

INTRODUCTION 引言

Cleaning is a major part of household chores. You regularly sweep the floor, vacuum the carpet, scrub the bathrooms, wipe windows, etc. But how clean is considered clean enough? Besides removing dirt and dust, the pandemic reminds us the importance of getting rid of germs. Still remember the time when there was a shortage of disinfecting wipes, hand-sanitizers and even bathroom tissue? Other than the problems we can see, there are deeper matters we cannot see. We worry about the rising crimes in the society. The Bible tells us that the root cause for moral and behavioral issues is sin. It requires a stronger cleaning agent to purge sin. In the Old Testament times, God set up an animal sacrificial system to temporarily remove sins. Among other rituals, God established the Day of Atonement to redeem people from sins. It is the holiest day of the year for them. Traditional Jews to this day still observe the festival. The Hebrew name is Yom Kippur. Yom is the Hebrew word for day, and Kippur means atonement. This year, Yom Kippur will take place from the sunset of this Tuesday to the sunset of this Wednesday. We will go back to Leviticus 16 and study how the original Yom Kippur was celebrated. Our focus today is on the two male goats that were used in the ceremony. The whole ritual looks forward to the sacrificial death of Jesus. In particular, God forgives and forgets our sins through Jesus.

EXPLANATION 解釋

1. A Slain Goat 替死羔羊

At that time, the Israelites picked two male goats to be sacrificed to God. They would cast lots and assigned the first animal as a slain goat for sin offering. The detail instructions are in verse 15 to 16: **15 “Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering that is for the people and bring its blood inside the veil and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, sprinkling it over the mercy seat and in front of the mercy seat. 16 Thus he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleannesses of the people of Israel and because of their transgressions, all their sins. And so he shall do for the tent of meeting, which dwells with them in the midst of their uncleannesses.”** This goat was slain after a bull was offered to atone for the sins of the high priest and his family. Just like what the priest did with the bull, he took some of the goat’s blood into the Most Holy Place of the tabernacle. This was the only day in the whole year that anyone was allowed to enter the room. The ark of the covenant was in there. It symbolizes God’s presence. The priest sprinkled the blood on the mercy seat, which is the cover of the ark, to atone for the sin of the people. The process would also remove the defilement on the tabernacle caused by people’s sins. Offering of the slain goat has two symbolic meanings. First, the animal died on behalf of people. Sin damages God’s holiness and the ultimate penalty is death. The goat was slain to substitute for the death of people. Second, the shedding of blood works like a detergent to cleanse the damages caused by sins. People’s relationship with God was thus restored. But the purification effect of the blood is limited. The word “atonement” here means covering. People’s sins were not eliminated, but were only covered. It is like clothes that covers up a mole on your body, and ladies wear makeup to covers up pimples. The blemishes do not disappear but are only covered. That was why a high priest had to repeat the ceremony once every year. It demands a

permanent solution. Hebrews 9:12 tells us the ultimate remedy: **He entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.** Jesus died once and for all to achieve an eternal redemption. He is the slain goat God ordained to forgive our sins. His blood does not only cover, but it washes away our sins. Jesus does not only save us from the punishment of sins. He also purchases us to be His followers in everyday life. Paul urges us in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 – **19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.** Paul convicts his readers in the context for maintaining a lifestyle of immorality. He says since the Holy Spirit lives in us, we become a mobile temple of God. Picture yourself carrying a huge cross on your shoulders and wearing a T-shirt with huge words at the front that read “I’m a Christian.” Will you still enter a casino or a bar? Will you dare to talk behind people’s back or spread rumors? Will it change your attitudes at work and in public? We are a new person in Jesus. Therefore, we must grow to become more like Jesus in our mindset, speech, conduct and priorities in life. Salvation is not the finish-line. It is just a new beginning. Christian life is like a marriage. Some people thought the mission has been accomplished after saying “I do.” They got a maid to do housework, a belly to make babies, a monthly check for living expenses and a free repair guy for maintenance. Marriage should be about keep building relationship between two persons. Likewise, salvation is not about asking God to give us this and that. We need to keep cultivating our relationship with Him. Our knowledge of God, our love for Him and our commitment to Him should continue to grow. Believing in Jesus may look simple. Just confess your sins and accept Jesus by faith. But living for Jesus is a lifelong pursuit of hard work.

