

**Week 8**  
**February 23/24, 2019**  
**The Day of Atonement**  
**Leviticus 16**

**Summary and Goal:**

Leviticus 16 looks at the most important sacrificial day on the Hebrew Calendar, Yom Kippur -The Day of Atonement. As we look at the Day of Atonement, we will see that God prescribes every part of the rituals that are to take place, on purpose. Every second of that day had one function. The events that would transpire on Yom Kippur would bring about forgiveness and covering for the people of Israel. The events that happened during the Day of Atonement pointed toward a greater Day that was to come, the Day when Jesus would make atonement for everyone. By the end of this lesson, you should have a better understanding of the events that took place and a deeper appreciation of their ultimate fulfillment in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

**Main Passage:**

Leviticus 16 – *February 21<sup>st</sup> (pg.195) in The Chronological Bible*

**Session Outline:**

1. **The Priest (Lev. 16: 1-6)**
2. **The Sacrifice (Lev. 16: 15-18)**
3. **The Scapegoat (Lev. 16: 20-21)**
4. **The Promise (Lev. 16:30)**

**Session in a Sentence:**

This lesson will display the ritualistic practices that the High Priest of Israel had to perform in order to atone for the people's sins; the Day of Atonement points forward to Jesus our Great High Priest who has made final atonement and given us direct access to God.

**Kingdom Connection:**

The Kingdom that God is establishing through the pages of Scripture, is one rooted in forgiveness and presence. The people who belong to the Kingdom of God have experienced the forgiveness of God and they enjoy His presence. The Day of Atonement points to a day when the people of God have unfettered forgiveness and can enjoy His presence at any moment through the accomplished work of Jesus.

## **Missional Application:**

The Day of Atonement shows us that intimacy occurs through purity. If we want to come close to God, we must come clean to God. The Day of Atonement spurs us to live holy lives. We forsake sin and impurity, and we pursue godliness. We run to our Great High Priest, Jesus, and we gain forgiveness. We run to Jesus and we gain access to God.

## **Introduction: Come Close & Come Clean**

Growing up, we used to visit my grandparents' ranch in the Texas Hill Country during the summer time and on holidays. We would spend our days riding horses, playing with my grandfather's goats and dogs, fishing down by the lake, and helping with chores around the house and in the garage. It was a blast! My grandmother would start cooking incredible meals during the late afternoon. After a long day of playing outside, we would come into the house famished! But my grandmother had one rule before dinner time. Before you come close to the food you better clean up! My grandmother was old school. It wasn't good enough to just wash your hands before dinner, a full shower was required. So, we would all come into the house covered in dirt, grease, and fish slime knowing full well that we would have to disperse to different showers throughout the house, comb our hair and brush our teeth before we could ever think about coming close to the dinner table.

In the book of Leviticus, God is giving the people of Israel instructions about how they are to become clean if they want to come into proximity and intimacy with God. Early on in their journey with the Lord, God was establishing a timeless spiritual principle: If you want to come close to God you must come clean to God.

Typically, when we think about the book of Leviticus we think of getting lost in the "Bermuda Triangle of the Bible" and never finding our way out. It is specific, and sometimes it can seem very overwhelming. But did you know that the book of Leviticus has more direct revelation from the mouth of God than any other book of the Bible? Today we won't look at all the specific dietary or cultic laws. Instead, we are going to look at the Day of Atonement which is at the very center of the book of Leviticus.

The Book of Leviticus is the central book of the Torah/ Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) At the very center of the book of Leviticus in Chapter 16 God gives instruction to Aaron the High Priest about how atonement is supposed to occur for the people of Israel. Just by position alone in the book and its context, we can see that God is trying to communicate that how we deal with guilt and

sin is the central issue of life. God designates within the Jewish Calendar, that the Day of Atonement was to take place during the middle of the year. Life itself revolves around the questions: How can we deal with sin? How can we come clean so that we can come close to God?

**1. The Priest (Lev. 16: 1-6) (February 21<sup>st</sup> (pg.195) in *The Chronological Bible*)**

*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; <sup>2</sup> 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.*

*<sup>3</sup> "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. <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> 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.*

*<sup>6</sup> "Aaron shall offer the bull as a sin offering, which is for himself, and make atonement for himself and for his house.*

God addresses the priesthood of Israel. Because of past events that occurred with Aaron's two sons Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1-2) God has specific instructions regarding the procedures for the Day of Atonement. There is a specific way that the Priests of Israel were to approach the LORD throughout their service but especially on the Day of Atonement. ***"Tell Aaron your brother not to come at any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the mercy seat that is on the ark, so that he may not die.*** (v.2) The Old Testament had a strict restriction on how God was approached. If Aaron didn't follow God's instruction there would be life-ending consequences for him.

