

The Reconciliation of All Mankind

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Speaking for myself, having grown up in the church of God all of my life, I think most church of God members tended to look forward to the fall Holy Days, you might say, with a little more enthusiasm, joy and excitement sometimes than we typically do with the spring Holy Days. Not that the spring Holy Days are not very important—they are—but I think a lot of this is tied to our understanding of the meaning of the fall Holy Days. As the church of God has always taught, the spring Holy Days focus on the plan of salvation for the Firstfruits; for the limited group who are being called prior to the return of Jesus Christ. If you look at Passover through to the eighth day, as we'll touch on today, it's all very focused on the salvation process for the Firstfruits. You get to the Feast of Trumpets and it's the pivot point and focus is on the Day of the Lord and God's wrath and the destruction of this evil world. That is in preparation for the process of salvation for the rest of mankind. For that opportunity to be opened up for everyone, everyone who has ever lived, to have the chance to understand the truth and have their chance to obtain their spot in the Kingdom of God—if they successfully endure to the very end.

The Day of Atonement in particular starts this very process. This is what we are going to focus on today; the meaning of the Day of Atonement and the role it plays in the process of salvation for the rest of mankind. If you would like a title for the sermon it's:

The Reconciliation of All Mankind

As we're going to see, the Day of Atonement is really the first major event that begins this whole process, that allows all of mankind to have their chance of salvation. To begin looking at the meaning of the Day of Atonement, let's start where most Holy Day sermons often tend to start—our go-to chapter that gives us an overview of the Holy Days—Leviticus 23:26, where the Day of Atonement is covered.

Leviticus 23:26 *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: "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. (NKJV)*

This tells us right off the bat exactly when it is—the tenth day of the seventh month—and it tells us we have to fast; that's what *afflict your souls* means. If you look at that particular phrase, every time it appears in the Bible in the Old Testament it is always in reference to the Day of Atonement and referring specifically to the command to have to fast.

To understand the big picture of the Day of Atonement, all we have to do is read verse 28 because it tells us exactly what the Day of Atonement is about.

28) 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. (NKJV)

We'll see this explained in a little more detail in Leviticus 26. But first, what is this day about? Its whole focus is about making atonement for the people, atoning for their sins, to cleanse them of their sins and to make them right before God. That's tied to the whole meaning of the whole day. Let's pick it up in verse 29.

29) For any person who is not afflicted in soul on that same day shall be cut off from his people. (NKJV)

God takes the command for us to fast on this day very seriously.

30) And any person who does any work on that same day, that person I will destroy from among his people.

31) You shall do no manner of work; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

32) It shall be to you a sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict your souls; on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your sabbath.” (NKJV)

We know it's on the tenth day, but He says the ninth day—He is defining here from sunset at the end of the ninth day until sunset at the end of the tenth day which is the twenty-four-hour period we are talking about. It's the tenth day of the seventh month. I'm sure we all know almost every sermon that addresses Atonement spends a lot of time in Leviticus 16 because this chapter gives us all the details of what this day pictures. It describes in graphic detail the ceremony that Israel was to do every year on the Day of Atonement and it was fundamental to the meaning. To put all this into perspective, and to properly understand how this applies to the day, we actually need to begin at the end of the chapter rather than the beginning. When you are dealing with a detailed, complex subject, it can be helpful to get the general overview, the summary to put everything into perspective and get the big picture before you dive into all the finer details. If you dive into the details without that big picture overview of what it's all about, sometimes you can get confused on all the details of what it is covering. Unfortunately, the way this chapter is laid out, it jumps into the details right off the bat and it's at the very end of the chapter that it gives you the overall picture of what it's about. What we're going to do is start at the end of the chapter in Leviticus 16:29.

Leviticus 16:29 *“This shall be a statute forever for you: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether a native of your own country or a stranger who dwells among you. (NKJV)*

It is interesting to note that the beginning of the chapter just jumps right into the details. We see later, as we go through the chapter, that at the beginning of Chapter 16, it mentions not to go into the Most Holy place just at any time, but just at a specific time. But it does not tell you when that time is. It goes through all the details of the ceremony but if you read here in verse 29 then you know when this specific time is. It is *the tenth day of the seventh month*, on the Day of the Atonement that you do that. If you don't read this overview, you don't have that detail. Continuing in verse 30.

30) For on that day the priest shall make atonement for you, to cleanse you, that you may be clean from all your sins before the LORD. (NKJV)

This shows us the big picture of what this day is about. It is very clear what the focus of the Day of Atonement is; it's about atoning for the people, cleansing their sins to make them right before God and to establish a good relationship with Him. That's the symbolism and the picture of this day. If you notice, as we read through the next couple of verses, it is going to talk about making atonement for the sanctuary, make atonement for the altar and the tabernacle of meeting and a lot of different objects. Reading all the details about when he goes in with the blood and where he is sprinkling the blood and all the finer details, we see it talks about making atonement for this object and that object along the way. These are just parts of the picture—the big picture of what's taking place, which is atoning for the sins of the people, to cleanse them of their sins and to make them right before God. We just have to put all that into perspective. If we just jump into the details without seeing that big picture, we see all the focus as being on the objects and we don't realize that the big picture is about the people and not the objects. Continuing on in verse 31.

