

The Day of Atonement pictures so much of what God's plan for mankind is all about. It's a process that has been designed so that mankind can be cleansed from sin and become reconciled to God.

We are carnal beings that are enslaved to our own selfish desires, and we sin a lot. Every day in fact. We know that God won't dwell around sin, so how is it we can go through this process of Atonement? Well, we know that the answer is through Christ. He is that missing link that God planned from the beginning so that His plan could come to fruition so that He could build His Family.

So, let's jump right into it here today. Let's begin today by turning over to **Romans 8:1—There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Joshua, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.**

We know that the wages of sin is death. Death, destruction, chaos, evil – these are all the complete opposite of God. God's ways do not produce any of these negative things; they produce the opposite, and they are often compared to life. God creates and He gives life. His spirit does the same, and that spirit demands growth. So, it makes sense that the opposite of creating, of growing, of living, it makes sense that the opposite is death.

So, this first verse is telling us that those who don't walk after the flesh – after their own carnal ways – but instead, walk after the spirit are living through Christ, that they are no longer condemned. That means that if we fight against our selfish ways, and even if we mistakenly sin along the way, as long as we are striving to walk after the spirit then we can be spared from death. This is one of the main roles that Christ is playing. His role is an absolute vital part of God's plan for us to be reconciled to Him, and this is what this day of Atonement is about.

Continue on in **verse 2—For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Joshua has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.** So, we know this scripture very well. The biggest issue was the law – was not the law itself but rather man's inability to follow it.

Just look at the laws of this world. A good majority of them agree with God's laws. Most countries would agree that it's a good idea not to steal or to murder, but people still do it anyways. But that doesn't negate the fact that it is still a good law to have.

Something that God gave to mankind is free-moral agency. He gave his law to mankind, He gave His morals, and He also gave us the ability to make up our own minds. The world has been free to make up its own standards of morality since the beginning. God has not been forcing His laws down anyone's throats, but He has given us a way to walk in, a way that leads to our overall contentment and happiness. The thing is for thousands of years, we have been free to disagree with God and learn the hard way.

We know that this has all been done with a purpose and a plan. Most of the world cannot understand the nature of God. They don't have any idea that God, as a whole, has left mankind to do as he pleases. They judge Him harshly because they think that just because He is God Almighty that He shouldn't allow any of the suffering in the world.

Some will even say that that's a reason why they believe that God cannot exist. Because they think, how could a loving and caring God allow for such horrors to occur in the world? The holocaust, for example, the brutalities of slavery, wars, etc., etc. If God was really about love and peace, wouldn't He stop these horrible events from happening?

But the world doesn't understand that leaving man to live as he chooses and allowing man to make mistakes, that's really all a part of God's plan. They don't understand this amazing design that He has put together for the building of His Family. They don't understand that living in these carnal bodies is the only way to bring about a perfect creation. They don't understand that they themselves are this creation and that we were made incomplete and that it is up to us to finish God's work, His design.

That pretty incredible that we, as God's Church, understand something so basic. The greatest philosophers in the world have never been able to grasp that truth. The ones you study about in school like Plato, Aristotle, Nietzsche, you could make a huge list, they knew absolutely nothing. Their own minds couldn't understand the mind of man and why the world is how it is. But we do.

So, all of this suffering that the world has seen is not a result of a weak God. On the contrary, it is the result of a master builder who has allowed mankind to fail and learn the biggest lessons that there is to be learned. God set mankind up for failure. He knew that we wouldn't be able to keep His law. So, a path forward, a way had to be made, otherwise, how could we escape such bondage? And that's where Christ comes into the picture. He acts as a bridge if you will.

Let's continue in **verse 4**. Says, **That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the spirit the things of the spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.**

What's the difference between being carnally minded and spiritually minded? Well, the answer is simple. It's God. God's mind is spirit, and we know that through Christ we have access to that spirit. That spirit is

able to help us discern between right and wrong. It's there of a helper of sorts. Because using our own intellect, that's what it is to be carnally minded. That's the way of the whole world, and we have seen almost six thousand years and the results of what happens when you're carnally minded. It is indeed death.

Let's look at **verse 7—Because the carnal mind is enmity against God. For it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.** Our minds are fully against God. We are all about self. So much so that our minds can't even be subject to God. It's like it stated that in verse 3 about the law not being able to reconcile us to God. It's not because the law wasn't good but rather because of our own inability to follow it. We are really slaves to our own selfish nature.

**Verse 8** further states, **So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.** So, it's pretty clear, that without God and His spirit, it is impossible for us to be reconciled with Him or have any part in the plan that He has laid out for us.

That is why God's plan includes the Day of Atonement. This day carries on a process that started with Passover. We know that Christ fulfilled his role as the Passover, but he also fulfilled many roles in the Day of Atonement. The thing is, though, the Day of Atonement is still very much a work in process.

Today we are going to look at how the Day of Atonement was first observed by the Israelites in the desert after they were freed from their bondage in Egypt. While they were technically free from their previous overlords, they were still in bondage though, just as the world is today. They didn't recognize it and neither does the world.

After we go through the origins of this day, then we're going to look at the continuation of the story with Christ and see what it means for us today and into the future.

Let's go over here to **Leviticus 23:26.** This is where we have the commandment to observe the Day of Atonement. And it says, **And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying, Also, on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of Atonement. It shall be a holy convocation unto you, and you shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD.**

So, today we are deliberately going without food and water. We are putting our bodies in a weakened state. It is a sacrifice to be able to fast. It is a humbling action on our part, and we are denying ourselves one of the biggest things, which that is food and water. We are denying ourselves of something that is really a big distraction that we have as humans.

