



MATT BLACK, Sun, June 10, 2018
livinghopechurch.net

7 | LEVITICUS 16

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

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Announcements

1. Welcome visitors!
2. **Bill Kroll** is retiring as an elder at the end of this month. We want to say thank you for his service as an elder. This is small gift, and we want to honor him later on as well. Praise God for our dear elder.

3. Church Picnic: June 16, Riverbend Park in St. Charles, 10am to 9pm
4. Register your kids for VBS today, either in the foyer or online. Sign up for volunteer staff positions. They are listed in the insert in your bulletin. Also, we are in need of a ton of items for donation to make this a success. Finally, if you are a volunteer and do not yet own a Living Hope T-shirt, please sign up and let us know your T-shirt size today. We must order them very soon.

Open your Bible if you will to **Leviticus 23:26-32**. We are in a series called “The Feasts of Israel.” Today we are looking at the fifth feast, and our message is entitled: “The Day of Atonement.” This continues the fall pilgrimage for Israel. The Day of Atonement reminds us that there is a reckoning one day.

OPENING ILLUSTRATION

When I was a child, my dad took me up to the First National Bank of Chicago where he worked for 40 years. He wanted to introduce me to the Chairman of the Board. Up and up and up we went in the elevators to one of the top floors. What a view! You can see Lake Michigan for miles up there! I got to shake the bank president’s hand. My dad said, this is my son! I was so proud and thankful that my dad cared so much to let me meet the bank president. I could never have had that meeting, except that my dad knew the Bank Chairman.

This morning we are talking about a much greater meeting. Entering into the presence of God. In Leviticus 16, God introduces the Day of Atonement. This is one of the seven feasts of the Bible. This one is in the Fall Pilgrimage.

A great tragedy had happened before the Day of Atonement. Aaron’s sons had brought “unauthorized fire” before God’s presence and they were consumed by God’s fire. It is a fearful thing to enter into the presence of God. None of us are worthy. But oh, how we need the presence of God. The Day of Atonement is all about how to approach God. Don’t you want to approach him in the right way so that you can fellowship and commune with him?

THE PRESENCE OF GOD

In the wilderness period God had said, “My presence will go with you” (**Exo 33:14**) and Moses regarded God’s presence as absolutely essential. Without it he did not want to move or do anything: “If your presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here” (**Exo 33:15**). But God did grant his presence and spoke of “their camp, where I dwell among them” (**Num 5:3**).

Does God dwell with you? Jesus spoke of making his abode in his followers. He said, “Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him” (**Jn 14:23**).

But on the other hand God’s presence is awe-inspiring and powerful. To approach him in the wrong way might be disaster. That is the point of the story of **Nadab and Abihu**. They “offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, contrary to his command” (**Lev 10:1**). The result was that “fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD” (10:2).

God is holy. He is unapproachable by sinners. He is “light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1 Jn 1:5). The God who made you is deeply offended by your sin and my sin. We all know we are guilty. If we approach God in the wrong way, we are doomed.

Like Nadab and Abihu, we deserve God’s just and awe-inspiring wrath. We tremble at the presence of God, and we should. But Jesus has taken the sting out of our condemnation. We are now accepted. Christ has paid so much for you to gain access to God’s presence. **There is a high price to pay for fellowship with him.** That’s what the Day of Atonement is all about. What I want us to hold on today, is first that the greatest gift God has given you was at a steep price. And since the price was so steep, the death of his Son, we ought to treasure God’s fellowship all the days of our life.

Dear sweet saint of God, is that you are a radically new person. You are indwelt by God’s awesome presence. The precious Holy Spirit has so much to give you. Before we can appreciate that, let’s stand and read God’s holy Word.

Our passage today is **Leviticus 23:26-32**, “And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ²⁷“Now on the tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. It shall be for you a time of holy convocation, and you shall afflict yourselves and present a food offering to the Lord. ²⁸ And you shall not do any work on that very day, for it is a Day of Atonement, to make atonement for you before the Lord your God. ²⁹ For whoever is not afflicted on that very day shall be cut off from his people. ³⁰ And whoever does any work on that very day, that person I will destroy from among his people. ³¹ You shall not do any work. It is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwelling places. ³² It shall be to you a Sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict yourselves. On the ninth day of the month beginning at evening, from evening to evening shall you keep your Sabbath.””

