

# An Atoning Sacrifice

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[ 0 : 00 ] We can turn back to our reading in Leviticus chapter 16. We're going to look at this passage, maybe especially looking at the verses, verse 6 to verse 10.

! Aaron shall offer the bull as a sin offering for himself, and shall make atonement for himself and for his house. Then he shall take the two goats and set them before the Lord at the entrance of the tent of meeting.

And Aaron shall cast lots over the two goats, one lot for the Lord and the other lot for Azazel. And Aaron shall present the goat on which the lot fell for the Lord and use it as a sin offering.

But the goat on which the lot fell for Azazel shall be presented a live before the Lord to make atonement over it, that it may be sent away into the wilderness of Azazel.

Last night we were looking at Leviticus chapter 2, and I mentioned there as we were beginning that all Scripture is God-breathed.

[ 1 : 04 ] All Scripture is given by God. But the book of Leviticus is where we see God speaking most in the sense of speaking directly to the people. And here in chapter 16, the chapter again begins with that kind of emphasis as it begins in verse 1.

The Lord spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron. Again we see God is speaking here. And he's speaking to them about the wonder of this day, this special day that the people of Israel had.

A special day in their calendar, a significant day. The day of atonement. A day when a special sacrifice was offered up. It happened once a year, and it was brought by the high priest into the very center of the tabernacle, the place that no one could go.

And only once a year on this special day could the high priest go in. Any other time or any other person who went in, they faced the consequences of death.

But here the high priest is able to go in and to go in with this sacrifice, making atonement. Making the people right with God that they might know the forgiveness of their sin.

[ 2 : 24 ] I mentioned last night as well, just to put this into context, that the first seven chapters in Leviticus showed to us the kind of offerings that the people had to give to God, which was a ritual throughout the year.

There was five main offerings. You had the burnt, the grain, the peace, the sin, and the guilt offering. And all of these were about the people's relationship with God.

These were the laws, the commands that they were to keep on a regular basis. As I mentioned earlier on, the grain offering was that sense of coming before God with a sense of worship.

But we know that sin had to be dealt with. Sin had to be dealt with. And we still know that that is the case. And how is sin dealt with?

Well, the Bible says that without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sin. And so this day of atonement, this day when a special sacrifice is offered up for the high priest, the priesthood as a whole, and all the people of Israel, was a significant day when they saw what the cost of their sins was to give that sacrifice, that sprinkling of blood in the Holy of Holies before God, that they might be made right with him.

[ 3 : 49 ] So sin had to be dealt with. And that is what we come to remember today as we come to our sacrament before us, the Lord's Supper.

We come to remember the Lord's death, that he came to deal with our sin, that he came to offer himself up as a sacrifice.

Have you ever imagined what it might have been like to be part of the people of God in the days of Moses or indeed throughout the Old Testament?

What it would have been like coming into this tabernacle, into this place where they gathered to see their sins forgiven, bringing an animal with them, bringing a sin offering, a burnt offering, a grain offering, a peace offering, a guilt offering all the time.

And then once a year coming to see this day of atonement, this offering up of a bull, a ram, and two goats. Imagine what it was like.

[ 4 : 51 ] Imagine if that is what we had to do today in order for our sins to be forgiven. What kind of place would this be today? It wouldn't be silence. There would be so much noise. Everyone bringing an animal, an offering before God.

How would we know which one to bring? How would we know an animal without blemish? Where would we find one that would satisfy this offering? How long would it take us to get through that sacrificial ritual, offering up these sacrifices?

How messy it would be. How noisy. How smelly. All of these things. What it would be like for us if that's what we had to do today. And yet, in a sense, we do the same as we were doing in those days.

But we are doing it because of what Jesus has done for us. And that is what makes all the difference. We don't come today to offer a burnt offering, a sacrifice.

We come through the one who has sacrificed himself once and for all. You see, Leviticus is telling us that this will be fulfilled in what we see in the New Testament, in what we see in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 6 : 07 ] For example, if you were to look at the book of Hebrews, which someone has described as a commentary on Leviticus, you see just how it is fulfilled. Especially in maybe chapters 9 and 10 of Hebrews, there you see in chapter 9 that redemption is through the blood of Christ, that forgiveness is found through the blood of Christ.

And then in chapter 10, that Christ sacrifices himself once and for all. You see the fulfillment of it. And as we look at Leviticus 16 today, and especially as we look at these two goats that were offered, we see how what the people had to do long ago in order to approach God and know forgiveness for their sins points us towards what we are doing here.