31) It is a sabbath of solemn rest for you, and you shall afflict your souls. It is a statute forever.

32) And the priest, who is anointed and consecrated to minister as priest in his father's place, shall make atonement, and put on the linen clothes, the holy garments; (NKJV)

Notice in verse 33 the objects they are talking about.

33) then he shall make atonement for the Holy Sanctuary, and he shall make atonement for the tabernacle of meeting and for the altar, and he shall make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly. (NKJV)

These objects are just part of the picture, but if you logically think about it, the objects don't have sins to be atoned for, they aren't capable of that; it's the sins of the people and you could say the objects are contaminated because of the sins of the people. But the big picture is focusing on atoning for the people and their relationship with God. The summary statement in verse 34 just drives this point home even further.

34) This shall be an everlasting statute for you, to make atonement for the children of Israel, for all their sins, once a year." (NKJV)

The whole picture here is making atonement for the people, about atoning for their sins, to cleanse them once a year and making them right with God. As we'll see later in the sermon, obviously this was a symbolic atonement because as we know the blood of animals doesn't really cover sins. It's a symbolic picture as the book of Hebrews describes those points to the ultimate reality of the sacrifice of Christ. This also gives us automatically, a very big clue as to what the meaning of the Day of Atonement is about. What did we just read here? This is all about atoning for the people's sins, to cleanse them of these and to give them a right relationship with God. As we'll see later when we go through the earlier parts of the chapter, this involves the sacrifice of an animal, and its blood is taken to do this cleansing and atoning. Just think about that; we know it's symbolic but what is it that actually atones and makes us right with God, cleanses us of our sins—that's obviously the sacrifice of Christ. So that's obviously what that's referring to physically and symbolically. To notice some of that let's see a couple of New Testament examples. Turn to Romans 5; there's a lot of scriptures that talks about this, but we'll just see a couple examples today. Romans 5:6.

Romans 5:6 *For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.*

7) For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die.

8) But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

9) Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. (NKJV)

What justifies and atones for our sins? The blood of Christ—that's what it directly tells us.

10) For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

11) And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation. (NKJV)

What is it that reconciles us to God the Father? It's the sacrifice of Christ and having that applied to us. There are numerous scriptures that talk about this and we'll just cover a couple today. Another example is in 2 Corinthians 5:18.

2 Corinthians 5:18 *Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation,*

19) that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

20) Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

21) For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (NKJV)

We can clearly see that it is the sacrifice of Christ that reconciles us to God, that atones for our sins, cleans us and makes us right before God the Father. Obviously, as we read from Leviticus 16, the Day of Atonement is symbolically picturing this whole process and therefore has a lot of the meaning by pointing to the sacrifice of Christ and what it does for us. This basically poses an interesting question. This is something that years ago I used to scratch my head over and I've discussed the subject many times with brethren over the years. We look at this subject and see it's obviously talking about the sacrifice of Christ and what it does for us, but isn't this also what Passover is about? Isn't this the same subject of the blood of Christ and how He died for us, reconciling us to God—isn't this what we picture in the Passover? Later in this sermon we'll read Hebrews 9, because it directly tells us that this is attached to the meaning of the Day of Atonement. There you also see the picture of Christ going before God the Father to atone for our sins, to pay the penalty for all mankind and isn't that what the wave sheaf pictures? Yes, it is. But why is this actually in the Holy Day plan twice? Why do we see basically the same meaning and symbolism played out twice throughout the Holy Day plan—why is that? The key is in what I mentioned in the introduction to the sermon.

As the church of God has taught my entire life, the spring Holy Days focus is on the Firstfruits; on the process of salvation for the people whom God is calling prior to the return of Christ. The fall Holy Days focus on the rest of mankind. If we focus on the details, we'll see that very clearly.

Let me first of all cover a principle that is a good basic principle in interpreting the spring Holy Days and something to keep in mind. The key to understanding the spiritual application of the spring Holy Days is sticking to the original story that they are based upon. If you look at the spring Holy Days, even from a physical perspective, why did ancient Israel keep them? Exodus 12 and 13 explicitly explains why.

Why are you keeping Passover? It's a memorial of what God did for us when He protected us from the death of the firstborn in Egypt.

Why do you keep Unleavened Bread? It's a memorial of God freeing us from slavery, when we were able to come out of Egypt and it is basically directly tied to that.

The spiritual meanings are based upon that same story, but how does the New Testament teach it to us? It's in spiritual analogies; it takes spiritual analogies and applies them to that story to explain the meaning of it. To get the meaning right we have to pay attention to the details of the story and stick to the structure of it to apply them. If we stray from the story, we might come up with an interesting sounding theory, but if it doesn't match the story then that means we got it wrong. So, the whole key is sticking to the details of the story. The reason I mention this is because it's pivotal to the understanding of this relationship between Passover and Atonement. If we stick to the details of the story, it makes it very clear to us how Passover applies. We will see this in Exodus 11. We'll see the context of Passover and what it was focused on.

