

THE WAY TO SECURE FORGIVENESS OF SIN LEVITICUS 04: 13–21

Introduction

What is sin? Sin can be defined in at least two ways.

=> Sin is the condition, state or being of imperfection. Sin is coming short of the glory of God, of His perfection (Rom 3:23).

=> Sin is disobedience, the disobeying of God's commandments. There are sins of *omission*: a person just fails to do what God says. And there are sins of *commission*: a person commits some direct act of disobedience, does exactly what God says not to do.

Every person stands before God as a sinner. We are all in the state or condition of sin. We are all guilty of having broken the commandments of God, of having disobeyed God. The terrible tragedy is this: no person can ever live in the presence of God.

Why? Because the penalty of sin is death, that is, separation from God. How then can a person approach God and become acceptable to Him? How can a person gain the right to live eternally with God? Through the death of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the sacrifice, the ransom paid to deliver man from the penalty of sin. The most wonderful thing happens when a person trusts Jesus Christ to save him from his sins: his sins are forgiven. God Himself forgives the person's sins. The person is reconciled to God and accepted by God, accepted to live eternally with God — all because Jesus Christ died as the sacrifice for his sins. Jesus Christ paid the ransom price to deliver the person from the penalty of sin.

What about the people before Christ came? Could they be forgiven their sins, and if so, how? God loves man; therefore, He has made provision for every generation to be forgiven their sins — if they will just follow His instructions, approaching Him exactly as He says. In the Old Testament, people were to approach God through the sacrifice of an animal that bore the guilt of his sins. The animal stood as a symbol of the LORD Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was the Lamb of God that was to take away the sin of the world (John 1:29). If a person believed God and approached God through the sacrificed animal, God counted the animal as a picture of Christ, as the person's substitute in bearing the punishment of sin. God counted the sacrifice as the ransom payment to be paid by Christ for the person's sin. The person was counted free from sin, and he stood perfect before God. He was thereby accepted by God. His sins and the penalty for his sins were paid by the substitute sacrifice that symbolized Christ.

This is the subject of the present passage, a discussion of the Sin Offering. The Sin Offering is the provision God made for His people to be forgiven their sins throughout the Old Testament. Once an Old Testament believer had been reconciled to God through the atoning sacrifice of the Burnt Offering, he immediately gave

thanks and dedicated his life to God (the Grain Offering). He was then living in the fellowship and peace of God. But as he walked about day by day, he experienced just what we experience: a constant barrage of trials and temptations. He became more and more aware of being short of God's glory and more and more sensitive to disobeying the commandments of God. He sensed what we sense, a deep-seated need for special encounters with God and for special times in seeking the forgiveness of sins. This God knew. Therefore, God made provision for His people and gave them the Sin Offering. This is the much-needed subject of this passage: *The Sin Offering (a Picture of Christ's Atoning Sacrifice): The Way to Secure Forgiveness of Sin, Leviticus 4:1-5:13.*

- I. The basic essential: a person must acknowledge the LORD and the need for forgiveness (vv. 1-2).
- II. The way for an anointed priest (minister) to be forgiven (vv. 3-12).
- III. The way for society — a community, an entire nation — to be forgiven (vv. 13-21).
- IV. The way for a leader to be forgiven (vv. 14-26).
- V. The way for an individual person to be forgiven (vv. 27-35).
- VI. The way for a person to be forgiven for specific, terrible sins (Ch.5:1-6).
- VII. The way for the poor person to be forgiven (vv. 7-13).

Leviticus 04:13–21 The Way for Society — a Community, an Entire Nation — to Be Forgiven

How can society — a community, an entire nation — be forgiven? God told the community of Israel how to be forgiven. The steps to be taken were the same as for the anointed priests (minister). Remember, there were at least two to three million Israelite citizens at this time. There would obviously be times when the entire nation would be guilty of sin and wrongdoing, but there would also be times when a much smaller number of people — small communities — would become involved in a sin. Whatever the case, the remedy — the only way to escape the justice and judgment of God — was to approach God as a community or nation of people and seek His forgiveness. Of course, if the nation as a whole were involved, the leaders would go to the Tabernacle, the place of worship, and approach God on behalf of the people. The people would stay home, praying and seeking God for forgiveness until their leaders returned to their communities or tribes. Note the ritual and steps to be taken by the community or nation in seeking forgiveness.

1. The people must confess the truth: they were guilty of national sin once it was brought to their attention, even if they were not previously aware of the sin (v. 13).

Thought 1. A desperate need exists for courageous leaders who will make us aware of sin and lead us to confess sin, crying out to God for forgiveness and deliverance.

Our communities and nations would suffer far less lawlessness, violence, injustice and seemingly unsolvable problems if leaders would arise who would be courageous enough to be raw honest and truthful.

2. People must approach God through the sacrifice when they become aware of the sin: offer a young bull (without defect) (v. 14).
3. People must observe the principles of atonement (vv. 14-15).
4. People must have the priest (High Priest) offer the sacrifice (vv. 16-20).
5. The result: God declares that the people's trust in the sacrifice (a symbol of Christ) will bring atonement, reconciliation, between Him and the people. God will forgive them and forgive their sins if they will just approach Him as He says, through the death and shed blood of the sacrifice.
6. The condemnation of sin symbolized: to take the rest of the sacrifice outside the camp (a symbol of judgment — that sin can never be allowed in God's presence) (v. 21).

Thought 1. A community or nation of people stands just as guilty of sin before God as individuals do. Whole communities...

- can become involved in sinful or evil acts of war, lawlessness, violence, immoral behaviour, abuse, drunkenness and a host of other evils
- can become guilty by keeping silent and doing nothing to prevent or correct the evil

In such cases, the very ground of a community or nation becomes polluted and corrupt in God's eyes. When the day of judgment comes, leaders and citizens alike will give an account for their sinful acts and/or cowardly silence and inaction.

Gen 6:12-13 *God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. So God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth."*

2 Chr 7:14 *If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*

Psa 130:4 *But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared.*

Prov 11:11 *Through the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, but by the mouth of the wicked it is destroyed.*

Prov 14:34 *Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people.*

Mat 25:31-33 *"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left."*

Acts 5:31 God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Saviour that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel.

Acts 13:38 Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. ■