Worshiping God, giving thanks to him for the forgiveness of our sins in remembrance of him, in remembrance of what Christ has done for us.

And so I want us to see three things from this day of atonement, this passage before us today. We see, first of all, the purpose of the sacrifice.

Secondly, we're going to look at the people of the sacrifice. And then thirdly, the prophecy of the sacrifice. But first of all, we're going to see the purpose of the sacrifice.

[ 7 : 35 ] It's a long chapter. And as we've read through it, you see, it goes into a lot of detail, chapter 16. And we can't take everything away from here today.

There's so much in it, so much in all the different details that you could tease out with time. But we want to see, overall, the passage is speaking about a special purpose in this day of atonement. What is it about? It is about the people knowing their sins are forgiven. Knowing their sins are forgiven.

It's interesting how you look at the chapters that come immediately before, from chapter 7 or 8 through to chapter 10, and then chapter 17 onwards. When you look at what's around this day of atonement in terms of the chapters, what you see is that there is law.

In chapter 8 to 10, there's the law of different things. And then in chapter 17, it goes back into talking about the laws against eating blood.

[ 8 : 42 ] And there's lots of different things about law. What they are to do. And as you see with law, it's so often a burden. Because there is no one who can keep the law fully.

And so the law becomes a burden. But in the midst of that, you have chapter 16. And what chapter 16, this day of atonement, shows the people their hope.

It shows the grace of God. It shows that it's not by keeping the law completely and perfectly that we are forgiven, but through sacrifice.

Through sacrifice offered to God. And when we look at these two goats in particular, Aaron had a bull offering for his sin, but then for all the people, two goats were to be offered.

And as we look at these goats, we see that here we find the way that forgiveness was found. One goat was to be a blood sacrifice. And the other was what is called a scapegoat, or a goat of riddance.

[ 9 : 56 ] You'll have heard the phrase good riddance. It means putting something away. Something that was maybe evil.

Something that was not right. Good riddance to that. It's good to get it away. And that's what the riddance goat is. It's that sense of putting away. And what this goat was doing was putting sin away. So there was the two goats. One was the blood offering, the sacrifice. And one was the scapegoat, the riddance goat, that their sin was removed into the wilderness.

And this is what was needed for sin to be forgiven. And for that assurance of sin forgiven. One day in the year, this day of atonement was significant for the people.

Because throughout the year, they broke the law. Throughout the year, they could not keep the law. They sinned. And therefore, this day was needed. And we know ourselves that by the law alone, we cannot keep everything perfect.

[ 11 : 05 ] We know that we sin against God in thought, word, and deed on a daily basis. And we know that God will not just allow sin to go unpunished.

That we too need the forgiveness of our sin. And what we see in this passage, we see looking forward then to Jesus Christ.

The first goat is the blood offering. That there is no forgiveness of sin without the shedding of blood. And you see the detail it goes into in this passage.

It shows that Aaron, as the high priest, was to sprinkle the blood. All the bits were to be burnt, taken away. Every bit of this goat was burnt.

So there was nothing left. It was fully sacrificed to God. And Jesus has done that for us. His blood was shed.

[ 12 : 05 ] His body was broken that we might have forgiveness of sin. Now the sacrifice, the blood offering, we can see right through the Old Testament.

But the scapegoat, it was once a year, along with this other goat that was sacrificed as well. This once a year day of atonement. And the scapegoat just reminds us that as well as the shedding of blood, that our sins are removed.

That they are cast away. Leviticus 16, verse 21, it says there, 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.

So this scapegoat had all the sins of the people laid upon it. And you see, the language is quite familiar to what Isaiah says in Isaiah chapter 53, looking at the Lord Jesus Christ.

The scapegoat is described as on whose head is laid the sins of Israel. What does in Isaiah 53 say about the Lord Jesus? The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

[ 13 : 25 ] All the sin of his people laid on him. The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Sin is dealt with by God.

And so what is the scapegoat about? Well, there are two things that we could take from the scapegoat to help us understand just how God deals with our sin.

One is that removal of sin. The sin being carried away out into the wilderness. Azazel is most likely a place in the wilderness, a place that the goat was sent to out into the wilderness, out of their sight. We sang in Psalm 103, the Lord removing our sin from us. What does it say? As far as east is distant from the west, so far as he removed our sin.

Out into the wilderness, away from his people, our sin is removed. And isn't there a wonderful assurance in that for us today?

[ 14 : 39 ] For you as you come, for me as I come, that as we confess our sin and as we look to the Lord Jesus Christ, he has dealt with our sin.

