

The Day of Atonement: A Day of Judgment, A Day of Vindication

For Israel, the Day of Atonement was the most solemn Day of the year. It was a day they associated with God's judgment and vindication of His people. **Leviticus 23:26-29** says "And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ²⁷ "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. 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. ²⁹ "For any person who is not afflicted in soul on that same day shall be cut off from his people."

The Bible is filled with the theme of Judgment. There are examples in the Old Testament - Noah & the world wide flood & the Ark; Sodom & Gomorrah; & Nineveh - as well as from the New Testament - the parables of the 10 Virgins; the Sheep & the Goats; & the Wheat & Tares - just to name a few.

Scripture teaches that obedience is a fruit of Love: obedience stems as a result of love.

Obedience, can be observed, even recorded, and judged. Please keep in mind there is a significant difference between judging behavior and judging the heart, which only God can know, or being judgmental, which is an attitude. Please notice these statements about judging and judgment:

John 14:15 "Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him."

1 John 2:4,5 "He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ⁵ But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him."

Matthew 7:17-19 "Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ "A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

Matthew 7:16,20 "You will know them by their fruits... ²⁰ "Therefore by their fruits you will know them."

There is an important spiritual lesson in the progression of the Fall Feasts that we should note. The repentance called for during the Feast of Trumpets is followed by the judging/cleansing/vindicating on the Day of Atonement, which is followed by the rejoicing during the Feast of Tabernacles.

The lesson is simple: A person can only experience true joy if they have genuinely repented of their sins and experienced the cleansing and renewal of redemption.

This judgment/vindication process for ancient Israel **typified a final judgment/vindication process for God's Spiritual Israel.** There was both a personal/individual and corporate judgment/vindication.

God's church is typified in Scripture as both a body, whose head is Christ, and also as the bride of Christ. Ultimately, God's church is made up by His faithful members of all generations – those saved by faith through His grace (**Eph 2:8-9**). A faithful member is a person who repents of their sin,

and surrenders to and accepts Jesus as Savior and Lord. Then, out of love, they follow the Lamb wherever He leads and keep God's commandments ([John 14:15](#); [Rev 14:4](#)). Even should they slip and fall to temptation, they rise up in His grace and continue their walk with Him ([Proverbs 24:16](#)). They are forgiven and cleansed and experience the joy and peace of Jesus through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit ([John 14:27 & 15:11](#)).

The Day of Judgment also typifies a specific time period in history involving God's church throughout history as well as His final, and literal, last day remnant church. Which we will see as we progress in this study.

Ten seems to be a number associated with testing, trial, law and order, and responsibility before the Lord.

- ([Gen 24:55](#)) Rebekah's brother & mother asked for 10 days before she should leave with Abraham's servant
- ([Ex 34:28](#)) God wrote His 10 commandments on stone
- ([Lev 14:8](#)) Ritual purification would take 10 days
- ([1 Sam 25:38](#)) Nabal died 10 days after Abigail told him about David
- ([Jer 42:7](#)) God spoke to Jeremiah 10 days after he prayed
- ([Dan 1:1,12,15](#)) Dan & 3 friends were diet tested for 10 days
- ([Matt 25](#)) tells the parable of 10 virgins and the testing experience they faced
- ([Rev 2:9](#)) Smyrna would be tested 10 prophetic days

For ancient Israel, the 10 inclusive days after the blowing of Trumpets were days of solemn preparation, and every Israelite was responsible to be ready for this solemn day. They were to **afflict** their souls and **repent, for they were soon to be judged. Those who didn't repent were cut off.**

10 Days were spent in and soul searching and repentance, because on that 10th day came the most solemn day in the Israelite calendar - **Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement** - which was also considered the **Day of Judgment**.

On the ritual **Day of Atonement**, Israelites humbled themselves before the Lord in fasting, national repentance and humiliation as they sought the Lord's atonement. A judgments generally consists of three parts: 1) after the court is seated if the accused pleads innocent there is an investigative phase (the trial) to see if the evidence corroborates the pea. 2) Next there is a verdict. 3) Finally the verdict is executed or we might better say, carried out.

You could fairly say, this Day of Atonement was a time for the proclamation of judgment, a time where the hearts of the people were investigated and judged, and a time for the execution of the judgment decision.

We've already read [Leviticus 23:26-29](#) above. [Verses 27](#) says they were to afflict their soul.

What does it mean to "afflict their souls"?

The Hebrew word translated "**soul**" – nephesh (neh'-fesh) – means a person, life, self, creature. You may recall that after God breathed the essence of life into the body of Adam, he became a living soul ([Gen 2:7](#)) because a living person doesn't have a soul, they are a soul.

