

ABSTRACT

“The Day of Atonement and God’s Law”— This study examines the relationship between the Day of Atonement and God’s law, highlighting its role in biblical theology and eschatology. It analyzes how Israel’s sanctuary purification rituals illustrated divine justice and mercy, prefiguring the eschatological judgment and the vindication of God’s character. Through a typological reading, the article explores the sanctuary’s role in the divine covenant, the nature of sin and atonement, and the relevance of these principles for contemporary Christian faith.

Palabras clave: Day of Atonement, God’s law, sanctuary, divine judgment, eschatology

RESUMEN

“El Día de la Expiación y la ley de Dios”— Este estudio examina la relación entre el Día de la Expiación y la ley de Dios, destacando su papel en la teología bíblica y la escatología. Se analiza cómo los rituales de purificación del santuario en Israel ilustraban la justicia y la misericordia divinas, anticipando el juicio escatológico y la vindicación del carácter de Dios. A través de una lectura tipológica, el artículo explora el papel del santuario en el pacto divino, la naturaleza del pecado y la expiación, y la relevancia de estos principios para la fe cristiana contemporánea.

Palabras clave: Día de la Expiación, ley de Dios, santuario, juicio divino, escatología

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT AND GOD'S LAW

Roy E. Gane

Introduction

From the beginning of our world's history, Satan has sought to deceive human beings into thinking that he has a better alternative to God and his law and that by disregarding his law they can enjoy freedom, happiness, enlightenment, and higher status as selfish rulers of themselves and their own destinies (see, e.g., Gen 3:1–6). The Israelite sanctuary and its services teach otherwise, as Asaph learned when he entered the sacred precincts and realized what will really be the end of those who rebel against God and his law, even if they appear to prosper for a time (Ps 73:17; cf. vv. 1–16). Every death of a sacrificial animal at the sanctuary showed what would be the fate of sinners if they did not have a substitute to die for them.¹ Ultimately, people can continue to live only if they have a positive relationship with their awesome Creator-Redeemer, who holds their breath in his hand (Dan 5:23). “In him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28).²

The expiatory sacrifices at the sanctuary were “types” or “shadows” of the dynamic process by which God saves faulty human beings from sin and its results through the greater sacrifice of Jesus Christ (e.g., John 1:29; Heb 7–10; cf. Col 2:13–17). So in order to understand these sacrifices, it is necessary to comprehend the nature of sin. The Bible defines sin as wrongdoing that is lawlessness in that it breaks God's law (e.g., Gen 3; Lev 4:2; Num 15:22; Jas 2:8–12; 4:17; 1 John 3:4; 5:17). Therefore, to understand sin, we must have knowledge of God's law (cf. Rom 3:20; 7:7).

The Day of Atonement on the tenth day of the seventh month (Lev 16) was the climax of ancient Israel's ritual year in terms of completing the treatment of sins and also physical ritual impurities, which repre-

1. Cf. Lev 17:11—sacrificial blood to ransom the lives of the offerers. For לְכַפֵּר עַל-נַפְשֵׁיכֶם here meaning “to ransom your lives” (trans. Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–22: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 3A [New York: Doubleday, 2000], 1295) referring to substitution, compare Exod 30:15–16; cf. v. 12.

2. Quotations of biblical translations in the present article are from the ESV (English Standard Version) unless otherwise indicated.

sented the human state of sinfulness that has resulted from sinful action (see below). Therefore, understanding the rituals of the Day of Atonement, by which the divinely appointed system of remedying sins and impurities reached its goal, is crucial for comprehending the entire system of expiatory rituals that illustrated the salvation process.

The Day of Atonement was special and unique in several ways. First, it was the only day of the year when God permitted the high priest to approach his Presence in the inner sanctum, the holy of holies (Lev 16:2–5, 12–17). Second, it was the annual time of renewal when God's sanctuary was ritually cleansed through special purification offerings (so-called "sin offerings"). These sacrifices removed residual defilements from physical ritual impurities and sins that had been accumulating at the sanctuary throughout the year (vv. 14–20, 33). Third, as a result of the cleansing of the sanctuary from the sins of God's loyal people, for which they had received forgiveness throughout the year, they now received moral purification (v. 30; cf. v. 34). Fourth, on this day the high priest symbolically sent the Israelites' sins on a live male goat to Azazel (vv. 10, 21–22), representing Satan, who bears responsibility for his own part in the sins of human beings.³

This cleansing of the sanctuary and moral purification completed the process of reconciliation (*at-one-ment*) between God and his people that made it possible for the divine-human covenant and God's residence among his people to continue. After this, the Festival of Booths (so-called Feast of Tabernacles), beginning on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, lavishly celebrated the historically redemptive and ongoing bond between God and the Israelites (Lev 23:33–43; Num 29:12–38).

If the Day of Atonement rituals were so important for understanding God's plan of salvation because they demonstrated the final disposal of sin, which is a violation of God's law, these rituals should teach us about the significance of God's law. In fact, several categories of divine law uniquely converged on the Day of Atonement. First, the texts that prescribe the rituals performed on this day (Lev 16; 23:26–32; Num 29:7–11) belong to the literary genre of ritual law. Second, only on the Day of Atonement was there ritual action that directly involved the ark of the covenant, the repository of the tablets of the Ten Commandments (Exod 34:28–29; 40:20): the high priest was to sprinkle sacrificial blood on the golden lid of the ark (כַּפֹּרֶת) and in front of it (Lev 16:14–15).

3. See Roy Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 273–274, 288–291, 295–297.

Third, Lev 16:16, 19 calls for the annual ritual removal from the sanctuary of physical ritual impurities (plural of *טִמְאָה*), which were regulated by laws (Lev 11:24–44; 12–15; Num 19). Fourth, Lev 16:16 states that in addition to physical impurities, the high priest was to remove from the sanctuary two categories of moral faults that were violations of divine laws: sins of rebellion (plural of *פְּשָׁע*) and (non-rebellious) sins (plural of *חַטָּאת*).

The present article explores the role of God's law in relation to the Day of Atonement rituals. The order of sub-topics discussed here is as follows: (1) the covenant framework of divine law manifested at the sanctuary, (2) ritual remedies for expiable moral faults and physical ritual impurities, (3) defilement of the sanctuary by physical impurities and moral faults, (4) the function of the Day of Atonement rituals, (5) antitypical fulfillment of the Day of Atonement and its purpose, and (6) conclusion: implications of this study for modern Christians.

The Covenant Framework of Divine Law Manifested at the Sanctuary

As mentioned above, only on the Day of Atonement was there ritual action in the most holy place on the ark of the covenant, which contained the written Ten Commandments. Thus, the Day of Atonement uniquely highlighted the divine-human covenant, its laws, and the function of the sanctuary as the residence of the covenant deity.

The Israelite sanctuary was the palace of the deity YHWH (the personal name of Israel's God, perhaps pronounced something like "Yahweh"), who had made a covenant with his chosen people (Exod 24) that was unique in the ancient Near East. This was not a covenant between equals because YHWH, as Israel's superior, gave it to Israel and set the terms of the covenant. Thus, the covenant resembled a political suzerainty treaty between a superior human king (such as a Hittite emperor), whom modern scholars call a "suzerain," and an inferior ruler, called a "vassal."

