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# *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*

## *"Pan Handlers"*

15:5-8

A quick reading of verses five through eight reveals seven angels dressed like priests exiting the smoke-filled Tabernacle in Heaven with bowls to pour out.

It would be a scene not too unfamiliar to a first century Jew. Once each year something similar happened on earth in the Temple at Jerusalem. From out of the smoke of the Holy Place the high priest would emerge. Blood from a bowl would be applied to various objects. It was Yom Kippur.

The Day of Atonement is the English equivalent for *Yom Kippur*. For many, however, the word *atonement* is vague and sheds no light on the meaning of the holiday. *Kippur* is from the Hebrew word *kaphar*, meaning: "to cover." Therefore, the word *atonement* simply means a *covering*. It was on Yom Kippur that an atonement (covering) was made for the previous year's sins. The atonement or covering consisted of blood sacrifice of an innocent animal.

On the day of Yom Kippur, the high priest had to follow a precise order of services, sacrifices, and purifications. This is how I understand them.

The high priest first performed the regular daily offering - usually performed by ordinary priests - in special golden garments, after immersing in a bath and washing his hands and feet.

The high priest immersed in a special *bath* in the Temple courtyard and changed into special linen garments washing his hands and feet twice - once after removing the golden garments and once before putting on the linen garments.

The high priest made a confession over the bull on behalf of himself and his household. He then slaughtered the bull as a sin-offering and received its blood in a bowl.

At the Eastern gate, the high priest drew lots from a lottery box over two goats. One was selected "for the Lord," and one "for Azazel." The high priest tied a red band around the horns of the goat "for Azazel." (Azazel probably means "escaped," hence our term 'scapegoat' since this goat was sent away.

The high priest ascended the altar and took a shovel full of embers with a special shovel. He was brought incense. He filled his hands and placed it in a vessel.

Holding the shovel and the vessel he entered the Temple's Holy of Holies. In the days of the First Temple he placed the shovel between the poles of the Ark of the Covenant. In the days of the Second Temple, when there was no Ark, he put the shovel where the Ark would have been. He waited until the chamber filled with smoke and left.

He next went to the eastern end of the Israelite courtyard and laid his hands on the goat "for the Lord" and pronounced confession on

behalf of the priests. He then slaughtered the goat, and received its blood in another bowl.

Again entering the Holy Place, on the other side of the veil from the Holy of Holies, the high priest took the bull's blood from the stand and sprinkled it with his finger eight times in the direction of the veil. He then took the bowl with the goat's blood and sprinkled it eight times in the same manner putting it back on the stand.

He removed the goat's blood from the stand and mixed it with the bull's blood. Starting at the northeast corner, he then smeared the mixture of blood on each of the four corners of the Golden (Incense) altar in the. He then sprinkled the blood eight times on the altar.

He left the Holy Place and walked to the east side of the Israelite courtyard. Near the Nikanor Gate, he leaned his hands on the goat "for Azazel" and confessed the sins of the entire people of Israel. While he made a general confession, individuals in the crowd at the Temple would confess privately. The high priest then sent the goat off "to the wilderness." In practice, to prevent its return to human habitation, the goat was led to a cliff outside Jerusalem and pushed off its edge.

That's just a small portion of the ritual on the annual Day of Atonement. In all, the high priest wore five sets of garments (three golden and two white linen), immersed in the bath five times, and washed his hands and feet ten times. Sacrifices included two (daily) lambs, one bull, two goats, and two rams, with accompanying meal offerings, wine offerings, and three incense offerings (the regular two daily and an additional one for Yom Kippur). He entered the Holy of Holies three times.

As wonderful as this ceremony was it was insufficient. The ceremony pointed to the penalty of sin being averted, or paid by another, but the people still did not receive actual forgiveness. All they were doing were buying time. This was merely a temporary reprieve. Everyone knew that the blood of goats and bulls could not really take away sin.

Before the day was done the people would have additional sin to atone for. The next day, the endless sacrifices would continue.

The Day of Atonement was meant to point us to Jesus. The Day of Atonement helps us understand what Christ came to do.

Hebrews 9:24 For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;

Hebrews 9:25 not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another -

Hebrews 9:26 He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

The picture of the two goats helps us understand what Christ did on the cross. On the one hand Christ paid the price for our sin to God (like the goat that was sacrificed). He satisfied the demands of holy justice that wrong might be paid for. Second, he removed our sin (like the scapegoat). Christ was our substitute. Our sins were placed on His head and transferred to His account and that account was settled at the cross.

Sin has been removed from our account. It is no longer on the record books of Heaven. In theological terms these two aspects of Christ's work is called propitiation and expiation.

So, back to our original observation. We see in our verses angels dressed like priests exiting the Temple against a backdrop of smoke. They carry bowls. It reminded a Jew of Yom Kippur.

Only in this case there is no scapegoat and the contents of the bowls are not blood that covers you but plagues that are poured out upon you.

That's because this is a scene at the end of the Great Tribulation, in its final months, and the people on the earth are without Jesus as

their Savior and Substitute. The wrath of God that proceeds from His Temple must be poured out upon them.

Revelation 15:5 After these things I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened.

The tables of stone which God gave to Moses upon which His law was written are called “tables of testimony.” These were commanded to be put into the ark of the covenant which was also called “the ark of the testimony.” This ark was in the Holy of Holies which was also called the “tabernacle of the testimony.”

What John is telling us is that the time has come to judge those on the earth who have broken God’s holy law and are without a Savior and Substitute. With no atonement you face the full demands of God’s law.

Revelation 15:6 And out of the temple came the seven angels having the seven plagues, clothed in pure bright linen, and having their chests girded with golden bands.

They are in priestly garb. They appear as priests because they come to mediate the judgment of God toward men.

The high priest did not wear his elaborate chest piece on the Day of Atonement because he, too, needed an atonement for his sins.

Revelation 15:7 Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever.

One of the cherubim angels that we’ve seen before provides the “bowls” within which the “seven plagues” are placed to be poured out. These are broad, shallow, pan-like, bowls.

Revelation 15:8 The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.

On the Day of Atonement the smoke was generated by the high priest. This is "smoke from the glory of God and from His power." It becomes a visible representation of the fact that access to God is over. There is no longer a way in to the presence of God for those who have rejected Jesus Christ. His judgment will from that point on be irreversible. We will see it fall upon the earth in chapter sixteen.

When Jesus died on the cross a very noteworthy thing happened, In Matthew 27:51 we read, "At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom."

What curtain was this? It was the curtain between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. In other words the way into God's presence was opened. Not only was sin removed, but we now have access into the presence of God. We don't have to wait for the priest to go to God for us. We can go ourselves. We don't have to wait for Yom Kippur, we can go at any time. We are not restricted to one day a year. We can come into His presence immediately.