Before Aaron ever ventured into the Holy Place, he had to bathe himself and put on new garments. On every other day of the year, the High Priest wore elaborate, elegant, flashy clothing. His typical clothing distinguished him as the intercessor between God and the people. When people looked at Aaron, they saw him as standing out above everybody else. But, on the Day of Atonement, Aaron wore plain white linen clothes. His clothes made a statement: If you are coming to God, you always must come low and humble.

Our culture has shifted in valuing humility. It just is not currently “in vogue.” Cultural Psychologists and Anthropologists are starting to recognize that humility is a fading character trait of Americans. In 1950 the Gallup Poll surveyed High School Seniors, asking the one question: “Are you a very important person?” In 1950 only 12% of High School Seniors answered yes to the question. In 2005, the Gallup Poll asked the same question to High School Senior. An astounding 80% of students said they are important. A recent study was done that ranked the United States as 36<sup>th</sup> in the World when it came to math comprehension. But when Americans were asked where we ranked: unanimously we believed we were number 1. In 2006 55% of 25-year old’s that were surveyed said that being famous is an important life goal, while only 22% said being spiritual was an important life goal. <sup>1</sup>

Humility is not self-abasement, and it doesn’t mean that you don’t have to have confidence. Humility is simply thinking accurately about yourself in relation to God. Aaron’s clothing was a representation of his stance before God. Although he was the High Priest of the nation of Israel, he was still a sinful man who would stand in the presence of God’s holiness and splendor. In a culture that trends toward pride and a desire to be famous and known, humility displayed in the Church becomes extremely rare, precious, and attractive. More importantly, it is God’s requirement. When we come to him, we are to come humbly.

God required that before Aaron could ever make a sacrifice on behalf of the people, he had to offer a sacrifice for his own sins. God was showing Aaron and the people of Israel that our spiritual leaders are held accountable to God’s holiness. People who are in positions of spiritual authority whether they are a pastor of a church, a director of a bible study class, or a volunteer teacher at VBS are not exempt. Atonement is required for everyone. Everybody must have their sins covered.

## **2. The Sacrifice (Lev. 16: 15-18)**

*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. <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> 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*

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<sup>1</sup> Brooks, David. *The Road to Character*. New York: Random House, 2016.

*himself, for his household, and for all the assembly of Israel. <sup>18</sup> 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.*

God gives specific instructions to Aaron regarding the sacrifice that is to be offered on behalf of the people. There are two goats that are involved in the Day of Atonement. Both paint vivid pictures. Both goats would serve as symbols to the people of Israel of the means of atonement and the effects of atonement.

First, we notice that atonement only comes through the shedding of blood (Heb. 9:22). In Leviticus 16, the word "blood" is used 8 different times! The High Priest was extremely busy that day. Based upon the typical sacrifices that were to be carried out in Numbers 28:1-8 and Numbers 29:7-11, Aaron and the following High Priests had to slaughter 15 different animals on the Day of Atonement. The High Priest was completely unassisted, and he never worked harder than on the Day of Atonement. This was a picture of our ultimate atonement. Aaron labored under the compulsion of the law. But our Great High Priest Jesus labored out of **love**. While Aaron never worked harder than on the Day of Atonement, our High Priest, Jesus never worked harder than he did on the cross accomplishing our atonement. <sup>2</sup>

God's specific instruction for the atoning sacrifice on the Day of Atonement painted a beautiful picture of the atonement that was to come. The High Priest would bring the blood of the innocent goat into the holy of holies. He would then approach the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark was where the manifest presence of God resided. God's Presence hovered over the mercy seat or the lid of the ark of the covenant. Aaron was instructed by God to sprinkle blood on top of the lid. Why? The symbolism is astonishing when we remember the contents inside the Ark of the Covenant. Inside the Ark, there are three items.

1. **Manna**- The manna represented God's provision, but it also represented the Israelites complaints toward Moses and God. In the Manna story we find that Israel desires the old life of slavery, because at least when they were slaves, they had their basic needs met.
2. **The Budded Rod of Aaron**- The Story of Aaron's Budded Rod is a story that was surrounded by Israel's rebellion against God in the Wilderness.

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<sup>2</sup> Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *The Day of Atonement*, Delivered August 10, 1856 Sermon No. 95 from New Park Street Pulpit Volume 2

3. **The Ten Commandments-** This was God's standard of Holiness that he placed upon his people. All of us are incapable of following all the commandments.