The formulation of such a treaty could involve several elements.⁴

4. These elements could include: (1) introduction of the speaker, (2) a historical prologue reviewing the previous relationship between the two parties, often emphasizing kind actions toward the vassal by the suzerain, (3) stipulations regarding what the vassal is obligated to do for the suzerain, (4) a statement concerning the document, such as the requirement for periodic public reading of the treaty and sometimes specification of the place where the treaty document is to be stored, (5) calls for witnesses, which were usually gods in ancient Near Eastern political treaties, but alternatively could be

Most relevant to us here are the treaty stipulations, i.e., obligations on the vassal that are specified by the suzerain, and the place where the treaty document is to be stored. In the case of the covenant/treaty between YHWH and the Israelites, the stipulations are the laws/instructions that he gave them. Of these, first and foremost were the Ten Commandments that God directly spoke to the Israelites (Exod 20:3-17; Deut 5:7-21). These exemplified key divine principles based on love for God and love for other human beings (cf. Matt 22:37-40, citing Deut 6:5; Lev 19:18; Rom 13:8-10).⁵ Tablets with the Ten Commandments written on them constituted the “testimony,” i.e., the contract of the divine-human covenant, and these were deposited in the “ark of the Testimony” in the most holy part of God’s sanctuary (Exod 25:16, 21-22; 34:28-29; 40:20; cf. 31:18; 32:15 of the first set of tablets).

God also progressively gave the Israelites other laws, especially in the major law collections of Exod 21-23; Lev 1-7, 11-24:9; 25-27; Deut 12-26. These laws reiterated the Ten Commandments (e.g., Lev 19:3-4) or expanded on them in a number of ways.⁶ First, some laws apply the Ten Commandments to specific life situations with cultural details and/or penalties. For example, the eighth commandment prohibits stealing (Exod 20:15) and Exod 22:1 (Heb. 21:37) specifies: “If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and kills it or sells it, he shall repay five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep.”

Second, some laws apply principles expressed by the Ten Commandments to sub-principles. For example, the fifth commandment requires: “Honor your father and your mother . . .” Other laws forbid various ways to dishonor one’s parents by striking or cursing them (Exod 21:15, 17; Lev 20:9) or rebelling against them (Deut 21:18-21).

Third, some laws apply super-principles exemplified by the Ten Commandments to other areas of life. For example, the seventh commandment forbids adultery (Exod 20:14; Deut 5:18), exemplifying the broader principle of sexual purity. Leviticus 18 and 20 also forbid oth-

heaven and earth or parts of the earth, and (6) curses and blessings against or for the vassal, carried out by the witnesses, depending on whether he disobeyed or obeyed the treaty stipulations. Scholars have shown that these kinds of elements appear in Exodus-Leviticus, Deuteronomy, and Joshua 24 regarding the covenant between God and the nation of Israel. See, e.g., John H. Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature in its Cultural Context: A Survey of Parallels Between Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, Library of Biblical Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), 101-105.

5. See Roy E. Gane, *Old Testament Law for Christians: Original Context and Enduring Application* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 147-155.

6. Cf. Gane, *Old Testament Law for Christians*, 62, 239-280.

er deviations from sexual purity, including incest (18:6–18; 20:11–12, 14, 17, 19–21), sexual intercourse during menstruation (18:19; 20:18), homosexual practice (18:22; 20:13), and bestiality (18:23; 20:15–16). Exodus 22:16–17 (Heb. vv. 15–16) and Deut 22:28–29 also regulate premarital (with an unbetrothed young woman) sex.⁷

Fourth, some laws exemplify the over-arching principle of love in ways that are not directly represented in the Ten Commandments, such as care for and protection of socially marginalized and/or poor people (e.g., Exod 22:21–27 [Heb. vv. 20–26]), non-human creatures (e.g., Deut 22:6–7, 10), and trees (Deut 20:19–20). Ritual laws that regulated exclusive worship of the covenant deity and purity that was compatible with his holiness so that he would continue to reside among his people (especially Lev 1–7, 11–17, 23:1–24:9; Num 19, 28–29; Deut 12, 16:1–17) could be regarded as based on the principle of love for the only true God (Deut 6:5).

Some ritual laws prescribed expiatory sacrifices, foreshadowing Christ's sacrifice, to remedy mistakes that people could make in violating God's other laws (e.g., Lev 4:1–6:7 [Heb. 5:26]) or to cleanse them from physical ritual impurities that were incompatible with his holiness (esp. Lev 12–15; Num 19). Thus, God's law itself provided mercy flowing from his love. Failing to fulfill such a ritual law by willfully neglecting to offer a required expiatory sacrifice would reject that divine mercy and the coming sacrifice of Christ to which the rituals pointed.⁸

The Ten Commandments were primary, but Israel's covenant deity held his people accountable for keeping all of his laws so that he could bless them, rather than curse them (Lev 26; Deut 28). His laws were in harmony with cause-and-effect principles and were for the good of the people (Deut 10:13). In addition to good results from the natural results of right doing, if the Israelites would follow his instructions, he could abundantly bless them. In this way, he would demonstrate his wisdom and beneficence and the benefits of serving him so that peoples of other nations would be drawn to him (Deut 4:5–8). Thus, the Israelites would serve as his chosen channel of revelation to the world so that he could also save many other people (cf. Gen 12:2–3; 22:17–18). On the other hand, if the Lord would bless the Israelites when they

7. Illicit sex with a betrothed woman is treated like adultery (Deut 22:23–24).

8. This explains the severity of the terminal "cutting off" penalty (on which see further below) for willful failure to undergo purification from corpse impurity by means of the ashes of the red cow (Num 19:11–13, 17–20), which was a purification offering (v. 9).

disobeyed him, he would send the wrong message to the world that his principles did not matter and that he was not really the God of love that he claimed to be.

The pentateuchal laws, in addition to the Ten Commandments, were just as divine in origin as the Ten Commandments themselves and comprised an expanded corpus of covenant stipulations. It is true that God conveyed them through Moses because the Israelites begged Moses to receive them from the Lord and convey them to the people because they were afraid to hear God directly speak to them (Exod 20:18–19; Deut 5:23–27). But they were not simply “laws of Moses”; they originated with God himself. Therefore, Moses directed that the book of the law, in addition to the Ten Commandments, should be placed with the ark of the covenant (Deut 31:24–26) as a witness to the conditional divine-human covenant.

The Israelites were morally responsible for keeping all of God’s commandments, which regulated many areas of life, and obedience to which was necessary for maintaining their covenant relationship with him. So in that sense, the divine regulations were all moral laws for the Israelites, which can explain why the pentateuchal law collections, especially in Lev 19, mix what we regard as religious and ethical laws together.⁹ However, various kinds of law had different purposes within the covenant framework. Ethical laws were for the health of God’s chosen and exemplary society and the well-being of individuals within it. Laws concerning ritual worship were directly related to God.

Associated with the ritual system were instructions for protecting the holy and pure sphere of God, centered at the sanctuary, through control of physical ritual impurities. These impurities of varying severity and duration were certain notable manifestations of the faulty state of sinfulness involving the birth-to-death cycle of mortality that has resulted from human sinful action (cf. Gen 3; Rom 5:12; 6:23).¹⁰ God is the sinless, immortal source of all life, so he could not be associated with such impurities or people would misunderstand his nature in relation to theirs.¹¹

9. Only in biblical law collections “are moral exhortations and religious injunctions combined with legal prescriptions; elsewhere . . . these three distinct spheres are found in separate independent collections” (Shalom M. Paul, *Studies in the Book of the Covenant in the Light of Cuneiform and Biblical Law*, VTSup 18 [Leiden: Brill, 1970], 43).

10. Cf. Hyam Maccoby, *Ritual and Morality: The Ritual Purity System and its Place in Judaism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 60; cf. 31–32, 48–50, 207–208.

11. Cf. Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 3 (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 767–768, 1002–1003.

