

## God Must Provide Our Atoning Sacrifice [Slide 1] Leviticus 16-17

We have this problem with God. We have disobeyed him. We have not done what he asked us to do. We have not loved him with all our heart and soul and mind. We have been ungrateful to him, taken him for granted, and often just plain ignored him. He will not overlook all these many offenses and we can't cut a private deal for forgiveness. God makes one provision to deal with mankind's sin and everyone must recognize and submit to God's one provision. God allows no alternative means of salvation. We do it his way or no way.

God first taught this truth to Israel through the Day of Atonement. However, the Day of Atonement was a picture of God's ultimate provision through Jesus Christ. As we learn about the Day of Atonement and its accompanying legislation, you will see a picture of our great High Priest Jesus Christ.

I invite you to turn to Leviticus chapters 16-17. Leviticus is the third book in the Old Testament. Leviticus 16-17. I will summarize these two chapters and read a few verses.

[Slide 2] Leviticus 16 provides the instructions for the Day of Atonement. The High Priest would collect a bull for the sin offering for himself and his household, a ram for a burnt offering, and two goats, one for a sin offering for the people and one for the scapegoat.

The layout of the tabernacle was this. Within the tabernacle was the outer court with the altar of sacrifice where the sacrifices were made and the washbasin. The smaller tent in the middle housed the holy place which contained the altar of incense, the table of showbread, and the golden lampstand. A smaller veiled area inside the Holy Place contained the Holy of Holies in which stood the Ark of the Covenant.

Only once a year, on the Day of Atonement, was the High Priest allowed to enter the Holy of Holies where the glory of God dwelt above the lid of the Ark of the Covenant. The lid was known as the mercy seat. Two carved, golden cherubim or angels faced each other with wings outstretched over the lid. Inside the Ark of the Covenant were the 10 Commandments, a pot of manna, and Aaron's rod. The mercy seat acted as God's throne.

No other person was ever allowed in the Holy of Holies. The Jews began the tradition of tying a rope to the ankle of the High Priest on the Day of Atonement before he went into the tent so that if God struck him dead in the Holy of Holies, the Jews could pull him out by the rope. How else could they retrieve the body without risking offending God and being killed by entering that restricted area?

In preparation for the Day of Atonement, the High Priest would bathe inside the Holy Place and then put on plain linen clothes, the clothes of a slave, because no one could enter God's holy presence as anything but a servant of the Most High.

After dressing, the High Priest sacrificed a bull as a sin offering for himself and his household. He then entered the Holy of Holies with a firepan of coals from the altar of sacrifice and some incense which he burned over the mercy seat so that the cloud of incense rose above the mercy seat and prevented the High Priest from gazing upon God and dying. He sprinkled the bull's blood upon the mercy seat. Remember that the Ten Commandments were inside the Ark. The blood on the mercy seat symbolized a covering provided for the High Priest and his household who had broken God's Law. When God looked down at his Law he saw that the breaking of the law had been covered or atoned for by the shed blood of the bull.

The High Priest then went outside the tent to the two goats. He cast lots to determine which was the sacrifice and which was the scapegoat. One goat he killed as a sacrifice for sin for the people. He took the blood of the goat and returned to sprinkle it on the mercy seat to represent the covering for the people's accidental sins just as he had done with the bull's blood for himself. He then returned outside to the remaining scapegoat, placed his hands on its head, confessed the sins of the nation over the head of the goat and then gave instructions for it to be led into the wilderness and released. The scapegoat illustrated God completely removing his people's sins from them and sending those sins way out into the wilderness where God would remember them no more.

The High Priest then took the blood of the bull and goat and sprinkled it on the horns of the altar of sacrifice. After that, he re-entered the holy place, removed his garments, bathed, put on new clothes and then offered the ram as a burnt offering for himself and the people. The carcasses of the bull and goat of sin offering were taken outside the camp and burned.

I'll read verses 29-34 which provide the reason behind the Day of Atonement. Read. The Day of Atonement was a holy day in which no one was to work. It represented a cleansing of sins, but as I have mentioned before, the cleansing was for unintentional sins, not deliberate disobedience. It was a day to humble yourself before God. The sacrifice covered the whole nation of Israel. That was the high and holy Day of Atonement.

[Slide 3] Leviticus 17 has a series of laws that remove the possibility of the Israelites looking for alternative means of cleansing. Verses 1-4 require anyone slaughtering an ox, a goat or a lamb to present it as an offering to the Lord. Verses 5-7 explain the primary purpose of that legislation was to prevent the Israelites from sacrificing to goat demons in the wilderness. Anyone not complying with the regulation was to be cut off from the people, that is forcibly expelled from the camp. The rest of the chapter specifies that you cannot eat meat with blood in it and you have to wash if you eat an animal that had died or been torn and you remained unclean until the evening.

What did the Day of Atonement teach and how is its message relevant to us today. What we will discover is that Jesus's death on the cross fulfills the symbolism of the Day of Atonement, but that in every way Jesus and his sacrificial death far exceed what the Day of Atonement accomplished.

[Slide 4] The first lesson of the Day of Atonement was that only Yahweh can provide a covering for sin or to put it in other words, goat demons need not apply as saviors. The main thrust of the legislation in Leviticus 17 was that there could be no alternatives to God's provision of cleansing. All sacrifices had to be made to God and anyone who tried to go out of God's prescribed sacrifices not only did not receive any cleansing, but they actually removed themselves from being God's people.

The New Testament equivalent to this principle is the truth that salvation can be found nowhere else except in Jesus Christ. Look at Acts 4:8-12 on your outline and let's read that. Read. There is salvation in no one else other than Jesus; not in Allah, not in Shiva or Krishna, not in Buddha. God has provided no other name under Heaven by which people can be saved other than the name of Jesus. Jesus is God's only approved sacrifice for the salvation of mankind. The alternative routes of salvation offered in the modern age are no different than during the time of the Exodus. They are demons masquerading as gods. If you sacrifice to and worship those gods you are cut off from God's people until you submit to God's one approved Savior, Jesus.

