

Leviticus & Hebrews: The Necessity of the Cross

Lesson 10: Perfected Through the Cross

Key Verse: *And Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins. And he shall put them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who is in readiness.~Leviticus 16.21*

On July 31, 2024, the Centers for Disease Control updated their recall of Boar's Head branded meat to include additional precautions¹. Typically, a food recall allows the consumers who purchased the contaminated foods to simply throw away the contaminated food. However, in this recall, there were further instructions to not only toss the food in the garbage, but also to completely empty and wash with hot, soapy water shelves and interior of the refrigerator it was stored in, as well as disinfect any countertops that came into contact with the contaminated food! Sin caused a likewise contamination within the tabernacle that required extensive purification. Through the Day of Atonement, all the contamination of the people's sins were wiped clean through the high priest's ritual acts for **atonement**. However, as inferred by the yearly necessity of the Day of Atonement's rituals, these rituals were insufficient to provide the people with permanent atonement for their sins. Oh, how they longed for the **Perfect** act of atonement through God's Messiah!

High King of Heaven, I praise You for providing the perfect sacrifice in Your Son. As I read about this Day of Atonement, keep me focused on the beauty of Your Glory. Illuminate this passage to help me fully understand and grasp Your mercy in providing a way of being cleansed of all my sin and of all the guilt of my sins. Have Your Spirit teach me of the nuanced details in Your commands that foreshadow the work of Your Son, Jesus. And Thank You for sending Him. Thank You for the privilege I have of knowing Him and living with Him now, as I study You and see Him in this passage.

Leviticus 16.1-34 The LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they drew near before the LORD and died, ² and the LORD said to Moses, "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. For I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat.

³ But in this way Aaron shall come into the Holy Place: with a bull from the herd for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. ⁴ He shall put on the holy linen coat and shall have the linen undergarment on his body, and he shall tie the linen sash around his waist, and wear the linen turban; these are the holy garments. He shall bathe his body in water and then put them on. ⁵ And he shall take from the congregation of the people of Israel two male goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering. ⁶ "Aaron shall offer the bull as a sin offering for himself and shall make atonement for himself and for his house.

⁷ Then he shall take the two goats and set them before the LORD at the entrance of the tent of meeting. ⁸ And Aaron shall cast lots over the two goats, one lot for the LORD and the other lot for Azazel. ⁹ And Aaron shall present the goat on which the lot fell for the LORD and use it as a sin offering, ¹⁰ but the goat on which the lot fell for Azazel shall be presented alive before the LORD to make atonement over it, that it may be sent away into the wilderness to Azazel.

¹¹ "Aaron shall present the bull as a sin offering for himself, and shall make atonement for himself and for his house. He shall kill the bull as a sin offering for himself. ¹² And he shall take a censer full of coals of fire from the altar before the LORD, and two handfuls of sweet incense beaten small, and he shall bring it inside the veil ¹³ and put the incense on the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is over the testimony, so that he does not die. ¹⁴ And he shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it with his finger on the front of the mercy seat on the east side, and in front of the mercy seat he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times.

¹⁵ "Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering that is for the people and bring its blood inside the veil and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, sprinkling it over the mercy seat and in front of the mercy seat. ¹⁶ Thus he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleannesses of the people of Israel and because of their transgressions, all their sins. And so he shall do for the tent of meeting, which dwells with them in the midst of their uncleannesses. ¹⁷ No one may be in the tent of meeting from the time he enters to make atonement in the Holy Place until he comes out and has made atonement for himself and for his house and for all the assembly of Israel.

¹ [Did you buy recalled deli meat? Clean your refrigerator!](#)

¹⁸ Then 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. ¹⁹ And he shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it and consecrate it from the uncleannesses of the people of Israel.

²⁰ “And when he has made an end of atoning for the Holy Place and the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall present the live goat. ²¹ And Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins. And he shall put them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who is in readiness. ²² The goat shall bear all their iniquities on itself to a remote area, and he shall let the goat go free in the wilderness.

