

LEVITICUS 16:1- 34

Theme: The Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur* – *Yom*: day, *Kippur*: Atonement)

Outline:

- An Appointed Period: v. 1-2
- An Assigned Procedure: v. 3-28
- An Afflicted People: v. 29-31
- An Announced Purpose: v. 32-34

The Day of Atonement

- Chapter 16 appears to be a speech God gave right after the events of chapter 10, when Nadab and Abihu were struck dead.
 - “Logically it might either occupy its present position, as being the great and culminating atoning and cleansing ceremony [after all the sin in chapters 12-15], or it might be relegated to a place among the holy days in chapter 23...” ~ Cambridge
 - Because I am a linear thinker, I would place it right after chapter 10.
- As mentioned before, the word *Atonement* is “covering”, the idea being that atonement is the process by which God “covers” all the sin.
 - For the Jews it is only the sin that has come before, and therefore atonement needs to be offered annually.
 - For Christians, because of Jesus, it covers all the sin, not only that has come before, but all the sin that will come in the future as well.

SCRIPTURE

An Appointed Period (v. 1-2)

16:1-2 *“Now the LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they offered profane fire before the LORD, and died; and the LORD said to Moses: “Tell Aaron your brother not to come at just any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the mercy seat which is on the ark, lest he die; for I will appear in the cloud above the mercy seat.”*

- This verse lends more evidence to the idea of Nadab and Abihu sinning in the Holy of Holies because God tells Aaron not to go into the Holy Place whenever he wants, or he will die because he will be struck with the presence of God. There is an appointed period of one day for him to present himself to the Lord.
- “The deaths of Nadab and Abihu must have put the fear of God into Aaron and the priests so that they wondered whether it was even safe to enter the tabernacle to do their work. God made it clear that the priests should not be afraid to serve, but that only the high priest was to enter the Holy of Holies, and that only once a year on the Day of Atonement... The appointed day was the tenth day of the seventh month [*Tishrei* aka late Sept. or early Oct.]. On the first day of the seventh month, the trumpets were blown to announce the beginning of a new year (*Rosh Hashanah*). Then came *Yom Kippur* on the tenth day, and the Feast of Tabernacles on the 15th day.” ~ Wiersbe

An Assigned Procedure (v. 3-28)

v. 3-4 A General Overview of the Procedure:

“Thus Aaron shall come into the Holy Place: with the blood of a young bull as a sin offering, and of a ram as a burnt offering. He shall put the holy linen tunic and the linen trousers on his body; he shall be girded with a linen sash, and with the linen turban he shall be attired. These are holy garments. Therefore he shall wash his body in water, and put them on.”

- The High Priest must first wash and present himself in plain white linen. This is a departure from his fancier ceremonial clothes that included the colorful robe and ephod.
- This was a form of humiliation, or a humbling of the Priest, stepping into a lower station.
 - Phil. 2:7-8 — “[He] made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”
 - During the Second Temple Period: “Seven days before the Day of Atonement he was separated from his wife, and lodged in a chamber in the Temple, lest he should contract defilement, which might unfit him for the performance of his pontifical duties. The elders or the representatives of the Sanhedrin read and expounded to him the ordinances contained in this chapter; which he had to practice in their [presence, so as to make sure that he could rightly perform all the ceremonies. This continued during the whole night previous to the Day of Atonement, when he was kept awake, so as to prevent any pollution arising from a dream or accident by night. He read, in the silent hours of darkness, the Books of Job, Daniel, Ezra, and Chronicles; and if he was no scholar, and could not read, the elders read them to him. As it was deemed important that he should not fall asleep, the priests who surrounded him alternately snapped their fingers, and made him walk on the cold pavement of the court. When the chief of the thirteen priests who were appointed to perform the ordinary duties in connection with the service in the sanctuary had ascertained that the morning had dawned, that the ashes had been removed from the brazen altar, and that the time of the early sacrifice had arrived, the high priest was conducted to the baptistery, where he immersed his whole body in water.” ~ Ellicott

v. 5-6 A General Overview of the Procedure cont’d:

“And he shall take from the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats as a sin offering, and one ram as a burnt offering. Aaron shall offer the bull as a sin offering, which is for himself, and make atonement for himself and for his house.”

- Three Sacrifices Listed:
 - Bull for the Priest and his household
 - Ram as a burnt offering
 - Two goats as a sin offering for the people

Specific Steps:

1. HP to wash.
2. HP to put on plain white linen.

v. 7-10 A General Overview of the Procedure cont’d:

“He shall take the two goats and present them before the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. Then Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats: one lot for the LORD and the other lot for the scapegoat. And Aaron shall bring the goat on which the LORD’s lot fell, and offer it as a sin offering. But the goat on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make atonement upon it, and to let it go as the scapegoat into the wilderness.”

- **Scapegoat:** Heb. *āzā'zēl* (az-aw-zale') – entire removal
 - Like the bird that flies free after the cleansing ritual from leprosy (sin), here too an animal is set free, while the other is killed for the sin of the people. This is a picture of Christ standing in our place, as the sacrifice.
 - Christ is the scapegoat that carried our sins away.
 - “As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.” ~ Ps. 103:12

v. 11-14 Specific Steps to the Procedure: *“And Aaron shall bring the bull of the sin offering, which is for himself, and make atonement for himself and for his house, and shall kill the bull as the sin offering which is for himself. Then he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from the altar before the LORD, with his hands full of sweet incense beaten fine, and bring it inside the veil. And he shall put the incense on the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of incense may cover the mercy seat that is on the Testimony, lest he die. He shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it with his finger on the mercy seat on the east side; and before the mercy seat he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times.”*

- The smoke of the incense may have been used to cloak or dull the glory of the Lord on the mercy seat so that the High Priest didn't automatically die just being in His presence.
- It also represents intercessory prayer. The High Priest stands in the gap offering incense in a place we cannot go.

