, sin (transgressing God’s law) leads to eternal death, but grace leads to eternal life.

“Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20).

It is by grace that we are saved, delivered from sin, justified, restored, and sanctified. On one hand, grace sets right our relationship with God. The law, on the other hand, tells us what sin is so that we may avoid it by the grace of God. A true conversion will fill the heart with gratitude and the restored person will once again want to live in harmony with the law of God.

Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments...If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love” (John 14:15, 15:10).

“For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:3).

A Story of Grace

In John 8, we read the account of Mary Magdalene when she was caught in adultery and brought before Jesus. She stood before Him condemned to death by the law (verses 3-5):

And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?

The law could not save her, but Jesus could. "So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (verse 7). All of the accusers fell short of the glory of God. Convicted of their own sinfulness, they left one by one. Only the trembling, guilty, repentant Mary remained.

Jesus turned to her and said, "Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (verses 10-11).

The condemned sinner was forgiven and placed under grace, but then she was obligated to henceforth keep the law, to "go, and sin no more." To be saved by grace does not relieve anyone from the duty of obedience to God's law. Grace takes away the condemnation of the law, but it does not do away with the law.

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:1).

Grace in the Old Testament

Our salvation centers in the cross of Jesus Christ. Have you ever wondered what people did about their sins before Jesus was crucified on Calvary? How were sins atoned for in Old Testament times?

Dispensationalists believe that before Christ salvation was based on the law, and now after Christ salvation is by grace. But as we saw in the previous article, all are obligated to keep the law of God. Therefore, salvation for those living before Christ must also have been by grace. In fact, grace existed even before the time of Noah, who "found grace in the eyes of the LORD" (Genesis 6:8).

In 2 Peter 2:5, Noah is called a preacher of righteousness, and righteousness comes by faith in Jesus Christ. The New Testament makes it quite clear that all salvation is through Christ Jesus. Hence, Christ is the Saviour of those that lived before the crucifixion.

The sacrificial system of the Old Testament pointed to the coming death of the promised Messiah. The Gospel was presented in the form of typology—an enactment of God’s salvation plan using symbols.

The sacrificial lamb of the Jewish system represented Jesus, the innocent Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the guilty world and grants the repentant sinner eternal life in Him and through Him. The blood shed by the lamb represents the blood of Christ that would be shed. Paul writes, "without shedding of blood is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22).

Grace from the Beginning

The Bible teaches salvation through Christ from the time of the Fall to the time of the Second Coming of Christ. The blood of the lamb—the first sacrificial animal—saved Adam and Eve. When sin stripped the holy pair of their righteousness and left them naked, God Himself covered their nakedness with animal skins (Genesis 3:21) symbolizing the righteousness that is available to all through Christ.

The animal that gave its life represented the Lamb of God that would be slain for them. Since God Himself clothed them with these pelts, representing the promise of righteousness restored, he must have explained to them this way to salvation—the Messiah who would come to pay the price for sin so that they could regain eternal life.

The Acceptable Sacrifice

The difference between relying on one’s own merits for salvation and relying on the merits of the Messiah who was to come was demonstrated in the lives of Adam and Eve’s sons, Cain and Abel.

Cain brought to God an offering only of farm produce, the fruit of his own labor. His offering did not receive the approval of God, because by bringing only this sacrifice Cain showed that he relied only on his own merits rather than the blood of the Lamb for salvation. However, “without shedding of blood is no remission.” Salvation lies outside oneself in Christ.

Abel’s offering, on the other hand, included the blood offering (Genesis 4:4). His sacrifice was accepted, because they pointed to the coming Redeemer. Abel thus understood that salvation was only to be obtained through faith in the blood of the Lamb and his testimony stands to this day.

By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh (Hebrews 11:4).

Abraham—An Example of God’s Grace

Abraham, like all the patriarchs, offered the sacrificial lamb. Throughout all history, the only means of salvation has been through sacrificial bloodshed—never through what humans can achieve.

Abraham was instructed by God to sacrifice his son, Isaac, on an altar. It was an enactment of the plan of salvation, God showing the world His method of dealing with sin. As Abraham was about to kill his beloved son, God supplied the sacrificial animal Himself. This predicted in type that God would give His own Son as a sacrifice.

