

The Day of Atonement

Leviticus 16

The Day of Atonement was ordained and initiated by God himself; it was of no human invention (Job 33:24). The Day of Atonement was set for a specific time each year (v. 29) – “*The seventh month, on the tenth day of the month.*” God’s great Day of Atonement was set, fixed, appointed, and determined by God himself. God called it “Mine hour.” Jesus came “when the fullness of time was come.”

Jesus said, “Father, the hour is come.” There was only one Day of Atonement each year. Christ was to make only **one** offering for sin. “Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself...Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many” (Heb. 9:26, 28). The sacrifices offered on the Day of Atonement were only typical. They could never put away sin (Hebrews 10:1-4). All these typical, ceremonial sacrifices were fulfilled by Christ and have ceased because Christ fulfilled them. “*No more offering for sin*” (Heb. 10:11-14). I want to draw your attention to four specific things about that great day The high priest – The slain victim – The lost scapegoat – The people’s response

I. THE GREAT HIGH PRIEST (v. 3); a specifically appointed man, Aaron, Israel’s high priest, made the atonement.

A. He was a chosen man (Psalm 89:19; Isaiah 42:1)

B. He was robed in garments of humility (v. 4)

On this great day Aaron laid aside his gorgeous, glorious garments and put on the garments of humility (2 Corinthians 8:9; Philippians 2:5-8)

C. He was a ceremonially holy man (vv. 3, 4, 6, 11, 12)

Though Aaron was a sinner like us, he had to be a ceremonially holy man to act as God’s high priest, picturing the Lord Jesus Christ. In order to approach God as the high priest of his people, Aaron had to have in type, and Christ had to have in reality, these four things:

1. Personal cleanness – Aaron bathed his flesh in water. Christ had no sin

2. Holy Garments – Linen garments, garments woven by the hands of a man. Christ’s righteous obedience to God as our Representative (John 17:4)

3. Divine approval – The incense smoke. Christ is a sweet-smelling savor to God. This incense also portrays Christ’s intercession for us (Rom. 8:34). We are accepted because of God’s approval of our Substitute!

4. Blood atonement – Aaron could not come into the Holy of Holies without blood
Christ could not obtain eternal redemption for us without his own blood (Heb. 9:12)

D. In all his work on the Day of Atonement Aaron acted alone (v. 17)

No one else was present. No one was allowed into the Holy of Holies but Aaron. Aaron was alone with God to make atonement for the people. The whole nation was entrusted to one representative man. The whole nation rested upon the shoulders of one man. If that man succeeds, the nation shall live. If he fails, the nation must die!

II. THE SLAIN VICTIM (vs. 5, 7-10)

We will consider the meaning of the scapegoat in a moment. Right now I want you to get a picture of the goat that was slain as a victim for a sin-offering to God. This goat also represents the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. Christ is both our High Priest and our Sacrificial Lamb – the victim, not of man’s will, but of God’s justice!

A. It was an innocent victim

B. It was taken from among the people

Among the people because it was the people who sinned against the Lord.

C. It was chosen and ordained by God (vv. 7-9; Prov. 16:33; Acts 2:23)

D. It was slain by Divine order as a sacrifice for sin (v. 15; Zechariah 13:7). Thus, Christ our Substitute, the Lamb of God, was sacrificed for us. A Sacrifice of infinite merit. A Sacrifice for a particular people "The Israel of God." A Sacrifice that actually made atonement and put away sin (Gal. 3:13; Heb. 10:10-14)

E. The blood of the goat was sprinkled upon the Mercy Seat seven times (v. 14)

This covered and propitiated (removed sin), and brought reconciliation. Having died in our place, the Lord Jesus Christ entered immediately into heaven itself and offered to God the merits of his own precious blood for our salvation. His sacrifice made a way of access for sinners to come to God (Heb. 10:19-22)

III. THE LOST SCAPEGOAT (vv. 20-22)

The scapegoat is a picture of the complete removal of our sins by Christ. The first goat, the Lord's goat, the slain victim gave us a picture of the atonement. The second goat, the scapegoat, gives us a picture of the result of the atonement.

A. The imputation of our sins to Christ (v. 21)

B. The removal of our sins by Christ (v. 22)

The guilt is gone (Heb. 10:14). The punishment is gone (Rom. 8:1). The memory is gone (Jer. 50:20). You are completely delivered (Psalm 32:1-2; Romans 4:8).

IV. THE PEOPLE'S RESPONSE

At the close of the day, when the work of atonement was finished, Aaron took off his linen garments and put on his glorious, gorgeous garments again. Then, on the basis of atonement made, he lifted up his hands and blessed the people (Numbers 6:24-26). When the people saw what God did for them, they had a threefold response.

A. They repented – "Ye shall afflict your souls" (v. 29) (Psalm 51:1-5)

B. They rested – "Ye shall do no work at all" (v. 29) (See Hebrews 4:9-10)

C. They rejoiced (Leviticus 25:9). Jubilee proclaims...Liberty! The cleansing of all debt!
Restoration!

"The Rabbis taught that forty years prior to the destruction of the Temple the lot did not come up in the [high priest's] right hand nor did the tongue of scarlet wool become white." (Talmud, Tractate Yoma 39b)

Jewish history records that it was a common practice to tie a red strip of cloth to the scapegoat. The red stripe represented the sin of the people which was atoned for by the red blood on the mercy seat. According to the Jewish Talmud this red stripe would eventually turn white, signaling God's acceptance of the offering. Two nearly identical he-goats were chosen from the congregation of the children of Israel and presented to the high priest. He would "cast lots" to determine which was "for Jehovah" and which "for Azazel" (Lev. 16:2,7,8, where Azazel is often translated "scapegoat"). Tradition is that he did this by reaching with both hands into a large golden urn which contained two lots, which were identical in size, shape and material. He picked one in each hand, one reading "for Jehovah" and the other "for Azazel". Each goat stood by one side of the priest, and the fate of each was determined by the lot chosen.

"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" (Isaiah 53:6).