

October 4, 2020

Atonement

Leviticus 16-18

BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLAN

Sept 27	Hab - Zeph	Oct 1	Malachi 1-4
Sept 28	Haggai 1-2	Oct 2	Matthew 1-4
Sept 29	Zechariah 1-7	Oct 3	Matthew 5-6
Sept 30	Zechariah 8-14	Oct 4	Matthew 7-8

Overview of Leviticus 16-18:

Leviticus 16 Instructions about The Day of Atonement

Leviticus 17 Do not sacrifice anywhere else to anyone else... Do not eat blood, because life is in the blood

Key passage:

- Lev 17:14 *“For as for the life of all flesh, its blood is identified with its life. Therefore I said to the sons of Israel, ‘You are not to eat the blood of any flesh, for the life of all flesh is its blood; whoever eats it shall be cut off.’*

Leviticus 18 Do not sin like the Egyptians or Canaanites did, so that you will not defile yourself. Keep God’s commands and be pure.

Key Passages:

- Lev 18:1-5 *1 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2 “Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘I am the Lord your God. 3 You shall not do what is done in the land of Egypt where you lived, nor are you to do what is done in the land of Canaan where I am bringing you; you shall not walk in their statutes. 4 You are to perform My judgments and keep My statutes, to live in accord with them; I am the Lord your God. 5 So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them; I am the Lord.*
- Lev 18:24-25 *24 ‘Do not defile yourselves by any of these things; for by all these the nations which I am casting out before you have become defiled. 25 For the land has become defiled, therefore I have brought its punishment upon it, so the land has spewed out its inhabitants*

Lesson Idea: Leviticus 16 The Day of Atonement pointed forward to the need for Jesus to render atonement through the sacrifice of Himself once for all.

Throughout our study of the Pentateuch, we have been trying to emphasize how the Old Testament points forward to Jesus. No previous lesson does so more than this one. Today we will focus in on Leviticus 16. As God

laid out the instructions for the Day of Atonement it points clearly to the atonement found once for all in the sacrificial death of Jesus. I encourage you to read back over Hebrews 9:6 – 10:18 which have been the focus of the sermon time in worship this past few weeks. It gives a New Testament view to what the Day of Atonement was all about. Hebrews 10:1 in the New Living Translation sums it up well:

The old system under the law of Moses was only a shadow, a dim preview of the good things to come, not the good things themselves. The sacrifices under that system were repeated again and again, year after year, but they were never able to provide perfect cleansing for those who came to worship.

The Day of Atonement reminds us that sin must be accounted for, and that God in His grace sent Jesus to pay the price for our forgiveness with His own, sinless blood.

Cross References: Romans 3:21-26; Ephesians 1:7; Hebrews 9-10; 1 Peter 1:17-21

Leviticus 16:1-14 Preparing for Atonement

1 Now the Lord spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they had approached the presence of the Lord and died. 2 The Lord said to Moses: *“Tell your brother Aaron that **he shall not enter at any time into the holy place** inside the veil, before the mercy seat which is on the ark, **or he will die; for I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat.** 3 Aaron shall **enter the holy place with this:** with a bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. 4 **He shall put on** the holy linen tunic, and the linen undergarments shall be next to his body, and he shall be girded with the linen sash and attired with the linen turban (**these are holy garments**). Then **he shall bathe his body** in water and put them on. 5 He shall take from the congregation of the sons of Israel two male goats for a sin offering and one ram for a burnt offering. 6 Then Aaron shall **offer the bull for the sin offering which is for himself, that he may make atonement for himself and for his household.** 7 He shall take the two goats and present them **before the Lord** at the doorway of the tent of meeting. 8 **Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats, one lot for the Lord and the other lot for the scapegoat.** 9 Then Aaron shall offer the goat on which the lot for the Lord fell, and make it **a sin offering.** 10 But the goat on which the lot for the scapegoat fell shall be presented alive before the Lord, **to make atonement upon it, to send it into the wilderness as the scapegoat.***

11 "Then Aaron shall offer the bull of the sin offering which is for himself and make atonement for himself and for his household, and he shall slaughter the bull of the sin offering which is for himself. 12 He shall take a firepan full of coals of fire from upon the altar before the Lord and two handfuls of finely ground sweet incense, and **bring it inside the veil. 13 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 ark of the testimony, otherwise he will die.** 14 Moreover, he shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it with his finger on the mercy seat on the east side; also in front of the mercy seat he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger **seven times.**

Questions to Ponder:

- **Why did Aaron's sons die, and what did it teach about the holiness of God?**
- **Why did God give such specific commands about what Aaron should do before making atonement for the people?**
- **What was the purpose of the incense?**

In Leviticus 10 Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, were consumed by fire from the Lord's presence when they offered "strange fire." The holiness of God demands that His commands be followed precisely in the way He instructs. Aaron was told he could not enter into God's presence **at any time** (v 2). He could only enter on the day which God determined.