Abraham’s willingness to obey God displays a faith that could move mountains. He knew God had promised that salvation would come through His and Isaac’s seed (Genesis 21:12). Abraham knew that even if he should offer Isaac, God would have to raise him from the dead to fulfill His promise (Hebrews 11:17-19). Abraham knew that God would never lie. In Genesis 22:5, Abraham says to his companions, “Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you” (NKJV).

Do we have such an unshakeable faith in the Word of God? No wonder the Bible says in Galatians 3:8 that the Gospel was preached unto Abraham. No wonder Christ referred to Abraham’s faith when He said, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day [by faith he saw the day of Christ’s sacrifice as the Lamb of God], and he saw it and was glad” (John 8:56).

Abraham was saved by faith in the Son of God, but this did not free him of the obligation to keep God’s law. “Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws” (Genesis 26:5).

It was on Mount Moriah that Abraham was prepared to sacrifice his beloved son. It was on Mount Moriah that Solomon built the temple and where the altar of burnt offerings stood. And it was at the northern edge of Mount Moriah, at the place called Golgotha, where the Son of God laid down His life.

Ancient Testimony

Typography in the Temple

The temple—and before that the sanctuary—serve as the greatest lesson on the plan of salvation ever given to God’s people. Its symbols and ceremonies lead us into a greater understanding of the mystery of salvation. In types and shadows we learn of Christ’s earthly mission as the Lamb of God, and His role as High Priest, Advocate, Judge, and King.

In the sanctuary we see justification by faith, sanctification, and glorification. In the sanctuary we learn more about Jesus, His character, His heavenly system of government, and His hopes and objectives for the people of God.

What a pity that some would discard the Old Testament as worthless today, teaching that it belonged to the old dispensation without relevance to those living after the cross. Yet the New Testament states that, “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4).

“Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come” (1 Corinthians 10:11).

Jesus Fulfills the Old Testament

Jesus Himself testified that the Old Testament testified about Him when he said, “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39).

Jesus did not come to do away with the writings of the Old Testament. He came to fulfill them. The first five books of the Bible, the Torah, were written by Moses and were a testimony to the plan of salvation. The prophetic books were written to remind God’s people of these truths and to unfold to them more fully their duty toward God. The Psalms form a miniature Bible by themselves—a written history of God’s people. They are prophetic and contain songs of praise to God.

The New Testament is the true fulfillment of the Old Testament. Jesus said, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled” (Matthew 5:17-18).

The Two Laws

On Mount Sinai, Moses received the law of God and precise instructions on the sacrificial system. These were to form the basis of the religious ceremonies of the Israelites.

Both sets of instructions were called the law, but they were different in that the law of Ten Commandments defined what sin was, and the ceremonial law contained the solution to the sin problem. God wrote the Ten Commandments, and Moses wrote the ceremonial law, or book of the law.

The Law of Ten Commandments

“And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God” (Exodus 31:18).

“And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables” (Exodus 32:16).

When Moses returned from meeting with God on Sinai he found that the Israelites had made for themselves a golden calf to worship. Moses was so angry that he broke the tablets of stone. Then God said to him, “Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first, and come up unto me into the mount, and make thee an ark of wood. And I will write on the tables the words that were in the first tables which thou brakest, and thou shalt put them in the ark” (Deuteronomy 10:1-2).

When Moses broke the first tablets, it symbolized the law of God that had been broken by God’s people when they served the golden calf. The law did not change as a result of the people’s sin. Rather, God wrote the law again onto the new tables of stone that Moses fashioned, symbolizing that we have to be co-workers together with God in upholding His law. Only in God’s strength can we uphold the law, but we must cooperate with Him in this regard.

The Ceremonial Law

This law of types and ceremonies was written by Moses in the book of the law, and was placed beside the ark.

And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished, That Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying, Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee (Deuteronomy 31:24-26).

These two sets of laws, the one moral and the other ceremonial, were thus entirely different and served different purposes.

Wasn’t the Law Nailed to the Cross?

Colossians 2:14 says this:

Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.

Does this verse mean that we no longer need to follow the ceremonial law and the law of Ten Commandments?

This verse refers to only one law: the law that was against us, that showed us our transgressions. This was not the Ten Commandments, but the ceremonial law. When Christ died, he satisfied the demands of justice in the law of ceremonies and blotted it out.

