



## **Lesson XXXIII: The Day of Atonement**

Leviticus 16

August 22, 2021

**I. The historical context:** after the judgment upon Nadab and Abihu for 'strange fire,' Lev. 10:1-2. "It is called strange fire; and, though not expressly forbidden, it was crime enough that God commanded it not." Matthew Henry

A. "The day was the 10th of Tisri (the seventh month), from the evening of the 9th to that of the 10th, five days before the feast of tabernacles. For this latter feast implied rest in Israel's inheritance; and before rest can be realized atonement must precede. It was kept as a sabbath; but not, as other sabbaths, with joy, but with affliction of themselves, as the day on which the nation's collective sin was brought to remembrance. The mode of affliction was not prescribed, but all work was forbidden on pain of cutting off from the Lord's congregation." Fausset's Bible Dictionary

B. "The day of atonement served as a reminder that the daily, weekly, and monthly sacrifices made at the altar of burnt offering were not sufficient to atone for sin. Even at the altar of burnt offering, the worshipers stood afar off, unable to approach the holy presence of God, as it was manifest between the cherubim in the Holy of Holies. On this one day in the year, atoning blood was brought into the Holy of Holies, the divine throne-room, by the high priest as the representative of the people." New Bible Dictionary

C. "The notion of sacrifice entertained by New Testament writers is derived from the Old Testament. The Old Testament sacrifices were

expiatory of guilt. The idea of expiation is the removal of the liability accruing from sin. Sacrifice is the provision whereby this liability is removed--it is the substitutive endurance of penalty and transference of liability from the offerer to the sacrifice." John Murray

D. "This chapter, taken altogether, is perhaps, as interesting and important as any, in the whole Levitical system. And if explained to us, by the gospel, will be found worthy the most serious and close attention of all real believers in Christ. It contains the memorable account of the appointed ordinance, to be observed once only in every year, of the day of atonement. How the high priest is to enter, on this solemn day, into the holy place: the prohibition of his ever entering there but upon that day; the service he is to perform; the manner of performing it; the sin-offering he is to bring, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of his people: these things are all here particularly set down and appointed. The ceremony to be observed also respecting the scape-goat, forms a part of this chapter; and the attention to be shown by the people, upon this memorable occasion is pointed out." Robert Hawker

## **II. "The Day of Atonement proceeded according to the following steps:**

- (a) The high priest washed and dressed (v. 4);
- (b) he sacrificed a bull as a sin offering for himself (v. 6; cf. v. 11);
- (c) he entered the Most Holy Place and sprinkled the ark with blood (vv. 12–14);
- (d) he took two goats and by lot chose one to be the scapegoat (Azazel), the other to be a sin offering (vv. 7–8);
- (e) he sacrificed one goat as a sin offering (vv. 9, 15);
- (f) he entered the Most Holy Place and sprinkled the ark with blood (v. 15);
- (g) he went out to the outer part of the tabernacle of meeting and sprinkled the blood (v. 16);
- (h) he went out into the courtyard of the tabernacle and sprinkled the main altar with blood (vv. 18–19);

(i) he confessed the sins of the Israelites as he laid his hands on the scapegoat's head (v. 21);  
(j) he sent the scapegoat into the wilderness (vv. 21–22);  
(k) the scapegoat gone, the high priest changed into his regular garments and washed (vv. 23–24); and  
(l) finally, he offered burnt offerings for himself and for the people (vv. 24–25)." Reformation Study Bible

### **III. The eternal significance.**

A. "The blood of the slain goat, sprinkled within the veil, pictures the satisfaction of the claims of God's justice. The live goat that was led away into the wilderness pictures our Lord bearing away our sins. On this head Christ's inestimable love towards us shines more brightly, who did not disdain to go out of the city that He might be made an outcast for us, and might undergo the curse due to us." John Calvin

B. "Aaron is now to show atonement in another form. The live goat is brought forward, and all Israel hear the high priest's voice confessing their sins and iniquities and transgressions. Most solemnly, and no doubt even with weeping, did Aaron confess his people's sins over the head of the scape-goat. He felt on his heart the load which he was laying on the victim. These confessed sins being thus laid on its head, the goat stood laden with the curse. Against it alone will the lightning be directed now — on this one point will vengeance fail. Israel is now clear — the stroke must slope over their heads toward their substitute. And a 'fit man,' one appointed for the purpose, leads it away down the courts, in presence of all the people, slowly and carefully, till he has gone out of sight and reaches the wilds of some rugged spot, or uninhabited waste. The man returns and attests that he left it there; and Israel feels the joy of pardon." Andrew Bonar

C. "Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat,

and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness. This was the second part of the atonement showing, not sacrifice, but the effect of sacrifice, and explaining what becomes of sin after the sacrifice has been accepted, and the blood has been presented within the veil." Charles Spurgeon

D. "The Bible explains the cross in terms of both propitiation and expiation, the twin accomplishments of Christ in our behalf. Propitiation refers specifically to Christ's work of satisfaction of God's righteousness. He pays the penalty for us that is due our sins. We are debtors who cannot possibly pay the moral debt that we have incurred by our offense against the righteousness of God, and God's wrath is satisfied and propitiated by the perfect sacrifice that Christ makes on our behalf. But that's only one aspect of the work. The second is expiation. In expiation, our sins are removed from us, remitted by having our sins transferred or imputed to Christ, who vicariously suffers in our stead. God is satisfied, and our sin is removed for us in the perfect atonement of Jesus. This fulfills the dual sense in which sin was atoned for on the old-covenant Day of Atonement, both by the sacrifice of one animal and the symbolic transfer of the sins of the people to the back of the scapegoat, who was then sent into the wilderness, removing the sins from the people." R.C. Sproul

E. "I must be allowed to say at this time, though I seldom say anything in the way of an apology, that this is not the place, nor would time serve us, to go into a full exposition of the very wonderful teaching of this chapter. If we may ever set any portion of Scripture before another, this is one of the most precious chapters in the whole compass of revelation, and in some respects the most remarkable of all. It is so full of wonderfully deep teaching that, instead of a sermon, it might require a volume, and then, perhaps, we should scarcely have done more than skimmed the surface. The annual atonement among the Jews was the picture of the great atonement, the real atonement, the effectual expiation, which, not once a year, but once for all, the Lord Jesus Christ

has offered, and which now renders it possible for God to walk with men, and dwell among them." Charles Spurgeon

F. "One man threw down the race, but another Man has lifted it up. One man brought ruin by the fall: another Man restored it, and made the race acceptable to God. If one man dishonored God, yet another Man has more honored Him than the first dishonored Him; Christ has become the great representative Man. All the glory of redemption is greater than ever there could have been of dishonor to God by sin. I believe that God is more honored by the world having sinned, and having been restored by Christ, than He would have been if there had never been sin upon this planet." Charles Spurgeon