



## **Leviticus 16** **Hebrews 9-10**

### **The Day of Atonement**

What is the most important day of the year? It has been called, "The Sabbath of Sabbaths."

The Hebrew annual fast day was the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*). It came on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Tisri, roughly around our October. On this most solemn day the people confessed their sins. After prescribed ceremonies with offerings, the high priest only on this day of the year entered the Holy of Holies to sprinkle blood on the Mercy Seat on the Ark of the Covenant. It was a day of humiliation and awful reminder of the holiness of God and sinfulness of man. The veil in the Holy of Holies separated the two. The people fasted from the evening on the 9<sup>th</sup> to the evening on the 10<sup>th</sup>. This helped to insure a proper heart attitude of penitence and faith.

This was the most important day on the Hebrew calendar because of the significance of this fast. By a special sacrifice, the sins of a whole year were covered. Atonement was made for all the sins of the entire nation (vv. 16, 21, 30, 33), and the sanctuary (vv. 16-19, 33). The high priest made an offering first for himself and the priests' (v. 3), and then two goats as a sin offering were sacrificed for the people (vv. 5-10). Aaron washed and put his regular high priest clothing on and offered his own and the people's burnt offering and sin offering (vv. 23-28). The remains of the animals were carried outside the camp and burned.

Even the Day of Atonement was a temporary provision. It had to be observed year after year until Christ came as the Lamb of God to take away sins. It could not produce perfection in the heart of man. An imperfect man cannot be a perfect priest. An imperfect sacrifice can not produce a perfectly clean conscience.

The Book of Hebrews is the best commentary on the fulfillment of the typical sacrifices of the Day of Atonement. It demonstrates for us that Christ's sacrifice for the people's sins, when He died on the cross, was not an annual Day of Atonement fast to be repeated each year, but a once for all complete and final sacrifice for sin (Heb. 9:11-12, 24-26; 10:12).

On this special day two goats were selected and lots were cast to determine which one was to be slain as a sacrifice and which one would be the scapegoat (vv. 7-10).

The high priest took the blood of the slain goat (vv. 15-19) into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled it on the Mercy Seat. It symbolized a perfect acceptance with God through the sprinkled blood. He then sprinkled blood seven times before the Ark of the Covenant. This signified a perfect standing before God by means of the shed blood.

The slain goat (v. 8, 15-19) is a beautiful type of Christ's death as a covering for sin (Romans 3:24-26). "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). Jesus paid the price for our sin debt. It vindicates the holiness and justice of God (2 Cor. 5:21). Our sin bearer died in our place (Isa. 53:4; Gal. 3:13). Keil and Delitzsch note the reason for making use of the two goats is that it was physically impossible to combine all the features that needed to be set forth in the sin offering of one animal. Cf. Heb. 10:4, 12-14; 9:28; 1 Pet. 2:24; Jn. 1:29. The blood of Jesus cleanses us of every sin (1 John 1:7; Heb. 9:14; 7:25).

Jesus not only paid our sin debt by dying on the cross for us, but He also carried our sins far away. The live goat on Yom Kippur was the goat of removal, symbolizing the removal of Israel's sins (Lev. 16:8-10, 15, 20-22). Our Great High Priest Jesus Christ needed no sacrifice for Himself because He was sinless. Therefore, He alone could carry away our sins.

"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. The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a solitary land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness" (Lev. 16:21-22). The live goat or scapegoat is a type of Christ's death as putting away our sins before God (Heb. 9:26; Rom. 4:25; 5:1; 8:33-34). He lifts up and carries our sins away never to return! The fate of the scapegoat is eventual death. He is released into the wilderness to eventually wander around and die. He is taken out into a solitary place where he can not find his way back to the camp. The disappearing goat is placed in an area where it was impossible for him to come back. The live goat suffered just what the sinner without Christ would suffer (Isa. 53:6, 12; 1 Peter 2:24).

By faith we laid our sins on Jesus and He bore them in His own body in His death on the cross. It is a visible symbol of our sins being further and further removed and carried away. "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:12). The sins on the animal were utterly lost, as though they had never been. What a picture of God removing our sins and remembering them no more.

When we confess our sins to God and believe on Jesus Christ as our personal savior we have the privilege of transferring all our guilt upon Him. The LORD God has provided the perfect sacrifice for all of our sins. We lay our hands upon His head when we confess our need for His atoning sacrifice and believe on Him. Because He died in our stead we will not have to bear the punishment, He did it for us on our behalf. Have you laid your sins upon the sacred head of Jesus?