Sources of the impurities were mainly human corpses (Num 19), skin disease (Lev 13),¹² and male and female genital flows (Lev 12, 15), but they also included carcasses of some animals (11:24–44).¹³ Incurring some impurities was involuntary (15:16–17—nocturnal emission; vv. 19–20—menstruation) or voluntary (v. 18—sexual intercourse) and even necessary (Num 19—if one must bury the dead) but deliberately incurring some impurities was forbidden (Deut 14:21, although not yet in Lev 15:17), especially for consecrated priests (Lev 21:1–4, 11; 22:8) and Nazirites (Num 6:6–7).

Israelites who incurred physical impurities were required to undergo timely purification in order to resume contact with holy things. Such purification could involve laundering clothes, bathing, and waiting until evening in cases of light one-day impurities (e.g., Lev 15:5–8, 10–11) and additional rituals, including sacrifices, for more severe impurities that lasted longer (e.g., Lev 12:6–8; 14:1–32; 15:13–15, 29–30; Num 19).

The comprehensive and exalted nature of God's law reveals his holy, pure, sinless, and immortal nature and character. Consequently, the Israelite high priest on the Day of Atonement must have been profoundly awed by the experience of approaching the repository of his covenant law, over which the divine Presence hovered between the cherubim, his lethal glory veiled by incense (Lev 16:12–13; cf. Exod 25:22; Num 7:89).

Ritual Remedies for Expiable Moral Faults and Physical Ritual Impurities

Approaching the ark where the divine Presence was enthroned, the high priest could have reacted like Isaiah, who cried out: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips" (Isa 6:5). But just as God had a cure for Isaiah's sin (vv. 6–7), he prescribed a remedy for the Israelite high priest and his people: sacrificial blood, which the priest was to sprinkle on the lid of the ark (כַּפֹּרֶת) and in front of it (Lev 16:14–15). The law in the ark represented pure justice, but the blood over and in front of it signified mercy for violators of that law, granted on the basis of the coming sacrifice of Christ. Justice and mercy, the two parts of love (Exod 34:6–7), met in peace at the throne of God (cf. Ps 85:10 [Heb. v. 11]; 97:2).

12. So-called "leprosy," but the symptoms are not the same as those of modern leprosy, which is Hansen's disease.

13. People could also become impure from carcasses of certain animals (Lev 11:24–31, 39–44).

Anyone who approaches God must face his justice because he is inseparable from his law, which is his own character. But it is only by coming to him that faulty human beings can receive mercy. “Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16). The divine source of the law is also the source of mercy. The exalted character of the law as God’s character of perfect love (1 John 4:8, 16; Matt 22:37–40), which can be illustrated by commandments, but is not reducible to them (Mark 10:17–21; Luke 18:18–22) or avoidable through loopholes (Mark 7:9–13), reveals the magnitude of the mercy that we need and that God has granted through Christ.¹⁴ Conversely, the supreme cost that God paid to give us that mercy—the sacrifice of his own Son—magnifies the law and makes it glorious (cf. Isa 42:21) by proving that it is immutable—unchangeable even to spare God’s only Son, and by displaying his infinite love for us (John 3:16). Therefore, we are drawn to the foot of the cross both by our need for mercy as sinners who have violated God’s law (Rom 3:10) and by the unfathomable love that we see lifted up there before us (John 12:32).

According to the Pentateuch (Torah), the violation of any divine commandment, whether ethical or ritual, was a moral fault, i.e., a sin. Violations of divine commands could be unintentional (Lev 4), due to forgetfulness (5:2–4), or intentional/deliberate sins (5:1; 6:2–5 [Heb. 5:21–24]). Deliberate sins could be non-defiant, and therefore expiable by animal sacrifice (5:1, 5–6; 6:1–7 [Heb. 5:20–26]), or defiant/rebellious (“high-handed”), and therefore inexpressible by animal sacrifice (Num 15:30–31), although God could forgive grievous sins, including rebellious (*peša’*) sins, apart from the Israelite ritual system (Exod 34:7; Mic 7:18; cf. 2 Sam 12:13; Ps 51; 2 Chr 33:1–19).¹⁵

A physical ritual impurity itself was not a sin, but breaking a divine commandment regarding impurity was a sin. Such a commandment could prohibit a person from incurring a particular impurity (e.g.,

14. “Those only who have a just regard for the law of God can rightly estimate the atonement of Christ which was made necessary by the violation of the Father’s law”. Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages: Book One* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1958), 232.

15. Cf. Roy E. Gane, “Numbers 15:22–31 and the Spectrum of Moral Faults,” in *Inicios, paradigmas y fundamentos: Estudios teológicos y exegeticos en el Pentateuco*, ed. Gerald Klingbeil, River Plate Adventist University Monograph Series in Biblical and Theological Studies 1 (Libertador San Martin, Entre Rios, Argentina: Editorial Universidad Adventista del Plata, 2004), 149–156.

Num 6:6–7), require an impure person to act in a certain way to avoid spreading his/her impurity (Lev 13:45–46; cf. Num 5:1–4), prohibit an impure person from coming in contact with holy things or places (7:20–21; 12:4; 22:3–6), or stipulate purification procedures to be carried out at certain times (e.g., 12:6–8; 14:1–32; 15:5–9, 10–11, 13–15).

God mercifully provided ritual remedies throughout the year for moral faults and physical ritual impurities of his people. The burnt offering effected removal/expiation (כִּפֹּר, Piel of כָּפַר), commonly translated “make atonement”¹⁶ in general, without specification (Lev 1:4). It was the basic sacrifice with several functions, including to remove/expiate sins, as earlier in patriarchal times (Job 1:5; 42:7–9).¹⁷ The burnt offering could also be combined with other sacrifices, especially purification offerings, to provide expiation for sin (Lev 5:7–10; Num 15:24) or purification from physical ritual impurities (Lev 12:6, 8; 14:19–22, 31; 15:15, 30).¹⁸

Two other kinds of expiatory sacrifices were more specialized to remedy certain kinds of sins that were not expiated by burnt offerings. Purification offerings (so-called “sin offerings”) expiated minor sins, including unintentional sins (Lev 4), secretly but deliberately neglecting to provide required testimony (5:1),¹⁹ and sins of forgetting to undergo required physical purification (5:2–3) or to fulfill an oath in a timely manner (5:4). Purification offerings also provided purification from severe physical ritual impurities (2:6–8; 14:19, 31; 15:15, 30; Num 19:9). Purification offerings for sins or physical impurities could be combined with burnt offerings (see above), which enhanced the quantity of the sacrifices.²⁰

16. For the basic meaning of כִּפֹּר as “effect removal,” see William K. Gilders, *Blood Ritual in the Hebrew Bible: Meaning and Power* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 29.

17. Burnt offerings at the Israelite sanctuary could also fulfill vows or serve as freewill offerings or festival offerings (Lev 22:18; Num 15:3, 8; 29:39). Earlier, patriarchs offered burnt offerings to worship God under various circumstances (Gen 8:20; 22:2–3, 6–8, 13).

18. Also, in Lev 16:24 burnt offerings supplement the purification offerings by which the high priest purges the sanctuary (cf. vv. 3, 5, 11, 14–16, 18–19).

19. On why this intentional sin of omission in Lev 5:1 was minor, see Bruce Wells: “the person in Lev 5:1 is not the perpetrator of the crime but an innocent bystander who simply saw or heard about the matter. It is not necessary, therefore, for the person to suffer a loss of memory, in order for the wrongdoing to be at a level of culpability low enough for the purification offering to suffice.” Bruce Wells, *The Law of Testimony in the Pentateuchal Codes*, BZABR 4 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2004), 81.

20. In Lev 5:7–10, two birds—one for a purification offering and the other for

Reparation offerings (commonly referred to as “guilt offerings”) expiated sins of sacrilege, whether by misuse of holy things (Lev 5:14–16) or fraudulent misuse of God’s holy name in a false exculpatory oath by a guilty defendant who was trying to clear himself from blame (5:20–26 [Engl. 6:1–7]). A reparation offering could also expiate an unknown sin (5:17–19).