²³ “Then Aaron shall come into the tent of meeting and shall take off the linen garments that he put on when he went into the Holy Place and shall leave them there. ²⁴ And he shall bathe his body in water in a holy place and put on his garments and come out and offer his burnt offering and the burnt offering of the people and make atonement for himself and for the people. ²⁵ And the fat of the sin offering he shall burn on the altar.

²⁶ And he who lets the goat go to Azazel shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and afterward he may come into the camp. ²⁷ And the bull for the sin offering and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the Holy Place, shall be carried outside the camp. Their skin and their flesh and their dung shall be burned up with fire. ²⁸ And he who burns them shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and afterward he may come into the camp.

²⁹ “And it shall be a statute to you forever that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict yourselves and shall do no work, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you. ³⁰ For on this day shall atonement be made for you to cleanse you. You shall be clean before the LORD from all your sins. ³¹ It is a Sabbath of solemn rest to you, and you shall afflict yourselves; it is a statute forever. ³² And the priest who is anointed and consecrated as priest in his father's place shall make atonement, wearing the holy linen garments. ³³ He shall make atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make atonement for the tent of meeting and for the altar, and he shall make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly.

³⁴ And this shall be a statute forever for you, that atonement may be made for the people of Israel once in the year because of all their sins.” And Aaron did as the LORD commanded Moses.

Diamonds:

1. The focus of this chapter's instructions is found in the final verse. What is the focus of this singular day full of unique offerings and presentations before the LORD (V 34)?

After providing Aaron with instructions to distinguish between clean and uncleanness within God's people, God redirects His speech back to Moses. God immediately addresses the condition not only of His dwelling place (unclean due to the unlawful entrance by Nadab and Abihu), but also of all His people. God's repeated phrasing of “for the people”, “uncleannesses of the people”, “all their sins” (verses 15, 16, 19, 21, 24, 30, 33, 34) reveals the compounding reality of the people's sins against God. While Nadab and Abihu were immediately judged for their rebellion against God, in truth, their rebellion isn't a singular event. Rather, it reveals humanity's innate rebellion against God.

The progression of the installation of the priesthood and the inauguration of the sacrifices in Leviticus 8-9, to Nadab and Abihu's deaths in Leviticus 10, to the regulatory laws of Leviticus 11-15, suggests at least a few days passed before the instruction for the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16. However, God's instructions for the Day of Atonement were provided on the *same day* as the death of Nadab and Abihu!²

2. What does God's immediate response (Leviticus 16) to sin's desecration and pollution of His earthly dwelling place teach you about God?

² Morales, p. 170

3. What emotions do you think Aaron and Moses experienced when God instructed them in Leviticus 16.1-2, especially as God promises that He is going to “appear in the cloud over the mercy seat” 🙏?

According to Dr. Morales³, the Day of Atonement is “a cleansing rite” that is distinguished from daily ritual cleansing because “this purification ceremony will be the regular resolution to Israel’s uncleanness and defilement of the tabernacle.” In addition, this yearly ceremony is distinct in that the cleansing of God’s house is from the inside out: it begins in the Most Holy Place⁴ and moves outward to the Holy Place and then finally to the courtyard of the tabernacle. Adding to the uniqueness of the Day of Atonement rituals is the use of a singular priest, the high priest, who also wears special garments reserved for use on this day alone.

There are three atoning rites on the Day of Atonement: purification offerings, the Azazel goat rite, and burnt offerings. Having purified himself, his household, and the Most Holy Place of the sins of the priests and the people (V 11-16), Aaron then moved to the Holy Place, performing rituals that served the same purpose (V 16-17). He also performed the rituals required to purify the courtyard of the tabernacle (V 18-19).