Christ fulfilled the obligations of the ceremonial law by becoming the Lamb slain for the sins of the world. He fulfilled the obligation of the law of Ten Commandments by His perfect obedience to its precepts. After His death, the law of ceremonies was discontinued because it foreshadowed the cross, but the law of Ten Commandments did not change, nor was it done away with. The same law is still to be found in the New Testament and those who follow Christ must continue to live by this law.

The Symbolic Sanctuary

How did the ceremonial law prefigure the ministry of Christ?

The Old Testament sanctuary provides the answers. Moses had to construct the sanctuary exactly according to the pattern shown him on the mount Sinai: "And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them" (Exodus 25:8).

"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 shewed to thee in the mount" (Hebrews 8:5).

The earthly Old Testament sanctuary, and the entire ministry associated with it, reflects the ministry of Christ on our behalf. It is also a miniature enactment of the much greater ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary, of which the earthly sanctuary was merely "a figure for the time then present" (Hebrews 9:9). The earthly was a copy of the heavenly.

"Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle" (Hebrews 8:5).

Christ entered the heavenly sanctuary that was not built by human hands after His resurrection and ascension into heaven.

"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" (Hebrews 9:24).

The price for sin was paid for at the cross. Justice was satisfied, but the ministry of Christ did not end there. Sin still exists and sinners still have access to God through Christ. We serve a risen Saviour, who is our High Priest, our Advocate, our Judge, and our King who is interceding in our behalf in the sanctuary above.

"We have such an high priest...in the heavens; A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man" (Hebrews 8:1-2).

In Old Testament times, the defense of the accused was a duty so sacred that the judge refused to delegate the work to an attorney. He himself served as the defender of the accused. The Jewish Encyclopedia explains: “attorneys at law are unknown in Jewish law.” Their legal code required judges to “lean always to the side of the defendant and give him the advantage of every possible doubt.”

What a system! God Himself defends and judges the accused. But who is the accuser? Revelation 12:10 speaks of the devil as the accuser who accuses us before God day and night. The devil also keeps a record of sin, and his accusations are painfully correct. How do we then overcome these accusations?

“They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony” (Revelation 12:11 NIV).

When we accept the fact that Jesus died in our stead, God finds the evidence He needs to pronounce us innocent. In certain situations, the Hebrew judge appointed an advocate to assist him in defending the accused. The Jewish Encyclopedia states that the husband could represent his wife and help the judge defend her if the verdict involved his personal rights. Here we have a glorious parallel with the heavenly judgment. Christ the Bridegroom purchased His bride with His own blood.

Christ serves as our court-appointed Advocate to help the Father defend us against the accusations of Satan. He also defends His own right to grant us salvation and to ultimately take us up to heaven. Our eternal salvation does not depend on how hopeless we are, but on how sufficient Christ is in saving sinners.

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:1-2 NIV).

When probation closes, Christ will cease His intercessory ministry, put on His kingly robes and return to earth as King of kings to meet His bride. Daniel chapter 7 describes the great judgment scene to take place just prior to Christ’s Second Coming, where He will receive kingship. In order for Jesus to qualify as King, He first had to become a priest. And before Jesus could become a priest, He had to become the Lamb, slain for the sins of the world:

In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all people, nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed (Daniel 7:13-14 NIV).

The main theme of the book of Daniel is Jesus Christ, the crucified Lamb, the risen High Priest, and the coming King. The good news is that the judgment will turn out in favor of all those who come to Christ with a repentant heart, seeking forgiveness of their sins and a renewed heart that lives in harmony with God.

“the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom” (Daniel 7:22 NIV).

The Ceremonial Law Pointed to Christ

Every Jewish feast represented an aspect of Christ’s ministry. There are three feasts that symbolized Christ’s First Coming:

The Passover

The Passover represented the crucifixion of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 5:7 Paul says, “For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.”

The Passover first occurred while the Israelites were slaves in Egypt. God sent plagues to punish Egypt, including an angel of death that killed every firstborn in Egypt. In order for God’s people to escape this plague, God told each family to kill a lamb that had no blemish. They were to smear the blood of that sacrificial lamb on their doorposts, so that the angel of death would pass over their houses, and their firstborn would be safe from the plague (Exodus 12).

