

Adult Bible Class

The Book of Leviticus - Lesson #9

Leviticus Chapter 16 (continued) - The Day of Atonement

The Day of Atonement was an important Jewish feast in the fall of the year. On this day, the high priest entered the Holy of Holies. God said that Aaron would die if he entered the Holy of Holies at any time other than on the Day of Atonement. Special sacrifices were made on this day.

Leviticus 16:6 "Aaron shall offer the bull as a sin offering, which is for himself, and make atonement for himself and for his house. 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."

The Concept of the Scapegoat

In the English language, a *scapegoat* is "someone who is unfairly blamed for something others have done." This definition is used sometimes in everyday language. But let's look at the scapegoat in Leviticus 16.

The word "scapegoat" is used in Scripture in only one passage, and that is here in chapter 16. The word is not used in the New Testament, yet we can see in the ritual of the scapegoat a picture of at least two aspects of the death of Jesus Christ for us.

Two goats were brought by Aaron for the congregation. One was to be the sin offering for the people, and the other was to be the scapegoat that was to be sent into the wilderness. "*Then Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats: one lot for the Lord and the other lot for the scapegoat* (vs 8)." The practice of casting lots occurred about seventy times in the Bible. There are many theories as to the nature of the lots that were cast to choose between the goats - we really don't know.

Casting lots was not like our "flipping a coin," where the outcome is left to chance. It was done in Scripture to determine the will of God, allowing the outcome to be governed completely by God and accepting the outcome. Casting lots was practiced by the priests in certain situations. The last time we see it practiced in Scripture is in the book of Acts when, by casting lots, Mathias was chosen to take the place of Judas who hanged himself (Acts 1:26). After this, the practice is mentioned no more (today we have the complete written Word of God and the baptism of the Holy Spirit to determine God's will).

However, in Leviticus 16, the will of God was determined by casting lots. This was considered the same as consulting God for the decision. Proverbs states:

Proverbs 16:33 (NKJV) The lot is cast into the lap,
But its every decision *is* from the Lord.

Proverbs 18:18 Casting lots causes contentions to cease,
And keeps the mighty apart.

Casting lots was a method given by God to determine His will in Old Testament days. When the lot was cast and God's will was determined, the matter was settled.

Leviticus 16:9 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 scapegoat (or "escape goat") escaped death and went into the wilderness.

¹¹ "And Aaron shall bring the bull of the sin offering, which is for himself, and make atonement for himself and for his house, and shall kill the bull as the sin offering which *is* for himself.

Aaron could only make atonement for the sins of the people of Israel after his own sins were covered. However, Aaron pictures the Lord Jesus Christ who would work as High Priest and by Himself would atone for our sins. Jesus was sinless and needed no atonement for Himself (Hebrews 7:26-27).

¹² Then he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from the altar before the Lord, with his hands full of sweet incense beaten fine, and bring it inside the veil. ¹³ And he shall put the incense on the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of incense may cover the mercy seat that *is* on the Testimony, lest he die.

The censer of incense not only created a pleasant aroma, but it created a cloud of smoke that covered the mercy seat where God dwelt. Scripture says, "*You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live*" (Exodus 33:20).

14 He shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle *it* with his finger on the mercy seat on the east *side*; and before 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, 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. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ 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 himself, for his household, and for all the assembly of Israel.

Numbers 29:7-11 gives more detail about the many sacrifices offered on this special day. But when it was time to offer the bull and the goat for this special day, when it was time to go behind the veil, the High Priest had be alone in the tabernacle.

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

Aaron brought the blood of the goat that was the sin offering for the people and made atonement for the Holy Place, the tabernacle, and the altar. The approach to God was cleansed by the blood of the sacrifice.

Leviticus 16:20 "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. ²¹ 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. ²² The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness.

The scapegoat bore the sins of the people symbolically, and the animal was sent "*to an uninhabited land*." Here we see a vivid picture of Jesus Christ taking away our sins - to be remembered no more.

Sin separates - but God separated sin!

Psalms 103:11 (NKJV) For as the heavens are high above the earth,
So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him;
¹² As far as the east is from the west,
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.

Micah 7:19 He will again have compassion on us,
And will subdue our iniquities.

You will cast all our sins
Into the depths of the sea.

The scapegoat gives us yet another aspect of the amazing sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Jesus bore our sins and took our sins to a place where we can no longer retrieve them. They are gone and we are justified in God's presence. In the Old Testament, sins were covered for one more year, waiting... But in the New Testament, the sins of mankind were covered and removed once for all time! Hallelujah!

