

# RECONCILIATION AND FORGIVENESS OF SIN THROUGH THE SHED BLOOD OF THE ATONING SACRIFICE

## LEVITICUS 16:15–28

### *Introduction*

The greatest need in all the world is for forgiveness of sin and reconciliation with God. Why? How can this be said to be the greatest need of man? Because of the judgment of God. There is a day of judgment coming. This is the teaching of God throughout the Holy Scripture. We must always keep one fact in mind: there is a difference between the religious literature of religionists and Holy Scripture. The Holy Scripture is the Word of the living and true God, the Creator of the universe and the Sovereign LORD and Majesty of all. It is the only living and true God who warns: there is a day of judgment coming, a day of accounting, a day when every human being of every generation must stand before God and face the judgment of God.

*Heb 9:27 Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.*

Some day out in the future, the terrible day of God's wrath against sin and evil is coming. Nothing — no person and no thing — can prevent God from executing justice. Justice will be executed by God. Nothing can stop the justice and judgment of God...

- not denial
- not ignorance
- not neglect
- not the best effort to escape

The justice and judgment of God are going to be executed upon the earth and throughout the whole universe. People, angels and any other beings living anyplace throughout the universe will face the judgment of God. This is what makes forgiveness and reconciliation with God so important. Forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God are absolute essentials in order to live with God. God accepts no person whose sins have not been forgiven, no person who has not been reconciled with Him.

The point is this: sin has separated and alienated man from God. There is a mass of sin that hangs over man's head, a mass of sin that has been committed in age after age. Sin has created a barrier of uncleanness between man and God. This barrier of sin and uncleanness has to be taken away and removed or else man has to face the judgment of God. Justice demands judgment. But this is the wonderful message of this passage: sin has been taken away and uncleanness has been removed. Justice and judgment have been executed. The penalty for sin has been paid. How? By Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ died as our *substitutionary sacrifice*. Hanging upon the cross, Jesus Christ...

- bore our sins, taking them away
  - died for our uncleanness, removing it
  - paid the penalty of death, bearing the alienation and separation from God for us
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- allowed the justice and judgment of God to be executed against Him, suffering our punishment

This is the strong declaration of this passage: *The Great Provision of God to Make a Person Holy, the Great Day of Atonement: Symbolizes the Only Way to Approach God — Through the Shed Blood of the Atoning Sacrifice*, Leviticus 16:1-34.

- I. There must be the correct approach to God (vv. 1-2).
- II. There must be the correct preparation made by the High Priest (a symbol of Christ) (vv. 3-10).
- III. There must be the righteous, sinless standing of the High Priest before God (vv. 11-14).
- IV. There must be the atoning sacrifice — the covering and taking away of sin — for the people (vv. 15-22).
- V. There must be an acknowledgment that cleansing and sacrifice are necessary for reconciliation with God (vv. 23-28).
- VI. There must be a permanent observance of this great day, the Day of Atonement (vv. 29-34).

### **I. *Leviticus 16:15–22 The Atoning Sacrifice — The Covering and Taking Away of Sin — for the People***

There must be the atoning sacrifice — the covering and taking away of sin — for the people. The great moment, the highlight of the day, had now arrived.

=> The atoning sacrifice for the sins of the people was now to be made.

=> The ransom price was to be paid.

=> The demands of God's holy nature were to be met.

=> The execution of God's justice was to be carried out.

=> The judgment of death was to be executed.

As stated, the atoning sacrifice for the people — the covering and taking away of sin — was now to take place. How? Note the Scripture and outline:

1. The sacrifice for the Sin Offering was put to death (vv. 15-16). Note exactly what Scripture says: the goat was sacrificed as the Sin Offering for the people (v. 15). Its blood was taken into the Most Holy Place and sprinkled on the Mercy Seat or Atonement Cover, and, apparently, on the other furnishings of the Tabernacle (vv. 15-16). Note that this made atonement for the Most Holy Place and for the Tabernacle. Why was it necessary to make atonement for these? Because of the contaminating power of sin. Note this is exactly what Scripture says: the sin and rebellion of the people contaminated the Tabernacle (v. 16). Therefore, before God could forgive sins and accept the people, everything contaminated by sin had to be cleansed.

Note also that the High Priest was to be acknowledged and honoured as the only person who could secure atonement for the people (v. 17). No person was allowed

to be anyplace in the Tabernacle from the time the High Priest went in to make atonement until he came out, having made atonement. This symbolized that Christ alone can make atonement for man; He alone can approach God and reconcile a person to God. He and He alone is the Saviour of man.

Note also that atonement was to be made for the Altar of Burnt Offering (vv. 18-19). The High Priest was to take some blood from the bull and from the goat and put it on the horns of the altar (v. 18). He was then to sprinkle blood on the altar seven times, symbolizing that a full, perfect cleansing was being made. The altar was being cleansed for the same reason that the Mercy Seat had been cleansed: the sins of the people had contaminated the entire Tabernacle and its furnishings. There were insincere, hypocritical people who approached God on that day just as there are today. Insincere, hypocritical people do not have their sins forgiven. In fact, their hypocrisy contaminates their very approach to God. The same was true of insincere, hypocritical Israelites who approached God with their sacrifices. Their hypocrisy contaminated the very Tabernacle and altar upon which they made their sacrifices. The point is obvious: everything contaminated by sin had to be cleansed by the blood of the sacrifice before God could forgive sins.