To remember this event, Jews celebrated the Passover, which not only looked back to their deliverance from Egypt and the lamb’s blood on their doorposts, but also looked ahead to the perfect Lamb that was to be slain to take away the sins of the world (John 1:29).

Christ’s sacrifice fulfilled the Passover feast. He was the Passover Lamb. Exodus 12:5,46 says: *Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats...neither shall ye break a bone thereof.*

Christ fulfilled these prophecies in the New Testament:

Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God (Hebrews 9:14).

But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs...For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken (John 19:33,36).

The Feast of Unleavened Bread

This feast represented the body of Christ. It was a symbol of Christ as He lay in the grave. Jesus attributed the symbol of bread to himself. "For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world" (John 6:33 NKJV).

This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world (John 6:50-51).

The Pharisees, the religious leaders of the time, knew very well what Jesus was talking about. They understood the typology of the Messiah as the Bread of heaven. They knew when He referred to Himself as the Bread of heaven, He was claiming to be the promised Messiah, the Holy One of Israel. That is why they tried to stone Him.

In the sanctuary's table of shewbread, the bread, symbolizing Christ as the Bread of Life, was always unleavened bread.

Unleavened bread is bread that has no leaven (yeast). In the Bible, leaven symbolizes sin or error. It causes fermentation. The Lord said to His disciples "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees" (Matthew 16:6; Mark 8:15). In addition, the apostle Paul warned the Church at Corinth that "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (1 Corinthians 5:6). He was saying that just a small amount of sin could destroy us.

Jesus is likened to the Unleavened Bread because He was the Sinless One with no leaven whatsoever, and thus fulfilled the Feast of Unleavened Bread (See Luke 1:35; John 8:46; 14:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 7:26; 1 Peter 1:19; 1 John 3:5).

The Feast of Firstfruits

This feast represented Jesus' resurrection. The resurrected Jesus was the firstfruits from the dead:

But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming (1 Corinthians 15:20-23 NKJV).

On the day of the feast of firstfruits, the priest waved a sheaf of the first harvest before the Lord. None of the harvest could be eaten before the Firstfruits were offered to God.

When Jesus rose, He appeared to Mary Magdalene. When she realized it was Jesus and drew near to Him, he said "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and to your Father; and to my God, and your God" (John 20:17).

A while later, however, He permitted Thomas to touch Him, and in fact told Him to "Reach hither thy finger and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side" (John 20:27).

In between these two events, Jesus would have done exactly what He said He was going to do—ascend to heaven to present Himself to the Father as the firstfruits of those that will be redeemed from the earth. Then He returned to the earth to comfort and visit His friends for another 40 days until He was taken up into heaven (Luke 24:51).

These three feasts (Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Firstfruits) were celebrated on consecutive days, representing the days of Christ's death and resurrection. Three other Jewish feasts pointed to aspects of Christ's Second Coming.

The Feast of Trumpets

During the Feast of Trumpets, God's people gathered in a sacred assembly, commemorated by blasts of the trumpet (Exodus 23:24). This feast points to the announcement of the pre-advent judgment. This judgment was represented by the Feast of Atonement, and was set to take place at the end of the 2,300-day prophecy (Daniel 8). The symbols in this feast were fulfilled in the events just prior to 1844.

The Feast of Tabernacles

This feast was a joyous celebration of the harvest. The Jews built booths, or tabernacles, of olive, palm, pine, and myrtle branches, and lived in those booths for seven days (Nehemiah 8:15). This was to remind the Israelites of the time they spent living in booths when God brought them out of Egypt. This feast reminded God's people of His goodness to them.

The harvest the Jews celebrated on that day represented the final harvest of the redeemed. The feasting represented the joy that the redeemed will experience when Christ returns.

The Day of Atonement

The Day of Atonement was the highlight of the Jewish year. This solemn annual festival enacted the washing away of Israel's sins. The sanctuary was cleansed, symbolizing the cleansing of the people's hearts before God. This earthly cleansing represented a heavenly cleansing, when all of the sins of God's people throughout the ages will be removed.

Leviticus 16:16 tells us about the cleansing of the earthly sanctuary:

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.

Once a year, the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies (or Most Holy Place), but only after he had made atonement for his own sins and those of the priesthood. On this day, two goats were brought before the high priest. One goat was sacrificed, and the other goat was to take the record of sins upon itself, and be set free in the desert.