This one hits very close for me because, you know, when I don't eat I get hangry. Some people seem to function better without food than others, but for me, my brain starts to shut down. It just gets really mushy and foggy, and I can't really think about anything else but getting some food to put into my body

so that I can feel better. I know I got to be careful with this, you know, because, yeah, I cannot be pleasant to be around.

But you know, on Atonement, it's usually different for me. After the initial hunger wears off and my body adjusts more or less, and I do okayish. But part of that is because I'm asking God—and this can happen any time in our lives—to give us help, you know. We definitely need to be asking Him today just to help us physically to get through this day. Because going without food and water, it's not easy. So, fasting and prayer definitely go together, and we should be doing them both today and we should be not only be asking that we don't just completely collapse, but we should also be asking God to show us our errors and different areas that we should be working on in our lives.

This whole process about fasting is really about humbling ourselves and being able to go before God, in this case in prayer, and ask for help. It's about sacrificing ourselves. We need to use this process to seek other ways that we can sacrifice. How can we put others' wants and needs above those of our own?

It reminds me of this quote from John Kennedy when he said, "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country." Well, we spend most of our days thinking about what we can do for "me," "myself," but we need to spend more time thinking about what we can do for others.

These carnal bodies of ours are constantly reminding us about "me," "me," "me," and that makes it so difficult, you know. It's "I'm hungry." "I'm thirsty." "I'm hot." "I'm cold." "I'm tired." "I'm bored." "I'm this..." "I'm that..." And once we get the reminder of these things, usually our natural reaction is we want to fix our problems. That becomes our number one priority. We often use these as excuses to treat others poorly because we feel like we're suffering and it's just the selfish nature that we have. It'll often justify dumb decisions that we have, that we do, and we justify it in our own eyes.

Let's skip over real quick to Romans 12:1 because this scripture goes along with the ideas that are connected with "afflicting our souls" and "giving up an offering made by fire."

**Romans 12:1—I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies or compassion of God.** So, God certainly has mercy and compassion for His creation. He understands how we work and what makes us tick. As we read about at the beginning of the sermon here in Romans 8, God knew that we would not be capable of keeping His law. We were made incomplete, not yet capable of walking in the way of God. That is why God created this plan for us to finally be completed, and He created a help for us too.

That is in part what this Holy Day is about because it is only when we have come into complete unity with God that we can be reconciled before Him.

Romans 12:1 again states, **I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies or compassion of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice.** So, in other words, God has mercy and compassion for

us. He knows how difficult it is for us to sacrifice self. It's not easy for us to do that and to see how we really are. Most people don't want to face that. They don't want to even try to overcome in the slightest. It's easier for most people just to think that they're a (quote, unquote) "good person" and that they're doing really great and to just bury their heads in the sand.

But we are told to take a look at our true state, to find out what our motivations are, to make sure that we're not just serving our own selves wants and desires with our actions. That's what it is about "to present our bodies as a living sacrifice." God is not interested in physical sacrifices of the Old Testament. The real sacrifice that He wants to see is that of ourselves. He wants to see us overcoming our own mental slavery.

The verse here continues, **that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable** (well pleasing) **unto God, which is your reasonable service.** So, we understand what it means to be a living sacrifice. It's about getting rid of self, and that's not easy. Atonement and afflicting our beings is about getting rid of self; it's about presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice.

The last part of this verse states that it is our "reasonable service." What does that mean exactly? I find that it's kind of peculiar how it's stated. But this word for "reasonable" in this verse is a very interesting word because it is only used twice in the New Testament, and it is the Greek word "logikos."

The other instance of this usage is from 1 Peter 2:2. We're not turning there. You can just jot this down if you want. It's where Peter is speaking of newborn babes that desire the sincere milk "of the word." The sincere milk of the "logikos." Now, this word "logikos" as you can already probably guess, it's the same base for our word of "logic." That's why sometimes Romans 12:1 gets translated as "your logical service" or "your reasonable service." So, "logical" is actually a little bit better translation, but it still doesn't make a whole lot of sense.

However, in Greek the word "logikos" or "logic" comes from "logos" – and we know that logos is what? It's God's word. "The Logos of God was made flesh." "The Word of God made flesh." That is how Christ was described by John. So, in this instance, the logic that is being spoken of is a logic that comes from the word, and more specifically God's word. It's not referring to the logic that forms from mankind's own mind. It is a logic that comes from God's mind.

Looking at this verse again, we just have to combine that with the word that is being used for service. This service is referring to a service of God, often in a ministerial sense or like those services that were conducted by the high priest on the Day of Atonement.

So, when we combine everything that is being told to us in this scripture, we see that presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice is a spiritual service. We aren't presenting a physical offering made by fire

anymore like the Israelites did on Atonement. We are presenting our own bodies and sacrificing self every day, just as Christ did, and that is our service.

But this verse goes on to show even more that it's really all about getting rid of self and offering it up before God, that this is all a team effort. God sent Christ to mediate His word and His spirit to us. It's through this process and design that we are able to actually atone ourselves to God.

This scripture pictures what God expects from us, and when we think of this service that is spoken of here in this verse, we can also think about it not just as a ritual type of service like was pictured in the Day of Atonement in the Old Testament, but we can also think of it as a service that serves others.

By giving up self, we are in turn giving to others. We are suddenly putting others before us, putting their needs and wants above ours. That is what's most important. That is a real service that each and every one of us should be rendering to those around us every single day, not just on the day of Atonement. If we ask God for help to do just that, He will send help in the form of His spirit. That is the real service that God wants from us.