Isaiah 53:6 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.

⁷ He was oppressed and He was afflicted,
Yet He opened not His mouth;
He was led as a lamb to the slaughter,
And as a sheep before its shearers is silent,
So He opened not His mouth.
⁸ He was taken from prison and from judgment,
And who will declare His generation?
For He was cut off from the land of the living;
For the transgressions of My people He was stricken.

John 1:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

2 Corinthians 5:21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

1 Peter 2:24 who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree . . .

Let's continue in chapter 16 of Leviticus:

Lev. 16:23 "Then Aaron shall come into the tabernacle of meeting, shall take off the linen garments which he put on when he went into the Holy *Place*, and shall leave them there. ²⁴ And he shall wash his body with water in a holy place, put on his garments, come out and offer his burnt offering and the burnt offering of the people, and make atonement for himself and for the people. ²⁵ The fat of the sin offering he shall burn on the altar. ²⁶ And he who released the goat as the scapegoat shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and afterward he may come into the camp. ²⁷ 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. And they shall burn in the fire their skins, their flesh, and their offal. ²⁸ Then he who burns them shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and afterward he may come into the camp.

We see many images of Jesus Christ in the ritual on the Day of Atonement. We see Jesus as our High Priest and mediator (Hebrews 4:14). He is our "sin offering" and sacrifice for sins (Revelation 13:8). He is our scapegoat, taking our sins upon Himself and bearing them far away (2 Cor. 5:21). He bore our sins "outside the camp" (Hebrews 13:12). Above all, He is the mighty God who ordained all of this and to whom we are made right in His sight.

²⁹ "This shall be a statute forever for you: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether a native of your own country or a stranger who dwells among you. 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. ³¹ *It is* a sabbath of solemn rest for you, and you shall afflict your souls. *It is* a statute forever. ³² And the priest, who is anointed and consecrated to minister as priest in his father's place, shall make atonement, and put on the linen clothes, the holy garments; ³³ then he shall make atonement for the Holy Sanctuary, and he shall make atonement for the tabernacle of meeting and for the altar, and he shall make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly. ³⁴ This shall be an everlasting statute for you, to make atonement for the children of Israel, for all their sins, once a year." And he did as the Lord commanded Moses.

The Day of Atonement was on the tenth day of the month of Tishri, in the fall of the year. The Israelites were to fast on this day.

The Book of Hebrews is our "go to" book to explain the Old Testament laws of sacrifice and the tabernacle plan - and to compare it with the work of Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 10:1 (NKJV) For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect... **4** For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins...