2. A Scapegoat 代罪羔羊

Besides the slain goat, there was also a scapegoat that was used on the Day of Atonement. Some Bible versions transliterate the word scapegoat as Azazel in verse 8. The Hebrew word means “go-away goat.” Today, the word “scapegoat” refers to an innocent person who takes the blame for someone’s mistake. The scapegoat in the ritual unknowingly bore the sins of people. Verse 21 and 22 describe the procedure: **21 “And Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins. And he shall put them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who is in readiness. 22 The goat shall bear all their iniquities on itself to a remote area, and he shall let the goat go free in the wilderness.”** The spiritual implication is self-explanatory. A high priest symbolically transferred all the sins of people to the goat by laying of hands. Then the scapegoat was sent into the wilderness until it disappeared. We call it “out of sight, out of mind.” We dump waste into trash bins. Sanitation workers come and empty the cans. There is no more trash when the trash truck is gone. However, just like the slain goat, a scapegoat had to be chosen yearly to repeat the ritual. This temporary atonement portrays the eternal forgiving grace in Jesus’ blood. He was the scapegoat God prepared to shoulder our sins. Isaiah 53:6 says: **All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned – every one – to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.** God put all of our sins on Jesus. People in any era can be saved by admitting that Jesus took their sins to the cross. The precious part is that once our sins are removed, they are erased from God’s record. Jeremiah 31:33-34 tells us: **33 “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their**

God, and they shall be my people. 34 ... For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” Israel broke the first covenant because people lacked the will to obey God. Jesus made a new covenant with believers by His blood. The Holy Spirit lives inside them and strengthens them to obey God’s commands. Verse 34 is another beautiful promise. God will not remember the sins of those who seek His forgiveness. Of course, God is not absent-minded like us. He willingly chooses to forget the sins of those He has forgiven. When Jesus sets us free from sin, we are free indeed. You may recall the time when you sent the last payment of your car loan, student loan or mortgage. You no longer owe anyone anything. In Jesus, our sin debt has been paid off. If not even God holds us accountable for our sins, then no one can. Satan often manipulates our feelings and robs the peace we have in God. Perhaps your car breaks down for no reason, your kid has a weird accident or your boss accuses you for a mistake you did not make. You wonder: “Does God dig up my old records and punish me now?” Then the devil whispers in your ears: “You pitiful loser! God will never forgive you.” Do not listen to those lies. If God has forgotten our sins, then no one can bring them back again. If God has accepted us, no force can separate His love from us. Yes, Christians will continue to sin in this life. We still live in an imperfect body and the fallen world is full of temptations. Sins will not cut off our relationship with God after we are saved. But sins will disturb our fellowship with Him. The misconducts of a child will not cancel out his relationship with his parents. But his disobedience will grieve their hearts. All he has to do is to go to his parents and say: “I’m sorry. I know I was wrong. Please forgive me.” Likewise, whenever we confess our sins with a sincere heart, God will wipe us clean. God’s grace is like a vaccine booster that enhances our immunity toward COVID. Our weakness in sin actually humbles us and takes away our pride. It reminds us that we can never go independent of God. We can live a victorious life only when we rely on Him.

CONCLUSION 結論

God forgives and forgets our sins through Jesus. The moment we receive Jesus into our hearts, all of our sins – past, present and future are taken away. It is as if those sins never exist. It reminds me of some medical bills I once had. At that time I was studying in the seminary. We had no income. Thanks to God’s grace through the love offerings of many brothers and sisters that supported us. Since we had no medical insurance, we applied for social benefits when my wife was pregnant with our first son. The hospital sent us some bills after he was born. It said we were responsible for those fees. Some friends suggested me to negotiate with the hospital. A few months later, I received a letter saying that those charges were waived. How could that be? All I did was to explain my financial difficulty and asked for mercy. Some donors I did not know had a good heart to help poor people like me. They had the capability to cover what I was lacking. All I had to do was to accept the offer. That is how salvation works. We have nothing to present to God to atone for our sins. Wealth, good work, superior moral performance and nothing else matter. All we have to do is to admit our spiritual bankruptcy, and to accept God’s mercy. If Jesus Christ is not your Savior and Lord, you can receive Him today. Admit that you are a sinner. Believe that Jesus died for your sins. Commit your life to Jesus and determine to obey Him for the rest of your life. For our brothers and sisters: salvation grace is not only something we believe. It should also be something we live day to day. Show others through what you do that you belong to Jesus. Besides, share this great news of salvation with others.

INTRODUCTION 引言

清潔是家務的重要事情。你經常掃地、吸塵、刷浴室、擦窗戶等。但是，乾淨到什麼程度才算乾淨？除了除去污垢和灰塵，疫情提醒我們除掉細菌的重要性。還記得那時候消毒濕巾、洗手液甚至衛生紙短缺嗎？除了我們看得見的問題之外，還有更深層的問題是我們看不見的。我們擔心社會上不斷增加的犯罪率。聖經告訴我們，道德和行為問題的根源是罪。需要更強力的清潔劑才能清除罪。在舊約時代，神設立獻動物為祭的方式來暫時除去罪。在眾多儀式中，神安排了贖罪日來為人贖罪。對他們來說，那是一年中最高神聖的日子。直到今天，傳統的猶太人仍然守這個節日。它的希伯來文名稱是 **Yom Kippur**。**Yom** 在希伯來文是天，**Kippur** 的意思是贖罪。今年的贖罪日是從這個週二の日落到週三の日落。我們會從利未記 16 章來看看人們當初如何慶祝贖罪日。我們今天的重點是儀式中使用的兩隻公山羊。整個儀式是預表耶穌的犧牲。特別是，神在耶穌裡饒恕並忘記了我們的罪。