During the Old Testament times, no final offering for sin was made because each year the high priest went into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement and sprinkled the blood. Only Christ offered the complete

into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement and sprinkled the blood. Only Christ offered the complete and perfect sacrifice for sin. It was His death that effected the New Covenant. His sinless life qualified Him to make the perfect sacrifice for sin and pay our sin debt. The death of Christ to pay our sin debt was all-sufficient because He only had to die once. His sacrifice was final and complete. He dealt with our sin once and for all. We do not have to bring supplemental offerings and sacrifices for our sins because Christ is sufficient and final.

In the person and sacrificial work of Jesus Christ on the cross the shadows, pictures and types have given way to the perfect and permanent reality of the one true sacrifice for sin. He is the true High Priest offering the only acceptable sacrifice which can open the way to God for all who believe on Him. The Day of Atonement is fulfilled in the sacrifice of Christ.

It is "not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. . . . For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a *mere* copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; nor was it that He would offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood that is not his own" (Hebrews 9:12, 24-25).

Moreover, because of the supreme importance of Christ's sacrifice for sin all who reject His sacrifice can only bring eternal damnation upon themselves. It is unforgivable. There is no other way to come to God (Acts 4:12).

The blood of Jesus Christ obtained our "eternal redemption." Its value was far more significant and greater than any animal sacrifice. We have a greater high priest, a greater temple, a better covenant with better promises, and an immeasurably greater sacrifice than the Levitical priesthood. This sacrifice accomplished a "one for all" perfect redemption (Heb. 7:27; 9:12, 28; 10:10). The word for redemption in the New Testament is the idea of a release on receipt of the ransom payment. The death of Christ has liberated us by the payment of a ransom. Thus, He has redeemed us from the penalty of sin. He purchased us while we were in sin's slave market and He set us free. He liberated us by the payment of the ransom, which is His blood.

"For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement" (Lev. 17:11). "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of our sins." The Talmud said, "There is no atonement except with blood." The only blood that will work is the blood of Jesus (1 John 1:7; Heb. 9:11-22; 13:20; 10:4, 19-20).

The Old Testament saints came every year to this most solemn day and in the back of their minds was the question what if there is just one sin that is not covered? What if my priest or I didn't perform the ritual just right; will I escape the wrath of God? What if . . . ? In every case redemption, or releasing on the payment of a ransom, is the deliverance from a situation from which the individual is powerless to liberate himself, or a penalty which he could never have paid. What if there is just one sin that is not covered? You could never do enough to cover that one sin because God is holy. He can not and will not look upon sin.

Moreover, the sacrifice of Christ relieves us of our load of guilt. Animals couldn't do that.

The people quietly waited outside of the tabernacle for the high priest to come out. As he approached them he raised his hands in blessing and cried out: "You are clean from all your sins!"

To everyone who is washed in the precious blood of Jesus He comes from within the veil and announces: "It is finished!" "You are clean from all your sins!"

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It takes all of the Old Testament sacrifices, offerings, feasts and fast put together to help us to comprehend something of the magnitude of what Christ accomplished for us in His death and the shedding of His blood. No one offering, not even the Day of Atonement, could completely explain what He did for us on the cross.

The sacrifice of Christ doesn't have to be offered again, nor does anything need to be added to it. It has been paid in full. It is sufficient. It is eternal. All you need to do is receive it as God's gift to you. There are no additions, no come ons, no service charges, no rebates, no sales charges, no taxes, no handling charges, no hidden small fine print or fast talking salesman will call. It is paid in full! Just receive it, enjoy it, and rejoice in Him. Believe on Christ right now. Ask Him to save you.

The writer of Hebrews gives us the perfect invitation. "Inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without *reference to sin*, to those who eagerly await Him" (Hebrews 9:27-28).

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Wil is a graduate of William Carey University, B. A.; New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Th. M.; and Azusa Pacific University, M. A. He has pastored in Panama, Ecuador and the U. S, and served for over 20 years as missionary in Ecuador and Honduras. He had a daily expository Bible teaching ministry head in over 100 countries for ten years. He continues to seek opportunities to be personally involved in world missions. Wil and his wife Ann have three grown daughters. He currently serves as a Baptist pastor and teaches seminary extension courses in Honduras.

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