The Hebrew word translated “**afflict**” - `anah {aw-naw'} - means to humble or humiliate. They were to humble themselves before God.

Psalm 119:67 says “[Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word.](#)”

David went through trials that humbled his heart. **God uses soul affliction – humbleness & humility - to draw us to Himself.** It's a self-examination, self-judgment, introspection, so that when a just God justly judges us we come to understand we can only be cleansed by Christ and not by our own works. This activity and our behavior reveal whether we have accepted, in faith, His grace and experienced His mercy.

The focus of the 10 day Feast of Trumpets was about repentance.

The focus of the Day of Atonement was about repentance, cleansing, judging, & vindication.

In **Vs 28** Israel was told to do no “**work**”: Hbrw - mela'kah {mel-aw-kaw'}. It means: 1) occupation, work, business 1a) occupation, business 1b) property 1c) work (something done or made) 1d) workmanship 1e) service, use 1f) public business 1f1) political.

In **Vs 28** we also see the word “**Atonement**”: Hbrw - kaphar {kaw-far'}. It means: 1) to cover, purge, make an atonement, make reconciliation, cover over with pitch (Piel) 1b1) to cover over, pacify, propitiate 1b2) to cover over, atone for sin, make atonement for 1b3) to cover over, atone for sin and persons by legal rites.

Vs 29 says the disobedient would be “**Cut Off**”: Hbrw - karath {kaw-rath'}. Which means: (Niphal) 1b1) to be cut off 1b2) to be cut down.

In **Vs 30** God says He would “**Destroy**” the disobedient: Hbrw - 'abad {aw-bad'}. Means: (Hiphil) 1c) to destroy, put to death 1a) of divine judgment.

Numbers 29:7-11 describes the offerings during this Feast. And **Leviticus 25:9** tells of the Jubilee connection which started on the Day of Judgment

Although it was one of the seven ritual/ceremonial Feast sabbaths, for Israel this day, the Day of Atonement, was really a fast day. It was the only one of the Feast days specifically set aside as a day of national fasting. Paul refers to it as "The Fast" in **Acts 27:9**.

In **Matthew 9:15** Jesus said, “[Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.](#)”

Never underestimate the cleansing effects of a good fast; not just dietary but also mental – all have a positive affect on the person and their spiritual life! While proper dieting is helpful, ultimately, the kind of fast God really wanted from His people then is the same kind He still wants from His people today. **Isaiah 58:6-9** says “[Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, To undo the heavy burdens, To let the oppressed go free, And that you break every yoke? ⁷ Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, And that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; When you see the naked, that you cover him, And not hide yourself from your own flesh? ⁸ Then your light shall break forth like the morning, Your healing shall spring forth](#)

[speedily, And your righteousness shall go before you; The glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.](#) ⁹ [Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; You shall cry, and He will say, 'Here I am.'](#)

Never underestimate the positive cleansing effects of a good fast - dietary or mental – because it affects the spiritual life!

For Christ's New Testament disciples, life was no longer the "ordinary business as usual", they had a Divinely appointed mission - the great commission – to proclaim, like a trumpet, the eternal gospel of Christ that would set the sinner free and prepare him for Jesus' return. Finishing the work was their life passion. But over the centuries that first love fire has dimmed.

Israel was God's chosen nation, but, like us, they were anything but perfect. In spite of personally witnessing God's miracles and hearing His voice and instructions, they had built and worshipped the golden calf. They grumbled and complained in the desert and murmured against God's appointed leader, Moses. They were a stubborn, stiff-necked sinful people, but God is a holy God. Sin and God do not co-exist together, then, now, or ever.

Israel lived and traveled with God every day in the wilderness. They camped around His house – the tabernacle. **The only way for them to survive such close proximity to God was to have their sins forgiven.** To have a right relationship with God, they needed to have their sins atoned. In addition to the yearly judgment and cleansing of the sanctuary, God had given them additional sacrifices and offerings. Personal sin offerings and sacrifices could be made through out the year, plus the daily sacrifice – morning & evening. These sacrifices were symbolic of the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ. When they participated in them they received forgiveness and grace as a result of their faith in Him. Christ's future sacrifice would secure both forgiveness and cleansing from sin ([1 John 1:9](#)), though a person only receives this benefit of grace by willingly accepting and receiving it. Through participation in ancient ritual feasts and sacrifices, sin was symbolically removed from the people, transferred to the blood of the innocent perfect sacrifice, and then into God's temple. It was then symbolically cleansed once a year on the Day of Atonement.

It's significant that the daily sacrifices were still continued on this day. That teaches us that forgiveness was still made possible by the daily sacrifices even on the yearly Day of Atonement. [Exodus 29:38-39](#) "Now this is what you shall offer on the altar: two lambs of the first year, **day by day continually.** ³⁹ "One lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight."

