

The Day of Atonement: Messianic Foreshadowing

The Day of Atonement, held the tenth day of the seventh month of the year, was an exceptionally hallowed ancient Israelite festival. It focused on a number of symbols and rituals that pertained to the Atonement, such as the sacrifice of a bull and a goat, the confession of sins on the head of a second goat (the scapegoat), the sprinkling of blood on the altar, and the high priest's entrance into the temple's Holy of Holies.

The directive regarding the scapegoat was straightforward: "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 in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat. . . . And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited" (Lev. 16:21–22). It was during the Day of Atonement that the high priest made atonement for the tabernacle and the altar, for the priests, and for the people: "And this shall be an everlasting statute unto you, to make an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year" (Lev. 16:34).

Topic	Day of Atonement	Jesus Christ
Atonement	Atonement was made for all Israelites (Lev. 23:27–28).	Jesus Christ made an atonement for all.
High Priest	The high priest officiated on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16).	As the "high priest of good things to come" (Heb. 9:11), Jesus provides the infinite Atonement.
White Vestments	The high priest wore holy, white linen vestments (Lev. 16:4).	The "clean and white . . . linen" represents "the righteousness of the saints" (Rev. 19:8).
Sacrifices for Sins	The high priest sacrificed animals to make atonement for Israel's uncleanness, transgressions, and sins (Lev. 16:6, 11, 15–20).	Jesus offered Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the world (see Heb. 7:27); His sacrifice was "neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood" (Heb. 9:12).

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Sacred Work on Own	No one accompanied the high priest to the Holy of Holies, where he made an atonement for the people (Lev. 16:15–17, 34).	Jesus trod the winepress alone (see Isa. 63:1–3) when He atoned for our sins.
Mediator	The high priest represented Israel before God (Lev. 16:3, 6, 11).	Christ the high priest represents us before God (see Heb. 7:26–27; 9:11; 1 Tim. 2:5).