In this chapter, God gave specific instructions on how Aaron was to prepare himself before making atonement for the people. He was to bathe and wear certain garments, once again as a way of recognizing the sinfulness of man before a holy God. He then had to offer a sin offering for himself and his family, before he could offer sacrifices for the sins of the people. Hebrews 7:26-28 explains why that was necessary for Aaron and the High Priests after him, but would not be necessary for Jesus:

26 For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest (Jesus), holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; 27 who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. 28 For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, appoints a Son, made perfect forever.

Jesus had no sins of His own to atone for, therefore His sacrifice could be applied to all of us as sinners in need of grace.

After casting lots to determine the goat to be slaughtered and the scapegoat (v 8), and before entering the holy place, verse 12-13 commanded that Aaron burn incense and bring it inside the veil. Verse 13 says: *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 ark of the testimony, otherwise he will die.* (The "mercy seat" was the top cover on the Ark of the Covenant, which featured two golden angels with wings covering their faces as a symbol of humility and awe.) God had promised that His presence would reside there. The incense would cause a cloud of smoke to envelope the most holy place. Even though Aaron was getting to enter into God's presence, he would not be allowed to look upon God or His mercy seat. Again, all of these preparations were emphasizing the holiness of God and the unworthiness of man to enter into His presence.

When Jesus died, the curtain of separation in the Temple was torn in two from the top down (Matthew 27:50-52). That curtain was either 45 or 60 feet tall and up to 4 inches wide (in other words, it wasn't torn by men). It signified that through Jesus the presence of God was now open to all believers for all time, not just to the High Priest on one day a year. Hebrews 10:19-20 says that now *we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh...*

Leviticus 16:15-22 Slaughter and Scapegoats

15 "Then he shall **slaughter the goat of the sin offering which 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, and sprinkle it on the mercy seat and in front of the mercy seat. 16 He shall make atonement for the holy place, because of the impurities of the sons of Israel and because of their transgressions in regard to all their sins; and thus he shall do for the tent of meeting which abides with them in the midst of their impurities.** 17 When he goes in to make atonement in the holy place, **no one shall be in the tent of meeting until he comes out,** that he may make atonement for himself and for his household and for all the assembly of Israel. 18 Then 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 of the blood of the goat and put it on the horns of the altar on all sides. 19 With his finger he shall sprinkle some of the blood on it seven times and **cleanse**

it, and from the impurities of the sons of Israel consecrate it.

20 "When he finishes atoning for the holy place and the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall **offer the live goat.**

21 Then Aaron shall lay both of his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the sons of Israel and all their transgressions in regard to all their sins; and he shall lay them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who stands in readiness. 22 The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a solitary land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness.

Questions to Ponder:

- **Why was a goat slaughtered as a sin offering?**
- **How does sprinkling blood cleanse anything? (see v 19)**
- **What was the purpose of the scapegoat?**
- **How does Jesus fulfill the roles of both goats – the one slaughtered and the scapegoat?**

One goat was chosen by lot to be slaughtered (v 7-10) as a sin offering. Verses 15-19 explain how blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat to "**make atonement for the holy place, because of the impurities of the sons of Israel and because of their transgressions in regard to all their sins; and thus he shall do for the tent of meeting which abides with them in the midst of their impurities**" (v 16). This indicated that even the places and objects of worship were negatively affected by the impurities of the people's sins. Sin corrupts everything; so God provided a way to bring a temporary cleansing year after year by the sprinkled blood. In this He was showing that sin had to be atoned for, and ultimately, Jesus would be that atonement.

We don't normally associate blood with cleansing, at least not physically. Good hygiene calls for doctors and nurses to glove up before dealing with bleeding patients. So the cleansing occurring here is not of a physical nature but a spiritual one. Hebrews 9:22 stresses the importance of the blood to spiritual cleansing:

22 And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

But not only was a goat slaughtered on the Day of Atonement, a scapegoat was chosen to symbolically "bear" the sins of the people. After sacrificing the goat of sin offering, Aaron was commanded to lay his hands on the scapegoat and confess the sins of the people. The goat was then led out into the wilderness and released

at a far place, where it could not find its way back. Verse 22 says that the goat would **bear on itself all their iniquities to a solitary land.**

When Jesus shed His blood on the cross, He actually fulfilled the roles of both of these goats. The New Testament declares that in His sacrifice, He brought atonement and forgiveness for man's sins. Hebrews 9:13-14 explain how Jesus' blood is greater than the blood of the animals which were sacrificed:

13 For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, 14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

The cleansing that mankind needs for the impurities of their sin is forgiveness—the *cleansing of their consciences from dead works*. Only when those are cleansed can someone truly *serve the living God*.