Through the shedding of his blood, he has dealt with our sin. But also in the removing of our sin, in it being taken away from us.

The wilderness here is a reminder to us of what our sin deserves. Our sin deserves that being cut off from God, sent out into the wilderness, as it were, away from God.

That is what our sin deserves, your sin and mine. But as we looked at last evening and as we see in this passage as well, the assurance of the people of God was found in their coming to God in this way and offering up a sacrifice.

And so this day of atonement is the ultimate way for them to know their forgiveness of sin. Sin forgotten.

[ 15 : 49 ] Do you realize that your sin is forgotten in Christ? Because sin is often a burden. Sin weighs heavy upon us.

The sin in our hearts, our individual sins, our collective sins, they all weigh heavy upon us. But as we come confessing our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive, to cast them away.

Micah chapter 7 has another beautiful illustration of what this is as well, where it says in verse 19, he will again have compassion on us, he will tread our iniquities under foot.

And then he says, you will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. Our sin is put away. Why and how?

Because the Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all. Paul says in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, he made him who knew no sin to be sin that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

[ 17 : 10 ] There is Paul speaking about that same kind of language, laying on him the iniquities of us all. And what did Jesus do for us?

Well, when you think of the scapegoat as forsaken, as put away into the wilderness, what was Jesus' cry on the cross? My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

It's the language of the scapegoat taken into the wilderness. Forsaken, put away, cast off. Jesus took it. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

That is what we deserved. that is what your sin deserved, what my sin deserved. And he took it. He took our sin.

He removed our sin as far as east is from the west. And doesn't that remind us that if we are looking anywhere else for forgiveness of sin, if we are thinking that by the law or by any other way we can satisfy God and that we can please him enough that our sins will be forgiven, we cannot.

[ 18 : 29 ] Only at the cross, only in Jesus Christ can we know the forgiveness of sin. The purpose of this day was for the forgiveness of their sin.

Our purpose today is to remember how our sins are forgiven, are cast away through his blood and through his forsakenness.

Then that leads us secondly to ask, well, what about the people involved? As you look at this passage, you see that there are people involved in this day of atonement.

The priest, the high priest, Aaron is clearly involved and other priests are involved, but not exclusively. because you see the focus is on all the people.

In verse 5, 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. From the congregation of the people.

[ 19 : 39 ] There was a sense in that this was something that was done together. There was significance in this and it was because sin was the common factor in them all.

There was no one who was immune from sin. And the same is true for ourselves today. We are all here because of that common problem that we are all sinners before a holy God.

None of us can come and say, but I have no sin. None of us can say we are perfect. We all fall short. And you see the collective nature in this in that it was for all the people as you look in verse 16 as well.

Thus he shall make atonement for the holy place because of the uncleanness of the people of Israel and because of their transgressions, all their sins.

It was a sense of the nature and the problem of sin was among the people all together. And that this day of atonement was for all the people together as well.

[ 20 : 50 ] The high priest, the priesthood, the sin of all the people was to be dealt with because this sin affected the whole camp, if you like.

The sanctuary was impure. The place where God met with his people was impure. sin had to be dealt with.

And when you think of how we see that sanctuary element fulfilled in the New Testament, where do you see it? Where does God tabernacle with his people?

It is in the people themselves. Because when you look at what Jesus says, he says, where two or three are gathered in my name, I am in your midst.

And so the congregation were looking at their relationship with God collectively. And what the people wanted was the presence of God in their midst, the Lord to bless them as a people.

[ 21 : 54 ] And in order for that to happen, the people collectively had to confess their sin. From the congregation of the people, these goats were brought. And so today, as we come, we don't just come individually.

You don't just sit at the Lord's table. You don't just look on, separate from everybody else. We are all here together. We all come, not individually, but collectively.

We confess our individual sins before God, but we can do it collectively as well. and say before God, Father, before you we have sinned.

We have sinned as a people. So we come collectively in that way. But on the other hand, as you look at that, there is also the theme that we come together to remember the Lord's death.

The people here collectively knew the forgiveness of their sins. And today, as we take the bread and the wine, yes, we do it individually, but we do it together.

[ 23 : 16 ] This we do in remembrance of him, as brothers and sisters in the Lord, as the people of God, seeking his blessing, seeking his presence with us together, asking for his forgiveness upon us, asking for his peace over us, asking for his guidance on us going forward.

We come together as the congregation of his people. In our study on Wednesday night, we were looking at Romans chapter five.

And again, as we think of that book, it's a book that's so clearly tied into the likes of Leviticus as well, where we see God's work among his people.