It's a little bit like what Christ said before, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." Presenting your bodies as a living sacrifice is what should identify that God is working in our lives. As that verse also states, when God sees that sacrifice from our part, it pleases Him. That is how we are reconciled to Him and that's a part of this atonement process.

Let's continue on in **verse 2—And be not conformed to this world: but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.** Again, that is some of the same sentiment that we read about in the beginning of the sermon in Romans 8. How can we know what is good and acceptable? How can we know what is the will or desire of God? By our own logic? The thoughts and words that come from our own mind?

No. It takes the logic and logos that comes from God to be able to discern properly. To be able to do that, we have to break away from the thinking of this world. Our minds must be transformed. But so often we don't stop and consider God and what His thoughts are. Instead, we get into arguments where we insist that our opinion is the correct one. We think our thoughts are right and we want to show someone else that their thoughts are wrong, that they're in error. That can create a lot of drama. We can even get caught up in these situations if we're not careful.

In one of the sermons some time back, I don't remember exactly when it was, but I mentioned about the word "zealous" and "jealous," this word that was used in the Hebrew that previously was one word and it wasn't until the mid-middle ages that it had a distinction that was made between the two of them. But it was a single word at one time, and all this word means was it about "getting hot and getting worked up."

Since we have been told that we are never to get worked up unless – and this is a big unless – it has to do with God’s spirit, and these kinds of disagreements that we have sometimes with one another have a tendency to do with this. Because when we get worked up in a disagreement, you know, it is definitely not because we are getting worked up with God’s spirit. It’s because we get worked up with our own selfish ideas of being right. That’s really a disgusting spirit to have and that’s something we have to be very careful with.

So, if we ever find ourselves in these situations, you know, we need to stop immediately and re-evaluate what’s going on, find out what our motivations are. And you know, so many times these disagreements that we have with those around us if we really just stop to think about them, they’re really just petty. Sometimes we might just be fighting over something that’s about how to do something, and there might not even be one particular way to do this thing.

It’s like a backseat driver telling the one in the front how to drive. “Take this road, it’s faster.” “Come on, I know the best road. We’re going to get there so much faster if you just take this road!” And, you know, that backseat driver, they might be in the backseat because they don’t even have a driver’s license, but they certainly know the best, don’t they?

Now, of course, sometimes we can give suggestions, and it’s all right to tell somebody, like, “Hey, maybe we should go this way,” or “Ah, there’s a…” whatever, but there is certainly a line that can be crossed and that’s usually when we really are determined to impose what we think is right and best. We don’t give it a rest. So, we have to control ourselves and not let our selfish human nature take over, because it wants to take over, and if we let it, it certainly will.

That’s what this scripture is telling us. “Be not conformed to this world.” Don’t let your selfish nature take over like the world allows for it to do. Don’t be like everyone else who is a slave to their own selfishness.

It says, “But be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” Our minds need to be swapped out. I think about computers, and they have what’s called a logic board in them. It’s also referred to as a motherboard. But this logic board controls everything in the computer. All of the components are connected to it. Every input and output have to pass through this board.

And so, it’s very similar to how our minds are, and if you think about it, you know, we need to have new logic boards. We want to trade ours out for God’s; we want an upgrade. But unfortunately, we can’t just go to the Apple store and ask them to put in a new one. Instead, it’s a little more complicated, you know, it’s a process of renewing. It doesn’t happen all at once.

But we need these new logic boards so that (as the scripture continues) **that you may prove or test what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.** So, at times, you know, we get to try

out this new logic board, but that's only when we are close to God. When we are trying to overcome, and we are quick to repent and change when we slip up, then we're able to continue to use that logic board. But there are other times when we are using the old logic board.

We're being told to test them both out, to see which one works best for us. God isn't forcing us to use one or the other. He isn't forcing us to upgrade. But He does give us the help to be able to make that upgrade.

To us in God's Church, it should be pretty obvious which is the better chipset to have, but we need to test it out and we need to reflect on the outcome. When we got worked up and have drama in our lives we can say, "Hey, how did that work out? What happened to our relationships?" And then on the flip side, you know, when we were calm, collected, and we didn't try to force our opinions on to others, and we put their needs and wants above ours we can see, yeah, how did that work out?

Yeah, we should never be forcing our opinions onto others. If we think about it, even God, whose ways are perfect and just, He doesn't force anything on any of us. So, who are we to force our stupid ideas and opinions, which, of course, aren't just, down others' throats?

Anyway, we want that new mind that is not creating drama. After testing out this new mind that is being built in us, we should see how much better it is with God's mind being a part of it. We should see the benefits in our own lives and that should give us a lot of resolve so that we can continue down this path.

The Day of Atonement is so important to God's plan for mankind. It is about this transformation process of our minds so that they are aligned with His. That is what atonement is all about.

Let's return to Leviticus, but this time we're going to turn to chapter 16. You know, there is a lot given here in the instructions for the Atonement ceremony, but when we go through this, and we look at what was performed, we can see that this process is all about making ourselves clean and getting rid of sin.

So often we have said that Atonement means "at-one-ment," as in we become one with God. That's a good way to remember the basics of what this day is about, but we need to be careful because this is not the only thing that is being pictured on this day.

Atonement, just like this ceremony that we are about to read about, is a process. In any process, there are many things that happen and each one of them carries its own specific significance. So, when we think about Atonement, yes, ultimately it's true that it's about coming into unity with God, but Atonement also reveals the how, how do we come into unity with God.