Exodus 11:4 *Then Moses said, "Thus says the LORD: About midnight I will go out into the midst of Egypt;*

5) and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the female servant who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the animals.

6) Then there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as was not like it before, nor shall be like it again.

7) But against none of the children of Israel shall a dog move its tongue, against man or beast, that you may know that the LORD does make a difference between the Egyptians and Israel. (NKJV)

Notice that what was going to happen that night was specifically that it was the firstborn of the Egyptians who were going to die. When they followed the instructions of Passover—killed the lamb and put the blood on the door—whose life was saved? It was specifically the firstborn. In Exodus 12:12 we see this again.

Exodus 12:12 *For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD.*

13) Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. (NKJV)

Who was protected by putting the blood on the door? Specifically, the firstborn. To drive this point home a little more, look over at verse 29 and we'll see how it actually played out.

29) And it came to pass at midnight that the LORD struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of livestock.

30) So Pharaoh rose in the night, he, all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where there was not one dead. (NKJV)

To make this a little more graphic, let's also ask the question.

"What would have happened to a family in Egypt—an Israelite family who was living there at the time and just decided to be boneheaded and not follow the instructions? Who had not done what Moses had passed on from God and they didn't kill the lamb and put the blood on the door—how would that have played out?"

Let me give you an example to illustrate this point. I'm going to use an example of a family that I grew up in for the illustration. The reason I mentioned that is because I am the youngest child. There was a family of four, I have three siblings and a lot of you, particularly, if you've been to the Feast with Pacific, you've probably met my sister Vivian—she's actually the firstborn of all of us children. I'm the youngest and there are

two brothers in between us. If you add our parents to the picture, our mom was not only a firstborn but she was an only child—she didn't have any siblings—whereas our dad was second born in his family. The reason I paint this picture is, imagine if our family just decided to be rebels and didn't follow the instructions, what would it have looked like the next morning? My mom would be dead, Vivian would be dead because they are both firstborns, my father, myself and my two brothers would all still be alive. It would be as if nothing happened because our lives were never at stake in the first place in this situation. My point is to graphically drive home the point that Passover is very focused on the "firstborn".

Similarly, it is true in terms of the wave sheaf. We know the wave sheaf pictured Christ ascending to the Father to atone for the sins of mankind to pay that penalty for everyone and as we're going to see later in the sermon, Christ does this *once for all*. He didn't have to do this more than once. It's applied differently, but see how it's pictured in the spring Holy Days. It's very much framed in the context of Firstfruits. You see all throughout the spring Holy Days this firstborn, this Firstfruits emphasis in how everything is presented. To quickly see this with regard to the wave sheaf, look at Exodus 23:19.

Exodus 23:19 *The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring into the house of the LORD your God. (NKJV)*

This is a brief reference, but refers to the wave sheaf offering. Notice how it is characterized as the first of the firstfruits; it's in the context of "firstfruits" that's being talked about. We'll see the exact same statement made in Exodus 34:26.

Exodus 34:26 *The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring to the house of the LORD your God. (NKJV)*

You'll constantly see that this is how the wave sheaf is pictured. Understand I'm not saying by any means that Christ died more than once or that He had to present Himself before the Father more than once. No, that happened *once for all* and the Bible is very clear about that. The issue here is when it's applied. As we know, prior to the return of Christ, there was only a small group of people who were offered their chance at salvation or even given the opportunity and that's the Firstfruits. That's pictured by the spring Holy Days, that's why everything about it—even Pentecost—when you look at Pentecost it's all about Firstfruits because that's the whole focus of the spring Holy Days. If you look at the fall Holy Days, you'll notice a lot of the same concepts addressed but the concept of Firstfruits and the firstborn is just not there. Even on Pentecost, you see the two wave loafs and it's all about the Firstfruits of the wheat harvest, you get to the fall Holy Days, the grape harvest was the big issue there—that was the major harvest in the fall but there is no similar ceremony of taking the firstfruits of the grapes and doing this ceremony. That concept is just not there. The reason being, the spring Holy Days are the Firstfruits and the fall Holy Days are the rest of mankind. That's why you don't see that emphasis. That whole issue is how it's applied.

Just to be clear, we know Christ only had to die once; it was *once for all* and it applies universally. Turn to Romans 6 and we'll emphasize this point.

Romans 6:8 *Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,*

9) knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.

10) For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. (NKJV)

It's very clear, Christ died as we know on the day of Passover, that's when He fulfilled that sacrifice. But it's applied differently because initially it's applied to the Firstfruits and later it's applied to the rest of mankind. In Hebrews 10 and we see another verse that emphasizes this same point of making it very clear that Christ died *once for all*.

Hebrews 10:10 *By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (NKJV)*

Very clearly Christ only had to do this once; He didn't have to do it more than once, it's not something that is repeated. It's just a question of how it's applied. We also need to keep in mind—and this will become very important later when we discuss the Azazel goat, is that Christ's sacrifice does the exact same thing for both groups. It's applied with the same set of rules, it accomplishes the same set of functions in everything for both groups. There is no difference. That's an important thing to realize; it's really just the timing that is different. Turn to Romans 3:21.