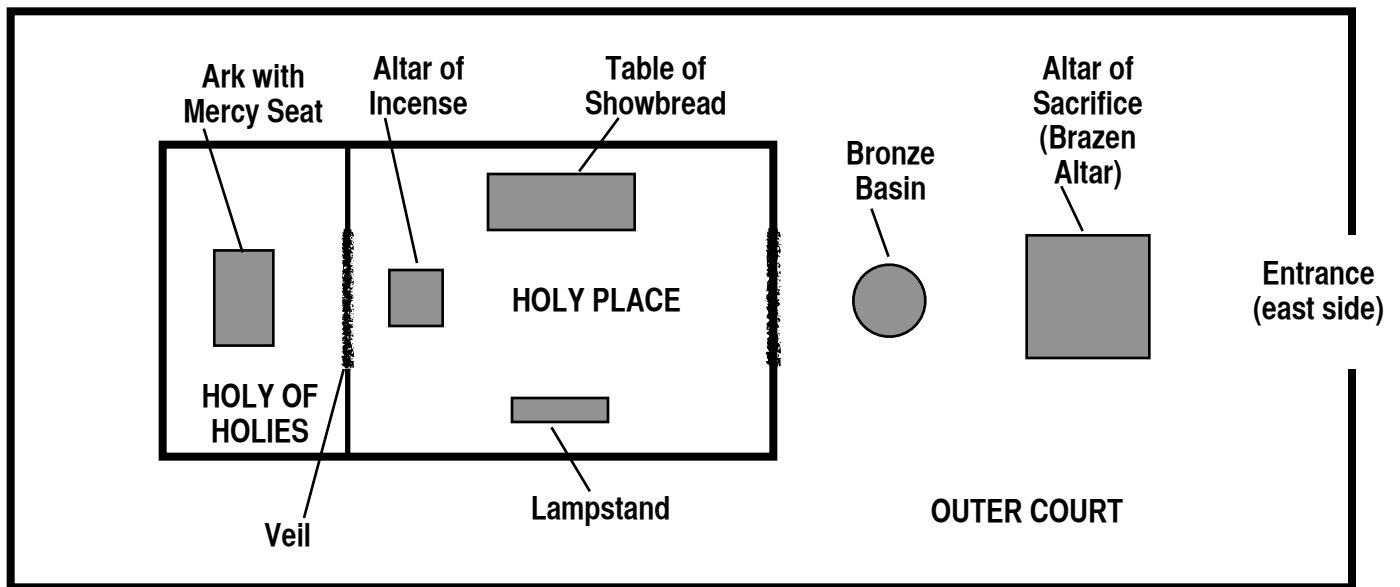
Christ's Death Perfects the Sanctified

11 And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. **12** But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, **13** from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. **14** For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified...

Hold Fast Your Confession

19 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, **20** by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, **21** and *having* a High Priest over the house of God, **22** let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. **23** Let us hold fast the confession of *our* hope without wavering, for He who promised *is* faithful.

THE OLD TESTAMENT TABERNACLE



Now, God gives specific rules regarding where sacrifices may be offered.

Leviticus Chapter 17

Lev. 17:1 (NLT) Then the Lord said to Moses, **2** "Give the following instructions to Aaron and his sons and all the people of Israel. This is what the Lord has commanded.

3 "If any native Israelite sacrifices a bull or a lamb or a goat anywhere inside or outside the camp **4** instead of bringing it to the entrance of the Tabernacle to present it as an offering to the Lord, that person will be as guilty as a murderer. Such a person has shed blood and will be cut off from the community. **5** The purpose of this rule is to stop the Israelites from sacrificing animals in the open fields. It will ensure that they bring their sacrifices to the priest at the entrance of the Tabernacle, so he can present them to the Lord as peace offerings. **6** Then the priest will be able to splatter the blood against the Lord's altar at the entrance of the Tabernacle, and he will burn the fat as a pleasing aroma to the Lord. **7** The people must no longer be unfaithful to the Lord by offering sacrifices to the goat idols. This is a permanent law for them, to be observed from generation to generation.

Before the children of Israel received the Law on Mt. Sinai, heads of families built altars and offered sacrifices to God in places they chose. We have read how Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all built altars to God where they were (Genesis 8:20, 12:7, 26:25, 33:20). As Abraham traveled about Canaan, he built an altar wherever he pitched his tent (Genesis 12:8, 13:8, 22:9). The ancient book of Job describes how Job was priest to his own family (Job 1:5).

However, when every man can be his own priest, this can lead to idolatry. Apparently, the Israelites fell into idolatry while in Egypt to some extent. Verse 7 in the NKJV states that they are to *"no more offer their sacrifices to demons, after whom they have played the harlot."*

The Israelites were one community, all traveling together, with the Tabernacle at the center of their camp. God stated above that they were to kill no animal for sacrifice without doing so at the door of the Tabernacle. It was then to be given to

the Lord as a peace offering. Remember in our study of the five offerings of Leviticus, the peace offering was the only offering that was eaten by the person who offered it. The peace offering was a time of fellowship between man and God, and between family and friends.

Matthew Henry's Bible commentary on the above passage gives insight as to why God made this strict command:

The reasons why God thus strictly ordered all their sacrifices to be offered at one place were, [1.] For the preventing of idolatry and superstition. That sacrifices might be offered to God, and according to the rule, and without innovations, they must always be offered by the hands of the priests, who were servants in God's house, and under the eye of the high priest, who was ruler of the house, and took care to see every thing done according to God's ordinance. [2.] For the securing of the honor of God's temple and altar, the peculiar dignity of which would be endangered if they might offer their sacrifices any where else as well as there. [3.] For the preserving of unity and brotherly love among the Israelites, that meeting all at one altar, as all the children of the family meet daily at one table, they might live and love as brethren, and be as one man, of one mind in the Lord.

The apostle Paul wrote:

1 Corinthians 10:31 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

In verse 7 the Scripture says, *"The people must no longer be unfaithful to the Lord by offering sacrifices to the goat idols."* The Hebrew word used here for *goat idols* is also translated, "goat demons," "devils," or "demons," depending on the translation. The Egyptians had goat deities that were worshiped. Later in Greek and Roman religion, satyrs and fauns - woodland gods - appeared in their worship. The pagan Greek god, Pan, was pictured as having the legs, horns and ears of a goat.



