

## Atonement, approach & access or, Sacrifice & scapegoat – 2 types of salvation

Yahweh is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness. He will not always accuse; neither will he stay angry forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor repaid us for our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his loving kindness toward those who fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. Like a father has compassion on his children, so Yahweh has compassion on those who fear him.

— PSALM 103:8-13

### Analysis

#### A. (16:1-19) The day of atonement: one goat the sin offering

The first 15 chapters deal broadly with sacrificial principles and procedures relating to the removal of sin and the restoration of persons to fellowship with God. The last 11 chapters emphasize ethics, morality and holiness. [Harrison 14]

Harrison [166] designates chapter 16 “the ceremonial and theological pivot” of the book of Leviticus. The whole community, for the only time in the year, mobilized for a feast which, unlike the other feasts, was marked by solemnity, not rejoicing, and by confession, contrition and affliction, rather than thanksgiving. Passover, while sharing in the symbolism of affliction, was a family, not a community, ceremony.

[16:1] It has often been suggested that chapter 16 is dislocated, that it should follow chapter 10. But Kaiser [1110] calls this proposed re-edit “a major mistake”, eliminating the lessons of chapters 11-15, namely that approach to God “demands extreme care, self-examination”.

[16:1,2] ALL the laws about uncleanness that disqualified worshippers from coming to the sanctuary may have been delivered after the death of Nadab and Abihu, on purpose to shew, at such a solemn time, how holy is the Lord, and that he must be approached with fear and reverence. So now also, while that event is still fresh in Aaron's remembrance, this command is given, ver. 2. The event was thus made useful to qualify Aaron more fully for his solemn duties; he learns, and all generations



after him, how profound must be the reverence wherewith the Lord is approached. It is thus still that a minister's afflictions are not in vain; they affect his office; they prepare him for it, as Paul wrote (2 Cor. 1:4) to the Corinthians in his day. It is, at the same time, significant, that before the Day of Atonement is spoken of, there should be a spreading out to view of sin, and of death, which is its desert. [Bonar 299]

**“ ... how profound must  
be the reverence  
wherewith the Lord is  
approached”**

[16:4] The dress is in singular contrast to the splendour of his usual official costume, in which he stood before men as representing God, and evidently signifies the purity which alone fits for entrance into the awful presence. [Maclaren ii 250]

[16:4] Then, having bathed, he must robe himself in a special manner for the service of this day. He must lay aside the bright-coloured “garments for glory and beauty” which he wore on all other occasions, and put on, instead, a vesture of pure, unadorned white, like that of the ordinary priest; excepting only that for him, on this day, unlike them, the girdle also must be white. By this substitution of these garments for his ordinary brilliant robes was signified, not merely the absolute purity which the white linen symbolised, but especially also, by the absence of adornment, humiliation for sin. On this day he was thus made in outward appearance essentially like unto the other members of his house, for whose sin, together with his own, he was to make atonement. [Kellogg 262]

**For just one day,  
not a king but a  
slave**

[16:4] The singularly simple garments of the high priest, Wenham reminds us [230], worn for this day only, made a complete contrast to his normal dress, detailed in Exodus 28. He looked, for this one time in the sacred year, less a king than a slave – suitable to his task in taking the sins of Israel into the Divine Presence.

[16:6] ... he who by a sacrifice of his own atoned for himself and his house, how was he capable of meriting God's favor for others? Thus then the holy fathers were reminded, that under the image of a mortal man, another Mediator was promised, who, for the reconciliation of the human race, should present Himself before God with perfect and more than angelical purity. Besides, in the person of the priest there was exhibited to the people a spectacle of the corruption whereby the whole human race is defiled,

so as to be abominable to God; for if the priest, both chosen by God, and graced with the sacred unction, was still unworthy on the score of his uncleanness to come near the altar, what dignity could be discoverable in the people? [Calvin ii 315]

[16:6-10] The desert and desolate places are mentioned elsewhere as the abode of evil spirits (Isaiah 13:21; Isaiah 34:14; Matthew 12:43; Luke 11:24; Revelation 18:2). The desert, regarded as an image of death and desolation, corresponds to the nature of evil spirits, who fell away from the primary source of life, and in their hostility to God devastated the world, which was created good, and brought death

