

Leviticus 16

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Preacher: David Helm

[0 : 00] if you're new to reading the Bible, you've come to Christ Church Chicago on an incredible day. The text makes that clear in the close.

It actually says, on this day, verse 30, on this day shall atonement be made.

And you've come on what Israel would call the day, the most important day in their calendar.

That's why the closing verses commemorate the repetition of this on an annual basis as the day, simply Yom Kippur, the day of atonement.

If you're new to reading the Bible, you've come into Christ Church this morning on a most incredible day. Leviticus 16 puts you and me under the shadow of Israel's day of atonement.

[1 : 10] The significance of which is quite literally this morning impossible for me to overstate. I thought all week long that this text is just too big for me.

It's significant because it stands here at the center of the book. Everything has been leading to this day from chapter 1 through chapter 15. And everything will come forth as a consequence of this day, chapter 27 to the end.

The day is so large that you come to the middle of Leviticus itself, to the hinge upon which the great wooden axis of a door between God and man swings.

It all comes down to this day. And not only that, not only does it stand in the middle of Leviticus, it stands in the middle of what we call the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible.

Leviticus stands with Genesis and Exodus on the front end of it, Numbers and Deuteronomy on the back end of it, and Leviticus 16 almost having the strength of arms to hold the entire five books of Moses unto itself.

[2 : 26] That all of Genesis 1-1 to Leviticus 16 has been moving to the day. And all that comes forth from the people as a consequence of this day into their entrance into the promised land.

It is the biggest day in the book. It is the biggest day in the five books. You could say it's the biggest day in all the scriptures, but in shadow form.

From Genesis 1-1 to the final concluding verse of Revelation, everything in the Bible can be understood as coming forth and falling out of this very chapter.

If you are new to reading the Bible, I cannot overstate this truth to you this morning. You have come on an incredible day. And we sit under the weight and the glory and the goodness of what seemed so intelligible to you while it was being read.

The substance of a thing is greater than the shadow.

[3 : 39] If I was thinking of titling this sermon, the substance is greater than the shadow. What is a shadow?

One of the things I love about this room is the natural light which penetrates from the outer dome to that dome. And on a beautiful day, there are times where I'm standing here and I'll see the shadow fall across the auditorium from one side to the next.

And it makes me aware. It makes me aware of at least three things. That we are now under the shadow which speaks of a substance above.

Maybe a cumulus cloud. But that cloud stands between you and me and a source of light. There is a source of light that some substance comes between.

And you and I walk in the shadows. Leviticus 16 is very much like this. It places us in the shadows of Israel's atonement.

[4 : 53] But it makes us aware of a greater substance which floats overhead and beyond that connecting us to the eternal source of light no one less than God himself.

There are three shadows in this text. And they all come in the middle portion of the reading. It was a lengthy reading.

And impossible I'm sure in your first hearing to make sense of how it's all organized or put together. But we've already seen in verses 29 to the end this repetitive claim that whatever's going on here is the day where atonement is made where access to God is giving.

we put 29 to the end on one end. Verses 1 to 10 stand on the other end of the chapter and they basically are the instructions about what's going to happen but all the action all the action is in the middle.

It's all there between verses 11 and 28. And in verses 11 to 28 there are three shadows which speak of a substance greater and an atonement that can be had even by you and by me this morning as we sit here.

[6 : 13] The first shadow is in verses 10 to 19. It's a shadow that falls across Israel on an annual basis that involves a second setting apart of Aaron his household God's household and the people.

It's a second setting apart of the priests who serve the people who live and the place in which they go to meet with God.

We know that the second shadow the second setting apart is needed with the opening verses. He comes back all the way to chapter 10 doesn't he telling us about the day that Nadab and Abihu went into the Holy of Holies and offered strange fire and were struck down and so all the things that had transpired from Leviticus 1 to 15 seemed to be down the drain.

Everything that was there seemed to be falling apart. The people were bringing their offerings to the Lord. The priests were offering the offerings to the Lord but then on that first day they went into the Holy of Holies with unauthorized fire and died and so now Leviticus 16 there's a second setting apart of Aaron God's household and the people.

