**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes 3-17-2024
Jesus and Yom Kippur**

If you would ask a Jewish person what the holiest and most important day of the year is, you would almost always here the same answer. Yom Kippur. The Day of Atonement. Today we are going to explore what that is all about.

Now over the last few weeks we have been taking a journey together, exploring the Jewish calendar and its relevance for Christians to learn and appreciate. Understanding each of the special days in the Jewish calendar in light of Jesus can help us not only appreciate the Old Testament, but also grow as disciples of Jesus today. So far, we have looked at the Sabbath, at Hanukkah, at Purim, and at Rosh Hashanah. Today, we will explore Yom Kippur.

This special day is critically important. In fact, this is arguable the most important special day to grasp for Christians. This is because of its beautiful and amazing fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

To help set the stage a bit, it is helpful to remember that these festivals and feasts were established to help remind Israel of His grace towards them. In a sense, that is really what much of the world is seeking to do today – St. Patrick’s Day. While people do celebrate this day for other reasons, the real reason is that God worked powerfully through Patrick in bringing the good news of Jesus Christ to the people of Ireland many years ago.

This theme of remembering God’s grace and mercy is epically true with Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur was God’s answer to how an unholy and sinful people can live in fellowship with a holy and completely pure God.

In the Book of Leviticus, God gives Moses instructions regarding several special days for the year. And one of those instructions is on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Here these words from Leviticus 16:29-34.

**29“This is to be a lasting ordinance for you: On the tenth day of the seventh month you must deny yourselves and not do any work—whether native-born or a foreigner residing among you— 30because on this day atonement will be made for you, to cleanse you. Then, before the Lord, you will be clean from all your sins. 31It is a day of sabbath rest, and you must deny yourselves; it is a lasting ordinance. 32The priest who is anointed and ordained to succeed his father as high priest is to make atonement. He is to put on the sacred linen garments 33and make atonement for the Most Holy Place, for the tent of meeting and the altar, and for the priests and all the members of the community.**

**34“This is to be a lasting ordinance for you: Atonement is to be made once a year for all the sins of the Israelites.”**

**And it was done, as the Lord commanded Moses.**

It must be noted that this very special day was the only day of the year that the high priest was to enter the Most Holy Place. The Most Holy Place was a sacred space within the Temple where God chose to dwell in a special way amongst His people.

The high priest would go into this Most Holy Place to make atonement for the sins of the people against God through the past year. There would be sacrifices that were offered to God – bulls and goats. It was the blood of these animals that was received by God as a substitute for the blood of God’s sinful people. The high priest was to offer sacrifices not only for the people, but on behalf of the other priests and for himself – for his own sins.

And the people were also to humble themselves before God and offer true repentance for their sins. This was the 10th and final day of the 10 Days of Awe that began on Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, which we looked at last week.

And the Lord, in His mercy, would cover their sins for another year.

But then we turn to Jesus and it is just so amazing. Jesus, we are told from the New Testament, is not just the King of Israel and the world, but He is also humanity’s high priest. This is prophesied in the Old Testament that the Messiah would be a priest forever. And so, Jesus would offer humanity’s atoning sacrifice for sin.

Here these beautiful and profound words from **Hebrews 10:1-18.**

**1 The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. 2Otherwise, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. 3But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins. 4It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.**

**5Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; 6with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. 7Then I said, ‘Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll—I have come to do your will, my God.’”**

**8First he said, “Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them”—though they were offered in accordance with the law. 9Then he said, “Here I am, I have come to do your will.” He sets aside the first to establish the second. 10And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.**

**11Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 12But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, 13and since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool. 14For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.**

**15The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says: 16“This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.”[**[**b**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+10%3A1-18&version=NIV#fen-NIV-30150b)**]**

**17Then he adds: “Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.”[**[**c**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+10%3A1-18&version=NIV#fen-NIV-30151c)**] 18And where these have been forgiven, sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary.**

Incredible. There is so much to unpack here. First, this passage tells us that God never was pleased with the atoning sacrifices that had been made. I believe this tells us that God never took pleasure in it. The sacrifices did serve to cover their sins enabling a holy God to be in fellowship with people that were sinful.