When Aaron sprinkled the blood of the innocent sacrifice on top of the lid of the ark of the covenant he was atoning or "covering" Israel's desire for their old life without God as their King, their rebellion, and the broken Law. As God was present on top of the Ark of the Covenant, he did not see rebellion, and he did not see the broken law, instead, he saw the blood of an innocent sacrifice. Only the blood of an innocent sacrifice can cover our brokenness and rebellion. The innocent goat that was slaughtered is an arrow that pointed toward the ultimate innocent sacrifice, who would shed his blood to cover our brokenness, rebellion, and sin. The shedding of the blood of Jesus is central to the New Testament's proclamation of forgiveness. *But now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. (Ephesians 2:13.)* By the blood of Jesus, we are forgiven. We are covered. When sin drove a wedge between us and God, Jesus shed his blood to bring us close to God and to make us clean.

### 3. **The Scapegoat (Lev. 16: 20-21)**

*<sup>20</sup> "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. <sup>21</sup> 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.*

On the Day of the Atonement, two goats were used. The first goat who was sacrificed pictured the **means of atonement**. Atonement had to be accomplished through death and the shedding of innocent blood. The Second Goat is symbolic of **what the atonement achieved**. The second goat was the picture of the result of the atonement.

Aaron would come up to the second goat and he would lay both of his hands upon the goat's head. It was at this moment that Aaron was symbolically placing all the guilt and sin that was on Israel's account onto the goat's account. All the immorality, all of the jealousy, greed, selfishness, and idolatry was transferred from Israel onto this scapegoat. What happens next is incredibly powerful! The goat was then released into the wilderness, never to be seen again.

What is God revealing to us? God is communicating to us that not only does he forgive our sin (1<sup>st</sup> Goat) but he also forgets about our sin (2<sup>nd</sup> Goat). God vanquished the sin of

the people into the wilderness to never be brought up, never be remembered, never to come back to haunt or accuse them again.

King David would write about this in Psalm 103:12 *“As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.”* This isn't just an isolated passage. The forgetfulness of God appears throughout the Scriptures:

*For I will be merciful toward their iniquities and I will remember them no more.*  
(Hebrews 8:12)

*I [God] am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.* (Isaiah 43:25)

*And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”*  
(Jeremiah 31:34)

When we come into a relationship with Christ our sins are atoned for. They are covered by His blood. We become forgiven people. But God also forgets our sins. He casts our sins as far as the east is from the west. He remembers them no more. He takes our guilt and sends it out into the wilderness to never rear its ugly head again. Tim Keller, tells us, *“The way to deal with guilt is not to avoid it, but to resolve it.”* In the Gospel, God doesn't avoid our guilt, he doesn't run from our sin, but he approaches it in Jesus Christ to resolve it.

#### **4. The Promise (Lev. 16:30)**

*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.*

God was making a promise to the Israelites on the Day of Atonement, that for that previous year, sin had been dealt with. But the Day of Atonement is an arrow pointing forward to the Ultimate Day of Atonement that was to come. The Israelites continually had to make themselves clean so that they could come close to God. Sacrifice after sacrifice, year after year; the Israelites were reminded that these sacrifices were not perfect. The Israelites would not be completely clean. But the Promise of God's perfect and complete atonement ultimately came into fulfillment through Jesus Christ.

The Good News of Jesus' work on the cross was that it was a completed work. When Jesus breathed His last breath, He shouted a proclamation of completion. *“It is finished.”* (John 19:30) Jesus made us permanently clean so that we could be

permanently close to Him. All sin was covered. Past. Present. Future. All sin is simultaneously reckoned with and forgotten at the cross of Jesus Christ. The Promise of The Gospel is when you come to Jesus, He makes you clean, and He holds you close.

### **Resources Used**

- Dr. Thomas Constable, *Notes on Leviticus* by Dr. Thomas Constable 2017 Edition
- Andrew A. Bonar, *A Commentary on Leviticus*
- John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*
- Warren Wiersbe, *Be Holy: Becoming "Set Apart" for God: OT Commentary Leviticus*
- Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *The Day of Atonement*, Delivered August 10, 1856, Sermon No. 95 from New Park Street Pulpit Volume 2
- Rooker, M.F. (2000) *Leviticus* (Vol. 3A, pp. 211-227). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.
- Feinberg, C.L. (1988). *Atonement, Day of*. In *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Vol 1, pp. 223-234). Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Book House

### **Digital Resources:**

- <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/yom-kippur-it-is-finished>
- <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/yom-kippur-101/>
- <https://jewsforjesus.org/jewish-resources/community/jewish-holidays/yom-kippur/>
- <https://youtu.be/IJ-FekWUZzE>
- <https://overviewbible.com/leviticus/>