Romans 3:21 *But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,*

22) even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference;

23) for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

24) being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

25) whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,

26) to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (NKJV)

We can see clearly, that through Christ's sacrifice that opportunity of applying this is given to the Firstfruits at this time and later it is then offered to all mankind. That's why you see the exact same meaning of the Passover and the wave sheaf offering reflected again in the Day of Atonement. It's an issue of applying that same meaning to the rest of mankind versus just exclusively applied to the Firstfruits because of timing.

With all that in mind let's go back to Leviticus 16 and we can look, through the meaning of the ceremony that gives us more specific detail about the meaning of the Day of

Atonement. This time we'll start at the beginning of the chapter because we've already seen the big picture overview of what it all means. The beginning of the chapter just jumps straight into all the details.

Leviticus 16:1 *Now the LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they offered profane fire before the LORD, and died;
2) and the LORD said to Moses: "Tell Aaron your brother not to come at just any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the mercy seat which is on the ark, lest he die; for I will appear in the cloud above the mercy seat. (NKJV)*

As I mentioned before, until you read the very end of the chapter, you don't know when this specific time is. He says not to do it at just any time, do it at the specific time. But it doesn't tell you when until you read the end of the chapter. It's on *the tenth day of the seventh month*, the Day of Atonement, that this takes place.

3) *"Thus Aaron shall come into the Holy Place: with the blood of a young bull as a sin offering, and of a ram as a burnt offering.
4) He shall put the holy linen tunic and the linen trousers on his body; he shall be girded with a linen sash, and with the linen turban he shall be attired. These are holy garments. Therefore he shall wash his body in water, and put them on.
5) And he shall take from the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats as a sin offering, and one ram as a burnt offering.
6) Aaron shall offer the bull as a sin offering, which is for himself, and make atonement for himself and for his house.
7) He shall take the two goats and present them before the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.
8) Then Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats: one lot for the LORD and the other lot for the scapegoat. (NKJV)*

Let me also make the point that I am reading this from the New King James translation and it always refers to this as the scapegoat. Most Bible translations just put the Hebrew word here which is Azazel. You'll also see they capitalize the word of Azazel which I personally think is an inaccurate way of addressing it.

9) *And Aaron shall bring the goat on which the LORD's lot fell, and offer it as a sin offering. (NKJV)*

Notice another interesting point to note as we go through this. It talked about these two goats and collectively referenced them as a "sin offering", and another interesting detail to note is that that's the only time it ever mentions the Azazel goat in the context of the wording of a "sin offering". The reason I mention that is, as you go through later, not only do you have distinguishing terms of Yehovah's goat and the Azazel goat, what you'll see is Yehovah's goat is referred to as the "goat of the sin offering" and the Azazel goat will be referred to as the "live goat". These are two terms for us to be able to contrast them. Obviously, the Azazel goat is not a sacrifice, you couldn't call it that

because it's never killed. A sacrifice is always something that is killed and its blood used and this goat is not killed, it's left alive through the whole process.

This chapter jumps around addressing the different animals and it can be a little difficult to follow in that regard. If we pick it up in verse 15 this will follow the meaning and stay consistent with the Lord's goat—Yehovah's goat.

15) 'Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering, [it's specifically referred to as the goat of the sin offering where the Azazel goat is referred to as the live goat and those are opposing, unique descriptors of the two goats] which is for the people, bring its blood inside the veil, do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it on the mercy seat and before the mercy seat.

16) So he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, for all their sins; and so he shall do for the tabernacle of meeting which remains among them in the midst of their uncleanness.

17) There shall be no man in the tabernacle of meeting when he goes in to make atonement in the Holy Place, until he comes out, that he may make atonement for himself, for his household, and for all the assembly of Israel. (NKJV)

We mentioned talking about atoning for the objects, but you keep seeing this emphasis that it's primarily about the people—the people's sins and making the people right before God.

18) And he shall go out to the altar that is before the LORD, and make atonement for it, and shall take some of the blood of the bull and some of the blood of the goat, and put it on the horns of the altar all around.

19) Then he shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times, cleanse it, and consecrate it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel. (NKJV)

You can see that we have two major components of this ceremony being talked about. We have the High Priest and these two goats and he's doing different things with these two goats. To understand this, we don't have to guess at all about a big portion of the picture, because the Bible is going to explicitly tell us what it means. When it comes to what the High Priest pictures and what the Lord's goat or Yehovah's goat—its blood and what's done with it—we don't have to speculate or guess at all because the Bible explicitly gives the answer. We see it explained very clearly for us in Hebrew 9.

Hebrews 9:6 *Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing the services.*

7) But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people's sins committed in ignorance; (NKJV)

We read in Leviticus 16, particularly if you read the last part where it defines the date and all the details, we know when that one time of year was—it was the *tenth day of the seventh month*, it was the Day of Atonement. So obviously what we're talking about is specific to the Day of Atonement from what has been stated.

8) the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing.

9) It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience—

10) concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation. (NKJV)

The next couple of verses explain to us exactly what was pictured by the High Priest and the Lord's goat because all we have to do is read it.

