

Living Guilt-Free



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As you read through the Old Testament, you'll discover that guilt is a very common topic. And it's no wonder guilt is frequently addressed under the Old Covenant, because God's people were trying to live by the law—and they failed frequently.

Before Christ came, God's people needed some way to deal with the guilt of their sin. So, guilt offerings were established as part of the law.

There is a wonderful teaching given in Leviticus concerning the Day of Atonement which teaches us about letting go of guilt and gives us great hope as we go deeper into the meaning of the Day of Atonement.

The Day of Atonement: A Drama in Five Acts

Act 1: The High Priest Goes to the Tabernacle

At the center of the tabernacle was the Most Holy Place, which was screened off from view by a heavy curtain. Only the high priest was allowed to enter the Most Holy Place. In it was the Ark of the Covenant, a wooden chest, carried on poles, with a lid over the chest.

Rising from the lid were two golden statues of cherubim. The purpose of the golden statues of the cherubim on top of the Ark of the Covenant was to visually remind them that no one could come near God without coming close to judgment.

The mercy seat was a flat area between the cherubim, and that is where God told Moses he would meet with him.

Exodus 25:22: *There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the Testimony, I will meet with you and give you all my commands for the Israelites.*



Only once a year on the Day of Atonement could the high priest enter this Most Holy Place.

Clothing

The high priest was one of the most important people in the whole nation. His clothes displayed the dignity of his office. When you saw the high priest, it would be like seeing royalty on a state occasion.





But on the Day of Atonement, the high priest did not wear his usual uniform.

So, as our play opens, the high priest appears dressed as a common slave.

Act 2: The High Priest Prepares

Aaron, Moses' brother, was the first high priest. But before he or any other high priest could enter the presence of God to deal with the sins of the people, he had to deal with his own sins first. So, in this second act, we see the high priest take some of the blood from the sacrificed bull, go behind the curtain into the Most Holy Place, and sprinkle it on the mercy seat as a sacrifice for his own sins.

Act 3: Atonement Is Made.

The high priest comes out of the tabernacle and two goats are brought to him. One of these goats is for a sacrifice for the sin of the people, and the other goat is a scapegoat.

Then the high priest sprinkles the blood of one of the goats on the mercy seat. Judgment, which demands death as the penalty for sin, is satisfied; mercy, which offers forgiveness for the sinner, is sustained. Mercy is released in the place of judgment as the blood is sprinkled.

God's mercy accepted a **substitute sacrifice**—giving life to the sinner. Nothing could satisfy God's justice except a perfect sacrifice for sin. Blood had to be shed.

This entire ritual was a picture of what the Messiah would do for his people when he came to redeem them from their sins.

Act 4: Sin Is Confessed

Now the second goat is brought to the high priest.

Leviticus 16:20-21a: *When Aaron has finished making atonement for the Most Holy Place, the Tent of Meeting and the altar, he shall bring forward the live goat. He is to lay both hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites – all their sins – and put them on the goat's head.*

At this point the high priest confesses all the sins of Israel while laying both hands on the head of the live goat! Imagine all the sins he would have to confess.

Sin cannot be atoned for and forgiven until it is confessed and forsaken. It is as true today as it was then.

This is a picture of what our Lord did when he died on the cross for our sins.



2 Corinthians 5:21: *God made him (Jesus) who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

1 Peter 2:24: *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.*

Act 5: Guilt Is Removed

After this long prayer of confession, the high priest sends the guilty goat into the desert.

Leviticus 16:21-22: *He shall send the goat away into the desert in the care of the man appointed for the task. The goat will carry on itself all their sins to a solitary place; and the man shall release it in the desert.*



A man is designated to come lead that goat way out into a desert and then let it go. That goat is gone forever. It will be remembered no more.

Truths for Today

The Day of Atonement was a series of visual aids in which God was teaching these basic truths that we need to grasp:

- We need a priest who will lay aside his dignity and honor and come as a servant to make atonement for us.
- That priest needs to be prepared, because a man with his own sins cannot atone for the sins of others.
- Atonement can only be made by the shedding of blood. This satisfies the justice of God and mercy can be released to the people.
- Sin must be confessed, and when it is, its guilt will be transferred.
- When atonement has been made and sin has been confessed, then your guilt will be removed. It will be taken out of your sight.

The Day of Atonement is a preview of what Christ did for us.

Act 1: Christ appears.

Philippians 2:6 – 7: *Who (Jesus), being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.*

Act 2: Christ Is Prepared

He lived a perfect life.

Hebrews 7:26 - 27: *Such a high priest meets our need – one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.*

He was what no other high priest ever was or could be – sinless. He was and is a qualified Savior.

Act 3: Christ Makes Atonement

Now, we have access to God's throne, right into the Holy of Holies, because Jesus paid the price to open the door to God for us.

Hebrews 4:16: *Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

Act 4: We Confess Our Sins

Just as the high priest had to confess the sins of the people, we must confess our sins.

Act 5: Our Sins—and the Guilt that Remains—Are Removed

When John the Baptist saw Jesus, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29b) Everyone who heard that would have understood exactly what John meant, because they had witnessed the Day of Atonement many times.

We no longer need a Day of Atonement. No longer do we need a ritual to remind us that a Messiah is coming to redeem us, because Messiah *has come* and he has redeemed us.

We must see our sin and our guilt taken away, never to be remembered against us again.

Psalms 103:10-12: *He (the Lord) does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.*

Isaiah 43:25: *I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.*

If you are still living with guilt from your past sins, which have been confessed, forsaken and forgiven, it is because you choose to.

What are your options in dealing with guilt?

Option #1: You can allow your thoughts to continually condemn you.

Option #2: You can try to shift the blame.

Option #3: You can try to drown the guilt.
Overwhelming feelings of guilt are one major cause of addictions.

Option #4: You can punish yourself.

Option #5: You can face the music and move on.

Your Plan for Guilt Management

1. Are you ready to become more intentional about dealing with your load of guilt, both true and false guilt?

- ☐ Yes
☐ Not sure

If you're not sure, I encourage you to pray more about it, seek some counsel from trusted, godly people if necessary, or just step out on faith and do it anyway. I promise, it can't hurt!

2. Accept Responsibility

What sins of the present or past do you need to own up to and confess to God.

Write out a prayer of confession for this/these sins:

(If you are only dealing with false guilt, or with sins that have already been confessed and forgiven, then your prayer needs to be one of confessing your lack of faith to truly believe you have been forgiven and God no longer holds those sins against you. Or, in the case of false guilt, confess that you have believed lies from your enemy instead of believing God, and this has kept you under the bondage of false guilt far too long.)

3. Changing Your Thought Patterns

Identify wrong thought patterns and messages that you have entertained and allowed which you recognize to be unbiblical, and find a scriptural antidote for it:

Wrong thought patterns/message

Scriptural Antidote

Choose some specific things you will do—things you are not now normally doing—which will help you to praise God more:

- ☐ I'll sing more praise to God throughout my day, not just at church.
- ☐ I'll often recite all that I have to be thankful for, especially when I'm feeling discouraged or depressed.
- ☐ I'll memorize some praise verses and quote them frequently.
- ☐ I'll remember to praise God for all the little things during my daily life that I so often take for granted.
- ☐ I'll offer sacrifices of praise—praising God when I don't feel like it at all.
- ☐ I'll praise him in advance, praising him by faith for what he will do.