[Slide 5] The second lesson the Day of Atonement taught was that only Yahweh's appointed High Priest can make the sacrifice. No other priest could offer the sacrifices on the Day of Atonement, only the High Priest.

The New Testament equivalent to this principle is that Jesus is now God's High Priest who can offer the sacrifice for God's people. Look at Hebrews 9:11-15 on your outline and let's read that. Read.

The author of Hebrews claims that in many ways Jesus is far superior to any OT High Priest. First, Jesus did not just represent the present. He represented the future. He is the High Priest of the good things to come, all that heaven has in store for us. Second, Jesus entered the more perfect tabernacle. He entered Heaven where God actually dwells, not just some tent made of leather skins that represented Heaven. Third, Jesus did not offer the blood of animals but his own blood as the atoning sacrifice. Fourth, Jesus did not obtain a temporary cleansing from unintentional sins as did the High Priest on the Day of Atonement. Jesus obtained eternal redemption for his followers. The blood of animals only cleansed the body making the person able to come into the outer court of the tabernacle. The blood of Jesus cleanses our conscience from dead works that do not save. Thus as verse 15 says, we can receive the promise of an eternal inheritance.

[Slide 6] Jesus far exceeded what any OT High Priest could do. Because Jesus is eternal and infinite, his blood is eternal and infinite in its effects. That brings us to the third teaching of the Day of Atonement. The one sacrifice provides the covering for all the people. The Day of Atonement sacrifice covered the sins of the whole nation of Israel.

The New Testament equivalent is that Jesus' one sacrifice of himself provides the covering for the sins of all mankind. Look at Hebrews 9:24-28 on your outline. Read.

Every year the High Priest had to offer sacrifices on the Day of Atonement, but Jesus only made one sacrifice for all time. He has put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And just as it is true for all men that they die once and then comes judgment, so Christ also died once, suffering God's judgment on the sins he bore on the cross. There is no need for any other sacrifice because Jesus's sacrifice is sufficient to pay for all sins. As I said earlier, because Jesus is eternal, the effects of his sacrifice last forever. Because Jesus is infinite, the effects of his sacrifice are without limit. They can be applied to every person who has ever lived.

To whom will God apply the benefits of Jesus' death? Who will receive forgiveness and the eternal inheritance? Those who believe in Jesus or as the end of verse 28 says, "Those who eagerly wait for Jesus."

We eagerly wait for Jesus because we know he is resurrected, alive, and is returning to the Earth. We eagerly wait because we are at peace with Jesus. He is our Lord and Savior, our Master and friend. We are eager to see him because, as we read earlier in verse 14, our consciences have been cleansed. Our sins are forgiven. We have nothing to fear at the coming of Jesus. We have everything to eagerly look forward to at his coming. We know that he has taken our judgment upon himself at the cross because we have trusted in him to do so. This is possible for every tribe and nation on the Earth. It matters not whether you are Jew or Gentile or your country of origin. Everyone who trusts in Jesus is covered by his sacrifice. Jesus truly is the Savior of all people, to everyone who will receive him as Savior.

[Slide 7] The final truth the Day of Atonement taught was that God's provision removed the sins completely from the people. Sending the scape goat out into the wilderness symbolized the complete removal of sins from the people. However, the limitation with the Day of Atonement

is that it only covered the unintentional sins committed that year. Jesus offers something far superior.

Jesus' death covers all the sins you will commit your whole life and his death does not merely remove sins but his death provides the power to sanctify you, to make you holy, to reverse the effects of the Fall so that when you finally stand before God you will be free from all the effects of sin. Look at Hebrews 10:10-14 on your outlien and let's read those verses. Read.

The OT sacrifices including the Day of Atonement did not actually remove sin. They did not improve the worshipper in any way. All they did was provide a temporary covering so that God would not immediately judge the person. But Jesus' death actually sanctifies us according to verse 10. It starts a process in us whereby we become more and more like Jesus as the Holy Spirit chips away at us and molds us to resemble Jesus. Verse 14 says that by Jesus' one offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. Jesus will complete the process started in us at the day of our conversion and we will be perfected and live in eternity as a morally perfect being, free from all sin, and exhibiting the righteousness of God.

Wow! What a God! What a Savior! Be done with all the false religions and cults of this world because they cannot provide a Savior like Jesus, who because he was both God and man, can provide such a powerful salvation. They are two bit gods who cannot match the Triune God of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

I will close by offering you the opportunity to be completely forgiven and perfected for all time. If you have never trusted in Jesus Christ and his death on your behalf, you can do that today. It's all true. Jesus is the God-man who died on the cross to pay the full payment for all of your sins. He can remove all of them from you and he can secure your place in Heaven in peace with God. He was raised from the dead so that not only will he come back to Earth as its rightful king, but also so that on the day of your death he will escort you into his Father's Heavenly dwelling where he has prepared a place for you.

What do you have to do? You have to admit or confess to God that you have disobeyed him. You need to realize that there is no salvation outside of Jesus. There is no other way you can be saved. You have to be ready to stop going your own way and ready to follow Christ. You call on Jesus to save you, trusting in him and his death on the cross to fully pay for your sins.

If you are ready to do that today I invite you to make that decision to trust in Jesus. I will close in a prayer expressing faith in Jesus Christ. If you would like to use my prayer as a model, you may pray along with me. There is no magic to the words, no specific things you have to say because what God is looking for is faith on your part. The prayer is just a helpful way to express that faith. Let's pray.