

# Commentary on Hebrews

## Review

### The Day of Atonement

#### PREPARATIONS FOR DAY OF ATONEMENT

- I. **Preparations of/by the People** – They are expected to spend the day in solemn convocation – all assemble at Tent.
  - A. The day is called a “Sabbath – sabbathon” (day of solemn rest) – or a “high sabbath,” by rabbis (Leviticus 16:29-34; 23:26-32).
  - B. No work or servile labor of any kind is to be done.
  - C. They must “deny themselves” or “afflict themselves” in mourning over their sins of the year.
- II. **Preparation of/by The High Priest**
  - A. He alone functions that day, “*No one is to be in the tent of meeting from the time Aaron goes in to make atonement in the Most Holy Place until he comes out...*” (Leviticus 16:17).
  - B. The High Priest could officiate only after certain elaborate ceremonial preparations
    1. First he must bath in water – total washing (Lev. 6:4).
    2. Then he must take off his normal robes for “glory, beauty and holiness” and put on garments of regular priest.

## Continuation

#### PREPARATIONS FOR DAY OF ATONEMENT

- III. **Preparation of the Sacrificed Animals**
  - A. Tradition says they were penned for a week to be examined for defects.
  - B. Five animals are required for the ceremonies.
    1. A bull – a Sin Offering for all priestly family.
    2. A male sheep for a Burnt Offering for priestly family.
    3. Two goats as ONE Sin Offering for the congregation.
      - a. One for Jehovah.
      - b. One for Azazel.
    4. A male sheep for a Burnt Offering for the congregation.

#### RITUAL OF THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

We will present the ritual of the Day of Atonement, then explain the applications to the priestly sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Summary: Tenth day of seventh month – a high Sabbath, Aaron has the total functions of the day. The people are assembled, the High Priest has bathed himself, taken off his beautiful garments and dressed himself in the humble white linen robes of the ordinary priest. The animals to be sacrificed have been penned seven days. He has five animals ready for the sacrifice:

- I. A young bull – Sin Offering for priestly family.
- II. A ram – Burnt Offering for priestly family.
- III. A goat – half of the Sin Offering for the people – Jehovah’s goat.
- IV. A goat – half of the Sin Offering for the people – Azazel’s goat.
- V. A ram – Burnt Offering for the people.

## THE 13 STAGES OF THE RITUAL

- I. **Stage 1 – Reception of the Pre-selected Animals**
  - A. Leviticus 16:3-5
  - B. According to the Targum the sacrifices were penned for a week prior to the Day of Atonement
    1. The *targumim* (singular: "*targum*", Hebrew: תַּרְגּוּמִים), were spoken paraphrases, explanations, and expansions of the Jewish scriptures that a Rabbi would give in the common language of the listeners, which during the time of this practice was commonly, but not exclusively, Aramaic.
    2. Final scrupulous examination to assure none have defects or blemishes.
    3. Christ was tried and the judge (Pilate) declared: "I find no fault in him Luke 3:4, 14; John 18:38; 19:4, 6
  - C. They must be physically perfect – as they symbolize the spiritual perfection of Christ whom they represent in shadow form.
- II. **Stage 2 – Presentation of the Animals to God**
  - A. “. . .and present them before the Lord at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting” (Lev. 16:7).
  - B. All animals presented to God.
  - C. Now all belong to God.
  - D. Purpose is to accomplish global atonement.
- III. **Stage 3 – Aaron Casts Lots over the Two Goats of the People’s Sin Offering**
  - A. Verse 8 – *He is to cast lots for the two goats--one lot for the LORD and the other for the scapegoat.*
  - B. This was done by placing two identical lots (or cubes) in an urn, and one was drawn and placed over the head of the first goat.
    1. One of the cubes had written on it: "for Jehovah" and the other "for Azazel"
    2. The priest then tied a scarlet cloth to the horn of the goat for Azazel
    3. The scarlet cloth was tied around the neck of the goat for Jehovah – indicating that it was the one that was to die
  - C. Then he presented the goat "for Jehovah" - probably as a request that God accept its life in substitution for the life the people owed His righteousness and justice because of their sins.
  - D. Both goats remain standing before the Lord while the ceremony of the priest’s sin-offering, the bull, was conducted.
    1. One for Jehovah – scarlet ribbon tied around its neck.
    2. One for Azazel – scarlet ribbon tied around its horn.
- IV. **Stage 4 – Aaron Kills the Bull of the Priests’ Sin Offering**

- A. There is no laying on of hands as in all the other Sin Offerings.
  - 1. Regardless of the graded level of the sin-offering, the laying on of hands was always demanded.
  - 2. Even in the ceremonies of the priestly consecration, hands were laid on the sin-offering.
  - 3. This sin offering was for Aaron and his household – for the household of the officiating high priest.
- B. The reason possibly being to indicate ceremonially that the sacrificial animal was not really bearing the sin after all.
  - 1. This is indicated by how the sins of the priest and his household, as well as the people, were later being laid upon the head of goat “for Azazel”, then sent out into the wilderness.
  - 2. Those sins are obviously ceremonially and symbolically sent on the head of the goat to the Cross of Christ where they were really covered and atoned for, as we have discussed and as we will later on understand deeper.
  - 3. Such would also indicate the personal holiness of Christ and affirm His sinlessness
- C. Nevertheless the blood of the bull will “*make atonement for himself and his house*” (v. 11).

**V. Stage 5 – The Incense Is Offered**

- A. Aaron enters the Holy of Holies for the first time.
- B. He takes two hands of incense to place on coals from Burnt Offering altar “so that he will not die.” – Leviticus 16:12-13.
- C. His first action within the veil is to put the incense on the “fire before the Lord” (Lev 16:13), who promised on this day. “I will appear in the cloud over the atonement cover” – Leviticus 16:2.
- D. The incense will “conceal the atonement cover.”
- E. This is normally called the “mercy seat.”
  - 1. This was the place noted for the appearance of the *Shekinah Glory* = the presence of the Lord.
  - 2. This was the lid that covered the Ark of the Covenant located in the Most Holy Place (Ex 25:12ff).
  - 3. That covenant, within the ark itself, had been broken by every sin that was to be atoned for that day.
  - 4. The Mercy Seat was not a place for God to sit! It is the idea of a mercy place, or center from which mercy was to be tendered to the people of His covenant.
  - 5. The blood of atonement covered the broken laws and turned the judgment seat into a seat (place) of mercy.
- F. Incense represents a prayer by Aaron that he not die because he is sinful in the presence of the sinless God.
  - 1. Remember incense is a symbol of prayer as far back as Psalm 141:2
    - a. [Psalms 141:2 NIV](#) May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice.