Caesarea Philippi in northern Israel. Place of worship of the god Pan. Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my church" (Matt. 16:13-19).

Pan was the Greek god of shepherds, flocks, and hunting. He was usually worshiped in natural settings such as caves or grottoes. It is interesting to know that in Jesus' day, Caesarea Philippi, located at the base of Mount Hermon in northern Israel, was the site of a spring and grotto (cave) that was dedicated to the worship of the Greek god, Pan. This was the site where Jesus spoke to Peter saying, *"Upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"* (Matthew 16:13-20).

Jesus purposely went to a place that was known for being a stronghold of devil worship and He spoke in defiance that He was the Christ and nothing could stop His church. Today the place is a common tourist site, and one can read about the worship of Pan there during the time of Christ.

The common picture of satan that people often have today is somewhat similar to the description of Pan. Satan is sometimes thought of as having horns, a goatee, etc. In Leviticus, the Lord forbid His people to offer sacrifices to “goat demons.”

As Guilty As A Murderer

The Lord made severe penalties for not obeying His command:

Leviticus 17:8 “Give them this command as well. If any native Israelite or foreigner living among you offers a burnt offering or a sacrifice **9** but does not bring it to the entrance of the Tabernacle to offer it to the Lord, that person will be cut off from the community.

Idol worship was a serious offense in God’s mind. Earlier, the chapter stated that *“that person will be as guilty as a murderer.”* God wanted His people to be devoted to Him alone. God had one way to worship and honor Him.

In Deuteronomy, the Israelites were reminded that when they entered the promised land they were to bring all of the offerings and sacrifices to the tabernacle (and later, the temple). When they were established in Canaan’s land, the tabernacle would be erected in the place where God chose to put His name. Three times a year they were required to appear before the Lord in the appointed place to offer their sacrifices. However, if they wanted to butcher meat for food, that was separate from the offering of sacrifices.

Deut. 12:1 (NLT) “These are the decrees and regulations you must be careful to obey when you live in the land that the Lord, the God of your ancestors, is giving you... **5** ...you must seek the Lord your God at the place of worship he himself will choose from among all the tribes—the place where his name will be honored. **6** There you will bring your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, your sacred offerings, your offerings to fulfill a vow, your voluntary offerings, and your offerings of the firstborn animals of your herds and flocks. **7** There you and your families will feast in the presence of the Lord your God, and you will rejoice...**13** Be careful not to sacrifice your burnt offerings just anywhere you like. **14** You may do so only at the place the Lord will choose...

15 “But you may butcher your animals and eat their meat in any town whenever you want. You may freely eat the animals with which the Lord your God blesses you. All of you, whether ceremonially clean or unclean, may eat that meat, just as you now eat gazelle and deer. **16** But you must not consume the blood. You must pour it out on the ground like water.

What about us today as New Testament believers? In Old Testament days, God’s people had to offer sacrifices and offerings *at the appointed place of worship*. But what of us? Look at the Scriptures below that speak to us of this:

John 4:19 (NKJV) The woman said to Him, “Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. ²⁰ Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.”

²¹ Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father . . . ²³ But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. ²⁴ God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

1 Timothy 2:8 I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting

Malachi 1:11 For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down,
My name shall be great among the Gentiles;
In every place incense shall be offered to My name,
And a pure offering;
For My name shall be great among the nations,"
Says the Lord of hosts.

Hebrews 13:10 We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat . . . ¹⁴ For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come. ¹⁵ Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of *our* lips, giving thanks to His name.

1 Peter 2:4 Coming to Him *as to* a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God *and* precious, ⁵ you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ . . . ⁹ But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰ who once *were* not a people but *are* now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

Hebrews 10:24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, ²⁵ not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

As New Testament believers, our offerings are our praise and worship to God (Hosea talks about the "*calves of our lips*" [Hosea 14:2]). We can offer the "sacrifice" of praise anywhere because we ourselves are the appointed place of worship (our bodies are the temple of God). Jesus Christ is our High Priest and our sacrifice. Jesus was the one final sacrifice for sin, and when we lift Him up in praise and worship, we are pleasing to God.

But the Scripture also points out the importance of public worship (or "corporate" worship, meaning the body of Christ gets together to worship God) - Hebrews 10:24. After the day of Pentecost and the first outpouring of the Holy Ghost, the church was known for its great fellowship and unity. Eating together was a great part of the early church:

Acts 2:41 Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added *to them*. ⁴² And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers . . .

⁴⁶ So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.