

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

Bible Study Notes

5-5-21

Leviticus 16

Preparation for sacrifice on the Day of Atonement - Verses 1-2

¹ The Lord spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron who died when they approached the Lord. ² The Lord said to Moses: "Tell your brother Aaron that he is not to come whenever he chooses into the Most Holy Place behind the curtain in front of the atonement cover on the ark, or else he will die. For I will appear in the cloud over the atonement cover.

16:1 The Day of Atonement was the greatest day of the year for Israel. The Hebrew word for atone means "to cover." Old Testament sacrifices could not actually remove sins, only cover them. On this day, the people confessed their sins as a nation, and the high priest went into the Most Holy Place to make atonement for them. Sacrifices were made and blood was shed so that the people's sins could be "covered" until Christ's sacrifice on the cross would give people the opportunity to have their sin removed forever.

What Aaron needs to bring with him when he goes into the Holy Place - Verses 3-5

³ "This is how Aaron is to enter the Most Holy Place: He must first bring a young bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. ⁴ He is to put on the sacred linen tunic, with linen undergarments next to his body; he is to tie the linen sash around him and put on the linen turban. These are sacred garments; so he must bathe himself with water before he puts them on. ⁵ From the Israelite community he is to take two male goats for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering.

16:3 Aaron had to spend hours preparing himself to meet God. But we can approach God anytime (Hebrews 4:16). What a privilege! We are offered easier access to God than the high priests of Old Testament times! Still, we must never forget that God is holy nor let this privilege cause us to approach God carelessly. The way to God has been opened to us by Christ. But easy access to God does not eliminate our need to prepare our hearts as we draw near in prayer.

16:3-5 This was extensive preparation for an important day. To the ancient Jews the Day of Atonement was called "the great day" or sometimes even just "the day." It was and remains the only day of commanded fasting on the Jewish calendar. Modern Jews still regard Yom Kippur an important day of fasting, soul searching, and righting wrongs - yet they offer no sacrifice for sin.

Casting lots to choose between the two goats - Verses 6-10

⁶ "Aaron is to offer the bull for his own sin offering to make atonement for himself and his household. ⁷ Then he is to take the two goats and present them before the Lord at the entrance to the tent of meeting. ⁸ He is to cast lots for the two goats—one lot for the Lord and the other for the scapegoat. ⁹ Aaron shall bring the goat whose lot falls to the Lord and sacrifice it for a sin offering. ¹⁰ But the goat chosen by lot as the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the Lord to be used for making atonement by sending it into the wilderness as a scapegoat.

16:6 This event with the two goats occurred on the Day of Atonement. The two goats represented the two ways God was dealing with the Israelites' sin: (1) He was forgiving their sin through the first goat, which was sacrificed, and (2) he was removing their guilt through the second goat, the scapegoat, which was sent into the wilderness. The same ritual had to be repeated every year. Jesus Christ's death replaced this system once and for all. We can have our sins forgiven and guilt removed by placing our trust in Christ (Hebrews 10:1-18).

16:6-10 One goat was for the LORD and would be sacrificed as a sin offering and one goat would be the scapegoat and would be released to the wilderness. Each goat had an important role on the Day of Atonement. The scapegoat was literally the "escape goat." It escaped death and went into the wilderness. Scapegoat translates the Hebrew word azazel. "The meaning of this word signifies 'removal' or 'dismissal ...symbolically this goat's function of removing sin from Israel.

The bull for the sin offering - Verses 11-14

¹¹ "Aaron shall bring the bull for his own sin offering to make atonement for himself and his household, and he is to slaughter the bull for his own sin offering. ¹² He is to take a censer full of burning coals from the altar before the Lord and two handfuls of finely ground fragrant incense and take them behind the curtain. ¹³ He is to put the incense on the fire before the Lord, and the smoke of the incense will conceal the atonement cover above the tablets of the covenant law, so that he will not die. ¹⁴ He is to take some of the bull's blood and with his finger sprinkle it on the front of the atonement cover; then he shall sprinkle some of it with his finger seven times before the atonement cover.

16:11 The bull of the sin offering, which is for himself: This sin offering was for himself and for his house. Before the high priest could make atonement for the nation, he had to make atonement for himself. When Jesus offered a perfect atonement for sin, He did not need to make a sin offering for Himself: For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, appoints the Son who has been perfected forever. (Hebrews 7:26-28)

16:12 A censer was a dish or shallow bowl that hung by a chain or was carried with tongs. Inside the censer were placed incense (a combination of sweet-smelling resins and spices) and burning coals from the altar. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest entered the Most Holy Place carrying a smoking censer. The smoke shielded him from the ark of the covenant and the presence of God—otherwise he would die. Incense may also have had a very practical purpose. The sweet smell drew the people's attention to the morning and evening sacrifices and helped cover the sometimes foul smell of the sacrifices.

16:14 He shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it with his finger on the mercy seat: The blood of this sin offering had to be sprinkled on the mercy seat, which was the lid to the ark of the covenant, which sat in the Holy Place. When he came into the Holy Place, he had to come with a smoking censer that gave off a cloud of incense.

According to Jewish tradition, it was on the Day of Atonement that the high priest - and only the high priest - could pronounce the name of God, the sacred Tetragrammaton YHWH. When he

entered the Holy Place with the blood of the goat set apart to the LORD, he would utter the name. He was the only one, and that was the only time, when the name could be uttered, and the high priest was to pass on the exact pronunciation of the name of God to his successor with his dying breath.