Defilement of the Sanctuary by Physical Impurities and Moral Faults

According to Lev 16:16 (cf. v. 19), the high priest ritually removed physical ritual impurities (plural of *הַמְּאֻסִּים*) and two kinds of moral faults—rebellious (*עֲשֵׂי*) sins and (non-rebellious *חַטָּוֹת*) sins—from the Israelite sanctuary on the Day of Atonement. The books of Leviticus and Numbers indicate three ways in which these impurities and sins, which related to God’s law in different ways, could come into the sanctuary.

First, the sanctuary could be defiled if persons with severe impurities entered the sacred precincts (Lev 12:4) of the covenant deity or otherwise violated purity rules that safeguarded the holiness of his sanctuary. Those who defiled (Piel of *אִמַּס*) the sanctuary in such a way would die (15:31).²¹ God’s awesome Presence among his faulty people, which would automatically and instantly kill them if they crossed boundaries that he set up for their protection (cf. 2 Sam 6:6–7), was a tremendous privilege, which they could enjoy only if they carefully followed his instructions.

Second, the sanctuary could be defiled (also Piel of *אִמַּס*) through certain very serious violations of God’s law, which could be regarded as rebellious and for which no expiation through animal sacrifices was available. These included Molech worship (Lev 20:3) and deliberately failing to undergo purification from physical impurity incurred by contact with or proximity to a corpse (Num 19:13, 20). These flagrant sins

a burnt offering—serve as the functional equivalent of a single flock animal for a purification offering (v. 6). So the burnt offering bird quantitatively contributes to make a large enough sacrifice, but it does not make a qualitative difference to the nature of the expiation, which is that of a purification offering. See also Num 15:22–29, where a burnt offering along with a purification offering to expiate the unintentional sin of the entire community provides the same kind of expiation, (but in greater quantity) as one female goat as a purification offering on behalf of an individual person.

21. Also, persons with severe impurities were to stay out of the Israelite camp in which the sanctuary was located so that they would not defile it (Num 5:1–4).

by any Israelite or non-Israelite immigrant defiled the sanctuary from wherever the sins were committed (automatically and from a distance) because they profaned the name/reputation of the covenant Lord who resided in the sanctuary (Lev 20:3—"to profane my holy name"; cf. Exod 20:7; Ezek 20:39; 36:20–23; 39:7). There is no indication that the sinner had to enter the sacred precincts in order to defile the sanctuary.²² The defilement was conceptual/symbolic, rather than material, and therefore not subject to constraints of physical transfer.

The sinner was condemned to the divinely administered terminal penalty of "cutting off," which goes beyond death (Lev 20:2–3),²³ the same penalty inflicted on rebels who sinned defiantly ("with a high hand"; Num 15:30–31). By judging rebels within the community of God's chosen people—those who had enjoyed the benefits of his covenant—the Lord upheld the importance of his law, which constituted the covenant stipulations. God's holiness is displayed even in the punishment of those who violate his commands (cf. Lev 10:3).

The third way in which the sanctuary could receive a kind of defilement, but in this case only lesser defilement (not Piel of *ס-נ-ט*), was through purification offerings. These sacrifices expiated minor sins and physical impurities (see above), resulting in transfer to the sanctuary of residual defilement from these sins and impurities. According to Lev 6:27–28 (Heb. vv. 20–21), blood from a purification offering that spattered on a garment had to be washed off in a holy place and a vessel in which the flesh of a purification offering was boiled (for the priests to eat; 6:26, 29 [Heb. vv. 19, 22] was to be broken if it was pottery or scoured and rinsed in water if it was metal. This demonstrates that residual defilement from the offerer, "from" (privative preposition *מִן*) whom was removed either (1) responsibility for committing a minor

22. Contra rabbinic interpretation in *Tosefta Shebu'ot* 1:8 and Rashi on Num 19:13, defended by Maccoby, *Ritual and Morality*, 167, 170, 172–174. Ángel Manuel Rodríguez has agreed with the rabbinic interpretation and Maccoby. See Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, "Transfer of Sin in Leviticus," in *The Seventy Weeks, Leviticus, and the Nature of Prophecy*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, DARCOM 3 (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Research Institute, 1986), 174. Jacob Milgrom has responded to Maccoby in "Impurity is Miasma: A Response to Hyam Maccoby," *JBL* 119 (2000): 729–731; Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 23–27: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 3B (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 2458–2463.

23. On this penalty, see, e.g., Donald J. Wold, "The Meaning of the Biblical Penalty *Kareth*" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1978), 251–55; Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 457–460. Cf. Ps 109:13, "Let his posterity be cut off [Hiphil of *כ-ר-ח*]; In a following generation let their name be blotted out" (NASB 1995).

violation of a divine commandment (e.g., 4:26; 5:6, 10) or (2) physical ritual impurity (e.g., 12:7; 14:19; 15:15, 30),²⁴ had been transferred to the sacrificial animal victim, from which it affected a garment or vessel.²⁵

Therefore, when an officiating priest applied blood from the same animal to the sanctuary (Lev 4:6–7, 17–18, 25, 30, 34) and burned its suet/fat on the outer altar (vv. 8–10, 19, 26, 31, 35), this would have further transferred the residual defilement of sin or impurity to part of the sanctuary, which included the outer altar (16:20, 33). When part of the sanctuary was affected in this way, the whole sanctuary was affected, which explains why physical impurities had to be removed from the most holy place (16:16) even though blood from purification offerings that had removed the physical impurities from their offerers was only ever applied to the outer altar in the courtyard.²⁶

If there was an unintentional sin committed by the high priest, who represented the whole community before God, or the whole community that included the high priest, the high priest was to offer a purification offering. In this kind of purification offering, he was to sprinkle blood seven times in front of the inner veil, i.e., in the main area of the holy place in front (east) of the incense altar,²⁷ and daub blood on the horns of the incense altar in the holy place (Lev 4:6–7, 17–18). By locating the sevenfold sprinkling “before YHWH” in front of the inner veil that separated the holy place from the most holy place (vv. 6, 17), Leviticus orients this ritual activity with reference to the most holy place. There God’s ark, containing his law, was located and the divine Presence was enthroned. In fact, the incense altar and the

24. On removal of sins and impurities from offerers by their purification offerings throughout the year, see Roy Gane, *Cult and Character: Purification Offerings, Day of Atonement, and Theodicy* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 106–143; Roy E. Gane, “Privative Preposition *min* in Purification Offering Pericopes and the Changing Face of ‘Dorian Gray,’” *JBL* 127 (2008): 209–222.

25. For my response to Christophe Nihan’s objection to the idea that the most holy purification offering could result in transfer of residual defilements to the holy sanctuary, see Roy E. Gane, “Purification Offerings and Paradoxical Pollution of the Holy,” in *Writing a Commentary on Leviticus: Hermeneutics – Methodology – Themes*, ed. Christian A. Eberhart and Thomas Hieke, *Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments* 276 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019), 117–122.

26. As in purification offerings for minor sins of individuals other than the high priest (Lev 4:25, 30, 34). The only purification offerings from which the blood was applied in the holy place of the tabernacle were for unintentional sins of the high priest or the whole community (vv. 5–7, 16–18).

27. On the location of this sevenfold sprinkling, see Gane, *Cult and Character*, 72–80.

outer altar, to which blood was applied in most purification offerings (for individuals other than the high priest) were also “before YHWH” (Exod 29:25; Lev 4:7, 18; 16:12, 18).