God requires that we are made clean before we can come into fellowship with Him, and ultimately to become reconciled with Him. This is what Atonement shows us. It shows us the how. In fact, the word



“atonement” is sometimes translated as “to purge” or “to purge away” and even “cleansed,” especially when it’s used in combination with the word “sin.” That echoes what’s stated in the New Testament when we are told to “purge out the old leaven,” to “clean out the old leaven,” get rid of it, get rid of sin. Atonement is very much about getting rid of sin. And when we look at the ceremonies that the Israelites did, we can see it was all about making themselves clean and purging themselves of their sins.

So, we are going to go through a little bit here and then skip back to the New Testament and see where certain areas here have been fulfilled and others that still have to be fulfilled.

For now, let’s pick up in **Leviticus 16:2—And the LORD said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron your brother, that he come not at all times into the Holy Place within the veil before the mercy seat, which is upon the ark; that he die not. For I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat.**

So, we know that this is speaking of the one time of the year on Atonement when the high priest, in this case, Aaron, was allowed to enter into the Holy of Holies. This was just a small room in the very back of the tabernacle and it is where the ark was stored and where God would manifest His presence to them.

But as it states, Aaron couldn’t pass beyond the veil into the Holy of Holies whenever he pleased, and God is making it clear that if they were to disobey this that they would die. And if we remember, Aaron’s two sons who were also priests (not the high priest, but the priests), they didn’t follow some of God’s instructions and when that happened they were consumed with fire immediately, right as they had disobeyed.

So, it’s apparent that these duties that were to be performed have great meaning to God, and He was not going to allow anyone to make any alterations to His plan.

Continuing on in **verse 3—Thus shall Aaron come into the Holy Place, with a young bullock for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. He shall put on the holy linen coat, and he shall have the linen breeches upon his flesh, and he shall be girded with a linen girdle, and with the linen miter shall he be attired. These are holy garments; therefore shall he wash his flesh in water, and so put them on.** So, before Aaron is to do anything he had to prepare himself. He had to be clean in order to go before God, so he washed himself and he put on this linen.

**Verse 5—And he shall take of the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering. And Aaron shall offer his bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and make an atonement for himself, and for his house.** Again, this is part of the Atonement process for the high priest. He first had to be clean and atoned for his sins before the service for the rest of the congregation could take place.

We know that Christ has and is fulfilling his role as our High Priest. We call this day the Day of Atonement, but in Hebrew, it is actually referred to as the Day of Atonements, plural. God's plan is not just about having one atonement for one individual completed, it is about His Family, and Christ was just the first to become fully atoned.

Continuing on in **verse 7—And he**, speaking of the high priest again, **shall take the two goats and present them before the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats: one lot for the LORD, and the other for the azazel.**

Now, we know the azazel is a representation of Satan. It's often translated as "scapegoat," and unfortunately that term, because of a misunderstanding of scripture, that term has come to mean something that's very different and twisted from what it really means. Today we think of a scapegoat as someone that is blamed for the wrongdoing or mistakes of others. In essence, the scapegoat is a victim. That is not the case by any means with Satan. But he would love for the world to see him in that light, as the victim of a harsh God, which is pretty sick.

The reality is that the term scapegoat comes from an archaic form of "escape goat." That makes a little bit more sense when you understand the meaning of azazel, but it's still not the best translation, especially for today. The azazel is a compound word for goat and another word that is about a "sending-off" if you will, and more concretely, "complete removal." This is not a goat that was allowed to "escape." They were commanded to separate the goat and forcefully send him away.

They had two goats but notice that the high priest was not to decide for himself. He had to cast lots and God had to show which goat was which. The priest brought forth two goats that from a physical appearance were spotless, but it is only God who can properly judge and know what is inside of us.

The world without God's spirit is unable to discern between God's ways and Satan's ways. It is only through God's spirit that we can know. And so, it was with these two goats, God had to show which one was Satan, and which one was Christ. The azazel is fully guilty. It just takes God's spirit to see that.

**Verse 9—And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the LORD'S lot fell and offer him for a sin offering.** We know that the goat is a representation of what Christ fulfilled on Passover.

**Verse 10—But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the azazel, shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make an atonement.** It's not "with him" but rather "over" or **against him, and let him go for an azazel into the wilderness.**

If we think of Atonement as an "at-one-ment" with God, then this scripture might not make so much sense. How can Satan be at one with God? Well, obviously he can't. That is not what is being stated here

at all. As was mentioned earlier the word for Atonement has much to do with cleansing and purging. That is what the whole ceremony was about for the Israelites. It is about making themselves clean.

Well, here it's the same thing. God is going to make the world clean again by removing Satan. So, the atonement against Satan is about his removal and purging; it is a separating and sending away just as was done with the goat. And we're going to go into this topic a little bit further here a little bit later in the sermon.

Let's continue on in **verse 11—And Aaron shall bring the bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and shall make an atonement for himself, and for his house, and shall kill the bullock of the sin offering which is for himself. And he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the LORD, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the veil.**

So, we understand that this sweet incense being spoken of is about our prayers that go up before God. They are sweet smelling because they show that we are seeking a relationship with Him. We are working on overcoming self, and we are repenting of sin.

Continuing on in **verse 13—And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not.**

Skip down to **verse 15—Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering that is for the people, and bring his blood within the veil, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat and before the mercy seat.**

We know that the mercy seat is very important in this whole process of atonement. It is the area where God would manifest Himself under the cover of the incense in the Holy of Holies. It is where the blood was sprinkled and was accepted as an atonement for their sins.

The mercy seat was essentially the closest physical location to where God was, and we understand it represents where God dwells. The mercy seat is mentioned in the New Testament. It's mentioned in Hebrews 9:5 where the parts of the tabernacle are described. But the word is also used in another place there and that's in Romans 3:25. Let's turn over there really quick for just a second.