Leviticus 16 gives more detail of the Feast. **2 major rites happened on this day:**

- 1. The sanctuary, the priesthood, and the people were all purified, cleansed, via the sacrifice of the goat's blood.**
- 2. The expulsion of Azazel, the scapegoat, with all the sins of the repentent.**

The Feasts find their antitypical fulfillment in Christ and the various aspects of His ministry. Paul said in [Hebrews 9:28](#) "So [Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation"](#)

The book of Hebrews reveals Jesus as our perfect sacrifice, and also as **our perfect High priest**. (**Hebrews 7:14-16**). **Vs 22** says Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant. **Vs 25-27** says “He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.”²⁶ For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens;²⁷ who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.”

God takes a corporate view of His nation, His people. As a collective people they needed to be forgiven and cleansed/absolved of sin. Just as the Seraph took a coal from the altar and purified Isaiah's lips [**Isaiah 6:5**], **the Day of Atonement was to purify the unclean people who would represent their holy God.**

Bible prophecy points to the date of October 22, 1844, that would begin a time period **where the hearts of people, especially God's people, would be investigated and judged, followed by another phase of judgment, the proclamation of judgment decision, and then a time for the execution or carrying out of that judgment decision.**

In **Revelation 22:12** Jesus says “And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.”

Jesus said He is bringing His (positive or negative) reward) with Him when He returns. That means He must determine what the appropriate reward is for each person before He returns. He must determine whether His professed people are truly His, in word and action/lifestyle. Jesus said in **Matthew 7:21** “ Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.”

This isn't about our works, but about our heart. Do we love our Savior enough to obey His commandments, in the grace He gives us.

Judgment & Vindication in Scripture is for US!

Daniel 7:9,10,13,14; 8:14,26; 9:25 “And he said to me, For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed.”

Seventh-day Adventists know from the timelines of prophetic Scripture, that the cleansing of the sanctuary would occur 2300 prophetic days (which means literal years) after 457 BC. The cleansing of the sanctuary, the Day of Atonement judgment would began on Oct 22, 1844.

Judgment can happen quite quickly if a person admits their guilt. But it takes time. If a person claims to be innocent an investigation is needed to determine the facts. Here are some facts - Scripture says we have all sinned (**Rom 3:23**) and are guilty, deserving of death, unless we have accepted God's gift of eternal life in Jesus (**Rom 6:23**).

1 Peter 4:17 says us that judgment begins with those professing to be God's people. An investigation must happen to see if what they profess is true or not. **Malachi 3:16** & **Revelation 20:12** tells us that everyone will be judged out of the books of remembrance, a place where their life works, words, actions, and the fruit/results of their love and faith are recorded. **Ecclesiastes**

12:14 says [“God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.”](#)

Jesus said He is the judge of this world (John 5:22,30; 9:39). He is the world’s Sacrifice, Interceding High Priest, Advocate, and Judge.

Daniel 12:1,2 says that at a time of trouble like this world has never see, Jesus will intercede and deliver His people. His people are the ones with their names recorded in the book of life. It puts this into the context of Christ’s 2nd coming. While the final judgment, destruction, cutting off of the wicked will occur at His 3rd coming one thousand years later. And what will happen to Satan, the anti-typical scapegoat? Scripture says that he will ultimately be destroyed (Ezek 28:18). The future fires of hell were designed for his destruction.

In Luke 10:20 Jesus said the redeemed would rejoice because their names are written in heaven. Revelation 21:27 Says that nothing evil will enter heaven, only those written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Dear friend, as it was so eloquently written in the book **The Great Controversy (GC), 489.3** [“We are now living in the great antitypical day of atonement. In the same manner, all who would have their names retained in the book of life should now, in the few remaining days of their probation, afflict their souls before God by sorrow for sin and true repentance. There must be deep, faithful searching of heart. The light, frivolous spirit indulged by so many professed Christians must be put away. There is earnest warfare before all who would subdue the evil tendencies that strive for the mastery. The work of preparation is an individual work....**Though all nations are to pass in judgment before God, yet He will examine the case of each individual with as close and searching scrutiny as if there were not another being upon the earth. Everyone must be tested and found without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.**”](#)

Do we understand how much more essential it is that those of us living in this antitypical Day of Atonement understand the work of Jesus our High Priest and Judge, accept Him in our lives and, by His grace, carry forth the duties He asks of us?

By God’s grace, may you be faithful to look for and hasten that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of our great Father, and of our Savior, Jesus Christ. (II Timothy 2:13).