And the book of Romans, as we've been looking at in this study, it's all about that idea of we cannot keep the law. How are we justified before God? We cannot keep the law.

We are justified by faith. And in Romans five, chapter two, it says, through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand.

[ 24 : 37 ] And when you think of the access that the high priest was giving to the people and to the holy of holy here, once a year and once a year only could he go into that place and have access to God for the forgiveness of sin.

What do we have in Jesus Christ? We have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand. Access there means to be introduced.

And the thought is that the only way to get close to a powerful dignity is to have someone who will introduce you. And when we think of it in this sense, Jesus is the one who brings us before God.

We have obtained access into this grace in which we stand. We can only come before him through Jesus Christ. Because it is Jesus Christ who brings us before God the Father.

Here is my brother. Here is my sister. Here is the one who I died for. And only through him can we stand.

[ 25 : 55 ] Only through the high priest did the people have that assurance in the days of Leviticus. But through Jesus Christ we have that assurance today.

Are you standing by his grace? Are you standing assured? the question that often comes as we think of sin is can my sin be forgiven?

Will my sin not come back and haunt me? You can imagine the people in the days of Leviticus wondering about the scapegoat on which the sins had been placed on and cast away into the wilderness.

They would have been like, what if it comes back? Would that have been you? That element of doubt. What if it comes back?

What if my sin finds me out again? Well the man who was appointed to take the goat out into the wilderness said he had to take it 12 miles into the wilderness and then cast it away and he had to remain until that scapegoat was completely out of sight and only then could he come back.

[ 27 : 19 ] As you see as you read through when he returned he had to wash himself cleanse himself from all of that sin but the sin was gone. Never to return.

Are you coming today with that sense of doubt? what if what if my sin comes back? What if my sin will come between me and God?

Can he really forgive my sin? Well as you come in faith as you come trusting in him you can remember that as far as east is from the west so far as he removed he has cast them into the depths of the sea he has borne our sin the iniquities of us all was laid on him he was forsaken that you might have peace with him and be able to stand in that grace peace we come by faith the final thing we see here before we come to take part in the Lord's supper is the prophecy it foretold the day of atonement as we've been alluding to throughout here points us towards that great sacrifice that once and for all sacrifice why is it today that instead of offering up a goat or sending another goat out into the wilderness why are we here gathered around the word of

God as we do why are we not lined up with an animal to bring before God to sacrifice to him because no sacrifice could satisfy no sacrifice could suffice for our sin but instead we have the Lord Jesus Christ the one who gave his life as a ransom for many when you look at Leviticus chapter 6 we remind it of the ongoing nature of the sacrificial system it says in verse 13 the fire must be kept burning on the altar continually it must not go out it was ongoing the day of atonement was once a year but throughout the year there were sacrifices being made continually is that true for us today not in the same way because at the cross Jesus said it is finished it is done and so as we come to the

Lord's table as we come to the Lord's supper it's trusting in the finished work of Christ and that is where we are to look that is what we have before us the broken body and the shed blood poured out for you that you might know forgiveness of sin so God doesn't require this kind of sacrifice anymore because Jesus is our high priest he offered himself to satisfy divine justice to reconcile us to God that we will be right with him and so as we come to the Lord's table are you looking to yourself are you looking to your sin and saying but how can he forgive me or are you looking to him the hymn writer says when

[ 31 : 15 ] Satan tempts me to despair and tells me of the guilt within upward I look and see him there who made an end of all my sin because the sinless saviour died my sinful soul is counted free for God the just is satisfied to look on him and pardon me to look on him and pardon me you in some ways we could say there's no mess here today in the sense of the whole sacrificial system and the mess and the noise and the sights of that but in another sense we can say there is a mess here because we are all a mess we are all a mess before God because of our sin when you look in your heart what do you see you see a distance from

God you see a sin that keeps that distance but don't just look at yourself because God looked on him on Jesus to pardon you and so yes we look to our sin in one sense because we need to confess our sin but we look to Christ we thank him for what he has done for us our scapegoat our sacrificial goat his blood shed his forsaken on the cross all that our sin might be forgiven the people in the days of Moses they came to this day looking for forgiveness forgiveness we come in the same way confessing our sin but not just looking for forgiveness but remembering our sin is forgiven in him he was crushed for our iniquities all the sin was laid on him and so we come thankful we come to do this in remembrance of him let us pray

