



LESSON 30

God Ordains the Day of Atonement

LEVITICUS 16:1-34



Forgiveness and cleansing from sin come through the death of a substitute.



“For on this day shall atonement be made for you to cleanse you. You shall be clean before the Lord, from all your sins” (Lev 16:30).

Supporting Truths

1. All people need forgiveness and cleansing.
2. To be forgiven and cleansed, there must be a blood sacrifice.
3. Through a substitute sacrifice, sins are removed.
4. True repentance is required in order for the sacrifice to apply to a person.
5. Jesus fulfills the Day of Atonement.

Objectives

1. State that the sacrifices were offered for all Israel, including the high priest.
2. Describe the two sin offerings and what Aaron did with the blood.
3. Describe what the high priest did to the goat sent into the wilderness.
4. Explain how the high priest confessed sin and all the people fasted.
5. Compare Jesus to the sin offerings and to the high priest.



Lesson Summary

God gave the Day of Atonement to provide forgiveness and cleansing from sin. It was a day of sadness, humility, confession of sin, and repentance. It was the only day when the high priest entered the Holy of Holies, and even then he could only enter as he carried in the blood of the sin offerings. He offered a sin offering for himself and one for the people, and he also sent away one of the goats into the wilderness as a sign of Israel's sins being carried away.

Spotlight on the Gospel

Jesus fulfills the Day of Atonement. In Him believers find atonement. He is the final sin offering whose death pays for sin.

LAST WEEK



God establishes the
priesthood
Leviticus 8:1-10:7

THIS WEEK



God Ordains the Day of
Atonement
Leviticus 16:1-34

NEXT WEEK



God requires holy living
Leviticus 19:1-37

Lesson Commentary

Forgiveness and cleansing from sin come through the death of a substitute.

Israel had received instructions for the sacrifices (Lev 1–7), and then the priesthood was set up (Lev 8–10). The sacrifices and the priests, along with the tabernacle, were the way God graciously allowed a sinful people to belong to a holy God. One of the priests' jobs was to instruct the people about the clean and the unclean (10:10–11). So the next section taught Israel how to live pure lives for the sake of their holy God (Lev 11–15). But the laws of cleanness also showed that it is impossible for a human always to be clean, and human uncleanness even defiles the tabernacle itself (15:31). So the next chapter (16) describes the Day of Atonement, a special day once per year when the tabernacle and all the people would be purified from their sins.

The high priest prepared carefully (16:1–5)

The instructions for this special day came right after Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, died for offering incense in the wrong way (Lev 16:1). This was a reminder to Aaron that coming into God's presence on the Day of Atonement was very serious, because God Himself was said to dwell over the lid of atonement in a special way (16:2). So Aaron first had to wash himself, illustrating that only the pure in heart can see God (Matt 5:8). Then he dressed in plain linen clothes instead of in his fancy high priestly clothes, demonstrating this was not a normal day.

The high priest offered sin offerings for atonement (16:6–19)

The high priest then presented several sin offerings, a bull for himself and his family (Lev 16:6), and two goats for all the people (16:7). First the high priest slaughtered the bull (16:11), and by repeating "for himself" three times, the verse emphasizes how important it was for the high priest to have **atonement**: he needed his sins paid for and washed away by the blood of a substitute sacrifice. Then he brought its blood into the

Holy of Holies. He came into the Holy of Holies burning incense, so that the cloud of incense would cover the lid of atonement on the ark. It seems that this prevented him from seeing God and dying (16:13). Then he sprinkled the blood on the lid of atonement (16:14). The Ten Commandments were under the lid of atonement, God's holy presence appeared above the lid of atonement, and the blood was in between. This shows that only blood can redeem sinners from the condemnation they deserve for breaking the law (1 Pet 1:18–19).

Sprinkling the blood seven times illustrated complete purification of the high priest and of the Holy of Holies. After this, the high priest went out and did the same thing again, but this time with one of the goats as a sin offering for the people (Lev 16:15). On his way out of the tabernacle, he also atoned for the Holy Place (the altar of incense, the lampstand, and the table of bread) and the bronze altar (16:16–19).

As the high priest performed these offerings for atonement, he pictured the great High Priest, Jesus Christ. The high priest served as a **mediator**, one who represented all the people before God, and no one else was allowed in the tabernacle during this ceremony. So Jesus Christ is the one mediator between God and man, and no one else can be mediator with Him (1 Tim 2:5). Also, as the high priest atones for sin and purifies from uncleanness, so Jesus' death pays for sin (1 John 2:2) and cleanses from sin (Heb 10:10; 1 John 1:7).

