

THE GREAT DAY OF ATONEMENT

Leviticus 16:7-11

The Day of Atonement was Israel's great day. It is known as YOM KIPPER by the Jews. It was the most solemn day in all the year both for the high priest and the nation. On that holy day, the high priest would make atonement not only his sins and his house , but for the entire nation of Israel.

God wanted to live among a holy people, but they were constantly defiled by who they were and what they did. The defilement needed to be cleansed away so that they could be restored to full enjoyment of God's favor. Therefore, the day of atonement was a day of confessing and cleansing from sins.

The word " atonement" means " coverings," or "to cover." The day of atonement was essentially the day of coverings. The word atonement first appears in Genesis 6:14 , where Noah was told to cover the ark with pitch. Pitched or covered , meant the ark now was judgment –proof , inside out .

Lev.16 is a very important chapter, not only because of the truths it contains, but because it is immensely helpful towards a right understanding of many difficult passages both in the Old and the New Testaments.

There are 2 main truths set forth in it.

1. The doctrine of **propitiation**
2. The doctrine of **substitution**

This Was a Day of Priestly Humiliation

Aaron , the high priest was forbidden to go the holy of holies within the veil. Only once in the year, on the day of atonement, was he permitted to enter there to atone for sins.

He must bathe himself on that day and not wear the special high priestly garments with its gold, precious stones, etc. The gorgeous robes of glory

and beauty had to be laid aside and a common "holy linen garment" was put on (v. 4).

On that day, he humbled himself just as the people humbled themselves. He went out in the form of a servant . This is so suggestive ! So illustrative of Christ , who came out from heaven , to make atonement for our sins , did not come in His robes of glory . He laid aside His glory , taking on the form of a bond servant.

The priest was still high priest, even though he was clothed in ordinary clothes. The Lord Jesus was still the eternal Son, although He made Himself of no reputation (Philippians 2:7-8).

The holy linen garments spoke of Christ taking on flesh and of His perfect purity and righteousness rather than of His high priestly position. Fine linen , in Rev. 19: 8, stands for righteous acts .

This Was a Day of Special Sacrifice

The high priest was to take a bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering, for himself and his household. His owning standing had to be secured before God, otherwise he could be killed during the atoning process. He was sinful like everyone else. For the children of Israel, he was to take two goats for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering for their sins.

Setting aside for this sermon the bull and ram offerings and their implications, let us this morning focus on the sin-offering of the two goats for the nation of Israel and their symbolism .

⁷ He shall take the two goats and present them before the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. ⁸ Then Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats: one lot for the LORD and the other lot for the scapegoat. ⁹ And Aaron shall bring the goat on which the LORD's lot fell, and offer it as a sin offering. ¹⁰ But the goat on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat shall be presented

alive before the LORD, to make atonement upon it, and to let it go as the scapegoat into the wilderness.

The two goats were to be set " before the Lord " and Aaron was to cast lots upon them—to decide which would be for the Lord and the other as the scapegoat. The high priest was then to kill the one on which the Lord's lot fell and was to pass within the veil with a censer full of burning coals from off the altar and his hands full of sweet incense and sprinkle the blood once on the mercy-seat and seven times before it , indicating a complete and perfect atonement .

The mercy seat was the throne of God for He dwelt between the cherubim. Without blood sprinkled upon it that mercy seat was in fact a throne of judgment. Within the Ark, of which the mercy seat was the lid, were the unbroken tables of the law, a law which demanded justice. God could only meet with man in His presence when the demands of that justice were fully met. Whatever the number of the people, or the number of their sins, divine justice was fully satisfied, in picture, by the blood of the slain goat.

Here everything prefigured Christ. The day that Christ died upon the cross was the world's GREAT and ULTIMATE DAY OF ATONEMENT.

Heb. 9:12— *But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. ¹² Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.*

It was a Day of Perfect Rest

V29 —*the instruction is ...do no work at all.* No matter what day of the week the day fell on , it must be treated as a Sabbath day. The priests and people of the nation were not permitted to work .The high priest must perform all the atoning work unassisted. You see , Christ must accomplish the

atonement alone . No angel , no man , no created being, or any other thing could contribute to the atonement for our sins. He alone was worthy !

This Was a Day of Solemn Imputation

The two goats were taken from the people. Therefore , that meant the people were represented in them .

The two goats constituted one offering, representing the two aspects of Christ's death. The one went up , the other went away in the wilderness — the one for the Lord speaks of propitiation (or atonement) and the one set free speaks of substitution and effects of the atonement .

Propitiation is the Godward aspect of Calvary. While substitution is the manward aspect. If we fail to distinguish these two aspects of the work of Christ at the cross diverse errors will follow. On the one hand we might end up believing that Christ's death was only for the elect or, on the other, that He was the substitute for all, and embrace universalism.

Propitiation— The slain goat

The high priest would stab the goat marked for death. Jesus is God's Lamb, the Lord's lot. He was marked out and predestined to die by crucifixion.

1 John 2:2 –*And He Himself is the propitiation (atonement) for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.*

On the cross, God's holy wrath was unleashed on His Son, on behalf of all humanity, to satisfy God's holy justice. And since Christ satisfied God's holy justice, even glorified it, by absorbing the punishment for our sins, God was able to set aside His wrath. So that it can be averted by those who put their trust in His Son.