The Sacrificed Goat

The first goat was sacrificed on the altar. The priest would then enter the Holy of Holies, burning incense and sprinkling the blood of this goat around the ark of the covenant and on the mercy seat. On his way out of the sanctuary, the high priest would also apply the goat's blood to the altars, symbolically atoning for the sins of the entire sanctuary.

The priest did this because God's law had been transgressed. Pouring the blood on the mercy seat symbolized the forgiveness of sins through grace. The Day of Atonement in the earthly sanctuary allows us to understand what Christ's ministry will look like in the heavenly sanctuary. Soon, the record of our sins will be wiped out forever.

Hebrews 9:22-24 says this:

In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence (NIV).

The earthly record was cleansed by the goat's blood, but the heavenly record is cleansed by Christ's blood.

The Scapegoat

The second goat, which represented Satan, was not killed. Rather, the priest laid his hands on the goat to symbolize the record of sin being removed from us and placed on Satan, the originator of sin.

Note that the scapegoat was not killed, and was therefore not the atoner. After the priest had laid hands on the scapegoat, he set it free in the desert. In the same way, Satan will receive the guilt of sin, but will not pay for our sin through his destruction. Christ, represented by the slain goat, was not responsible for our sin, but He still atoned for our sin through His death.

The Antitypical Day of Atonement

The ancient Day of Atonement was a cleansing of the earthly sanctuary that symbolized the actual cleansing of the *heavenly* sanctuary. This cleansing is the cleansing of the pre-Advent judgment recorded in Daniel 8. Daniel states that this cleansing would take place at the end of the 2300-day prophecy: "And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; *then shall the sanctuary be cleansed*" (8:14 emphasis added).

The blood of the sacrificial goat was needed for the high priest's ministry to begin in the Holy of Holies (the Most Holy Place). In the same way, Jesus could not have begun His work in the heavenly Holy of Holies until after He had shed His own

blood. The only reference to the start of this ministry is in Daniel 8, at the end of the 2300-day prophecy.

The 2300-day prophecy of Daniel 8 is the longest time prophecy in the Bible and began its fulfillment in 457 BC when Artaxerxes Longimanus issued a decree to rebuild Jerusalem. When we translate the 2300 prophetic days into years and add those years to 457 BC we see that the prophecy ends in 1844. Therefore, the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary began in 1844 as “then shall the sanctuary be cleansed” (Daniel 8:14). Jesus entered the Holy of Holies on that date to begin His work of the antitypical Day of Atonement.

The Jews associated the Day of Atonement with the Day of Judgment. The high priest’s actions represented the cleansing of the sanctuary—the wiping out of sin and the final salvation of Israel. The Day of Atonement points to the pre-Advent Judgment taking place in heaven before the return of Christ. Christ must be the Judge in heaven prior to His return to the earth, so that He can separate the wicked from the just at His coming.

The Day of Atonement was a very serious Jewish practice. Any Jew that did not take part in the ceremony was to be cut off from the people. It was a day of heart searching, and a day of judgment. This day was to be kept solemnly, just like the Sabbath.

Also the tenth day of this seventh month shall be the Day of Atonement. It shall be a holy convocation for you; you shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. And you shall do no work on that same day, for it is the Day of Atonement, to make atonement for you before the LORD your God. For any person who is not afflicted in soul on that same day shall be cut off from his people. And any person who does any work on that same day, that person I will destroy from among his people (Leviticus 23:27-30 NKJV).

We are living in the time of the antitypical Day of Atonement. We must live as the Israelites did: confessing their sins so that they may be forgiven. We need to develop the habit of meeting with God, asking for humble spirits and clean hearts and minds. Confession produces pure hearts. Judgment becomes good news if our sins have gone before us to the sanctuary.

It is important to note that only confessed sins were placed on the head of the scapegoat. Sins that had not been confessed, and thus given up, could not be transferred. Unconfessed sins cannot be atoned for and sinners that knowingly refuse the gift of salvation also have to bear the guilt of their own choice. This is why it is so important that our sins are confessed before God. As we confess, we are purified and stand before God without fear for we are promised that “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9 NKJV).

“Come now, and let us reason together,” Says the LORD, “ Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18 NKJV).

The standard of judgment has not changed. It is the infallible law of God—the Ten Commandments. James 2:12 says, “So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.”

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).