But Jesus is much greater than any human high priest. He is perfect (1 Pet 2:22) and needed no sin offering for Himself. Instead, He offered Himself as the sin offering for others (Heb 9:12). When He did, the veil separating the Holy of Holies was torn (Matt 27:51), so that all who come through Jesus can enter the presence of God (Heb 4:14–16; 10:19–22).

THINK ABOUT IT

The people did not pay for their sins personally but their sins were paid for by a substitutionary sacrifice.





The high priest sent a goat away (16:20–22)

After these offerings were finished, the priest then took the second goat. Instead of killing this goat, he sent it away “to Azazel” (Lev 16:10). “Azazel” most likely means “the goat that departs” (a scapegoat), or it may refer to the practice of sending this goat over a cliff. Either way, the point is that this goat was to be sent far away from the people.



THINK ABOUT IT
When God forgives sin He removes it as far as the east is from the west (Ps 103:12).

The high priest put both hands on the live goat (16:21). Normally only one hand is placed on an offering, a sign of confessing sin and putting that sin onto the animal. Putting two hands on this goat

shows that this was a greater confession and greater atonement than normal sin offerings. In fact, the verse uses three separate terms for sin (also in Ps 51:2–3), showing that all of Israel’s sins, known or known, defiant or unintentional—all their sins were being sent away on this goat (Lev 16:22). While the first goat was killed as payment for sins, the second goat was sent into the wilderness to show that after sins are paid for and confessed (Prov 28:13), they are taken far away.

The same words about bearing iniquity (16:22) are applied also to Jesus (Isa 53:4, 6, 12). He bore sins outside of the camp (Heb 13:12). Through Jesus, God takes away all the sins of those who confess and trust in Jesus (1 John 1:9; 3:5).

The high priest offered burnt offerings (16:23–24)

After the sin offerings, the high priest washed and then changed back into his high priest robes (16:23–24). Then he offered two burnt offerings, one ram for himself and another ram for all of Israel. These burnt

offerings represented renewed dedication to the LORD. They had to come after the sin offerings, because sin must be paid for before a person can present himself to God (Rom 12:1).

The Day of Atonement was a very special day (16:29–34)

After describing the offerings performed by the high priest, God then gave instructions for all the people. They were to observe this day once each year. They were to “afflict” themselves, which refers to fasting, or not eating all day. They were also not to do any work (Lev 16:29). The day was a Sabbath for Israel (16:29). Fasting is fitting for a national day of confession. It is a sign of repentance, showing that even the sin offerings of the Day of Atonement are meaningless for a person who refuses to repent (Isa 1:11–17).

When they humbled themselves, they would be cleansed on this day from all their sins (Lev 16:30, 34). Earlier, one of the words for sins included the word for rebellious sin. Normally, sin offerings could not be made for such sin. But on this day, even the rebellious sin would be paid for and removed far away through confession, repentance, and a substitute sacrifice.

So this day was a very important day, one that was to be celebrated once per year forever (16:34). Believers no longer offer these sacrifices, not out of disobedience, but because this sacrifice has been completely fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Now by repentance and faith we can know that Christ’s sacrifice completely dealt with our sin.

THINK ABOUT IT
It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins (Heb 10:4).



Lesson Outline

Forgiveness and cleansing from sin come through the death of a substitute.

AGES 3–5 LESSON OUTLINE



1. The high priest washed himself and dressed in plain clothes (16:1–5).
2. The high priest killed two animals for sin offerings (16:6–19).
3. The high priest sent a goat away carrying Israel's sins (16:20–22).
4. The people confessed sin, repented, and were forgiven (16:29–34).

AGES 6–11 LESSON OUTLINE



1. The high priest prepared carefully (16:1–5).
 - The high priest had to be careful because he came into God's presence (16:1–2).
 - The high priest washed himself and wore clean, humble clothing (16:4–5).
2. The high priest offered sin offerings for atonement (16:6–19).
 - He offered a bull for himself and a goat for all Israel (16:6, 11, 15).
 - He came to the place of atonement with incense (16:12–13).
 - He sprinkled blood on the place of atonement (16:14–15).
 - He made atonement for the Holy Place, the tent, and the bronze altar (16:16–19).
3. The high priest sent a goat away (16:20–22).
 - He put his hands on the live goat (16:21).
 - He confessed Israel's sin and placed them on the goat (16:21).
 - He sent the goat away into the wilderness carrying Israel's sins (16:22).
4. The high priest offered burnt offerings (16:23–24).
 - He washed and then changed back into his high priest robes (16:23–24).
 - He offered a ram for himself and a ram for all Israel (16:24).
5. The Day of Atonement was a very special day (16:29–34).
 - The day was a Sabbath for Israel (16:29).
 - It was a day of atonement and cleansing once each year (16:30, 34).



