



slumber. While we shut the lights off at night to get rest, the Christian always keeps the Light of the world that is Christ turned on. The way we “keep our lamps burning” is by regularly receiving Christ in Word and Sacrament. Regularly means daily searching the Scriptures at home (**Jn 5:39**), and gladly hearing and learning God’s Word here at Church (3<sup>rd</sup> Commandment) and in Bible Study downstairs. Just as no one in their right minds turns their furnace off during the cold winter months or else their water pipes would freeze and burst, so also no Christian in the soberness of their mind shuts off the Light whom darkness cannot overcome by ignoring Christ’s invitation to His feast.

When Jews observe the feast of *Rosh Hashanah*, their New Year, it is a ten day celebration that also has a focus on repentance, for ten days later they also celebrate *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement. You can read more about the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16. To summarize, in case you don’t know what happens, there are two goats. One goat was killed as a **“sin offering for the people”**, whose blood was brought **“inside the veil”** of the Most Holy Place, which was **“sprinkled over the mercy seat and in front of the mercy seat”** thus making atonement for the Holy Place because of all the people’s sins (**Lev 16:15**). The other goat was allowed to live, but **“Aaron (was to) lay both his hands on the head of the goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins”** (**Lev 16:21**). And then Aaron was to send the goat away into the wilderness. This goat sent off is where we get the word scapegoat from, by the way.

Here is how this all connects. On the one hand, when the Jews celebrated their New Year, while thankful for God’s creation, they also were contrite for their own sins. They knew ten days later they would be observing the Day of Atonement when their sins were atoned for by the shedding of the goat’s blood in the temple, and also by the removal of their sins literally from the community of believers with the removal of the scape goat from their midst. Since they knew the Day of Atonement was coming, they stayed ready by living in repentance.

On the other hand and in the same way, we Christians celebrate the New Year thankful to God for all the gifts of His creation that He gives to us for the good of both body and soul. We thank Him for the gifts of this past year, but we also trust in the assurance of faith that He is going to continue to provide for us in the new year to come. We, also, though, confess our sins. We live in daily repentance. We don’t have a ten day waiting period before the Day of Atonement gets here. That day was fulfilled in Christ when He died on the cross. *He* was sacrificed, **“whose blood cleanses us from all sins”** (**1 Jn 1:7**), becoming our scapegoat who removes all transgressions from the community of believers.

And yet, unlike the Jews who knew their *Yom Kippur* was coming ten days later, we don’t know when the Son of Man is going to return for the final time. So our readiness, the girding of our loins in anticipation of the Son of Man returning is rooted in the forgiveness of sins that Christ already made atonement for. It is when we believe in the forgiveness of our sins for Jesus’ sake, that we have the strength, courage, and certainty to confess along with the Apostle Paul in our Epistle reading that **“neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord”** (**Rom 8:38-39**). No one and nothing can separate you from the love of Christ.

Jesus says, **“Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when He comes”** (**Lk 12:37**). Stay awake, brothers and sisters in Christ. Keep your lamps burning by continuing to receive Him who will not let you slumber. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

**New Year's Eve Sermon thoughts to consider:**

- Listen for the relationship/connections between the Jewish celebration of the New Year (Rosh Hashanah) and how the Christian celebrates the New Year.
- Consider the importance of staying sober-minded as we prepare for Jesus' Second Coming, and what this means for you personally in your daily life.
- Consider how Jesus has made atonement for your sin and is the foundation of your readiness, who enables and empowers you to stay spiritually awake.

**New Year's Eve Sermon thoughts to consider:**

- Listen for the relationship/connections between the Jewish celebration of the New Year (Rosh Hashanah) and how the Christian celebrates the New Year.
- Consider the importance of staying sober-minded as we prepare for Jesus' Second Coming, and what this means for you personally in your daily life.
- Consider how Jesus has made atonement for your sin and is the foundation of your readiness, who enables and empowers you to stay spiritually awake.

**New Year's Eve Sermon thoughts to consider:**

- Listen for the relationship/connections between the Jewish celebration of the New Year (Rosh Hashanah) and how the Christian celebrates the New Year.
- Consider the importance of staying sober-minded as we prepare for Jesus' Second Coming, and what this means for you personally in your daily life.
- Consider how Jesus has made atonement for your sin and is the foundation of your readiness, who enables and empowers you to stay spiritually awake.

**New Year's Eve Sermon thoughts to consider:**

- Listen for the relationship/connections between the Jewish celebration of the New Year (Rosh Hashanah) and how the Christian celebrates the New Year.
- Consider the importance of staying sober-minded as we prepare for Jesus' Second Coming, and what this means for you personally in your daily life.
- Consider how Jesus has made atonement for your sin and is the foundation of your readiness, who enables and empowers you to stay spiritually awake.