This is God’s Word.

Outline

1. Admire your humble **high priest** (Lev 16:1-5)
2. Enter God’s **holy presence** (Lev 16:6-10)
3. Remember your **high privilege** (Lev 16:129-30)

The Day of Atonement was preceded by ten days of repentance and deep introspection. The first ten days of this fall feast was called “The Days of Awe.” Have you ever gotten in trouble, and you knew you had to meet with someone, and you knew it was going to go bad? It’s a fearful thing to consider that we are all going to meet God face to face. God is holy. Thinking about that final day makes me tremble. Because I know Christ, I tremble in holy love, but I still tremble. What great love he has poured out for us.

But let us tremble thinking what we would be without Christ. He’s done it all. He’s paid a hefty price, the infinite price. That’s what the Day of Atonement is all about.

God is majestic and powerful – and remote. Never forget this. We are so privileged to be near to God, but to Israel his presence was remote and terrifying. You could only see his glory cloud at a distance. You could never enter in the veil, except once a year.

So on this one day in the year approach was permitted.

1. ADMIRE YOUR HUMBLE HIGH PRIEST (LEV 16:1-5)

THE PRIEST'S CONVICTION

To enter the holy of holies, the presence of God, in an improper way or at an unwarranted time incurred the **death penalty**. Accordingly, 16:1-2 stresses the sanctity of the holy place by letting us know about how to approach God properly (on the Day of Atonement) after the death of Nadab and Abihu (Lev 10), the priests who dared to enter without proper care.¹

The Lord spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they drew near before the Lord and died (16:1).

The death penalty might seem extreme, but it's not when you realize that we serve a holy and infinitely powerful God. It seems extreme to us because we do not see our own sin as an infinite offence to a holy God. God says to Aaron:

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 (16:2).

Inside the holy of holies was the ark of the covenant; and on the ark was a covering or lid commonly referred to as the mercy seat. The cover for the ark was a solid gold slab measuring 44" by 26" with statues of angels on either end, their wings touching in the middle. It referred to the place in the holy of holies where the blood sacrifice was made effectual, where God was present with his people, and from where he revealed himself to them.² Remember God's words in **Exodus 25:22**, "There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you about all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel."

The High Priest represented one who would have the care to enter into the holiest place, God's presence with utter seriousness and care. Jesus had one mission in life, to enter into the holiest place and give his life "a ransom for many."

In order for any of us to come to God through Christ, we must remember how serious our sin is. Nadab and Abihu did not take their sin seriously. You and I must if we are to come to God.

Make Time to Enter the Holiest Place

Nadab and Abihu offered "unauthorized fire" before the Lord (Lev 10:1) and "fire came out from before the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord" (Lev 10:2). They were destroyed by God. Saints, do you believe that "our God is a consuming fire" (**Heb 12:29**)? Can you rejoice that Jesus has given "authorized fire" a perfect sacrifice, so that you may enter into God's presence without being struck down and

¹ Ross, *Leviticus*, 317.

² Allen P. Ross, *Holiness to the Lord: A Guide to the Exposition of the Book of Leviticus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 317.

consumed by fire, like Nadab and Abihu? You have a high and holy privilege. Are you accessing the presence of God like you ought? What a joy! What an awesome gift from the sweet presence of God. We don't have to be consumed in condemnation, we can be consumed in joy and comfort!

The only way you are going to grow in Christ is if you go deep with God. Christ made the way by his work so that you could get to know the Father in heaven. Prioritize your life. You will never *find* time for God. It's not there. You need to *make* time for him.

THE PRIEST'S COMMISSION

On the Day of Atonement, the High Priest had to do all the work. We learn this in **verse 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 (16:3).

He also had to offer a bull for himself. There was the morning and evening offering. Later he offers a goat at the mercy seat in the holy of holies. There were actually 15 sacrifices total that day, and no other priest could offer them: only the High Priest. He did all the work.

Aaron had to do this alone and unassisted. We read in the 17th verse, "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." No other man was to be present, so that the people might be quite certain that everything was done by the high priest alone.

The High Priest did all the work that day. He tended to the menorah candles; he burned the incense; he kindled the fires at the altar. He offered all the sacrifices. The only priest allowed to work that day was the high priest.