11) But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.

12) Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

13) For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh,

14) how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

15) And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. (NKJV)

This is what opened up the opportunity for mankind to receive salvation, to have their sins forgiven and to be reconciled to God. As we read through this, we can see clearly that it started out telling us about the Day of Atonement, the one and only time that you could go into the Most Holy place. It then turns around and explains what that ceremony means. It's picturing Jesus Christ going before God the Father with His own blood, atoning for the sins of mankind and enabling us to be reconciled to the Father and have our sins forgiven. It is very clearly, in a straightforward way telling us about it. As I mentioned before, this is the same meaning we see in the Passover and the wave sheaf offering. The whole key here is understanding that Passover and the wave sheaf are all presented in the context of the firstborn, the Firstfruits. Whereas if you look at the fall Holy Days, Atonement, the Feast and the Last Great Day, none of these are in the context of "firstfruits" and "firstborn" because this applies to the rest of mankind. Obviously when both of these ceremonies of Passover and Atonement were done in an Old Testament setting, in both cases, you have a physical animal and its physical blood being used for a symbolic atonement. They are both completely equal in that regard. This was just a symbolic picture that pointed to the ultimate reality of what Jesus Christ would do for us. As Hebrews explains for us, the blood of bulls and goats would not truly

cover sin, only the blood of Christ could do that. This was a symbolic picture to teach us the meaning of what all this would accomplish. We can clearly see what is accomplished with all this.

Another thing that is accomplished as we just read here, with the Lord's goat or a picture of Jesus Christ, we can see what Jesus Christ actually does for us. He is also referred to as the Mediator of the New Covenant because He was able to make our relationship—that is, open up the door so to speak—for us to have a relationship with God the Father. This gets into one of the meaningful symbols here. As it said, there was only one time of the year you could go behind the veil; to actually have direct access before the throne of God the Father. As the Bible tells us, Christ's death and paying that sacrifice for all of us, enables us a way through that veil. Removes that barrier so we can have that New Covenant relationship with God the Father. That was the whole meaning of the physical temple with a veil separating the presence of God and not having that access. That was the whole point, teaching that this was an Old Covenant relationship. The sacrifice of Christ enables a New Covenant relationship where we can have direct access to the Father, we can receive the Holy Spirit and have the opportunity for salvation. To see this a little more clearly, we will look at Hebrews 10:19.

Hebrews 10:19 *Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus,*

20) by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh,

21) and having a High Priest over the house of God,

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.

23) Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.

24) And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,

25) not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. (NKJV)

You can see it's the sacrifice of Christ that enables us to get through that barrier—that symbolic veil—that kept us separate from God the Father. This is what enables us to have that access. Let me also just clear up one thing that is sometimes a misunderstanding because of how this is worded in the New King James. This is actually in verse 20. Look at this again from the New King James.

20) by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh ... (NKJV)

If you read that the way it's worded there, you could come to a conclusion that the veil it's referring to, is somehow Christ's flesh. That's not what it's saying at all. It's saying that Christ's flesh enabled a way through the veil and that's clearer because of the way it's worded in the Complete Jewish Bible "*by means of His flesh*". In other words, *by*

means of His flesh He enabled a way through the veil and allowed the access directly with God the Father. This meaning was illustrated when Christ actually died, because the veil in the actual temple that was in existence at the time was literally rent in two at the time of His death. This made it painfully clear that it was His death and what He went through—the sacrifice that He did—that enabled this access through the veil. Let's look at Mark 15:37.

Mark 15:37 *And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last.
38) Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. (NKJV)*

You can see this is what happened at His death, but notice also this veil is being torn when? On the fourteenth day of the first month on Passover when Christ was being killed. This meaning is then being addressed on the Day of Atonement going through the veil. You can see how these tie into the Passover and into Atonement. The Passover is addressing the sacrifice of Christ for the Firstfruits and Atonement for the rest of mankind.

As I mentioned before, the ceremony wasn't just about the Lord's goat. There's another goat involved in this ceremony that has important meaning as well. Now we need to look at this one. As we're going to see as we go through this, with this one you have to do a little more detective work and analysis to get the answer. It's not as simple as having a chapter in the Bible that just lays it out and explicitly tells you what the answer is and you just flip over there and read it. That is why this subject is a lot more debated because we don't have a Hebrews 9 to turn to and read off the page and say, "There's the answer." To look at the Azazel goat let's go back to Leviticus 16:10.

Leviticus 16:10 *But the goat on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat [again, I'm reading the New King James, most translations say the Azazel] shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make atonement upon it, and to let it go as the scapegoat into the wilderness. (NKJV)*

The subject kind of jumps around, but to stay consistent go to verse 20.

20) *“And when he has made an end of atoning for the Holy Place, the tabernacle of meeting, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat. (NKJV)*

As I mentioned before, you will see the Lord's goat is referred to as the “goat of the sin offering”, but you'll see the Azazel goat is referred to as the “live goat” and they are unique descriptors.