All applications of purification offering blood were in relation to the holy Presence of God and his law, acknowledging human faults and faultiness within the covenant context. Even through physical impurities, remedied by purification offerings, were not violations of God's commandments, they were offensive to him in that they represented the mortal state that has resulted from sinful action. Sins and physical impurities affected the divine-human relationship, so they needed to be remedied. Therefore, although no purification offering blood was applied in the most holy place on days other than the Day of Atonement, this part of the sanctuary was affected by residual defilements that came into the sanctuary through blood applications “before YHWH” in the holy place and at the outer altar. Defilement at one part of the sanctuary affected the whole sanctuary.²⁸

Why did the sanctuary receive residual defilement from purification offerings, which were most holy (Lev 6:25, 29 [Heb. vv. 18, 22]), and though which sinners received expiation that was prerequisite to divine forgiveness (e.g., 4:20, 26, 31, 35) and physically impure persons received purification (e.g., 12:7–8)? Regarding expiation and forgiveness, this way of pardon is granted by God as the divine Judge (cf. Deut 19:17; Ps 7:8 [Heb. v. 9]; 96:10, 13). A human judge is responsible for vindicating those who are innocent and condemning those who are guilty (Deut 25:1), and this also applies to God as Judge (1 Kgs 8:32). If a human judge acquits a guilty person, who should be punished according to the law, he incurs culpability (נִפְּי) in the form of judicial responsibility for extending mercy at the expense of justice (2 Sam 14:9; cf. 1 Kgs 2:31). Also God as Judge appears to compromise justice when he mercifully forgives sinners, all of whom have sinned and deserve to die (Rom 3:23; 6:23). Justice and mercy are essential aspects of God's character of love (e.g., Exod 34:6–7), so he must maintain both of them in perfect balance (cf. Ps 85:10 [Heb. v. 11]).

This explains why it is necessary for the Lord to be justified when he justifies sinners (Rom 3:26). God is shown to be just when he justifies a person who has faith in Jesus because such a person receives the benefit of Christ's sacrifice (vv. 24–25), as typified by purification offerings at the Israelite sanctuary (cf. John 1:29). But there is more to justification

28. On the part-for-all principle, see Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers*, 168–170.

of God than the objective historical fact of Christ's sacrifice: He is just only when he justifies the right people, who have living faith in Jesus, which is manifested by their moral transformation to lives of loyal obedience to God and his law of love (Rom 8:1–17; Gal 5:6; Jas 2:26; Titus 3:3–7). This also implies the opposite: God is just when he condemns those who do not have true, living faith.

A person may have faith in God's salvation through Christ and receive the promise of eternal life, but it is necessary to "continue in the faith" (Col 1:23), rather than giving it up (Heb 6:4–8; 10:26–31, 35–38). So, eventually, God needs to be justified/vindicated through a judgment for granting eternal life to the right people, who continue in the faith, and for withholding salvation from those who are disloyal. Pending this vindication regarding individual cases, there are questions concerning God's justice. Such questions were symbolized by residual defilements borne by the Israelite sanctuary, which represented his administration.

Regarding purification from severe physical ritual impurities, which represented the birth-to-death cycle of mortality that has resulted from breaking God's law (see above), the purification offering was the only sacrifice that consistently and directly remedied severe physical ritual impurities, although burnt offerings often supplemented purification offerings (Lev 12:6–8; 14:19–20, 31; 15:15, 30) and the elaborate purification of a person who was healed from skin disease included a reparation offering (14:12–14, 25). So it makes sense that when purification offerings removed impurity from persons, residual impurity from this process would affect the sanctuary through contact of the offerer's animal victim with the sanctuary (see above). Thus, in order to save humans from heightened symptoms of mortality in the form of physical impurities, God allowed his sanctuary, representing his government, to be affected by these impurities (16:16, 19), even though impurity was to be carefully separated from the holy sphere in other ways (e.g., 7:20–21; 15:31).

In terms of typology, God mercifully made himself vulnerable to human mortality in the person of Christ, whose sacrificial death redeems human beings from the power of death (e.g., John 3:16; Rom 5:21; 1 Cor 15). "For the wages of sin is [eternal] death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 6:23; word in brackets supplied). Christ's sacrificial death makes God right for offering eternal life to all who have deserved eternal death (cf. 2 Cor 5:19—"in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself"), provided that they accept the gift, becoming servants of God and right-doing, i.e., obedience to his law (cf. Rom 6:17–22).

The rules in Lev 6:27–28 [Heb. vv. 20–21]) only apply to purification offerings. There is no biblical evidence that expiatory sacrifices, aside from purification offerings, transferred residual defilements to the sanctuary.²⁹ Further evidence for the uniqueness of purification offerings is the fact that officiating priests who ate the meat of these sacrifices (only purification offerings) bore the culpability (יִטָּו; Lev 10:17) that was removed from the offerers/sinners (cf. 5:1).

Why did only purification offerings, which only expiated minor sins and physical impurities, transfer residual defilements to the sanctuary? Reparation offerings, which could expiate more serious deliberate sins of sacrilege against the divine name (Lev 6:1–7 [Heb. 5:20–26]), and burnt offerings, which could expiate other kinds of deliberate sins (1:4), did not transfer defilements to the sanctuary. Moreover, whereas purification and reparation offerings were mandatory when people committed the kinds of sins for which they were the required remedies (4:1–6:7 [Heb. 5:26]), burnt offerings are presented as voluntary in Lev 1, and there was no animal sacrifice at all for the most serious rebellious sins, although God could forgive them without animal sacrifice (Exod 34:7). So the more serious the sin, the less it was involved with the ritual system that remedied human faults. The whole system of expiatory sacrifices seems backwards! This impression is reinforced by consideration of the antitype to which the ritual system pointed: Christ's once-for-all sacrifice that provides forgiveness for any sinner who will accept it (e.g., John 1:29; Acts 13:38–39; 1 John 1:9).

29. Contra arguments, for which there is no biblical evidence, that reparation offerings transferred **טָּוָה** sins (misinterpreted as expiable deliberate rather than rebellious sins) to the sanctuary so that they had to be cleansed from there on the Day of Atonement, see Alberto R. Treiyer, "The Day of Atonement as Related to the Contamination and Purification of the Sanctuary," in *The Seventy Weeks, Leviticus, and the Nature of Prophecy*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, DARCOM 3 (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Research Institute, 1986), 238–239; Slaviša Janković, "A Re-Examination of Pentateuchal Hamartiology and Atonement as a Hermeneutical Framework for Interpreting the Laying on of Hands" (PhD diss., Andrews University, 2020), 242–246. Reparation offerings only expiated **חַטָּאת** sins (Lev 19:22; cf. the verb from the same Hebrew root **ח-ט-ה** in 6:2–4 [Heb. 5:21–23]), never **טָּוָה** sins. Furthermore, the purification offering (**חַטָּאת**) did not include the reparation offering (**עֹלָה**) as a subcategory (contra Richard M. Davidson, *A Song for the Sanctuary: Experiencing God's Presence in Shadow and Reality* [Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2022], 242, 286, 298–299 and others cited here). The two kinds of sacrifices appear separately in the list of sacrifices in Lev 7:37, include different kinds of blood manipulations (compare 4:6–7, 17–18, 25, 30, 34 with 7:2), and remedy distinct kinds of evils (compare 4:1–5:13; 12:6–8; 14:19; 15:15, 30; Num 19:9, 11–12 with Lev 5:14–6:7 [Heb. 5:26]).