The idea was that God was above the mercy seat (I will appear in the cloud above the mercy seat, Leviticus 16:2, and as He looked down upon the ark of the covenant, He saw the sin of man. Man's sin was represented by the items in the ark of the covenant: Manna Israel complained about, tablets of law Israel broke, and a budding almond rod given as a response to Israel's rebellion. Then, the high priest sprinkled atoning blood seven times on the mercy seat - covering over the emblems of Israel's sin. God saw the blood cover over the sin, and atonement was made. This captures the thought behind the Hebrew word for atonement: Kipper, which means, "to cover." Sin was not removed, but covered over by sacrificial blood. The New Testament idea of atonement is that our sin is not merely covered, but removed - taken away, so there is no barrier between God and man any longer.

The goat selected for sacrifice is offered to make atonement for the tabernacle - Verses 15-19

¹⁵ "He shall then slaughter the goat for the sin offering for the people and take its blood behind the curtain and do with it as he did with the bull's blood: He shall sprinkle it on the atonement cover and in front of it. ¹⁶ In this way he will make atonement for the Most Holy Place because of the uncleanness and rebellion of the Israelites, whatever their sins have been. He is to do the same for the tent of meeting, which is among them in the midst of their uncleanness. ¹⁷ No one is to be in the tent of meeting from the time Aaron goes in to make atonement in the Most Holy Place until he comes out, having made atonement for himself, his household and the whole community of Israel. ¹⁸ "Then he shall come out to the altar that is before the Lord and make atonement for it. He shall take some of the bull's blood and some of the goat's blood and put it on all the horns of the altar. ¹⁹ He shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times to cleanse it and to consecrate it from the uncleanness of the Israelites.

16:15-19 Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering: The goat that was sacrificed was also like Jesus, in that the goat was spotless, was from the people of Israel (Leviticus 16:5), was chosen by God (Leviticus 16:8) and the goat's blood was taken to the Holy Place to provide atonement.

So he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel: This blood was applied to the mercy seat, but also the tabernacle and altar itself. This blood cleansed the house of God itself, which was made ceremonially unclean by man's constant touch.

The release of the scapegoat - Verses 20-22

²⁰ "When Aaron has finished making atonement for the Most Holy Place, the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall bring forward the live goat. ²¹ He is to lay both hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites—all their sins—and put them on the goat's head. He shall send the goat away into the wilderness

in the care of someone appointed for the task. ²² The goat will carry on itself all their sins to a remote place; and the man shall release it in the wilderness.

16:20-22 When he has made an end of atoning for the Holy Place: After the high priest's sin was dealt with and after the tabernacle itself was cleansed, Aaron then dealt with the sin of the people through the transference of sin and release of the scapegoat.

He shall release the goat in the wilderness: This was a perfect demonstration of atonement under the Old Covenant, before the completed work of Jesus on the cross. Sin could be put away, but never really eliminated. The sin-bearing goat, bearing the sin of Israel, was alive somewhere but put away.

Completion of the sacrifices - Verses 23-28

²³ "Then Aaron is to go into the tent of meeting and take off the linen garments he put on before he entered the Most Holy Place, and he is to leave them there. ²⁴ He shall bathe himself with water in the sanctuary area and put on his regular garments. Then he shall come out and sacrifice the burnt offering for himself and the burnt offering for the people, to make atonement for himself and for the people. ²⁵ He shall also burn the fat of the sin offering on the altar. ²⁶ "The man who releases the goat as a scapegoat must wash his clothes and bathe himself with water; afterward he may come into the camp. ²⁷ The bull and the goat for the sin offerings, whose blood was brought into the Most Holy Place to make atonement, must be taken outside the camp; their hides, flesh and intestines are to be burned up. ²⁸ The man who burns them must wash his clothes and bathe himself with water; afterward he may come into the camp.

16:23-28 He shall wash his body with water in a holy place: After releasing the scapegoat, the high priest and the one who released the scapegoat washed and the sin offering and burnt offering would be completed.

Take off the linen garments ... put on his garments: When atonement was finished, the priest emerged from the tabernacle in glory - with the humble garments taken off and in his normal clothes for glory and beauty.

What the people did on the Day of Atonement - Verses 29-32

²⁹ "This is to be a lasting ordinance for you: On the tenth day of the seventh month you must deny yourselves and not do any work—whether native-born or a foreigner residing among you— ³⁰ because on this day atonement will be made for you, to cleanse you. Then, before the Lord, you will be clean from all your sins. ³¹ It is a day of sabbath rest, and you must deny yourselves; it is a lasting ordinance.

16:29-32 You shall afflict your souls: In contrast to other national days of gathering, the Day of Atonement was a day to afflict your souls. That is, it was a day of fasting and rest - a sabbath of solemn rest. Modern Jews who do observe the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) typically fast for that day. Yet they have no sacrifice for sins.

That you may be clean from all your sins before the LORD: God wanted them to afflict themselves so they could identify with the sacrifice for sin. Afflicting the soul brought the

Israelite into sympathy with the afflicted sacrificial victim, even as the believer identifies with Jesus Christ on the cross.

What the high priest does on the Day of Atonement - Verses 32-34

³² The priest who is anointed and ordained to succeed his father as high priest is to make atonement. He is to put on the sacred linen garments ³³ and make atonement for the Most Holy Place, for the tent of meeting and the altar, and for the priests and all the members of the community. ³⁴ "This is to be a lasting ordinance for you: Atonement is to be made once a year for all the sins of the Israelites." And it was done, as the Lord commanded Moses.

16:32-34 He shall make atonement for the Holy Sanctuary: This meant the priest and only the priest. Only once a year only one man - enter into the Holy Place and come near the presence of God.