This reconsecration as it were. But by signposting the chapter for you the middle movement the second shadow really falls in verses 20 to 22.

[7 : 53] This is not a second setting apart of Aaron and God's people. This is a sending away of the people's sins. There's a setting apart yes but then there's a sending away of sins.

And then again by way of signposting that third shadow which falls upon this text verses 23 to 28 these men who set things apart getting rid of the sins actually in one sense take a shower so that they can return to service.

The first shadow 10 to 19 the second setting apart Aaron is to present a bull verse 11 for himself making atonement for himself and his house.

he kills the bull takes the coals from the fire of the altar two handfuls of sweet incense beaten small and notice the end of verse 12 we haven't been here before in the book he shall bring it inside the veil or verse 14 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 the front of the mercy seat he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times.

This whole book has been trying to tell us how we draw near to God and early on we saw this tabernacle built we saw people bringing their offerings to the east entrance through which they could see a bronze altar and sacrifices were made but then we progressed closer to God's very presence the priests themselves would at times enter into the holy place separated by a veil from the holy of holies and in that place we saw that we were drawing even nearer to God but now but now the priest is this second setting apart he's to go only one day a year beyond the veil into the holy of holies a 15 foot cube where the mercy seat sat with golden cherubim fashioned by artisans hanging over it and he was to sprinkle that because the cherubim looking down right here on the mercy seat is where God makes satisfaction for sins this is where God speaks if you want to dwell with God this is the place and he now he now is there can you imagine how frightening it would have been for Aaron the last two in there unauthorized to be there his sons dying but now he goes and he offers and he actually burns incense so that the whole room is now covered in cloud almost to again keep the distance between himself and a holy

[11:07] God he fumbles around in the room and does what he needs to do and comes out and I'm sure his family breathes a sigh of relief the second setting apart of the priesthood has been accepted by God then he comes back in verse 30 15 then he takes the goat that represented the people and he goes again inside the veil and he makes atonement for the people he does the same thing it's a second setting apart for the people the blood sacrifice is made and he sprinkles blood on it seven times and he consecrates it and so now as you arrive at the end of verse 19 there has been a second setting apart God's people can meet with God through blood atonement offered by a mediator that actually has entrance into the very holy of holies and yet it is but a shadow it is but a shadow the writer to the Hebrews would have been worthy of any dissertation done at any world class university picks up on these things and speaks about the shadow in regard to the substance and in chapter 10 verses 11 to 14 the New

Testament writer will look back upon this first shadow and write the following but when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come then through the greater and more perfect tent not made with hands that is not of this creation he entered once for all into the holy places not by means of the blood of bulls and calves but by means of his own blood thus securing an eternal redemption for if the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes and the heifer sanctify for the purification of the flesh how much more will the blood of Christ who through the eternal covenant and the spirit offered himself without blemish to God purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God what the writer to the Hebrews does it says I've read about the day I've been in Leviticus 16 I've seen what it is to draw near to God this second setting apart that happened on an annual basis but let me tell you about Jesus let me tell you about my

Jesus he didn't he didn't just come down here and do this thing with bulls and goats and heifers and ash he actually gave his own body on the cross and if you want to look behind the veil if you want to look above the shadow if you want to see above the clouds he actually entered into heaven itself wherein all of this is but a pattern and he offered himself once to make atonement for sin for all people over all time the substance is greater than the shadow well it's nice to know isn't it as this first shadow passes by that Jesus through his righteousness is able to enter into the presence of God but what about you what about me the text hasn't dealt with us yet it's interesting that in one sense you come to church to learn that

Jesus is able to enter where you cannot go but oh I need this chapter to fall upon us with a second shadow I need to know how I get there and how you get there I'm glad for Aaron I'm glad for his sons I'm glad for Jesus but what about me and thus the second shadow verses 20 to 22 one of the most stunning and striking unique parts of this text he takes this second goat and this second goat the priest will lay his hands on it verse 20 when he's made an end to atoning for all those things he shall present a live goat 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's in readiness and the goat shall bear all their iniquities on itself to a remote area and he shall let the goat go free in the wilderness there is not only a setting apart a second setting apart but there is a sending away there is a sending away of the sins of the people that's good news even in shadow form the notion that

