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THE DAY OF ATONEMENT – LESSON 1

YOM KIPPUR

At sundown today starts The Day of Atonement called Yom Kippur by the Jews. It is the holiest of all the religious days observed as ordered in Exodus 30:10. It is Tishri 10 of the seventh month of the Jewish religious calendar.

In Leviticus 16:29-31 and Leviticus 23:27-33 the people are commanded to observe it as a sabbath of rest. It is a day of “affliction” which means they are to eat no food and drink no drink. It is a day of absolute fasting. Anyone who does not fast shall be cut off from among God’s people. Anyone who does any work will be destroyed by God.

The entire chapter 16 of Leviticus spells out the procedures and offerings for this day.

The High Priest is to perform it. The procedure is done only once a year on Tishri 10. It is the only time a human can enter the most holy place (Holy of Holies) where the ark of the covenant rested behind a veil.

Tomorrow we will look at the priestly rituals, but for now I will discuss the significance of the word “atonement.” It is the English word used in the Old Testament many times, but only once in the New Testament in Romans 5:11 where it says, **“...we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ by whom we have now received the atonement.”** The Greek word used for “atonement” here is “katallagé” which means “reconciliation,” and is translated that way in Romans 5, I Corinthians 7, and II Corinthians 5.

To be reconciled (katallagé) and katallassó) means to be thoroughly changed throughout. Present-day preachers take that “reconciliation” to illustrate the alternative translation “atonement” to point toward what the reconciliation “looks like,” namely AT-ONE-MENT with God.

Yes, reconciliation or “atonement” does mean that we have been entirely forgiven so as to become “at one” with God through the shed blood and resurrection of Jesus. We have been “thoroughly changed throughout” (katallagé) as spoken in II Corinthians 5:17 as a **“new creature; old things are passed away; all things are become new.”**

That did not happen in the Old Testament. The word translated “atonement” is not in the New Testament sense of reconciliation. It is the Hebrew verb “kaphar” which means “to cover” and the Hebrew noun “kapharim” (plural) meaning of “coverings.”

Therefore, the priestly rituals and sacrifices of The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) only provided a temporary “covering” of their sins for one year. It was not “forgiveness.” It meant that God would not “see” the sins because he covered them with the blood sacrifices of animals until the next year.

Jesus became the permanent “once for all time” sacrificial lamb whose blood **for**gives our sin and not just **cover**s it. Thus, the Yom Kippur (day of Atonement) was a temporary foreshadowing of Messiah.

We have the “better atonement” of reconciliation through Jesus Christ.