**Romans 3:25**, but we're going to pick it up actually in **verse 23—For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Joshua, whom God has set forth (purposed) to be a propitiation.** So here, this word is the same word that's used for "mercy seat" – propitiation.

This is about mercy, forgiveness, and reconciliation. God cannot be around sin. If we understand that then we can understand that He can't be around us. We go against God and sin and that's evil. God has

allowed evil to exist in this world and it's only for a specific purpose that He's working out, and that purpose has everything to do with us.

So, again, how can we have any part in God? Well, the answer is right here in this verse. God purposed for Christ to be a go-between if you will, to make a way from this world of ours to that of God's. God purposed from the very beginning that Christ would actually be the mercy seat or atonement seat. Christ is that place where atonement occurs.

We pray to God and how do we do it? We do it through His Son, Joshua the Christ. He is our High Priest, and he is the one, the only one who is allowed to pass through the veil. He passes through it with that incense which pictures our prayers, and he is able to make atonement for us.

So, let's reread the second part of that scripture again. It says, "Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith of his blood." What does it mean "through faith in his blood?" Well, that's about our belief that Christ entered into the Holy of Holies with his own blood. He didn't enter into the Holy of Holies with blood from another sacrifice; he entered in with his own, and that was without fault. And in doing so, it has allowed for us to go before God whenever we want, through His Son, and ask for forgiveness of our sins.

The rest of this verse reads: **to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.** That is what I was just saying more or less but in different words. We can have remission of our sins. If we didn't have that remission, then we would be owed death.

"Forbearance," as it says here, is often used in Greek for "holding back." So, God's judgment of death is being held back from us. We are given another chance and another and another. We are allowed to keep working on ourselves because we don't get it right the first time, but we keep trying.

As was already mentioned here today, Christ is fulfilling his role as High Priest, and I think it would be good for us now to go over to some other scriptures that speak to this a little bit more.

Now we're going to turn to **Hebrews 9:1—Then verily, the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.** So, there is a distinction being made here. Before they had a divine service, but it took place in a physical sanctuary, and as we're going to see in these next verses that sanctuary is no longer of this world. It's a spiritual sanctuary. And inside of a spiritual sanctuary, we must also participate in a new spiritual sacrifice of our living bodies, as is spoken of back in Romans 12.

Continuing on in **verse 2—For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the showbread; which is called the sanctuary. And after the second veil, the tabernacle, which is called the Holiest of All, or the Holy of Holies, which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid around with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna and Aaron's rod that**

budded, and the tables of the covenant. And over it, the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy seat, of which we cannot now speak particularly.

Now, when these things were thus ordained, the priest went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest only once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people. This holy spirit, this signifying, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was yet standing.

So, only the high priest could enter into the Holy of Holies, and only at one time during the year, and that was on Atonement. The rest of the congregation didn't have any access. The high priest worked as the intermediary between the congregation and God.

**Verse 9** here it says, **Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience.**

Everything that was done during this service or ceremony was unable to make the high priest perfect. Why? Well, for one, it was only once a year, and if we sin, when do we need to purge or clean ourselves of those sins? Right away! We can't just wait. If we wait, God will stop dwelling in us. God won't be around sin.

So that was one big problem. Another one was that the high priests were still human, they were still filled with carnal human nature.

You can keep your place here; we will return in just a minute. But let's skip over to Hebrews 7:11. It's just a few pages back, so maybe you don't even need to hold your place, or maybe you don't even use pages anymore; maybe you use an iPad. But we'll go to **Hebrews 7:11—If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should arise after the order of Melchizedek, and not be called after the order of Aaron?**

So, we know that Christ was not a Levite. He did not descend from Aaron, and under Moses, the duties of the priesthood were only to be performed by the Levites, and that is what is being discussed here.

**Verse 12** it says, **For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood. And it is yet far more evident, for that after the similitude of Melchizedek—"similitude" just meaning of "being similar in nature"—that after the similitude of Melchizedek, there arises another priest, who is made not after the law of carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.**

And we know from past sermons that Melchizedek is God. Only the Eternal God is without father or mother and has no beginning of days or end. It's saying here that Christ was made after the power of endless life, just like His father.

Continuing in **verse 17—For he testifies, Thou are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. For there is, verily, a disannulling of the commandment.** This is a canceling, if you will, no longer valid. **For there is, verily, a disannulling of the commandment going before the weakness and unprofitability thereof. For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing of a better hope; by the which we draw near unto God.**

The old covenant couldn't bring about a true and lasting atonement for the people. But it was a start, and today it allows us to, better allows us to understand God's plan. The whole process has essentially been visualized for us.

Let's continue on in **verse 23—And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death. But this** (speaking of Christ), **because he continues ever, has an unchangeable priesthood.** Before, you know, there were many priests, high priests before Christ. But they all died. There was only one high priest allowed at a time, and after they died, they had to be replaced. But Christ is now the High Priest, and he has eternal life, so there won't be another one.

**Verse 27—Who needs not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice for his own sins and then for the peoples, for this, he did once when he offered up himself.** So, before, in addition to Atonement, the high priests were constantly offering up sin offerings daily. We need to do that as well. We need to pray to God and ask Him to forgive us daily and then change, and to offer ourselves up as a sacrifice instead.

Christ never had sin. He offered himself up just that one time, and that is why he is the only one who can fulfill this role as our eternal High Priest.