21) *Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man.*

22) *The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness. (NKJV)*

There are some interesting points to note in clarifying the role that this goat plays and in understanding its identity. This is a lot more debated, controversial subject. First of all, note, as I pointed out before, that the Lord's goat is referred to as the "goat of the sin offering", this goat is referred to as the "live goat". Any type of sacrifice has to be killed and the blood is used for atoning. This animal is not killed so it's not a sacrifice. So, you know that whatever it's picturing can't be symbolically looking at the forgiveness of sin because the animal doesn't die. For there to be forgiveness of sin there has to be the shedding of blood, there has to be the death penalty and the blood is then used to atone. That's not what is happening here at all. So then, what role then does this animal play in atoning for Israel? How are we to understand this?

One of the keys here, is to look at another translation. The Complete Jewish Bible words this verse in Leviticus a little more clearly and we can see exactly what this goat's role is in providing an atonement. Leviticus 16:10 out of the Complete Jewish Bible.

Leviticus 16:10 *But the goat whose lot fell to 'Az'azel is to be presented alive to ADONAI to be used for making atonement over it [notice this] by sending it away into the desert for 'Az'azel. (NKJV)*

So, the role that this goat plays in atoning for the sins of Israel is by getting rid of it—"getting it out of Dodge" you might say. Another interesting point to make, it is the presence of the Lord's goat—in other words it's killed, its blood is taken into the Most Holy place and it's sprinkled on the altar, it's sprinkled around in numerous places there. It is the presence of that blood that cleanses and provides atonement. This animal is the exact opposite. The only role that it plays in atoning is "getting it out of the camp", getting it away from everybody where it has no connection with anyone.

Another interesting thing to note is in verse 26.

26) *And he who released the goat as the scapegoat shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and afterward he may come into the camp. (NKJV)*

This is referring to, as it says, *the hands of a fit man* taking this animal and leading it off to an uninhabited area where it's not around anything. Notice that the man who did this, had to take a bath before he was allowed to come back into the camp. He has to be cleansed to come back. Obviously, this isn't because he sacrificed an animal and he has blood and other bodily fluids that he has to clean up, because that didn't happen here. He just took the animal and took it off away from the camp and came back. Obviously, it's symbolically telling us that he was contaminated by the sins from being associated with this animal. So that's another important thing to focus on.

As I have mentioned previously, there is often debate around what exactly the Azazel goat pictures. We noticed earlier with the High Priest and the Lord's goat, that it is pretty easy to see and understand. We can go to Hebrews 9 and read it off the page and there you have it. There's the answer, it explicitly explains it. We don't have a chapter like that

for the Azazel goat. There is not anywhere else in the Bible that it's mentioned, other than Leviticus 16. There is not another chapter you can turn to and read and say, "Here is the Bible's explanation, it's right here on the page." That opens up the door for a lot of debate. The two most common arguments for this are the idea that the Azazel goat also pictures Christ or the idea, which we are going to cover later, that the Azazel goat pictures the binding of Satan. There are a couple of problems with the idea that it also pictures Christ. One of them that I've already pointed out is the fact that, as we see, Christ died *once for all*, it's a universal sacrifice. It applies the same way with the same set of rules, performs the same function for everyone, it's just a difference in timing. The Firstfruits get their opportunity for salvation first and the rest of mankind gets theirs later. What's interesting is, if you look at Passover and the wave sheaf you see an exact parallel to what Hebrews 9 explains in regards to the High Priest and the Lords' goat. What we don't see here is anything addressing the Azazel goat because that enters symbolism into the picture that we don't see anywhere with Passover and the wave sheaf. We have to answer the logical question then, if you're going to try and apply that to Christ, how do we explain that if this is applying to Christ that means there is some function that Christ's sacrifice is doing for the rest of mankind that's not mentioned for the Firstfruits. That contradicts a whole number of scriptures.

I think it's a big tip that we don't see the Azazel goat addressed in the book of Hebrews. We have to take into consideration what the focus of the entire book of Hebrews is? There are different tangents that get addressed throughout the whole discussion of the book of Hebrews, but there is a very specific theme about what the book is about. Look to Hebrews 8:1.

Hebrews 8:1 *Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,*
2) a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man. (NKJV)

In other words, the whole focus, the whole main point of the book of Hebrews is the role of Jesus Christ—that He is our High Priest. All the sacrificial system pointed to Him and what His sacrifice would accomplish and the role that He plays in our salvation. He is the Mediator of the New Covenant—all these things are explained in detail. If you think about it logically, it specifically addresses the High Priest and the Lord's goat and tells us this pictures Christ and here's why. Here is what it accomplishes—but it never mentions the Azazel goat. If that was also a function of what Jesus Christ accomplished, wouldn't you logically throw that in there as well? Wouldn't that be addressed and be part of the story? You would say, "Christ also does this and here's what it means." The most common argument is Christ is removing our sins from us as far as the east is from the west. Again, it's never mentioned in Hebrews. But also think of it as I have described, it's the presence of the Lord's goat—its blood being taken into the Most Holy place right before God, sprinkled on everything, it cleanses everything. What happens to the Azazel goat? The focus on him is to "get him out of here" where he can't have contact with anybody. Is there anything in the symbolism of our

relationship with Christ that would make us think that we would want Christ to be as far away from us as possible and have no contact with Him? No, we want Christ living in us, we want Him close. You don't want to be separated from Him at all. It's the exact opposite. We have to take that into consideration.