Can I tell you, Aaron was pointing to our great High Priest, Jesus Christ? And it is Christ alone who has dealt with our sin problem. If you are born again, dear child of God, you must give him every ounce of glory, that Jesus, **alone and unassisted**, made atonement for your sin and guilt. Stop carrying it around. He doesn't need your help bearing your sin. It is finished! Child of God rejoice that you are set free from the hellish ball and chain of your sin. He has buried it in the depths of the sea.

Let Christ Carry Your Guilt

Christ did it all for you! Dear child of God you no longer have to carry around the guilt of your sin. This is hard, because often **those around you will remind you** of your worst sins. They will join in with Satan himself and make you feel so inadequate, and the scary thing is: you are! You will try to work harder and be better to redeem yourself. But the best way to make yourself better is to stop striving. Rest in Christ. Trust in his righteousness alone. He's the only one who can carry your guilt of sin. Leave it with him.

Be Healed by the Work of Christ

I'm so glad Christ did it all for you and me. You see my efforts can never heal me, but Christ's touch does. There is so much of our pain in life that comes that can only be healed

by the stripes of Jesus. **Look upon his cross dear saint.** He loves you. You will never be healed until you look to him. Like those in the wilderness, we need to look again to Christ

Some of you have such crushing burdens. Maybe you fear that you never feel free and unburdened by your sorrows. You are crushed on every side. Enter into the fullness of Christ. Time has to stop for you. Make time to get alone with Christ. Make time for His Spirit to minister to the deep needs of your soul. You will never regret at the end of your life that you spent too much time with your Savior who loves you so.

THE PRIEST'S CLOTHING

On the Day of Atonement, the High Priest could enter the Holy Place (Lev 16:1-3). Normally the high priest would wear some pretty dazzling clothing. He wore a head dress, a mitre with plate of gold, tied with brilliant blue. And he wore a breastplate studded with gems representing the twelve tribes of Israel, adorned with pure gold. But on this day he put aside these dazzling garments, and wore clothes that were poorer than the normal linen of common priesthood.

On the Day of Atonement, the high priest had to, in essence, “dress-down.” On this day, no one ate. All were fasting. **The High Priest looked more like a slave.** His outfit consisted of four simple garments in white linen, even plainer than the vestments of the ordinary priest (Exo 39:27-29).³

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 (16:2-5).

How humble our great High Priest, Jesus was. He left the glories of his throne in heaven. He did not come arrayed in all his glory but set the display of his glory aside to be wrapped in clay, the dust of our humanity. On his head was no crown: only the crown of thorns. No scepter was in his hand except the reed the soldiers put in his hand to laugh at him. He had no kingly robe, but just a purple rag they used to mock our Jesus. He who hung the sun, moon, and stars in place was now hung on a cross naked. He came in such a humble way to bear my disgrace.

Oh, let us adore our Savior today. He came from so high a place in heaven to so low a place on earth. The Master of everything became a slave. The Perfect Holy One, the truly spotless, immaculate Son of God gave himself in our place, treated like the most wretched and depraved criminal. He could have called legions of angels, but he chose to die. He did not come to exalt himself, but to humble himself as a servant. Behold your God on the cross. How humble! Adore him today! Oh, angels in heaven you saw the glorious crown he set aside. You saw the glory that was wrapped in a human body. Let us worship Jesus for his humility!

³ Gordon J. Wenham. *The Book of Leviticus. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979), 230.

THE PRIEST'S CLEANSING

We read about how the High Priest had to wash himself over and over. We read about one of the washings in verse 4.

He shall bathe his body in water and then put them [his garments] on (16:4).

Aaron had to wash himself at least **five times throughout the day**. Not only that Aaron could not go behind the veil into the Holy of holies until his sins had been atoned for by the bull.

Aaron shall offer the bull as a sin offering for himself and shall make atonement for himself and for his house (16:6).

And even then, he had to come with the smoking incense in front of his face (16:11-14). He had to put the incense fire in front of his face **“so that he does not die” (16:13)**.

What's the point? **Aaron was symbolizing Christ**. Aaron is a mere sinful mortal, trying to symbolize the perfections of Christ. Aaron had to constantly cleanse himself and offer a bull before God's presence, but **Jesus was already perfect!**

“He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth” (1 Pet 2:22).

“He [God] made Him who knew no sin [Jesus] to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor 5:21, NASB).