**Verse 28** continues, **For the law makes men high priests which have infirmity** (or are weak); **but the word of the oath, which was since/after the law, makes the Son, who is consecrated/perfected for evermore.** This first part is saying the same thing that we read about back in Hebrews 9:9. The service that was performed "could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience." You know, we're all weak, and no physical service can change that.

The second part of this verse is referring back to an oath in Psalms 110 where God promised that He would set up a priesthood after the order of Melchizedek. We know that is referring to Christ. That is why the Levitical priesthood was done away with. Because we have a new High Priest that is perfect, and his ways are the same as God Almighty's.

That is pretty important to understand because that answers a big part of the “how” question concerning Atonement that was spoken of earlier. How are we able to be forgiven of sin, and how are we able to shed that sin and be cleansed? How are we then able to be reconciled and become at one with God? Christ is the key part of the atonement process and of God’s entire plan. That is why he is referred to as the chief cornerstone. Because the whole building is being built on him, and without him, the building wouldn’t really be able to stand too well, would it?

We’re going to go back over to Hebrews 9, and we’re going to pick it back up in verse 11. **Hebrews 9:11 —But Christ being come a High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made of hands, that is to say, not of this building.** So, this new tabernacle, as it says, is not built with hands. It is spiritual. The old physical service was only picturing the spiritual process of Atonement. It is a process whereby we can purge ourselves of sin.

**Verse 12—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.** What does it mean that Christ obtained eternal redemption for us? What is redemption even about? Well, redemption is about redeeming something. It’s about an exchange. And in this case, we are being redeemed as slaves of this world, slaves of our own minds. So much of God’s plan pictures coming out of slavery, you know, coming out of Egypt, coming out of Babylon. It is about coming out of sin.

What Christ did, by offering himself as a sacrifice and entering into the Holy of Holies on our behalf pictures that redemption process. We can now offer up ourselves as a living sacrifice and in doing so we can exchange this carnal way of being for a different and better way. We can get an upgraded chipset like I mentioned earlier, and the result is an eternal freedom from drama, destruction, and death.

Let’s continue on in **verse 13—For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?**

It’s pretty obvious that Christ’s sacrifice is more impressive and means so much more than that of the blood from the animals. But the second part of this verse is also quite powerful because it shows part of the atonement process and further illustrates part of God’s plan for His Family.

Let’s look a little closer. First, we should consider what is our conscience. Oftentimes our conscience is described as this little voice in our head that tells us what is right and what is wrong. We often speak in a manner such as “due to my conscience” or “I can’t consciously do something” or “you can’t go against your conscience.” When you boil it down, our conscience is about our mind seeing between right and wrong and being able to differentiate that.

Of course, our conscience can also be something that weighs on us. That is usually because we have done something wrong, and we know we shouldn't have done it. In a way, you could say that our conscience is somewhat of a moral compass that we have in our brains. It's good to have a painful reaction, for example, to something wrong that we have done in the past. That means we have remorse.

That's also why it is so dangerous if someone sears their conscience, for example. If that happens it means that person no longer has any remorse. That remorse can be a good motivating factor for us so that we don't repeat past mistakes. But if you don't have it anymore or don't care, then obviously that shows that you have no desire to ever change.

So, this part where it speaks of "cleaning our conscience from dead works" is really a twofold operation. On one hand, we are able to clean our minds and be forgiven of our sins, which resulted in dead works. It's like when you repent of a sin, you don't have to dwell on it and beat yourself up over it. You don't have to walk through the streets so that your knees get bloody and whip yourself like some Catholics do in Mexico and other parts of South America. God doesn't want to see something like that. What He wants to see is the change in our lives, and that is what is pleasing to Him.

But there is also balance in how we should react to past sin. While we shouldn't beat ourselves up about it, we also shouldn't forget about the results of sin. Because the results are ugly. They are full of drama and destruction and there is a lesson that we should learn from it.

So, our conscience can be cleansed through the forgiveness of sin, but here is another way in which our conscience is cleansed as well. Cleaning our conscience from dead works is about making our conscience agree with God's. Deciding what is right and healthy for us to do is not something that we are capable of figuring out on our own. That is why our conscience and mind need to be in agreement with God's.

Let's go over to **Hebrews 10:16—This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the LORD, I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them. And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.** So, having our conscience cleansed from our dead works is being stated in another way here in verses 16 and 17. God is saying that our sins will be forgiven, and they won't be remembered, they won't be held against us.

There won't be any more death and pain that we create in these carnal bodies and our conscience will be right. God's laws will be put into our hearts and into our minds. That is a lot of what this Day of Atonement is about. Out with death and in with life.

And to think that in the future we will just be able to know what is right and wrong, and it'll be in our minds? It's really hard to imagine that we're really going to have a mind like that. But that is what God is offering us.



And just think, if you have that kind of mind and you're able to discern what is right in any given circumstance, then it will be so easy. We will just do it. Because by then our minds will have been fully set because we'll have had an entire lifetime of carnal experiences that have shaped us and taught us the full consequences of what it is to go against God. We won't be stupid anymore; we won't go against what we know to be right because it will be so plainly clear that it hurts us and others if we do so.

It makes me think of the saying, "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over but expecting different results." Well, that's what we do when we continue to sin. We keep hurting ourselves. But for some reason, we keep at it, thinking that the results will somehow be positive. And if you stop and think about it, that really is insane and stupid. And without God, it's quite clear we don't have any sanity.

So, this time that's being spoken of here when our minds are finally and fully set and they're aligned with God's, that's going to be pretty awesome.