The Bible does not directly tell us why the ritual system related to different kinds of sins as it did. However, upon further reflection, it makes sense when we consider that the sanctuary type was a dynamic model for teaching the Israelites about their relationship to God and his law. First, by focusing on the effect of minor sins (mainly unintentional or due to forgetting) in conveying residual defilement to the sanctuary, paralleling the effect of residual defilements from physical impurities, God raised the standard of obedience to his law. If there were consequences even for such sins, it would be obvious that more serious violations of God's law would more severely affect the divine-human relationship within the context of the covenant. So a deliberate sinner would want to voluntarily offer a burnt offering if that would be acceptable to God (cf. Ps 51:16 [Heb. v. 18]).

Second, residual defilement of the sanctuary from minor sins would be relatively light and, therefore, would avoid giving the impression that the sanctuary was seriously defiled in such a way that could negatively affect its function as God's holy residence. This defilement was only a limited illustration of the broader effect of God's forgiveness on the heavenly sanctuary that takes place in the antitype.

Third, if expiatory animal sacrifices were available for rebellious sins, this would lower the moral standard because one who committed such a sin could quite easily avoid a disastrous fate. Compare the effect of easy confession of all kinds of sins to a so-called "Christian priest" and payment of indulgences along with acts of penance. It is easy to see that moral corruption and practical lawlessness abound in societies where such cheap grace is practiced. But King David understood that there was no expiatory sacrifice, not even a burnt offering, that could expiate his crime of adultery with Bathsheba³⁰ and the murder of her husband (2 Sam 11). He deserved to die, as he unwittingly pronounced sentence upon himself in response to the prophet Nathan's juridical parable (2 Sam 12:5). Therefore, David fell shuddering with remorse and fear directly before God, whose law he had so grievously transgressed (Ps 51; cf. Ps 119:20). Yet God forgave him, although David would suffer the natural consequences of his actions (2 Sam 12:10–14).

30. Richard M. Davidson interprets this adultery as "power rape" by King David. See Richard M. Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 535.

The Function of the Day of Atonement Rituals

According to Leviticus 16, the Israelite high priest was to perform two special purification offerings on the Day of Atonement: a bull on behalf of the priests and a male goat on behalf of the non-priestly community. By applications of blood in the most holy place (within the inner veil, called “the holy place” in this chapter), the holy place (“the tent of meeting,” i.e., the rest of the tent of meeting), and on the outer altar, he ritually purged God’s sanctuary from the physical ritual impurities, rebellious sins, and (non-rebellious) sins that had accumulated there since the last Day of Atonement (Lev 16, esp. v. 16).

In the most holy place, as mentioned above, the high priest sprinkled blood on the lid of the ark of the covenant and in front of that object. In the initial ceremony that established the covenant between YHWH and Israel, Moses had tossed the blood of burnt and well-being offerings on an altar for YHWH and on the people (Exod 24:4–8), signifying that the covenant was a bond in blood with life-and-death consequences for keeping or breaking it. Now, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest’s application of purification offering blood above and in front of the covenant stipulations in the ark implicitly acknowledged that the Israelites had violated divine commandments, but that God was vindicated in having forgiven them. For such violations, they had deserved the ultimate penalty of eternal death, the second death, which is the consequence of all sin (Rom 6:23; Rev 20:9, 14–15).³¹ However, the blood of sacrificial substitutes, pointing to Christ’s one sacrifice, had ransomed their lives (cf. Lev 17:11).

Applications of blood in the holy place and at the outer altar throughout the year acknowledged human faults and faultiness and gained human freedom from them. But blood on the Day of Atonement in the most holy place, as well as the holy place and the outer altar, not only acknowledged the sins and impurities, but removed them as problems to God.

We have found that there were two phases of removing (כִּפֶּר) physical impurities and non-rebellious sins through purification offerings. First, these were removed from offerers of individual purification offerings throughout the year, resulting in the transfer of residual

31. Even though many pentateuchal laws specify penalties even less than the first death, which applied under God’s theocratic rule over the Israelites (e.g., Exod 22:1, 3–7 [Heb. 21:37]). Biblical laws did not inflict capital punishment for economic crimes of stealing, except for stealing persons, i.e., kidnaping (Exod 21:16; Deut 24:7).

defilements to the sanctuary. These defilements functioned as a kind of record of what God had done for faulty people. Second, these defilements were removed from the sanctuary by the special corporate purification offerings on the Day of Atonement. These two phases were limited to purification offerings, which only expiated minor kinds of sins, as an illustration of how God works with all kinds of sins in the antitype (see further below).

There was no more need for records of removal of impurity or forgiven sin from God's loyal people following the second phase. This fulfills the last part of Jer 31:34, which expresses the basis of God's "new covenant" with his people: "For I will forgive their iniquity [phase 1], and I will remember their sin no more [phase 2]" (words in brackets supplied). Not remembering sin is a way to say that it has become permanently irrelevant. Until then, forgiveness can be undone if the forgiven person chooses to reject the divine grace on which that forgiveness is based, as in Jesus' parable of the unjust steward who failed to forgive his fellow servant even a tiny fraction of what he had been forgiven (Matt 18:23–35).

The second phase of ritual cleansing represented vindication (legal cleansing) of God's reputation for forgiving and granting life in place of mortality to the right people, who accepted his gift of expiation and purity through sacrifices prefiguring Christ's once-for-all sacrifice. God's reputation for truly being the God of love = full justice and full mercy is crucial for him to maintain trust and love, including loyal obedience to his law of love, from his created beings. It is God's reputation in the universe that is under dispute in the Great Controversy between Christ, who demonstrates the divine character, and Satan, who has defamed God and has deceived people concerning his character from his temptation of Eve (Gen 3:1, 4–5) onward.

Vindication of God for what he had already done in forgiving and purifying people simultaneously vindicated those people as rightfully receiving the benefits of the divine gifts, provided that they showed humble loyalty to him on the Day of Atonement by practicing self-denial, such as fasting, and by abstaining from work (Lev 16:29, 31). Leviticus 16:30 affirms their final purity/vindication regarding (non-rebellious) sins: "For on this day [the Day of Atonement when God's sanctuary was ritually cleansed, representing his vindication] shall atonement be made for you to cleanse you. You shall be clean before the LORD from all your sins" (words in brackets supplied). Compare 1 John 1:9: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to

[1] forgive us our sins and to [2] cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (numbers in brackets supplied). It is true that forgiveness provides a kind of moral cleansing, but ultimate cleansing comes at a stage following forgiveness when the forgiveness that we have received is affirmed because God, our just Judge, is vindicated in having forgiven us.

On the other hand, those who committed rebellious sins received no expiation through sacrifices in a first stage of removal from them, and removal of such sins from the sanctuary on the Day of Atonement provided no vindication for these sinners. They remained condemned, and God was vindicated in condemning them (cf. Rev 16:5, 7; 19:2). Also condemned were those who failed to show loyalty to God on the Day of Atonement by practicing self-denial and keeping complete sabbath cessation of all work (Lev 23:29–30).

Therefore, we see that on the Day of Atonement, God judged between loyal and disloyal individuals within the community of his nominal people. The loyal ones were not perfect, but they accepted and continued to accept God's provisions for their expiation and purification.

Antitypical Fulfillment of the Day of Atonement and Its Purpose

According to 1 John 1:7, 9, "the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin . . . If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." This is removal from sinners of blame for our sins, just as Israelite purification offerings removed sins from individual sinners who offered them throughout the year (e.g., Lev 4:26). Those whom God forgives are permanently free from culpability for breaking his law (Ps 103:12; Mic 7:19) if they continue in the faith (see above). But if they choose to return to their sins like a dog returns to its vomit (Prov 26:11; 2 Pet 2:22), "the last state has become worse for them than the first" (v. 21; cf. Matt 18:23–35). In such cases, God cannot be just if he continues to justify them when they have given up their faith in Jesus (cf. Rom 3:26).