EXPLANATION 解釋

1. A Slain Goat 替死羔羊

當時，以色列人挑選兩隻公山羊獻給神。他們會拈鬮，把第一隻動物用作贖罪祭的替死羔羊。詳細的指示在第 15 至 16 節：**15 「隨後他要宰那為百姓作贖罪祭的公山羊，把羊的血帶入幔子內，彈在施恩座的上面和前面，好像彈公牛的血一樣。16 他因以色列人諸般的污穢、過犯，就是他們一切的罪愆，當這樣在聖所行贖罪之禮，並因會幕在他們污穢之中，也要照樣而行。」**大祭司要先獻上一隻公牛為自己和他的家人贖罪，然後屠宰那隻山羊。祭司會重複獻公牛的儀式，他把一些山羊的血帶進會幕的至聖所。那是一年中唯一任何人可以進入那個房間的日子。約櫃放在裡面。它像徵著神的存在。祭司將血灑在施恩座上，也就是約櫃的蓋子上，為百姓贖罪。這個過程也將消除人們的罪對會幕造成的污染。獻上被殺的山羊有兩個像徵意義。首先，動物為人而死。罪損害了神的聖潔，最終的懲罰是死亡。山羊被殺以代替人的死亡。其次，流血就像清潔劑一樣，清洗罪造成的損害。如此，人與神的關係便恢復了。但血的潔淨功效是有限的。這裡「贖罪」這個字的意思是遮蓋。人的罪沒有被消除，只是被遮蓋而已。就像衣服遮住你身上的痣，女士化妝遮蓋青春痘。瑕疵不會消失，只是被遮蓋起來。因此大祭司必須每年重複儀式。它需要一個永久的解決方法。希伯來書 9:12 告訴我們終極的補救措施：**並且不用山羊和牛犢的血，乃用自己的血，只一次進入聖所，成了永遠贖罪的事。**耶穌一次的犧牲，成就了永遠的救贖。祂是神命定饒恕我們罪的替死羔羊。祂的血不只遮蓋，而且洗去

我們的罪。耶穌不僅救我們脫離罪的刑罰，祂還買贖我們在日常生活中跟隨祂。保羅在哥林多前書 6:19-20 中敦促我們：**19 豈不知你們的身子就是聖靈的殿嗎？這聖靈是從神而來，住在你們裏頭的；並且你們不是自己的人，20 因為你們是重價買來的。所以，要在你們的身子上榮耀神。**保羅在上下文中責備他的讀者仍然維持不道德的生活型態。他說，因為聖靈住在我們裡面，我們就變成了一座流動的聖殿。想像你扛著一個巨大的十字架，身穿一件印有「我是基督徒」字樣的衣服。你還會進入賭場或酒吧嗎？你敢在別人背後批評、散播謠言嗎？你會改變你在工作和公共場合的態度嗎？我們在耶穌裡是一個新人。因此，我們必須在我們的心態、言語、行為和優先次序上變得更像耶穌。救恩不是終點線，它只是一個新的開始。基督徒的生活就像婚姻。有些人以為說完「我願意」之後便完成任務。他們有一個女傭做家務，有一個肚子來生孩子，每月有固定的生活費，還有一個免費修理工。婚姻應該關乎於不斷建立兩個人之間的關係。同樣，救恩也不是在於要求神給我們這個或那個東西。我們需要繼續培養我們與神的關係。我們對神的認識、對祂的愛和對祂的委身應該不斷增長。相信耶穌可能看起來很簡單。只要承認你的罪，憑信心接受耶穌。但為耶穌而活是一生追求的操練。