But what Jesus would do would be far greater than what the other high priests did. They had to offer sacrifices for themselves, for their own sins and also sacrifices for the sins of all the people.

Jesus, however, would offer one sacrifice, once and for all. He didn’t need to offer a sacrifice for Himself, because He was without sin. And His sacrifice was perfect. He lived as the perfect human. Without sin. Wholly holy. Completely holy and pure. This sacrifice was more powerful than the sacrifices of animals on humanity’s behalf. Jesus’ sacrifice would be of a perfect, sinful human being.

Because this was a perfect human on behalf of sinful people, this sacrifice was once and for all. It was never to be repeated.

And of course, who was this sacrifice that Jesus offered up for us as our High Priest? Himself. He offered Himself. He lived as the perfect Israelite in obedience to God.

And the effects of Jesus’ offering and Jesus’ sacrifice are far greater than what took place through the centuries as the high priests offered their sacrifices on Yom Kippur.

Previously, those sacrifices just covered the sins for another year. But the sins were never fully dealt with and removed forever.

Jesus’ sacrifice was fully sufficient to do that. It had the power to totally and forever remove sin from God’s people. His sacrifice was sufficient to cleanse the human conscience of guilt and shame. His sacrifice was able to take God’s law and word and embed it in people’s hearts and minds.

In summary, Jesus’ atoning sacrifice had the power to cleanse people and truly make them holy before God! Yes, there is a process of Christian maturity that we call sanctification. This does not happen all at once, but is a continuous process and journey. But at the same time, by faith in Jesus as one’s atoning sacrifice, any person is made pure and clean in God’s sight the moment that they believe. This is amazing grace indeed.

I love how Paul writes to the Christians in Rome. He tells them in Romans 3:25:

**25God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished.**

Jesus was the atoning sacrifice for all the people of Israel, once and for all. But He was not only the high priest and atoning sacrifice for Israel alone, but for all people from every nation through history. He was the atoning sacrifice for those that lived before Christ came, but He was also the atoning sacrifice for the people of Ireland to whom Patrick came and for us today as well.

Friends, as we ponder these scriptures, what is the big takeaway for us today? And I believe it is this. We must remember that Jesus fulfilled Yom Kippur by being our atoning sacrifice. He is both our High Priest who stands before God for us and also the sacrifice that was offered to cleanse us from our sins.

This is just good news. We must remember that whatever we have done, whatever sins we have committed, we have a God who is bigger than all that. And we have a God that long before we were born already dealt with all our sins. And He did this through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

If you have trusted in Jesus, you stand clean before God and pure in His sight. And this is all be grace alone. The LORD desires to cleanse us on the inside. He desires to free us from the guilt of our sins. He desires to give us a good and clear conscience. He wants us set people free from shame.

Jesus’ atoning sacrifice has the power to do all of this. And because of God’s grace, we are called to live holy lives unto God. We are to live lives completely dedicated to God.

Jesus willingly took all the punishment for human sin upon His body as He suffered and died. Think of the greatness of His love towards us.

The truth Jesus’ fulfillment of the Day of Atonement reminds us that His sacrifice is the one and only sacrifice that we need. We can’t add to that. No offer sacrifices are to be made. And the power of Jesus’ atoning sacrifice is able to not only forgive us for all our sins, but to change us from the inside out. He writes His law on our hearts and minds so that we want to please God in all that we do.

Finally, how do we know that Jesus’ sacrifice was enough? Well, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest walks about of the Most Holy Place, alive and well. The sense was that God would strike them down and they would not walk out of the Most Holy Place if the sacrifice was not accepted by God.

But think of Jesus – how do we know that His sacrifice was accepted by God? He walked out, alive and well. And we will celebrate that in two weeks, on Easter Sunday morning.

And friends, because Jesus lives, we have a high priest that knows us and loves us, who understands us, and who intercedes for us. Talk with Him every day. Give thanks to Him. Worship Him. And offer yourself – body, mind, and spirit – for the glory of God.

Let’s pray…

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/day-of-atonement/#:~:text=Of%20all%20the%20days%20marked,and%20reestablishes%20the%20whole%20stem>.