2. The momentous occasion had now arrived for the scapegoat to be presented to the LORD. As soon as the High Priest had made atonement for the Most Holy Place, the Tabernacle and the altar, he brought forth the live goat (vv. 20-22). Note what he did:
  - a. He symbolically laid all the sins and rebellion of the people on the scapegoat. This he symbolized by laying his hand on its head and confessing all their sins.
  - b. He then symbolized the removal and taking away of the people's sins (vv. 21-22). This he did by sending the scapegoat away into the wilderness. The scapegoat bore the sins of the people upon itself and carried their sins away — far, far away, completely out of sights, gone forever. The picture is that sins were totally and fully removed, forgiven forever.

**Thought 1.** The two goats give us two descriptive symbols of the atoning death of Jesus Christ.

- (1) The goat that was put to death is a symbol of the death of Christ. Jesus Christ gave Himself as an offering and a sacrifice to God so that we might be forgiven our sins. Jesus Christ died as the perfect offering for sin. His death cleanses everything contaminated by sin. But keep this fact in mind: it was the blood that made sacrifice for sin, not the Tabernacle nor any of the furnishings within the Tabernacle. Thus it is with Christ: it is Christ, His blood, that is important and that cleanses us from sin. It is not the buildings, furnishings nor rituals of the church. Again, it is Christ, His blood alone, that cleanses us from sin.

**Gal 1:4** *Who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.*

**Eph 5:2** *And live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

**Titus 2:14** *Who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.*

**1 Pet 3:18** *For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit.*

**Isa 53:5** *But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.*

(2) The scapegoat that bore the sins of the people and carried them away is also a symbol of Christ. It is Jesus Christ who bore the sins of the world and who removes and takes them away.

**1 Cor 15:3** *For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.*

**Heb 9:28** *So Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.*

**1 Pet 2:24** *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.*

**1 John 3:5** *But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin.*

## **II. *Leviticus 16:23–28 The Acknowledgment that Cleansing and Sacrifice are Necessary for Reconciliation with God***

There must be an acknowledgment that cleansing and sacrifice are necessary for reconciliation with God. The forgiveness of sins had just been symbolized by the substitute sacrifice of the two goats. Now reconciliation is to be symbolized by the sacrifice of the Burnt Offering. The picture of both forgiveness and reconciliation are needed in order to understand the death of Christ. The great day of atonement was to give both pictures to God's people. God's people were to see that they needed forgiveness and reconciliation with God. As stated, the taking away of their sins had just been symbolized. Now they were to acknowledge that both cleansing and sacrifice are necessary for reconciliation with God.

1. The High Priest and the people acknowledged the need for cleansing and sacrifice (vv. 24-25). Note that the High Priest had to wash himself and put on the High Priestly clothes before sacrificing the Burnt Offering. This was necessary because the Burnt Offering symbolized the atonement itself, reconciliation with God. In order to offer the sacrifice of the Burnt Offering — the sacrifice that makes atonement and reconciliation

with God — he had to put on the clothes of the High Priest. This was a symbol of the righteousness of Jesus Christ. It is His righteousness that reconciles us with God.

Note also that the High Priest had to sacrifice one ram as a Burnt Offering for himself and the other ram as a Burnt Offering for the people. This he did to make atonement or reconciliation for himself and for the people. Note also that he had to burn the fat of the Sin Offering on the altar (v. 25). The pleasing aroma of roasting meat ascending up symbolized the pleasure of God with the sacrifice. The sacrifice was accepted by God.

2. The shepherd of the scapegoat acknowledged the need for cleansing and sacrifice (v. 26). This he did by not entering the camp until he had washed himself and his clothes with water.
3. The people acknowledged the need for cleansing and sacrifice by having the hides, organs and dung taken outside the camp and burned (v. 27). This symbolized that sin with all its distastefulness and repulsiveness was taken away, removed by God. The fiery judgment of God consumed sin in all its repulsive nature.
4. The man who burned the waste of the sacrifice acknowledged the need for cleansing and sacrifice (v. 28). This he did by not entering the camp until he had washed himself and his clothes with water.

**Thought 1.** The sacrifice of the Burnt Offering is a symbol of Jesus Christ. It is Jesus Christ who reconciles us to God by His death upon the cross. Any person who approaches God through Jesus Christ will be accepted by God, reconciled with Him.

**2 Cor 5:18** *All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.*

**Eph 2:16** *And in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.*

**Col 1:20** *And through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*

**Heb 2:17** *For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.*

**Thought 2.** Cleansing is necessary for reconciliation with God. A person living in sin is alienated from God, not reconciled with God. The person who approaches God must be cleansed from his sins.

**Acts 22:16** *Wash your sins away, calling on his name.*

**1 Cor 6:11** *And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*

**2 Cor 7:1** *Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.*

**James 4:8** *Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.*

**Psa 19:12** *Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults.*

**Psa 51:2, 7** *Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin...Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.*

**Psa 79:9** *Help us, O God our Saviour, for the glory of your name; deliver us and forgive our sins for your name's sake.*

**Isa 1:16** *Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong.*

**Jer 4:14** *O Jerusalem, wash the evil from your heart and be saved. ■*