Specific Steps to the Procedure cont'd:

v. 15-19 *“Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering, which is for the people, bring its blood inside the veil, do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it on the mercy seat and before the mercy seat. So he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, for all their sins; and so he shall do for the tabernacle of meeting which remains among them in the midst of their uncleanness. There shall be no man in the tabernacle of meeting when he goes in to make atonement in the Holy Place, until he comes out, that he may make atonement for himself, for his household, and for all the assembly of Israel. And he shall go out to the altar that is before the LORD, and make atonement for it, and shall take some of the blood of the bull and some of the blood of the goat, and put it on the horns of the altar all around. Then he shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times, cleanse it, and consecrate it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel.”*

Specific Steps cont'd:

3. Offer the bull as a sin offering for himself and his family (outside)
4. Take incense into the holy of holies, sprinkle blood of the bull on the east side of the mercy seat 7x.
5. Kill the goat chosen for sacrifice (outside) as a sin offering for the people.
6. Bring the goat's blood into the Holy of Holies and sprinkle it 7x on the mercy seat.
7. Go out to the altar and put the blood of the bull and the goat on the horns, and sprinkle blood on it 7x to cleanse the altar from all the sin that had been “cleansed” on it the previous year.

Specific Steps to the Procedure cont'd:

v. 20-22 *“And when he has made an end of atoning for the Holy Place, the tabernacle of meeting, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat. Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man. The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness.”*

- Laying on of hands: confession, designation, and transference.

Specific Steps to the Procedure cont'd:

v. 23-28 *“Then Aaron shall come into the tabernacle of meeting, shall take off the linen garments which he put on when he went into the Holy Place, and shall leave them there. And he shall wash his body with water in a holy place, put on his garments, come out and offer his burnt offering and the burnt offering of the people, and make atonement for himself and for the people. The fat of the sin offering he shall burn on the altar. And he who released the goat as the scapegoat shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and afterward he may come into the camp. The bull for the sin offering and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the Holy Place, shall be carried outside the camp. And they shall burn in the fire their skins, their flesh, and their offal. Then he who burns them shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and afterward he may come into the camp.”*

- All three men who were involved must wash because they are all ceremonially unclean as they came into contact with and were defiled by "sin". Remember that the bull and goat had the sin transferred to them.

Specific Steps cont'd:

8. Bring the scapegoat – confess, designate, and transfer by the laying on of hands, and release it into the wilderness, led by a suitable man.
9. Take off linen garments, wash, and put on other garments.
10. Offer ram as burnt offering.
11. Burn the fat of the sin offering on the altar.
12. Man who took scapegoat into wilderness needs to wash his clothes and body before returning to the camp.
13. The bodies of the bull and goat for the sin offerings are taken outside the camp to be burned. Whoever burns them must wash his clothes and bathe before coming back into the camp.

An Afflicted People (v. 29-31)

v. 29-31 *“This shall be a statute forever for you: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether a native of your own country or a stranger who dwells among you. For on that day the priest shall make atonement for you, to cleanse you, that you may be clean from all your sins before the LORD. It is a sabbath of solemn rest for you, and you shall afflict your souls. It is a statute forever.”*

- Statute forever: This is one of those laws that God commands to be universal (for the Jews) forever. Jesus fulfilled this for those that accept Him as their Messiah.
- Afflict your souls: humble yourselves, deny your flesh (fasting from self-care, food, marital relations, etc.).
- Do no work: Set apart as a Sabbath day

An Announced Purpose (v. 32-34)

v. 32-33 *“And the priest, who is anointed and consecrated to minister as priest in his father’s place, shall make atonement, and put on the linen clothes, the holy garments; then he shall make atonement for the Holy Sanctuary, and he shall make **atonement for the tabernacle of meeting and for the altar**, and he shall make **atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly**.*

- Notice that sin affects not only the **morality of the people**, but the **material of their possessions** as well. Sin affected more than just our souls when it came into the world. It affected the physical universe as well (causing decay, aging, Law of Entropy, etc.)
- The tabernacle needed to be atoned for as well as the people. It gets not only literally dirty (from all the blood) and needs to be cleaned, but it gets metaphysically unclean as it is tainted by the effects of sin all year long.

v. 34 *“This shall be an everlasting statute for you, to make atonement for the children of Israel, for all their sins, once a year.” And he did as the LORD commanded Moses.”*

- The purpose of this Day was to make atonement for the sins of the previous year. This is why many Jews don’t see the need for Jesus, as God simply “forgives” their sin every year. What they don’t take into account is that God was simply “covering” them temporarily until Jesus came as the forever sacrifice that doesn’t just cover their sins, but His blood cleanses them from their sins permanently, not just annually.

Conclusion

- Galatians 4:4-5 — *“But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”*
 - If the Day of Atonement sacrifice was all that was needed, God would never have sent Jesus. We needed to be cleansed, not just covered.
 - Hebrews 9 specifically speaks of the limitations of the earthly sacrifices.

“Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness. For a tent was prepared, the first section, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence. It is called the Holy Place. Behind the second curtain was a second section called the Most Holy Place, having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron’s staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant. Above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail. [as they were lost] These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties, but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people. By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing (which is symbolic for the present age). According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper; but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation [the coming of the Messiah].” (Heb. 9:1-10)