2. A Scapegoat 代罪羔羊

除了替死羔羊之外，在贖罪日中還有一隻代罪羔羊。一些聖經版本在第 8 節將代罪羔羊翻譯為「阿撒瀉勒」。它在希伯來文的意思是「離開的山羊」。今天，「代罪羔羊」是指一個無辜的人為別人的錯誤承擔責任。禮儀中的代罪羔羊在不知不覺中背負了人們的罪孽。第 21 和 22 節解釋程序：**21 「兩手按在羊頭上，承認以色列人諸般的罪孽過犯，就是他們一切的罪愆，把這罪都歸在羊的頭上，藉着所派之人的手，送到曠野去。22 要把這羊放在曠野，這羊要擔當他們一切的罪孽，帶到無入之地。」**儀式中的屬靈含義是不言而喻的。一位大祭司象徵式地接手將人們所有的罪轉移到山羊身上。然後代罪羔羊被送到曠野，直到牠消失。我們稱之為「眼不見，心不煩」。我們將垃圾倒入垃圾桶，工人來把桶子倒空。垃圾車走後，垃圾就沒有了。然而，就像替死的羔羊一樣，必須每年選一隻代罪羔羊來重複這個儀式。這種暫時的贖罪指向耶穌寶血的永遠赦罪恩典。耶穌是神預備承擔我們罪的代罪羔羊。以賽亞書 53:6 說：**我們都如羊走迷；各人偏行己路；耶和華使我們眾人的罪孽都歸在他身上。**神把我們所有人的罪都放在耶穌身上。任何時代的人都可以通過承認耶穌將他們的罪帶到十字架上而得救。寶貴的地方是，一旦我們的罪被除去，它們就會從神的記錄中被刪掉。耶利米書 31:33-34 告訴我們：**33 耶和華說：「那些日子以後，我與以色列家所立的約乃是這樣：我要將我的律法放在他們裏面，寫在他們心上。我要作他們的神，他們要作我的子民。34 ... 我要赦免他們的罪孽，不再記念他們的罪惡。這是耶和華說的。」**以色列違背了第一個約，因為人們缺乏順服神的意志。耶穌用祂的血與信徒立了新約。聖靈住在他們裡面，並幫助他們遵守神的命令。第 34 節是另一個美好的應許。神不會記念那些尋求祂赦免的人的罪

過。當然，神不會像我們一樣健忘。祂是主動選擇忘記那些祂已經饒恕的人的罪。當耶穌把我們從罪中釋放出來時，我們確實是自由了。你可能還記得你最後一次支付汽車貸款、學生貸款或房屋貸款的時候。從此你不再欠任何人什麼錢。在耶穌裡，我們的罪債已經還清了。如果連神都不追究我們罪的責任，那麼沒有人可以了。撒但經常操縱我們的情感，奪走我們在神裡面的平安。也許你的車無緣無故地拋錨了，你的孩子發生了奇怪的事故，或者你的老闆錯怪了你。你就想：「是不是神翻我的舊帳並在懲罰我？」然後魔鬼會在你的耳邊說：「看你這個可憐蟲！神永遠不會原諒你的。」不要聽那些謊言。如果神忘記了我們的罪，那麼沒有人可以舊事重提。如果神已經接納我們，沒有任何力量能使祂的愛與我們分開。的確，基督徒在今生還是會繼續犯罪。我們生活在一個不完美的身體裡，墮落的世界也充滿試探。我們得救之後，罪不會切斷我們與神的關係。但罪會擾亂我們與祂的相交。孩子犯錯時不會取消他與父母的關係。但他的不聽話會讓他們傷心。他所要做的就是向父母說：「對不起。我知道我錯了。請原諒我。」同樣，每當我們真誠地認罪時，神就會再次潔淨我們。神的恩典就像疫苗的加強針，可以增強我們對新冠病毒的免疫力。我們在罪中的軟弱實際上使我們謙卑，並拿走了我們的驕傲。它提醒我們，我們永遠不能獨立於神。唯有依靠祂，我們才能過得勝的生活。

CONCLUSION 結論

神在耶穌裡饒恕並忘記了我們的罪。當我們接受耶穌進入心中的那一刻，我們所有的罪，包括過去、現在和將來都已一筆勾銷，就好像那些罪從來不存在的一樣。這就讓我想起我曾經欠的一些醫療費用。那時我正在神學院學習，我們沒有收入。感謝神的恩典，通過許多弟兄姐妹的愛心奉獻支持我們。由於我們沒有醫療保險，我們在我太太懷老大時申請了社會福利。他出生後，醫院寄了一些賬單給我們，要求我們繳那些費用。有些朋友建議我和醫院商量一下。幾個月後，我收到一封信，說全部費用都已被免除。怎麼可能？我所做的只是解釋我的經濟困難並請求寬容。一些我不認識的好心人捐款幫助像我這樣的窮人。他們有能力彌補我的不足。我所要做的就是接受他們的幫助。救恩就是這樣運作的。我們沒有什麼可以獻給神來贖我們的罪。財富、善行、高尚的道德表現，什麼東西都於事無補。我們所要做的就是承認自己屬靈的破產，接受神的憐憫。如果耶穌基督不是你的救主和生命的主，你今天就可以接受祂。你必須承認你是一個罪人，相信耶穌為你的罪而死，將你的生命交給耶穌，並決心在你的餘生中順服祂。對於我們的弟兄姐妹：我們不只要相信救恩，我們也應該在每天生活中活出救恩。藉著你的行為向別人表明你是屬耶穌的。此外，與他人分享這個救恩的好消息。