It's also important to look at what I like to call the literal nature of everything that plays out in Leviticus 16. If you look through what we've covered on the symbolism of the "Lord's goat" and the "High Priest" and all it symbolizes, and then read the explanation in Hebrews 9, it's like a literal depiction of what Christ did. He takes this blood, goes into the Most Holy place which symbolically represents being before the footstool of the throne of God the Father and presents it to Him. He is on the other side of the veil now; He has direct access to the Father. All of this is a very literal depiction. That would also suggest that we should expect the symbolism of the Azazel goat to have a literal depiction. Whatever it pictures would have that same type of literal fulfillment as to what is pictured in the ceremony.

There is an event in Revelation 20 that we can look to in the future that literally has that exact same symbolism where it would play out very literally.

Revelation 20:1 *Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.*

2) He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;

3) and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while. (NKJV)

If you think about it, this directly matches the symbolism of a fit man taking the Azazel goat out of the camp to an uninhabited area where he can't be around anybody. This symbolism exactly matches. It would also match the idea of the man who had to take him there and had to take a bath before coming back into the camp because he was considered to be contaminated by just being around this goat. It totally matches. How would that play a role in atoning for the sins of Israel? What role would that connect to with the relationship with God—how would this all tie together?

As we read directly out of Leviticus 16, the role of the Azazel goat plays into "atoning" simply by its absence—being removed, being taken away, that was its role. We can see here that Satan is taken away. If we understand Satan's role and how he plays into the whole issue of sin and our relationship with God. We'll see a direct parallel here. In John 8 we see a statement that Christ makes which tells us that Satan is the originator of sin.

John 8:42 *Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me.*

43) Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word.

44) You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. (NKJV)

He is the originator of sin, he was the first sinner, the first one to rebel against God and he has also played a very major role in introducing the concept of sin to mankind. He is leading mankind astray to be in direct rebellion against God. We can see his original role in this, in Genesis 3, where we see that after creation he very quickly gets directly involved with Adam and Eve and tempts them to sin. He basically gets rebellion started among mankind.

Genesis 3:1 *Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'"*

2) And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden;

3) but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" (NKJV)

Notice what Satan's response is to this and how he leads her astray.

4) Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die.

5) For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

6) So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

7) Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. (NKJV)

As we know, this is where sin enters the picture with Adam and Eve. Prior to this they had been living a life in full obedience to the instructions that God gave them. Who introduced all of this? It was Satan. He had rebelled long before this, we don't know how much earlier it was, the Bible doesn't tell us but we know he led a rebellion against God and took one third of the angels who followed him. He was also the primary player in leading mankind astray and entering this into the equation. It's also important for us to realize what a major role he plays in the issue of sin with mankind. The Bible tells us that *we don't wrestle against flesh and blood, we wrestle against spiritual powers and deceptions*—that's the important issue. We are certainly capable of free moral agency even without Satan; we can still be boneheads and make bad decisions and insist on doing our own thing. But the very reason that we have a hostile nature innately in us—as Romans tells us, is because the nature of man is just hostile against God. We're not capable of living in full submission to Him because we have this hostile, rebellious

nature and the reason for that is because of Satan's influence. It's very important that we realize the significance of that.

Revelation 12:7 *And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought,
8) but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer.
9) So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. (NKJV)*

It's important to realize that, because of the deception that he has caused amongst mankind, he plays an extremely pivotal role in mankind's rebellion and sin against God. The evil heart his influence puts in us causes us to have to fight a natural desire to be rebellious and do our own thing. It's a huge part of this picture. To reinforce this, we can look at 2 Corinthians 4:3.

2 Corinthians 4:3 *But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,
4) whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. (NKJV)*

So, as you can see here, a very major part of why mankind is in rebellion against God is because of Satan and his influence; because of the deception that he has caused and the hostile, evil nature that his influence places in us. You can see that, simply moving that out of the equation and allowing men to just have a heart of flesh, to just be natural human beings without that spiritual influence trying to pull us in the wrong direction, would have a massive impact upon the relationship between mankind and God. It's the sin that separates us. Notice Isaiah 59:1.

Isaiah 59:1 *Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear.
2) But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.
3) For your hands are defiled with blood, And your fingers with iniquity; Your lips have spoken lies, Your tongue has muttered perversity. (NKJV)*

So, what causes this great rift between us and God? Sin does. You have all of mankind being deceived, having their minds blocked from even being able to grasp the basics of God's Word, and, not only that, also being injected with a hostile, evil nature which just wants to reject and fight against God's Word. Removing that and sending it "out of the camp" where it can't affect anybody, would have a huge impact in making the relationship between mankind and God, a more positive, workable situation. You can see that's what this is pointing to. The fact that if you remove Satan from the picture, that's going to greatly help the situation with the relationship between God and mankind and that is exactly what happens during the millennium. If you look at the fall Holy Days,

the Feast of Tabernacles pictures the 1000-year reign of Christ and the Firstfruits in this utopian environment. We also know that during this period there's no Satan. He is imprisoned, he's taken away from being able to influence mankind. The Day of Atonement happens prior to that and its symbolism shows us that this major event is going to happen as God works with the rest of mankind. That's why this goat is not killed, its blood is not used to atone for anything; its role is to have the responsibility for sin put on it and then, to "get it out of here" and get it away from everybody. Even the man who carried it away, he had to take a bath before he is allowed back in—he was contaminated by just being around this thing. That's what Satan does.