Jesus **“has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin” (Heb 4:15).**

You are Cleansed in Christ

Christ is righteous! Christ is holy! The angels adore him. The planets revolve at his Word. He is the spotless lamb. Aaron needed cleansing to try and imperfectly symbolize the perfect righteousness of Christ. But make no mistake, Christ is sinless. And he is the sacrifice you have saint. Embrace his sacrifice and you will have a clean conscience.

Clothe Yourself with Christ

Christ is righteous! Pile your sins up to the highest heaven. Christ's blood is far more than enough to blot them out. What is it dear saint of God that is controlling you? Is it anger? Is it worldly pleasure or the lusts of this world? What is it? What you need to do is **clothe yourself with the righteous presence of Christ, and you will not gratify your flesh. You will no longer be controlled by it.**

“Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh” (Rom 13:14). What does that mean? Put on Christ. What does that mean? Hosea says,

**“Sow for yourselves righteousness;
 reap steadfast love;
 break up your fallow ground,
 for it is the time to seek the Lord,
 that he may come and rain righteousness upon you.
¹³ You have plowed iniquity;
 you have reaped injustice;**

you have eaten the fruit of lies.
Because you have trusted in your own way” (Hos 10:12).

2. ENTER GOD’S HOLY PRESENCE (LEV 16:7-10)

In order to enter God’s holy presence without the same fate as Nadab and Abihu, there has to be a costly sacrifice. Actually there are two goats that represent the amazing work of Christ: the **sacrificial goat** and the **scapegoat**.

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 (16:7-8).

This is so important because as sinners we don’t feel worthy of entering into God’s presence. We never will. That’s why we need to understand what Jesus did on the Cross and remind ourselves of the costly sacrifice that more than answers the guilt of our sin. We feel guilty, but our guilt has been paid for and removed.

Escape to Jesus

Often as Christians, we feel we are stuck with a messed-up personality or a messed-up childhood. Perhaps you have sins that have overtaken you. It could be uncontrollable and irrational fear. It could be depression. Perhaps you just don’t care anymore. You need an exit. You need an escape.

I want to give you hope dear Christian. We all feel that way. As Christians you have an escape. I want to give you the greatest escape! Escape to Jesus! Jesus died to give you an escape, not just to cleanse you from your sins, but to give you that deep fellowship that you desire. You need his fellowship more than you need to breathe. And all that pain in your life is designed by God to bring you into his presence.

THE SACRIFICIAL GOAT

Our guilt has been paid for. Oh the cost! Peter says, “You were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot” (1 Pet 1:18-19).

We come into God’s presence through a costly sacrifice. The high priest was to offer a bull for himself and the priest hood, and then a goat sacrificial goat on behalf of the people.

⁹ And Aaron shall present the goat on which the lot fell for the Lord and use it as a sin offering (16:9).

Hebrews says, “he [Jesus] entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption” (Heb 9:12).

The Rope

The high priest had to enter into the Holy of holies on this one occasion of the year. In fact, the Talmud records that when the high priest went into the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur during a rope was tied to his ankle. If the high priest's sins were not atoned for properly, he would die in the presence of the shekinah—the glory of God—that filled the Holy of Holies. Again, remember **Nadab** and **Abihu**.

No one else could enter that part of the temple without also dying, so the priests felt they needed a way to retrieve the body of the high priest, if necessary. That was the purpose of the rope—to pull the body out.

The Sacrifice

Listen, our High Priest, Jesus, didn't need a rope. He is the perfect sacrifice! Christ entered the holy place with his own blood. He is the spotless Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

THE SCAPEGOAT

Our guilt has not only been paid for, dear saint, it has been cast away – removed – banished – like the scapegoat we see here in verse 10.

What an awesome privilege it is to come into God's presence. But with the death of Nadab and Abihu, there had to be some fear and trepidation. There was a demonstration of our need for cleansing and what happens if we don't have cleansing. Two goats are set before the Lord: one for **sacrifice**, and one for **banishment**. One goat points to our Savior, the other to our sin.

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 (16:10).

Aaron cast lots and devoted one goat “for the Lord” and the other “for Azazel [‘āzā ‘zēl].” This latter goat was the scapegoat upon whom the Israelites laid their sins and led out into the wilderness to die. Azazel means “the goat that departs,” which takes ‘ēz (“she goat”) and āzel (“to go away”), i.e. the “scapegoat.”⁴

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.