Another unique feature of the Day of Atonement is God’s instruction for the two male goats. Using the Urim and Thummim, Aaron cast lots to designate one goat “for the LORD”, and one designate one goat for the “Azazel” (verses 5, 7-10, 20-22). The one “for the LORD” was the sin offering, whose blood was used “to purify God’s house”⁵ and for the forgiveness of the people’s accumulated sins.⁶ Having completed the rituals with the combined goat and bull blood, “now the whole sanctuary was purified and available again for another year.”⁷

4. Use Hebrews 10.1-22 to understand the significance of the rituals on the Day of Atonement. According to Paul, what were the insufficiencies of the rituals and rites performed on the Day of Atonement?

The high priest placed both of his hands (the hand-leaning rite) on the goat for Azazel to “confess over it all the iniquities [sins] of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions [rebellions against God], all their sins.” (V 21) This ritual was performed in the courtyard of the tabernacle and once the goat was led away into the wilderness by a designated man. This “scapegoat” symbolized the removal of the people’s sins into the wilderness, or away

³ Morales, p. 170

⁴ Jewish legend adds that a rope was tied around the high priest’s legs or waist in order to pull their dead body from the Most Holy Place should the high priest meet God’s wrath. While its accuracy is questioned, it does reveal the understanding of “the peril the Day of Atonement caused.” Mathews, p. 141

⁵ Morales, p. 178

⁶ Mathews, p. 141

⁷ Mathews, p. 142

from God and His people⁸. This act of forgiveness provides understanding of the dual nature of forgiveness of sins: purification (cleansing from sin's pollution), and expiation (removal of sin's guilt).⁹

5. How do the symbolic roles of the two goats point forward to the "better promises" Paul expounds upon in Hebrews 8.6-13? (Note Paul is inspired by and quoting Jeremiah 31.31-34; also, feel free to read this passage of Hebrews in several translations for better understanding.)

The goat "for Azazel" (V 8) has no clear scholarly understanding. According to Dr. Morales¹⁰, below are the "four main suggestions":

1. It may refer to a demon or god of wrath that displeases YHWH, symbolizing an alter ego;
2. A reference to an "uninhabited wilderness", rocky precipice, or similar place;
3. May translate to "utter destruction";
4. May be a symbolical translation of "the goat that is sent away".

Though scholarly debate doesn't land firmly on one suggestion, all agree that the English word "scapegoat" has its origins in this ritual, and thus comfortably refer to this goat as the "scapegoat".

Our final distinction about the Day of Atonement is found in the call to total Sabbath rest (V 31), as well as the inclusion of "the native or stranger who sojourns among you." (V 29) "In the case of the Day of Atonement, all resident aliens were expected to participate, since all those dwelling in the Lord's land were to repent before Him for their wrongs (Numbers 15.26-30)." And for those who enjoy literary nuance, note that verses 29-31 are a chiasmus where repetition is in reverse order.¹¹

6. What stands out to you about the Day of Atonement? Is there a nuance that helps you understand God better? If nothing is remarkable or nuanced, instead, how do you see the foreshadowing of Christ in the Day of Atonement?

Deity: Perfect (Consecrated)~ (Leviticus 16.30) To fully grasp God as "Perfect" and Jesus as "Perfect", we must bust some myths and misapplications of the English understanding of the word "perfect". God is Perfect because, well, He is God! God "does not lack anything or have any moral imperfections."¹²

Jesus is Perfect because He is also Divine (John 1.14-18). However, when Jesus came to earth (condescension) as a baby birthed through Mary's womb, His Perfections while living fully in human flesh are better understood as grounded in His being consecrated, in that He is uniquely "set apart for God's glory" as God's own Son (Matthew 3.17, 17.5).

⁸ "Later Jewish tradition, not recorded in the Bible, described how the scapegoat was pushed over a cliff to its death. This act ensured that the goat burdened with Israel's guilt would never wander back into the camp." Mathews, p. 143

⁹ Morales, p. 179

¹⁰ Morales, p. 178

¹¹ Sklar, p. 141 Both the quotations and the final thought/sentence.