The Lord Jesus went to the cross first of all to meet the demands of the throne. It has often been said, and it is vital to realize the truth of the statement, that even if no one had ever been saved God was infinitely glorified in the work of Christ.

An infinite person made an infinite sacrifice which infinitely satisfied the heart of the Father and the throne of God.

1 John 2:2 – *And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins and those of the whole world* .This verse gives character to the propitiation .

The propitiation cannot in any sense be limited in its potential value . It is for the whole world . This cancels any idea of limited atonement . The atonement is sufficient for all, but efficacious only for believers.

If there were a million more worlds to save, the infinite value of Christ's blood would more than sufficient to save every sinner, of every world.

Now, notice, the Lord Jesus Christ, He Himself is the propitiation! If we put a limit on the atonement, and say He only died for some sinners, we are not simply putting a limit to His sacrifice, we find ourselves placing a limit on the person of Christ Himself. By doing such a thing, we find ourselves undermining His infinite worth and the great truth that God is love.

2 Cor. 5 : 14-15 –*And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again*”

Heb.2.9— *He tasted death for every man.*

1 Timothy 2.6—*states that the man Christ Jesus "gave himself a ransom for all" without exception.*

The doctrine of limited atonement is unbiblical and harmful. Churches have split over it . People have lost their minds because of it . This inexcusable doctrine is spreading so fast in the churches of Christ, it's alarming! My dear brother and sisters don't buy into this ! It is new theology ! Virtually all the Christian writers before the Reformation period of 1500s, held to a general, unlimited atonement.

Robert Lightner , in his superb book on the topic ,entitled *The Death Christ Died* , says , “ *the design of the atonement provided a basis of salvation for those who believe (the elect) , and a basis of condemnation for those who*

*refuse to believe (the non-elect). For Jesus Himself says, " **Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life , but whoever rejects the Son will not see life , for God's wrath remains on Him .***

On the day Christ raises the unbelievers from their graves , and they stand before the Lord to be judged , all will see His pierced hands , and know , without a shadow of a doubt that He died on their behalf on the cross.

Having rejected Him and His cross for their lives, they will be condemned, and shall be cast into the eternal lake of fire and be tormented day and night throughout eternity.

Heb.10:29- ***Their punishment will be great, for having trampled on the Son of God, and treating the blood of His covenant as a common thing and for having insulted the spirit of grace.***

Substitution—The freed goat

The goat that was slain specifically met the demands of God ; the scapegoat especially met the needs of man. The goat upon which the Lord's lot fell never had the sins of the people transferred to it, but the live goat had them confessed over him.

The high priest was to lay both his hands on its head; he stood as the representative of the whole congregation. Then he was to confess over it "***all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins***" (Lev 16.21). It was a symbolic transference of the sins on the innocent victim.

The scapegoat was then sent away, by a man appointed for the task, into the wilderness, carrying all their iniquities into the wilderness.

This is plainly the great truth of substitution. The scapegoat bore (carried) away the sins of the people , setting forth the great truth of 1 Peter 2:24 – "***Who Himself (Christ) bore our sins in His own body on the tree.***" God would remember them no more (Heb. 8:12; 10:17). It is the believer's

blessed privilege to know that all his sins are gone; carried away and lost in the land of God's eternal forgetfulness.

We should carefully note that the Bible nowhere says that He bore the sins of the whole world.

When reading John 1.29 - Behold, *the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world*, we are to carefully distinguish that it says "sin" not "sins". This looks forward to the eternal day when sin shall have been removed from the universe by the Lamb of God.

With propitiation both the unsaved and saved are represented . With substitution only the saved are represented. The first cannot save without the second. The first opens the way for the second.

It Was a Day of Real Affliction

But it was a day of much affliction, self-denial and fasting . It wasn't a festive day . How can our souls not be afflicted when we behold the Son of God crucified, pierced for us . He suffered the indescribable tortures of hell that we deserve.

Sin is no light matter, neither is atonement. Frivolous hearts will always treat sin lightly. Christ's blood atonement must be accepted with conviction and a broken heart. No one gets saved unless he weeps over his sins and weeps over the reality that Christ loved him so much, to the point of being nailed to the cross, to suffer our hell.

John 16:8—*And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.* There is no salvation without a turning away from you sins. In Mark 1:15 we read Jesus 's first message was , *"Repent, and believe in the gospel."*

It was a Day of Cleansing

The result of the priestly work was that they were "*clean before the Lord .*" We can never make ourselves clean , no matter what religious life we chose

to live. *The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin*" (1 John 1.7). John told his disciples, "*Unless I wash, you have no part with Me.*" (John 13.8).

Closing

Christ died, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. Divine justice and mercy kissed at the cross. Christ died for our crimes, so that we might be forgiven and set free. O, how great the love and mercy of God!

The problem of sin has been canceled through atonement, redemption, and forgiveness. A forgiven believer now can have a completely new relationship with God and enjoy God's peace, mercy, and grace.

All this should produce, in our souls, a spirit of overflowing worship and thanksgiving to the One who accomplished all the will of God—and at such an enormous cost to Himself.