God in his mercy holy as he is might be willing to send away the sins of Israel could it mean then that he could send away your sins as well the scriptures talk about him removing our sins as far as the east from the west out of the city out of the gate all the way beyond simply as the priest lays his hands on a goat this goat becomes a sacrifice indicating that God sends your sins away away there was a young man 18 years old I've mentioned him before he's one of the heroes of my own life died in 1836 went to Cambridge as an undergraduate student not a

[17 : 23] Christian but under his undergraduate days early on he heard about this kind of sending away and this is what he would later write in part that the Jews knew what they did when they transferred their sin to the head of their offering the thought came into my mind what may I transfer all my guilt to another has God provided an offering for me that I may lay my sins on my sins on his head then God willing I will not bear them on my soul one moment longer accordingly I sought to lay my sins upon the sacred head of Jesus from that hour peace flowed into me abundance into my soul and I had sweet access to God through my blessed Savior he found that to be true by faith look

I know of two people sitting in our midst this morning who through the reading of scriptures with others in the church have committed their life to Christ this very week that there is a newness a freshness of God in our midst where people are knowing that I can transfer my sin to him and through him he's going to send it away he's done it for me he's done it for many he's doing it even today in our midst hallelujah but as comforting as it is to know that our sins can be taken far away I need a third shadow

I need to know how I get back in I need to know how I settle down I need to know can I get back in the camp can I reenter the garden can I go into heaven because even though my sins have been sent far away I know who I am a sinner nevertheless and the third shadow falls upon the text in verses 23 to 28 as we see Aaron and this one who took the goat out having to now find reentrance into God's people and three times over verse 24 he bathes his body in water he rids himself of the clothes that are tarnished with sin verse 26 he who let the goat go shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water those things shall be carried and burned outside the camp verse 28 he who burns them shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water three times over think of it the movement of the cumulus clouds of

Leviticus 16 falling over you now this morning thank God that there is a second setting apart even after the consequences of the sin of Nadab and Abihu thank God that he's willing to take sins and send them away thank God that we stand in the shadow that those could bathed cleansed and reenter into fellowship in God's family how do you do this well I told you the substance is greater than the shadow one writer put it this way that when Jesus had made purification for sin he sat down he didn't leave heaven he walked in said I belong here I'm righteous I've actually offered my life for sins that weren't my own I've purified the place I've sent sins away

I'm able to sit down at the right hand of the father think about it the book of Leviticus is continually asking the question how is it that God is going to be capable of drawing near to us it's also asking the question how is it that we can draw near to God and the scriptures say that Jesus is the substance of the shadows and he entered into heaven praise God in perfect obedience gave his life as a substitute for sin that would take yours away and allow you to enter in and one day I believe it one day I will sit down with him I will look him in the eye and I will say thank you for

[22 : 52] I lived in a world of shadows and succumbed to the fullness of sin yet your son did everything for me you know our children this past Tuesday they've been learning about Leviticus I'm going to leave you this word picture and sit down they have one of our youth group members metaphorically act as the goat who exited the city with the sins and our young children wrote down on post-it notes real sins I've read them I'm not going to call you out this morning young ones you who hit your brother

I'm not going to mention you by name you who lied to your parent I'm not going to mention you either by name but our children went with these post-it notes they affixed them to one who metaphorically was the goat and he took their stuff away I'm calling upon you today to either do the same or to praise God that he has done it for you in Christ C.S.

Lewis 20th century atheist turned skeptic become Christian as a story in and of itself as wife die tragedy he writes a book a grief observed like how do I deal with death book gets turned into a movie they change the name shadow lands my favorite line is this Lewis says for believe me this world which seems so substantial is no more than shadow lands real life has not yet begun

I told you at the outset that you came to Christ Church Chicago on an incredible day day the day of atonement the day of access may it be the beginning of the rest of your life until you and we all see in substance what we only hold on to now by faith our heavenly father strengthen us as we continue to make our way through this most mysterious book but we thank you that in Jesus we have something greater than these shadows and I pray Lord that you would help each person here each man each woman each child to give their life to Christ by faith that their sins would be taken away and they might be able to sit one day with him who made purification on their behalf in Jesus name I pray amen