Therefore, forgiveness by God does not mean that he immediately "forgets" the sin (Jer 31:34). He must keep a record of the sin and its forgiveness in case the forgiven sinner changes his/her mind, again choosing sin instead of the gift of God's grace through Christ (see above). This fact does not diminish the Gospel or cast doubt on the divine promises. Rather, it manifests God's remarkably high respect for human free choice (cf. Rev 3:20), without which nobody could truly

love him or anyone else. He allows human beings to choose whether they want to be saved or lost and he lets them change their mind.

The idea that God keeps records of human actions and choices indicating relationships of people to himself is not simply a logical deduction; it is explicit in Scripture. God has a “book of life” that records the names of his righteous people (Ps 69:28 [Heb. v. 29]; Phil 4:3; Rev 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:15; 21:27). Related to the “book of life,” he also has a “book of remembrance” to record good actions of his faithful people (Mal 3:16). Books/records are opened in a heavenly judgment (Dan 7:10) that distinguishes between people who are disloyal or loyal to him (vv. 11–12, 22, 26–27). Therefore, these books must record good or evil actions, as Eccl 12:14 affirms: “For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil (cf. 2 Cor 5:10).”³²

We have found that the ritual cleansing of the Israelite sanctuary on the Day of Atonement, Israel’s judgment day, symbolized the vindication of God for granting freedom from sin to the right people (Lev 16:30), that is, those who maintained their loyalty to him (cf. vv. 29, 31). Similarly, Dan 8:14 predicts a cosmic end-time justification/vindication (Niphal of *ṣ-d-q*, “be justified”), i.e., legal “cleansing”³³ of God’s (heavenly) sanctuary, which represents his administration and, therefore, his character.³⁴ This is clearly the eschatological, worldwide antitype of the Israelite Day of Atonement.

Justifying God’s sanctuary in an end-time “Day of Atonement” is the solution to the problems that culminate in the activities of the “little horn” power against God and his people (Dan 8:1–13). Therefore, the justifying of God’s sanctuary is another way to describe the judgment of 7:9–14 in a parallel prophecy culminating with a challenge against God by the “little horn” power (vv. 1–8).³⁵

32. See also Rev 20:12 of judgment during the millennium: “And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.”

33. “Then the sanctuary shall be cleansed” in NKJV; NJPS; cf. the Septuagint. Cf. Job 4:17, where the verbs ק-ד-צ, “be just,” and ט-ה-ט, “be pure,” appear in synonymous parallelism to express the idea of vindication.

34. This must be God’s sanctuary in heaven (Heb 8:1–5; 9:11–12, 23–24) because the temple on earth in Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70, long before the end-time.

35. On this end-time judgment, including its purpose and timing at the end of 2,300 evening(s) morning(s) (Dan 8:14), see Roy Gane, *Who’s Afraid of the Judgment? The Good News About Christ’s Work in the Heavenly Sanctuary* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2006).

Daniel 7:25 summarizes the threat posed by the “little horn” king: “He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law.” Not only does this human power rebelliously break God’s law by arrogantly speaking against him (cf. vv. 8, 11, 20) and by persecuting his loyal people (cf. v. 21); it presumes to change “the times and law,” that is, the times and law of God. This implies that God’s faithful people, who are opposed by the “little horn” power, uphold and obey God’s times and law. They are like loyal Israelites in ancient times who committed themselves to complying with YHWH’s laws, including those regarding sacred times (Lev 23), of which the permanent weekly Sabbath was foundational (v. 3).³⁶

Therefore, the vindication of God’s administration and character (Dan 8:14) is accomplished by a judgment between two groups (7:9–14): those who rebel against him and those who are loyal to him. This is like the Israelite Day of Atonement, when rituals for purging the sanctuary represented vindication of God’s administration and character (Lev 16) and requirements to practice self-denial and abstain from work (vv. 29, 31; Lev 23:26–32) tested his people according to their loyalty (16:30) or disloyalty (23:29–30). God is just in justifying only those who accept his provision for remedying their sins through sacrifice and show that they have undergone moral reform.

The defining difference between the loyal and the disloyal, both in Leviticus and in Daniel, is their attitude and relationship toward God and his law, which comprises his covenant stipulations. Will they or will they not allow him to mercifully forgive them on the basis of Christ’s sacrifice for their past violations of his laws and to transform them into harmony with him and his principles of unselfish love?

We found that in Leviticus, only purification offerings transferred impurities and sins to the sanctuary. So the sins for which God’s loyal people received vindication as a result of the purgation of God’s sanctuary, representing vindication of his administration (Lev 16:30), were

36. However, Christians are not obligated to observe the annual Jewish festivals (Lev 23; Num 28–29), which required animal sacrifices at the sanctuary/temple that foreshadowed and therefore prophesied the sacrifice of Christ, which now has taken place (cf. Col 2:16–17, referring to ritual observances, including on weekly Sabbaths, but not to Sabbath rest itself). Nobody can keep the festivals in the biblically prescribed ways because the sanctuary/temple on earth no longer exists. Christ has moved the focus of our worship to God’s temple in heaven, where he ministers as our high priest (Heb 4:14–16; 6:19–10:25).

only the relatively minor חטאת sins expiated by purification offerings. However, this dynamic illustrated the broader concept that the end-time Day of Atonement judgment in Dan 7–8 completely vindicates God’s loyal, holy people (see esp. 7:22—“judgment was given for the saints of the Most High”). This implies that the heavenly sanctuary is justified (8:14) with regard to God’s forgiveness of all of their sins, including more major deliberate sins that could not have been remedied by purification offerings in ancient Israel. If so, this further implies that all sins forgiven by Christ are transferred to the heavenly sanctuary in the sense that records of these forgiven sins are kept in the sanctuary to be consulted during the pre-Advent judgment (7:10—“the books were opened”).

Ancient Israelites were to show their loyalty to God on the Day of Atonement by obeying his instructions to practice self-denial and keep a sabbath by not working (Lev 16:29, 31; 23:26–32). Revelation 14 tells us what God’s loyal people are to do during the time of the pre-Advent judgment (v. 7), the antitypical “Day of Atonement” when “God’s temple in heaven” has been “opened, and the ark of his covenant” is “seen within his temple” (11:19). God’s new covenant people are to do two things: they are to keep (1) the commandments of God and (2) the faith/faithfulness (πίστις) of Jesus (14:12).

God’s commandments are based on love (Matt 22:37–40). The “faith of Jesus” also involves love, whether it refers to faith in Jesus, faithfulness to Jesus, or the faith or faithfulness that Jesus has demonstrated during his life on earth. The true faith or faithfulness of God’s people works through love (Gal 5:6; cf. Col 1:4), and Jesus’ faith in his Father and faithfulness in fulfilling his mission for us demonstrate the epitome of divine love (e.g., John 15:13; Rev 1:5).

Thus, Rev 14:12, at the conclusion of the three angels’ messages, is a call for God’s people to show their covenant loyalty to him through their holy, loving lives during the end-time “Day of Atonement” judgment. This corresponds to the message of Malachi to remember God’s law (based on love) delivered through Moses and to accept relational reconciliation (also based on love) through the ministry of God’s end-time “Elijah” (Mal 4:4–6 [Heb. 3:22–24]). Also Paul highlights the importance of love in preparing for the second coming of Christ: “and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints” (1 Thess 3:12–13).

Here, increasing in love has the effect of establishing hearts blameless in holiness, which is sanctification. This makes sense because God's holy character is love (1 John 4:8, 16), so becoming more like him in love is growth in holiness.

According to Exod 31:13, keeping the Lord's seventh-day Sabbaths is a sign that he sanctifies his people. Sanctification is growth in love, so observing the weekly Sabbath signifies growth in love that is in harmony with God's character and law of love. Thus, the Sabbath is a microcosm of God's law because it celebrates the principle of love that is behind the law. As such, the Sabbath is especially important during the end-time when the final appeal to the world is to accept God's love, including by keeping his commandments.