¹² MacArthur & Mayhue, p. 943

exclusive annual entry into the Holy of Holies. The Day of Atonement was an *entrance rite*, and the messiah's office – his labor and mission – was defined by that entry...Here then, at the heart of the Pentateuch we find an answer to the question, *Who shall ascend into the mountain of YHWH?* The one able to ascend is the Adam-like priest, with blood, on the Day of Atonement. *This is the way YHWH has opened for humanity to dwell in His Presence.*"¹⁷

Dressed in spectacular and resplendent haute couture reminding God's people of God's glory and beauty, the high priest was chosen by God and also "exalted among his brothers as the one 'upon whose head the anointing oil was poured and who was consecrated to wear the garments'..." (Leviticus 21.10). The remarkable work the high priest performs on the Day of Atonement within the Holy of Holies, God's Presence, is the work of atonement! "Atonement is at the heart of the Pentateuch, because atonement is the doorway to life with God."¹⁸

9. List the five unique locations and peoples that the high priest makes atonement for in Leviticus 16.33. How is both the Holiness of God and the mercy of God revealed in this exhaustive list?

"In receiving the wrath of the Father on the cross, Christ was able to make atonement for His people. Christ carried, or bore, the punishment for the sins of human beings. He atoned for them by accepting the just punishment due for those sins (Matthew 1.21; 1 Thessalonians 1.10). The Old Testament covenant pronounced a curse upon any person who broke the law of God (Deuteronomy 30.15-20). On the cross, Jesus not only took that curse upon Himself, but He became 'a curse for us' (Galatians 3.13). He was forsaken by the Father and experienced the full measure of hell on the cross." (Mark 15.34)

"Jesus did not die for Himself, but for us. His suffering was vicarious; He was our substitute. He took our place by fulfilling the role of the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1.29; Ephesians 1.7)...The Son did not persuade the Father to save those whom the Father was loath to save (Titus 3.3-7). On the contrary, both the Father and Son willed the salvation of the elect and worked together to bring it to pass (Acts 20.28; 2 Corinthians 5.19)."

"The atonement of Christ was not a divine afterthought. The purpose of God in Christ's death was determined at the foundation of the world. The design was not guesswork but according to a specific plan and purpose, which God is sovereignly bringing to pass. All for whom Christ died are redeemed by His sacrificial act (Romans 3.21-28)."

10. Hopefully you have had the opportunity to tell others that you are studying Leviticus this year. It is not difficult to imagine their surprise, or bewilderment, as to why anyone would willingly study this book of the Law, and to what personal spiritual benefit! Having studied the Day of Atonement and the doctrine of atonement, as well as the work of Christ in fulfilling these Levitical Laws through the first chapters of Hebrews, how will you now respond to someone's reaction of bewilderment? If you haven't had to explain yourself, how would you sell the idea of studying the book of Leviticus for personal spiritual maturity?

¹⁷ Morales, pp. 175, 177

¹⁸ Morales, p. 184

Your Scripture-Soaked Prayer: According to this study's calendar, you are on the cusp of celebrating something made even more extraordinary with your understanding of the Law: the birth of Messiah (CHRISTmas)! Use this week's SSP to celebrate the advent of God's Great High Priest. It is a most awesome privilege to know the High King of Heaven hears your words of worship, praise, and adoration in real time. Use your privilege!

Lecture Outline:

Aim: Christ's atoning sacrifice perfects all that sin ruins.

- I. Priestly Perfection (Leviticus 16.1-14) **TR1:** Christ's atoning sacrifice restores the paradise of a perfect relationship with God.
 - a. What sin are you allowing to rob you of the paradise that is yours in Christ?
 - b. How is it hindering your intimacy w/ God?
- II. People's Perfection (Leviticus 16.15-34) **TR2:** Christ's atoning sacrifice restores condemned sinners from exile to Eden.
 - a. Which specific sin or sins keep you filled with dread and condemnation and exiled from God?
 - b. What is drawing you eastward or away from God? What is drawing you westward or toward God?

Mathews, Kenneth A., *Leviticus: Holy God, Holy People*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009) pp.137-146

Morales, L. Michael, *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord?*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015) pp.15-107, 145-184

Sklar, Jay, *Leviticus*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014) pp. 206-216