



Grace Temple
BAPTIST CHURCH

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A STUDY OF THE WHOLE BIBLE

THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS

CLEAN AND UNCLEAN BODILY CONDITIONS (16:1-34)

The Place of the Passage

This chapter could be regarded as the heart of the entire Old Testament law. It might seem like these laws about the Day of Atonement should be included later in Leviticus 23, where Israel's other festivals are found. Instead, this detailed description of the Day of Atonement is separated from the rest and placed between the purity laws (11:1–15:33) and the holiness laws (17:1–20:27). Here it anchors the law to the festival day when one man—the nation's high priest—entered the throne room of God to make atonement for the whole nation.

The Big Picture

The main act of this chapter is how the stain and power of sin are removed when the high priest enters God's presence with the blood of our atonement.

Gospel Glimpses

FREEDOM FROM SIN. One of the distinctive features of the Day of Atonement is the use of two goats for the people's sin offering. Typical sin offerings used only one goat to remove the stain of sin from God's presence. But the second goat is added on this occasion to further display the removal of sin's power and presence from among the people. This is a precious hope shared by every believer in both Old and New Testaments. Scripture encourages us with the glorious hope that, one day, sin's power and temptation will be fully removed from our experience, never to be felt again.

GREAT HIGH PRIEST. Few rituals of the old covenant captured the humility and glory of the high priest's office as profoundly as the Day of Atonement. The simple linen garments the high priest wore in the Most Holy Place to atone for the people's sins were probably to demonstrate his humility as the congregation's sin bearer. The change into his glorious robes of beauty after the completion of the ritual suggests the honor God places upon him on account of his intercession for the people, and the delight with which the Father accepts his continual approaches thereafter with prayers on behalf of the people. The New Testament book of Hebrews tells us that the Old Testament high priest was a shadow of the Great High Priest, Jesus, who has entered into the heavenly Most Holy Place with the blood of our atonement and now stands in glory to intercede for us.

Whole Bible Connections

MOST HOLY PLACE. In the ancient world, temples were designed as palaces for the gods. The tabernacle was likewise designed as a palace for the true God of Israel. But one difference was especially striking with respect to this divine “palace” compared to the temples of other nations. Other nations had an idol seated on a throne in their temple’s inner sanctum, but the tabernacle had no image of God in its throne room. In fact, the tabernacle (and later the temple) did not even have a throne but only a footstool—the ark of the covenant—from God’s throne. When other nations mocked Israel for having a temple without a “god” inside, Israel countered, “Why should the nations say, ‘Where is their God?’ Our God is in the heavens; He does all that He pleases. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands” (Psalm 115:2–4). The design of the Most Holy Place was a reminder to Israel that this “divine palace” on earth was not the literal house of God, nor were its rituals the literal source of atonement. They were earthly shadows of the real atonement the true High Priest would present to God in the real temple—heaven itself.

Theological Soundings

AN EXCLUSIVE GOSPEL. Leviticus 16 begins with a reminder (v. 1) of what happened to Nadab and Abihu when they attempted to approach God’s presence by unauthorized means. The passage then states, “Tell Aaron . . . 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. . . . But in this way Aaron shall come into the Holy Place” (vv. 2–3). Praise God, there is a sure and effective way to enter his presence and be accepted with life and heaven’s blessings! But there is only one way. It is only through the sacrifice foreshadowed in the Levitical atonement rituals and accomplished by the Great High Priest, Jesus Christ.

Glossary of Terms

RESURRECTION. The first five books of the Bible.

INTERCESSION. Appealing to one person on behalf of another. Often used with reference to prayer.

Please answer the following questions:

Leviticus Chapter 16

1. What warning was Moses to give Aaron about entering the Most Holy Place? (v. 2)
2. What was Aaron to use for his sin offering and burnt offering before entering the sanctuary? (v. 3)
3. What was he to use as a sacrifice from the Israelite community? (v. 5)
4. What were the uses for the 2 goats? (vv. 8-10)
5. What was Aaron to take behind the curtain? (v. 12)
6. What were these used for? (v. 13)
7. What was to be sprinkled? Where? How many times? (vv. 14-15)
8. What did this process do? (v. 16)
9. Who could be in the Tent of Meeting during this time? (v. 17)
10. For what was Aaron to make atonement? (v. 20)

11. What was done with the live goat? (v. 21)

12. How did the goat get to the desert? (v. 22)

13. What was Aaron to do with his linen garments? (v. 23)

14. What was he to do in his regular garments? (v. 24)

15. The man who released the goat was required to do what before returning to the camp?
(v. 26)

16. What was to be burned outside the camp? (v. 27)

17. On what day was the atonement made? (vv. 29-30)

18. Who is to make atonement? (v. 32)

19. How often was atonement made? (v. 34)

20. Describe in your own words, the ritual for the Annual Day of Atonement.