Lord our gracious God we thank you that there is nothing that we could possibly ever bring to you that would satisfy you for our sin and yet oh Lord you have opened up that way for us not that we would come with a bull or goat or ram but that we would come by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ the one who paid the price the one who was forsaken the one who was condemned the one upon whom all our sin was laid and we pray today Lord that we would remember the wonder of that forgiveness that as far as east is from the west so far as he removed our sin from us cast into the depths of the sea never again to condemn us Lord we thank you that as we come in faith that we might know that in him we stand in that grace presented before you by a saviour by a precious saviour so

Lord continue with us bless us and keep us as we ask all things for the forgiveness of our sin in his name amen as we come to partake in the Lord's supper we ask as well the question of who the Lord's supper is for and this is what we call the fencing of the table a part where it's made clear just who should come to the Lord's supper who should sit at the Lord's table as we've read through Leviticus we see a lot of instruction given as to what the people had to do and what was done for them but if you look at the very end of this chapter the beginning starts with the Lord spoke to Moses and then the very last words are this and

Moses did as the Lord commanded! Moses did as the Lord commanded him what did he do?

[ 36 : 24 ] well we could say that there's three things that he did first of all he listened there's a lot in this chapter a lot to take with us a lot for Moses to take with him but he listened he listened to what God was saying and that is what we are to do as we come to the Lord's table you listen to what God is saying you listen to his command in obedience you come to do this in remembrance of him so are you listening today are you listening to the word of God the second thing that we can take with Moses is that he trusted he believed because he did as the Lord commanded because he believed in what God was saying that in order to know the forgiveness of their sin this is what had to be done and again we apply that to ourselves as we think how do we come to the

Lord's table we have to come trusting we have to come believing believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved so you have to listen to the word of God you have to believe the word of God and then thirdly he obeyed he obeyed he did as the Lord commanded him and that is how we are to come to the Lord's table as well in obedience because he commands it of those who believe and so if you believe you listen if you believe you trust if you believe you obey if that is your heart today you come to the

Lord's table whether you are in our congregation or another congregation if you are believing in him you come if you are not you don't!

God because no one can come in that sense of listening trusting obeying without believing it would be wrong but it doesn't mean you should never come because maybe today is the day where you start to listen maybe today is the day when you start to believe maybe today is the day when you say I want to obey and so whether you're sitting at the table or whether you're looking on may we still see it's not about us it is about him we listen to him we are to trust him we are to obey him well as we come to the Lord's table we do so singing to God's praise the words of Psalm 118 at verse 15 Psalm 118 at verse 15 page 398 of the psalm books will sing down to verse 23 in dwellings of the righteous is heard the melody of joy and health the Lord's right hand doth ever valiantly the right hand of the mighty Lord exalted is on high the right hand of the mighty Lord doth ever valiantly we'll sing from verse 15 down to verse 23 to God's praise!

[ 40 : 22 ] Amen!

verse The mighty Lord doth ever value me.

I shall not die, but live and shall the words of God discover.

The Lord hath me chastiseth soar, but not to death give o'er.

O set ye open unto me the gates of righteousness.

[ 42 : 26 ] Then will I enter into them, and I the Lord will bless.

This is the gate of all quiet, the just shall enter in.

We will thy grace for the meekers, and trust my safety in.

That stone is made dead cornerstone, which builders in each side.

This is the doing of the Lord, and wondrous in our eyes.

[ 43 : 54 ] Well, as we come to the Lord's Supper, we have thought about all that's been done for us.

And as we read there at the end of the chapter, Moses obeyed. We are to come listening. We are to come believing.

And we are to come in obedience. And our warrant, as we find it for the Lord's Supper, we read in 1 Corinthians 11 at verse 23.

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed took bread. And when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, This is my body, which is for you.

Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way also he took the cup after supper, saying, This cup is a new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.

[ 45 : 01 ] For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. For we follow the same pattern that on the night he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took bread and he gave thanks.

So we'll bow our heads in a word of thanksgiving. Lord, our gracious God, as we come before you at this time, we have that sense of our unworthiness.

For we are not worthy of the least of your mercies. But we are thankful that you are one who remembers us, the one who is gracious and merciful towards us. We thank you that we look before us here and that we see the bread and the wine in the ordinary nature of them.

And yet, O Lord, may you bless them to us as we come to see what they represent. The body that was broken and the blood that was shed.

And may you bless us, Lord, as we partake. As we take of the bread and of the wine. May it be for our strengthening. For our growth in grace.

[ 46 : 17 ] That our faith would be encouraged. We thank you, Lord, that we come to do this in remembrance of him. And may it be that that is where our eyes are focused and where our hearts are fixed.