To cover one other point because this is a question that always comes up when you address the issue of the Azazel goat picturing Satan. People always say, "Why would you picture Satan with a goat that is flawless?". You start off with these two goats that are perfect as far as animals go; you have to cast lots to differentiate between the two. Why in the world would you picture Satan as a perfect animal? Wouldn't it be some ugly, deformed animal that looked horrible? Wouldn't that be more appropriate? I've heard that question many times in my life. We have to understand Satan's history to understand that picture. He wasn't always the evil, maniacal being that he is today—that's not how God created him. That happens later after he rebelled. In Ezekiel 28 we see his history. He was originally created as a righteous archangel and then given free moral agency but made the wrong choice. As the Bible tells us in great detail, he was a beautiful, wonderful being prior to all of this; he was renowned for his beauty and his wisdom and how great everything was until sin entered into the picture. Keep in mind with the Azazel goat, you have this perfect goat brought into the equation, you have to cast lots to distinguish it from the Lord's goat and then all the sins are put upon it and it's carried out. Then the man who carried it has to take a bath because he's contaminated. It's when sin entered the picture that everything changed and that's exactly what the Bible tells us.

Ezekiel 28:11 *Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying,*

12) "Son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre, and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "You were the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

13) You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The sardius, topaz, and diamond, Beryl, onyx, and jasper, Sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes Was prepared for you on the day you were created.

14) You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones.

15) You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, [notice the last phrase] Till iniquity was found in you. (NKJV)

In other words, prior to sin entering the picture he was beautiful and flawless—he was perfect. All this worked well, but then he decided to rebel against God. Then he entered sin into the picture and everything changed. Then he wasn't the perfect, wonderful being—he was something that contaminated people by his presence. That's exactly

what we see in the Leviticus 16 ceremony. We can see how this plays out—it lays out for us how God is going to work with the rest of mankind when he starts opening the opportunity for salvation and working with them. There are two major steps. We know that during the millennium we have Satan not in the picture—that’s all pictured in the Azazel goat. We also know that all of mankind gets the same opportunity for salvation offered to them as the Firstfruits have which is the sacrifice of Christ. That’s why we see in the High Priest and the Lord’s goat, the exact same symbolism we see in the Passover and the wave sheaf. This same sacrifice, this same opportunity for salvation is offered to the rest of mankind.

Just to cover one “side note” scripture in regard to the verses we just read. I know for myself personally this is something I’ve scratched my head over for many years. There is a statement that doesn’t quite fit the context and that is because it’s actually a translation error. This is a side note but I thought I would address it since I have just read these verses. Notice the whole description starting from verse 12 down through 15 is all about how wonderful Satan was prior to his rebellion. When he is fully obeying God, how perfect he was in wisdom and beauty and he was described so beautifully. But then you see this comment in verse 13 that says “*You were in Eden, the Garden of God*”. Most often that is interpreted and I, myself, did this for most of my life—you would read that and go, but in Genesis 3 we have him described there in the Eden, the Garden of God, that seems to make sense. But think about the context. When he is in Eden, the Garden of God in Genesis 3, is he perfect in beauty and wisdom and wonderful and everything is great? No, he is an evil, maniacal being, and is described as a serpent there. This doesn’t really fit the context. The problem is, it’s a translation error. If you read the first part of verse 13 from the Septuagint it clears this up. It reads:

Thou wast in the delight of the paradise of God.

In other words, *the paradise of God*, is obviously referring to the garden of Eden; it’s saying you were *in the delight of the Garden of Eden*. In other words, you were as beautiful and perfect as the Garden of Eden. That fits with the whole context of all these beautiful jewels, works together and is perfect in beauty and wisdom—yes, he is beautiful, *he is as delightful as the Garden of Eden*. It’s not a reference to saying he was in the Garden—yes, he was in the Garden in Genesis 3—but that doesn’t fit the whole context here at all. The whole context is how wonderful he was prior to him rebelling. If you think about it in terms of he was *as delightful as the Garden of God*, it makes perfect sense and fits the context. I just wanted to explain that as a side note because there is a translation error there.

As we can see from all of this, the Day of Atonement is a wonderful day for us to look forward to, because of its meaning and what it pictures. This is the day when we begin the opportunity for salvation for all of mankind. It’s when it really “kicks off” God beginning to work with mankind, to offer them all, the chance of salvation and their chance to be in the Kingdom of God. It’s a day to look forward to with great excitement. It will be a wonderful day when all of this is fulfilled and all the rest of mankind will have the same opportunity at salvation that we have. That’s why when we look at this day, we

can look forward with great anticipation for the time when God will offer the opportunity for all mankind to be reconciled to Him.