But Jesus also "took our sins away" like the scapegoat. Isaiah 53:4 prophesied about the Suffering Servant:

4 Surely He has borne our griefs

And carried our sorrows;

Yet we esteemed Him stricken,

Smitten by God, and afflicted.

5 But He was wounded for our transgressions,

He was bruised for our iniquities;

The chastisement for our peace was upon Him,

And by His stripes we are healed.

6 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.

(NKJV)

Consider also 2 Corinthians 5:21 which says: *He (God the Father) made Him (Jesus) who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him*. What the Day of Atonement could not fully accomplish pointed forward to the time when Jesus would come and fulfill it once for all.

Leviticus 16:23-34 Continuing the Practice

23 "Then Aaron shall come into the tent of meeting and take off the linen garments which he put on when he went into the holy place, and shall leave them there. 24 He shall bathe his body with water in a holy place and put on his clothes, and come forth and offer his burnt offering and the burnt offering of the people and make atonement for himself and for the people. 25 Then he shall offer up in smoke the fat of the sin offering on the altar. 26 The one who released the goat as the

scapegoat shall wash his clothes and bathe his body with water; then afterward he shall come into the camp. **27 But the bull of the sin offering and the goat of the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the holy place, shall be taken outside the camp, and they shall burn their hides, their flesh, and their refuse in the fire.** 28 Then the one who burns them shall wash his clothes and bathe his body with water, then afterward he shall come into the camp.

An Annual Atonement

29 **"This shall be a permanent statute for you: in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall humble your souls and not do any work, whether the native, or the alien who sojourns among you; 30 for it is on this day that atonement shall be made for you to cleanse you; you will be clean from all your sins before the Lord. 31 It is to be a sabbath of solemn rest for you, that you may humble your souls; it is a permanent statute. 32 So the priest who is anointed and ordained to serve as priest in his father's place shall make atonement: he shall thus put on the linen garments, the holy garments, 33 and make atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make atonement for the tent of meeting and for the altar. He shall also make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly. 34 Now you shall have this as a permanent statute, to make atonement for the sons of Israel for all their sins once every year." And just as the Lord had commanded Moses, so he did.**

Questions to Ponder:

- **What was Aaron commanded to do after completing the act of atonement?**
- **Why did God desire this to be a *permanent statute* and an annual observance?**
- **Why was it also to be a *sabbath day of rest* for the people?**
- **How did Moses respond to these instructions?**

After Aaron finished the work of atonement, he was commanded to take off his special garments, bathe again, then offer the burnt offering for his sins and the sins of the people. The rest of the sin offerings (the bull and goat whose blood was sprinkled in the tabernacle) was then *taken outside the camp* and burned in fire (v 27). Hebrews 13:11-14 makes application of this to Jesus as well:

11 For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest as an offering for sin, are burned outside the camp. 12

*Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate. 13 So, let us go out to Him **outside the camp**, bearing His reproach. 14 For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come.*

Moses was instructed to make the Day of Atonement an annual observance and declare it a special Sabbath day of rest. God desired to remind His people every year that they were sinners in need of His grace and mercy. It also emphasized God's holiness and the separation that our sinfulness causes, as well as the seriousness of our impurity. The people were to pause on that day as the High Priest made atonement for them, and worship the Holy God, who in His great love and forbearance, allowed them to be called His people for another year.

Verse 34 describes how Moses responded: ***And just as the Lord had commanded Moses, so he did.*** What a great lesson in obedience for us. We need to respond obediently to any instruction from the Lord. The rituals and requirements found in these chapters may not have completely made sense to Moses, but he obeyed them without question. From this side of the Gospel event, we understand how all of the activities on the Day of Atonement were meant to foreshadow the saving work of Jesus Christ. And it should cause us to love the Lord even more today, because His death brought us life and forgiveness and cleansing and rest. Worship Him today.

Hebrews 4:14-16 reminds us of the great privileges we have now because of the atoning work of our Great High Priest, Jesus Christ:

14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. 16 Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Lesson by Bro Stan