The high priest would take the scapegoat and place both his hands on its head. There was a transference of the people's sins to the scapegoat, and the goat was banished, never to be heard from again. No one knew where the scapegoat was, and that's the point.

⁴ Allen P. Ross, *Holiness to the Lord: A Guide to the Exposition of the Book of Leviticus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 319.

“As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us” (Psa 103:12).

“I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins” (Isa 43:25).

THE MIRACLE OF THE CRIMSON CORD

After the lot was cast on the Day of Atonement, the fate of the two goats was sealed. The goat on which the white stone lot fell was the sacrifice to the Lord on the Day of Atonement. The high priest tied a red strip of cloth around the scapegoat’s neck.

The goat on which the black stone lot fell was Azazel, the scapegoat. A red strip of cloth was tied to one of its horns. Before the scapegoat was sent into the desert to die, a portion of the red strip was removed and tied to the door of the Temple.

The red cloth had great significance. God’s people were claiming the words of the prophet Isaiah, “Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isa 1:18).

Jewish history and literature indicate that this was a big deal. Not only was the sacrifice to the Lord and the scapegoat a God-ordained part of the Day of Atonement, but God seemed to verify his acceptance of the atoning sacrifice of the offering to the Lord. Every year the crimson cord, tied to the door of the Temple, turned white. This was considered a miracle by the people. They rejoiced. Their sins were red, but through the atoning sacrifice they became white as snow. God had accepted their sacrifice as atonement for their sins.

Every year the crimson cord turned white on the Day of Atonement. It happened every year, that is, until about AD 30. Both the Jerusalem Talmud and the Babylonian Talmud record the miracle of the crimson cord.⁵ After AD 30, the crimson cord remained crimson.

For forty years, from the time of the death of Jesus to the destruction of the Temple in AD 70, the crimson cord on the Temple door remained crimson. It did not turn white.

Why the sudden and dramatic change? Why for years and years did the cord turn white every year? What happened in about AD 30?

Believers understand. Jesus is the atoning sacrifice. There is no longer the need for a sacrificial goat for the Lord and a scapegoat. God has kept his promise. The price is paid, once and for all. The red stain of sin has been washed in the crimson blood of Jesus. And for all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, their sins were washed as clean as newly fallen snow or as wool.

3. REMEMBER YOUR HIGH PRIVILEGE (LEV 16:29-30)

We are told that this is a statute forever, that they had to remember this day forever.

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

⁵ *Talmud*, Tractate Yoma 39b; also the *Babylonian Talmud*, Soncino version, Yoma 39b (*cf* Tractate Shabbat, Folio 86a).

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 (16:29-30)

A HOLY PRIVILEGE

The idea of afflicting yourself is another way of saying they should not eat food. They should fast. This day was the only day God's people told to fast.

This was a day to forget their sin and remember the cleansing of God. Why did they have to do this every year? Because it's easy to forget the goodness of God.

It should take our breath away that we can enter the presence of God at any time. God calls for a fast on this day. Nothing should be eaten. There should be no distraction as to what God has done for them, and there should be no distraction for what God has done for us.

Gaze at where you are in Christ. You are united to him. They would fast. I think there are many times in our Christian walk when we should fast and renew our sobriety in Jesus. We are often falling out of fellowship with God. This is a serious thing. We should have times when we set ourselves aside and fast and ask God to renew his presence. Ask God to renew the vision of the cross and Christ's atonement in our lives.

A HAPPY PRIVILEGE

Something interesting would take place on the Day of Atonement every 50 years. There would be a year of Jubilee when all the captives were set free and all the debts were forgiven. Wow. Can you imagine?

"Then you shall sound the loud trumpet on the tenth day of the seventh month. On the Day of Atonement you shall sound the trumpet throughout all your land. ¹⁰ And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you, when each of you shall return to his property and each of you shall return to his clan. ¹¹ That fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you" (Lev 25:9-11).

Sweet child of God, you are free! Every day is the Day of Atonement for you.

Conclusion

How often do you eat? Imagine the son or daughter of a restaurant owner starving. That would be absurd right?

We have a feast in the presence of God waiting for us. The way has been made for us. "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (**Heb 4:16**).