Let's skip down to **verse 19—Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Joshua, by a new and living way which he has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and a High Priest over the house of God.**

Now, let's skip to **verse 22—Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.** This is how we should go before God, with a true heart. God has given us this incredible process of Atonement and we shouldn't take it for granted. We need to approach this with the attitude of "I want to change." And if we do that, then our hearts are pictured as being cleansed by the sprinkling of blood and our bodies washed. All of this is like the symbolism that we have read about today in Leviticus 16, that process about making ourselves clean.

Let's go to **verse 23** here. It says, **Let us hold fast to the profession of faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised) and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as the day is approaching.**

This is what we heard about earlier this past summer so much in the series entitled *Exercising God's Love*. We need to be thinking about one another and we need to be putting others above ourselves so that our actions, as it says in the scripture, provoke good works. Just think how much nicer this world would be if that's what people actually did for one another, if we tried to bring out the best in one other, if we encouraged each other to make positive changes in our lives. We should be helping one another.

As it says here in the scripture as well, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together." This is speaking about the 144,000 that Christ is preparing to bring with him when he returns. He is helping to assemble this group together. And it's saying, don't leave the assembling. Don't abandon it; keep on

fighting. Keep exhorting one another, admonishing, encourage and strengthen one another. Help build one another up, and even more so now because Christ is about to return.

This is a perfect segue here to go back to Leviticus 16 actually. Let's head back over there and this time we're going to pick back up in verses 16 and 17. Because it's about the high priest completing his work in the Holy of Holies, and that is what Christ is doing right now.

Leviticus 16:16—**And he shall make atonement for the holy place.** "The holy place." It's about what God is building. He's building a Temple, a place to dwell, and we are supposed to live in God and Him in us. It's about the Family of God, Elohim, the Kingdom of God.

And so, it says the High Priest, Christ, will make an atonement for the holy place. Why? To get rid of sin. If not, then it wouldn't be possible for any of us to have any part in this.

Continuing on, says, **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 remains among them in the midst of their uncleanness.** So, this "tabernacle of the congregation" is a meeting place where sacrifices and offerings would be presented. It is where the children of Israel would come before God. They would enter, and they would still have sin because they were carnal beings.

And so it is with us when we go before God. We have sin and we need to repent and be made clean. This is what Christ is here picturing doing. He is helping to clean his people and prepare them. And just like the children of Israel, we're always going to have sin in this body. It remains in our midst as it says. So, Christ is working at atoning this place, this holy place, and it is very much needed.

What is being stated here in verse 16 is showing part of the process of building the spiritual Temple. You know, Herbert Armstrong used to make the comparison that after baptism we are like an embryo. We've had the impregnation of God's spirit, but we have a long way to go still, and that's a very good comparison.

We have to grow to finally be able to be born into spirit. That's what is being pictured here. We should be sacrificing ourselves and getting rid of sin and going before God. Christ, along with God's spirit, helps us to do just that. But it is a lifetime of work that is required; it doesn't happen overnight.

Let's continue on in **verse 17.** Says, **And there shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goes in to make an atonement in the Holy Place, until he comes out, and has made,** or better stated, **until he has made an atonement for himself, and for his household, and for all the congregation of Israel.** This is about Christ's household. And again, that's the 144,000. That's what's being pictured here. Christ is not going to come out or return until that work is finished.

Let's skip down to **verse 20—And when he has made an end of reconciling the Holy Place and the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, he shall bring the live goat. 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, and 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.**

Finally, now is the time to deal with the live goat, and we know this goat pictures Satan. He is the originator of sin, and God allowed this sin to come into existence for a purpose. But at some point, Satan's role begins to be fulfilled. At some point, a final cleansing has to take place; the azazel pictures the beginning of the final cleansing process.

As we know, sin cuts us off from God. It separates us from Him; He can't be around it. So, this live goat, pictured as Satan, also can't be around. The live goat shows that sin has to be removed and it has to go far away. This goat wasn't just left outside of the camp either, he was, instead, actually escorted far away into the wilderness.

This word for wilderness is also descriptive of what sin produces. I'm not sure about you, but for me the word "wilderness" makes me think of a thickly forested landscape that doesn't have people living there but instead, it has lots of wild animal life, like maybe some pine trees with wolves and bears and big rivers.

But that is definitely not what this word is describing. This kind of wilderness is a wilderness like they have in these dry deserts in Israel or Egypt and other places here in the Middle East. It's a desolate landscape, devoid of any kind of life whether it be animal life or plant life. There is no water, and this is in a land that cannot support life.

A perfect example of this is when the children of Israel were in the wilderness. There wasn't anything for them to eat or drink. They wouldn't have even survived if it wasn't for God providing them with water from a rock and manna from the sky.

If we think about it, the wilderness or desert being spoken of here, is a representation of something that is the complete opposite of God. God creates, His creation grows, and it flourishes. And this desert wilderness, on the other hand, it just rots away. They are completely two different worlds.

This is a perfect representation of God and Satan. Look at what the two different sides produce.

It makes me think of when Herbert Armstrong would say that he was the "voice crying out in the wilderness." He would go before the leaders of the world, and he would speak to them about the give and get way and about good and evil. He would speak to them in terms that they could understand, but

essentially he was speaking to them about God's ways, whether they fully understood it during much of his speeches or not. But that was what he was doing.

So, he really was a voice crying out in the wilderness. The world is a spiritual wilderness, and Satan is the one who has had control, so it shouldn't be any surprise that the world is how it is. But isn't it fitting though that Satan is pictured as being sent into his own world that is a complete wasteland, a place that is produced as a result of sin? And so, God is showing that sin is going to be fully separated from Him and His Family with the separation of this goat and the azazel.