The first angel in Rev 14 implicitly points to the Sabbath when he proclaims: "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water" (v. 7). Glorifying and worshiping the Creator especially involves keeping the Sabbath, the weekly "birthday of the world," which commemorates his unique work of Creation that makes him the sole sovereign over Planet Earth (e.g., Gen 2:2–3; Exod 20:11; 31:17). Just as the Israelite Day of Atonement judgment day was a sabbath of complete rest with no work (Lev 16:29; 23:28, 30–31), the only ceremonial sabbath that required complete rest like the weekly Sabbath, the weekly Sabbath is prominent when the time of God's end-time "Day of Atonement" judgment has come.

If God's kind of unselfish love is so crucial for end-time Christians, how can we have such love, which is not natural to our fallen human nature? This love is a gift from God, poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5). Therefore, the mighty final outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the "latter rain" (Joel 2:23, 28–29) gives God's people the motivating and empowering love that they need to finish the gospel work of showing God's character of love to all the world.

"And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony [*μαρτύριον*] to all nations, and then the end will come" (Matt 24:14). The Greek word for "testimony" here is *μαρτύριον*, the same word that appears in the Septuagint for the covenant "testimony" of the law that God gave to Moses to put in the ark (Exod 25:16, 21; 31:18; 40:20). Now the gospel of Jesus Christ, whose revelation of God's love is greater than that of the law given to Moses and the Israelites (John 1:17; 2 Cor 3), is the testimony/witness or evidence, like a receipt, that guarantees salvation to those who accept the promised

divine gift of love (Rom 4:16; Eph 1:13–14), but testifies against those who reject it. The gospel testimony gives individuals the opportunity to choose their destinies intelligently, the kind of people they want to be and remain while there is still time to make that choice before the end of the judgment (Rev 22:11).

As Moses did, we are to set before precious people the clear choice between “life and good, death and evil” (Deut 30:15). The way of life is the way of love: to love the Lord and his law of love (cf. v. 16; Ps 119:97, 113, 163). The alternative to love is eternal death, which is the result of sin (Rom 6:23), which is selfish un-love. That is because “real, unselfish love is the only basis on which intelligent beings with free choice can live in harmony and not destroy each other.”³⁷

Ultimately, only those who have chosen to live forever according to God’s principles of love can continue to exist in his universe. The end-time messages of Malachi and Revelation make this crystal clear. In Mal 4:6, the alternative to relational reconciliation is utter destruction carried out by God. In Revelation 14, those who reject the true God of love, choosing instead to worship and give allegiance to “the beast and its image,” will be subjected to God’s undiluted wrath and tormented with fire (vv. 9–11; cf. 20:9–10).

Conclusion: Implications of this Study for Modern Christians

Israelite sacrifices to remedy even unintentional violations of God’s commandments (Lev 4) showed that his law really does matter. He holds people accountable for obeying his laws because they are in harmony with his own character of love (Matt 22:37–40; 1 John 4:8, 16), he is the sovereign covenant suzerain who redeemed them (e.g., Exod 20:2), his laws are good (Rom 7:12; 1 Tim 1:8) and for their benefit (Deut 10:13), protecting them from harm (e.g., Ps 119:92), and they are not too difficult to keep (Deut 30:11–14). God himself sets the example for human beings by acting according to the principles of his own laws (Deut 10:17–19), and Jesus Christ has further shown the way by demonstrating that a human being with faulty heredity (Matt 1:1–17; Luke 3:23–38) can live in our broken world in harmony with God’s law of love (Phil 2:3–8; 1 Pet 2:21–23) without sinning (Heb 4:15). Thus, it is vital for the spiritual health and salvation of God’s people to study

37. Roy Gane, *The Sanctuary and Salvation: The Practical Significance of Christ’s Sacrifice and Priesthood* (Madrid: Safeliz, 2019), 88.

his instructions and learn from the record of Christ's life in "the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim 3:15).³⁸

Every sacrifice at the Israelite sanctuary was offered "before the Lord," who was enthroned above the ark of the covenant, which contained the record of his law. Therefore, every sacrifice was a covenant transaction. If the sacrifice was to expiate a sin, that sin was a violation of a principle in God's law, which was exemplified by the tablets of the law in the ark, and the sacrifice appealed to the divine covenant suzerain and claimed his promise of mercy.

Every sin was a potential threat to the divine-human covenant relationship as a whole, which is why "whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it" (James 2:10). But every expiatory sacrifice removed (כִּפֹּר) the impediment to the divine-human relationship. Those sacrifices prefigured the sacrifice of Christ, which frees his people from condemnation (Rom 8:1) and gives "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" to those who have been "justified by faith" (Rom 5:1).

Purification offerings throughout the year and the special purification offerings that ritually purged God's sanctuary on the Day of Atonement add another dimension to our understanding of salvation: they illustrate God's justice when he forgives repentant sinners who choose loyalty to him and when he condemns those who are rebellious and disloyal. This theodicy (vindication of God) is crucial because it shows that God exercises justice when he extends mercy, thereby maintaining two essential components of his character of love.

God transparently acknowledges that forgiveness, even following a sacrificial substitute, appears to be unjust and, in fact, would be unjust unless the sinner truly turns from sin, maintaining his/her repentance and loyalty to him. When that reformation/transformation is established, as it was outwardly demonstrated by the Israelites' humble self-denial and cessation of work, God is vindicated in saving the right people, and they are vindicated as the right people to be saved.

It is not that people earn part of their salvation by vindicating God or themselves. Everything they do in response to God's offer and

38. "It is only as the law of God is restored to its rightful position that there can be a revival of primitive faith and godliness among His professed people." Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan: The Conflict of the Ages in the Christian Dispensation* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1950; orig. 1888), 478.

provision is only ever receiving his free gift (cf. Isa 55:1). He initiates and carries out their salvation by giving them repentance (Acts 5:31), justification through Christ's sacrifice (Rom 3:21–26), and the gift of the Holy Spirit that transforms their lives into harmony with his holy love (John 3:5–8; Rom 5:5; Titus 3:4–7). It is God who gives the ability to obey his law, as expressed in the new covenant promise of Ezekiel 36: “And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you... And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules” (vv. 26–27; cf. Jer 31:33).

Vindication of God was accomplished on the Israelite Day of Atonement through an implicit judgment that differentiated loyal people from those who were disloyal. The antitype of this event is the explicit judgment in Dan 7:9–14, by which God's sanctuary, representing his character and reputation, is cleansed/cleared of any problem of injustice. God is shown to be fully just in all his ways (cf. Deut 32:4; Dan 4:37; Rev 15:3).

This judgment is good news (Rev 14:6–7—judgment as part of the eternal gospel) for God's faithful people because it delivers them from oppression (Dan 7–8; Rev 13). They have nothing to fear from the judgment while they have God's Son (1 John 5:12), who is their defense attorney (1 John 2:1; cf. Zech 3:1–5) and empathetic intercessor (Heb 4:15), their “faithful and true witness” (Rev 3:14), judge (John 5:22), and substitute (Isa 53:5, 8, 10–12; 2 Cor 5:21; 1 Pet 2:24).³⁹ The judgment is good news for the entire universe because all of God's intelligent created beings can have full confidence and trust in his just and merciful love so that they can unreservedly love him, his law, and each other forever, and destructive sin/rebellion/selfishness will never arise again.

Roy E. Gane

gane@andrews.edu

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Andrews University

Berrien Springs, MI, USA

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39. Cf. Richard M. Davidson, “The Good News of Yom Kippur,” *JATS* 2 (1996): 4–27.