Lesson Questions

Use these questions to teach or to review this week's lesson.



Ages 3–5 Lesson Questions

- 1. Why did the high priest wash himself?**
He washed himself to show that only people who are pure and clean can see God.
- 2. Why were the bull and goats called sin offerings?**
Because the high priest offered them to pay for sins and to wash sins away.
- 3. What did the high priest do with the second goat?**
He sent it into the wilderness, showing that when our sins are paid for, God takes our sins away.
- 4. What did the people do?**
They did not eat food or do any work.



Ages 6–11 Lesson Questions

- 1. Why did the high priest have to be careful about coming into the Holy of Holies?**
This is the place where God appeared to the high priest. God is holy, and those who do not treat Him as holy die like Nadab and Abihu.
- 2. What did the high priest offer as sin offerings?**
He offered a bull for his own sin and a goat for all the people's sins.
- 3. What did he do with the blood of the sin offerings?**
He sprinkled the blood from each offering seven times on the lid of atonement in the Holy of Holies.
- 4. What is atonement?**
Atonement is paying the price for sin, and it is also washing sins away. The blood of the sacrifices paid for sins and cleansed the people and the tabernacle.
- 5. What did he do with the second goat?**
He put both hands on it, confessed all of Israel's sins, and sent it far away into the wilderness.
- 6. How often was the Day of Atonement to be celebrated?**
Once a year.
- 7. What did the people do on this day?**
They fasted and did not do any work.
- 8. How does Jesus fulfill the Day of Atonement?**
He is the sin offering who died for sin and the sin offering who bears sin away. He is also the high priest who brings His own blood to God and represents all who believe in Him. Through Him we have forgiveness and entrance into God's presence.

Lesson Activities

Choose from the following ideas to introduce, illustrate, and apply this week's lesson.

AGES 3–5



INTRODUCE

DIRTY CLOTHES

Illustrate the need for atonement for sins by using dirty clothes. Take a set of very dirty clothes to show the class. Ask the children, “Would your parents allow you to go to church wearing dirty clothes like these? This illustration demonstrates how preparation (atonement for sin) must be made before coming into the presence of God. It was necessary for the people of Israel to present a sacrifice in their place for their sins. In today’s lesson, we will learn about a special day on which Israel was cleansed from their sin. This helped them come to God clean from sin.

ONCE-FOR-ALL

Talk about things we do on a regular basis (brush our teeth, cut our fingernails, cut our hair, clean our room, etc.). Tell the class that Israel celebrated the Day of Atonement every year because the sacrifices they offered for sin couldn’t completely pay for it. However, when Jesus Christ died on the cross He paid for sins once-for-all. This is why there is no need to celebrate the Day of Atonement anymore.



ILLUSTRATE

CLEAN INSIDE AND OUT

Materials: cleaning bucket, assortment of sponges and scrubbers, spray bottle, washcloth, bar of soap, small Bible.

Directions: Ask the children how they get clean on the outside. Pull out the spray bottle, sponges, and scrubbers and ask if they use these things to clean themselves. (This should elicit a negative response.) Pull out the washcloth and soap and ask if they use these things to clean themselves on the outside. (This should get a positive response.) Then ask the children how they clean themselves on the inside—their minds and hearts. Show your Bible and explain that only God’s Word can make you clean inside.

SPONGE CROSSES

Before class, cut sponges into the shape of a cross. Make enough for each child to take home, and use one during the lesson to show children that only Jesus can make us clean from sin.



APPLY

DAY OF ATONEMENT POINTS TO CHRIST

See Year 1 Craft Book, Book 2.

Materials: Craft sheet, cardstock, red paper, crayons, scissors, and glue.

Directions: Pre-cut pictures and verses from the craft sheet. Make an arrow out of red paper. Help the children to glue the pictures and verses to the cardstock as pictured below.

Day of Atonement Points to Christ
See Year 1 Craft Book, Book 2.



TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

God Ordains the Day of Atonement • Leviticus 16:1-34



AGES 6-8



INTRODUCE

HAND SOAP

Bring in a small bottle of hand sanitizer. We use this special lotion to kill the germs on our hands and make them clean. Put a small amount of hand sanitizer on each child's hands to make them clean. We all have sin in our lives. Every day, we need to be cleansed from sin. The Israelites were the same. We are going to learn about the Day of Atonement today. Once a year, a special sacrifice was made to cleanse the people from their sin. The goats we will learn about did not really take the sin away, but belief in God's promise did.

PREPARE TO MEET GOD

Ask the children to describe how they would prepare if they had an appointment with God tomorrow. Have them describe how they would get ready, what they might wear, what gifts they might take, and what they might say once they arrived. The book of Leviticus illustrates the preparations the Israelites made to come before a holy God. Why do the children think they could fellowship directly with God?



ILLUSTRATE

IT'S THE HEART THAT MATTERS

Ask the children if they attended church last week. What about the week before? What about the week before that? Which child has the longest active streak of church attendance? Then ask the children if physical attendance in church has any ability to forgive sin. It does not. The sacrifices on the Day of Atonement, similar to church attendance, were worthless unless accompanied by genuine repentance and faith.

CLEAN AND WHITE

Bring two pairs of socks to class. Have one pair be a brand new pair of white socks and the other an old dirty pair. Show the brand new pair of socks to the class. Ask them what happens to socks over time as they are worn. Then show them the old, dirty socks. Explain that socks get dirty over time. The Israelites, like all people, got dirtier over time because of daily sin. The Day of Atonement was a special day to pay for sin and to remember that we are constantly sinning. Ask the children which sock they most resemble.



APPLY

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

See Year 1 Craft Book, Book 2.

Materials: Craft sheet, tan cardstock, brown construction paper, crayons, scissors, and glue.

Directions: Instruct children to make a tabernacle and tabernacle walls from brown construction paper and glue them to a sheet of tan cardstock (see below). Color and cut out the pictures from the craft page and glue them onto the tan cardstock.

The Day of Atonement
See Year 1 Craft Book, Book 2.



AGES 9–11



INTRODUCE

MUDDY SPOONS

Did you use a muddy spoon to eat a bowl of cereal this morning? Of course not! You used a clean spoon. The Israelites were like muddy spoons. They needed to be cleaned so that God would live with them and so that He could use them. Once a year, God had a special sacrifice that showed the people their need for cleansing. This happened on the Day of Atonement. Today, we are going to learn about the Day of Atonement and see how the people were cleansed.

SCAPEGOAT

Pass out sticky notes and pencils. Ask the children to write down some sins they committed that week on the back of the papers to ensure that they will remain private. To illustrate the purpose of the second goat serving as a “scapegoat,” ask an adult volunteer to play the role of the goat. Have the children stick their papers to the scapegoat. After all the children have attached their sins to the scapegoat, ask the person to leave the room for the remainder of the class period to symbolize how the sins were removed from Israel each year on the Day of Atonement.



ILLUSTRATE

TOILET BOWL TOOTHBRUSH

Show a toothbrush to the class and ask if the children would use it to brush their teeth. Then explain that you used it to clean your toilet this morning before church. Any takers? Use this illustration to picture our sinfulness and need of cleansing from sin.

REMINDERS THAT GOD IS HOLY

Have the children describe some things we do to help us remember. Some suggestions include putting notes on the fridge, setting an alarm, and making a shopping list. Similarly, God instituted various rituals, feasts, clothing, sacrifices, and a way of life to daily remind His people, the Israelites, about His holiness.



APPLY

VENN DIAGRAM: SACRIFICES

Help the children create a Venn Diagram and tell them to list things that the two sacrifices had in common in the space where the two circles overlap and list differences in the distinct parts of the circle. Some examples are provided for you below.

Similarities

- Holiness is required by God
- Blood atoned for sins
- Forgiveness and communion with God resulted
- One sacrifice was made for all people

Day of Atonement

- Once a year
- Sacrifice offered by the high priest
- Goat bore the sins of Israel
- Past sins were atoned for
- Israel would continue to need to bring sin offerings to God the following year
- Veil remained separating the Holy of Holies

Jesus' Death on the Cross

- Once for all eternity
- Jesus offered Himself as the sacrifice
- Jesus became sin for us (2 Cor 5:21)
- Past and future sins atoned for
- New Testament believers need no more atoning sacrifice
- Veil separating the Holy of Holies was torn at Jesus' death (Matt 27:51)