And then finally, we see in **verse 22** that it says, **And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited.** So, Satan is going to reap the rewards of sin. Ending up in an uninhabited land is the opposite of God's Family. That's what can happen if we don't choose God. We don't want to be without God or His spirit. We want what He is offering, a large meeting, a congregation, a Family.

Let's turn over to **Revelation 20:1—And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.** The bottomless pit or abyss is a place devoid of everything. It is not a place for habitation. There is no light. It's such a great representation because it shows that without God, we are nothing.

Everything we have comes from Him. That goes for Satan as well. He thought that he could become greater than God. What a foolish, stupid idea and look at the results. There couldn't be a more powerful description of the place where Satan is to be bound than a place that contains nothing because that is what he creates. He doesn't create anything. All he creates is destruction, which is nothing.

As it said earlier in Revelation, it refers to Satan as the king and angel of the abyss, whose name is Abaddon and Apollyon. He was the first to bring evil into the world and so he is the king of death and destruction. This is what sin leads to in all cases, death and destruction, and essentially, nothing.

This live goat or azazel spoken of in Leviticus shows that Satan is also a part of this whole atonement process. It's really a beautiful picture that after God has worked to create His Family and our minds have been cleaned and sin has been taken care of, that finally God takes care of the last being and beings that can cause any death or destruction in the universe. Their influence is removed.

Let's continue in **verse 2—And he laid hold of the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years.** So, we see that after the 144,000 return with Christ that Satan and his demons will also begin to be separated and purged from God.

As it says in Leviticus 16:10, God is going to make an atonement over them or against them. But this is not an atonement about forgiveness or reconciliation, it's an atonement that has to do with cleansing and finally getting rid of sin.

Let's wrap things up here today in **Hebrews 2:14-18—Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.** Satan has the power of death. Where does that power come from? Sin. That's why if we don't have sin and we are clean and reconciled to God then death has no power over us.

**Verse 15—And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime bound to slavery or bondage.** This word for bondage or slavery has to do with service and yielding up obedience. It's interesting to think of it like that, that we are yielding up our obedience. But we should ask what are we yielding up our obedience to, what are we serving? And the reality is in these carnal bodies of ours, we're all about serving self. That's what this service is about. We don't usually see it that way, but that is the reality. We are slaves to our own wants and desires, and that dictates how we live life.

We do things that we want to do simply because we want to do them, and it doesn't matter if it hurts those around us. It happens all the time in relationships; we just take and take and take. And that's a very quick way to lose a relationship.

Not having meaningful relationships in our lives is also not good for our health. There is a lot of research that backs this up. There have been quite a few studies that have been done on loneliness for example, and they all seem to point to the fact that you have a far greater likelihood of having a premature death if you are lonely compared to if you're not. Some studies even suggest up to a fifty percent greater chance. This really affects every part and every aspect of our physical health.

That should show us how much we really that we truly need one another. That's also why fellowship is so important. If having normal relationships with friends and family in the world is so important, then how much more important is it with God's Family? I can tell you, it's important for your physical health but it's also critical for your spiritual health.

Having those relationships are what edifies the Temple; it builds it. Not having them is doing the complete opposite. It stifles the building or just breaks it down. Just like being alone can physically break us down.

Again, that is why we are told to offer up our lives as a living sacrifice, if so we can build one another up.

So, we don't want to be in bondage and slaves to our unhealthy natural carnal ways because the results are not healthy, and they eventually lead to death. It's like this scripture says too, about the fear of death. That is such a motivating factor for human beings. Everyone knows that we have a limited time on this earth, and so much of man's mentality is about getting all that we can get before we kick the bucket.

And nowadays for so many it is acceptable to do whatever you have to do to get the most out of your life. You know, be as selfish as you want and hurt as many people as you need along the way. You know if you've got to lie, cheat or steal, it's not a problem, it's just part of the game. And sadly, that is how so many people see life.

If we didn't face death then it probably wouldn't bring out mankind's selfish nature to such an extreme. Maybe people would be a little bit kinder to one another. Like if someone gets in your way when you are late when you're driving, maybe they're driving slow in front of you, and maybe you wouldn't react so harshly if you had all the time in the world. You be like, yeah whatever, I got time.

But instead, time really is a commodity; it's not infinite. So, if someone is getting in our way, it's like, "You are stealing my time, and that's time from my life that I'm not going to get back, so you better get out of my way or we're going to have a problem!" But yeah, it's true, that's what it says, the fear of death definitely has helped to make people more selfish and a slave of death.

Let's finish up here in these last verses. Verse 16—**For verily, he took not on angels; but he took on the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made 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. For in that, he himself has suffered being tempted, he is able to help (bring aid) to them that are tempted/tested.**

We are tempted and we are tested every day. But we are told that Christ has fulfilled so many aspects of God's plan that he can help us. We don't have to overcome self by our self. We aren't alone in this battle. So, in that regard, if you think about it, the game is a little bit rigged in our favor now. We have an unfair advantage. We have Christ, we have God's spirit that works in us, and we have each other.

How thankful are we, that we have this race in front of us to run and that God has put together this amazing process of Atonement? That process is being worked out right now. It started with the Israelites having the High Priest that could only enter into the Holy of Holies just once a year on the Day of Atonement. But that wasn't enough, so, finally, Christ came, and he fulfilled the role of the first goat and then became the High Priest after the priesthood of His Father and became the instrument by which we can seek to become atoned.

But as we have seen, not all of this fulfillment has yet to be completed. Christ will soon return with the 144,000 whom he has been working with. Sin will be taken care of and removed, the azazel will be sent away, and soon all of mankind will have the opportunity to have their shackles loosed and become free from the law of sin and death.