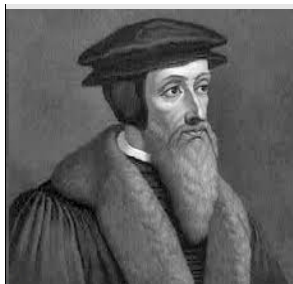
**Expiation and propitiation  
– 2 key theological terms  
illuminated by the symbols  
of Leviticus**

and destruction in their train. [Keil ii 398]

[16:10] *Expiation*, we are reminded by Walter Kaiser, is “the act of atoning for an offense”, whereas *propitiation* is “the act of satisfying the person who has been offended”. The high priest, in placing his hands upon the second goat, symbolically transfers the sins of Israel to the scapegoat. Hence the necessity of using 2 goats in the type, as obviously the goat sacrificed cannot enact the taking away of sins as well as the sacrifice itself. Thus the sins of Israel are not merely forgiven, they are forgotten. [see Kaiser 1111-1112, and our lead text, Psalm 103:8-13]

[16:18-19] The meaning of the sprinkling of blood upon the capporeth and the horns of the two altars was the same as in the case of every sin-offering. The peculiar features in the expiatory ritual of the day of atonement were the following. In the first place, the blood of both sacrifices was taken not merely into the holy place, but into the most holy, and sprinkled directly upon the throne of God. This was done to show that the true atonement could only take place before the throne of God Himself, and that the sinner was only then truly reconciled to God, and placed in the full and living fellowship of peace with God, when he could come directly to the throne of God, and not merely to the place where, although the Lord indeed manifested His grace to him, He was still separated from him by a curtain. [Keil ii 401]

#### B. (16:20-28) The second goat carries all iniquities away



JOHN CALVIN  
What do we know of  
groaning under the weight  
of self-condemnation?

[16:20] The confession tended to humiliate the people, and thus acted as a stimulus to sincere repentance; since “the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit,” (Psalms 51:17); nor is it fit that any but the prostrate should be lifted up by God’s mercy, nor that any but those who voluntarily condemn themselves should be absolved. The accumulation of words tends to this, “all the iniquities, all their transgressions, all their sins,” that believers may not lightly only and as, a mere act of duty acknowledge themselves guilty before God, but rather that they should groan under the weight, of their guilt. Since now in Christ no special day in the year is prescribed in which the Church should confess its sins in a solemn ceremony, let believers learn, whenever they meet together in God’s name, humbly to submit themselves to voluntary self-condemnation, and to pray for pardon, as if

the Spirit of God dictated a formulary for them; and so let each in private: conform himself to this rule. [Calvin ii 320]

[16:21] So that the whole question whether any man’s sin is pardoned turns on this, Has he laid his hand on Christ? Faith is only a condition of forgiveness, not a cause, or in itself a power. There was no healing in the mere laying of the hand on the head of the goat. It was not faith which was the reason for forgiveness, but God’s love which had provided the sacrifice. [Maclaren ii 261]

#### C. (16:29-34) A statute forever

[16:29] The time which was ordained for this annual observance is significant – the tenth day of the seventh month. It was appointed for the seventh month, as the

sabbatic month, in which all the related ideas of rest in God and with God, in the enjoyment of the blessings of a now complete redemption, received in the great feast of tabernacles their fullest expression. It was therefore appointed for that month, and for a day which shortly preceded this greatest of the annual feasts, to signify in type the profound and most vital truth, that the full joy of the sabbatic rest of man with God, and the ingathering of the fruits of complete redemption, is only possible upon condition of repentance and the fullest possible expiation for sin. It was appointed for the tenth day of this month, no doubt, because in the Scripture symbolism the number ten is the symbol of completeness; and was fitly thus connected with a service which signified expiation completed for the sins of the year. [Kellogg 260]

Amid the details of the chapter, the main features of the day were four: (1) The sacrifices on the brazen altar; (2) The entrance of the High Priest through the Holy Place into the Holy of Holies. This was the only occasion of entrance, and it was always by the High Priest alone; (3) The sprinkling of the blood on and around the Mercy Seat in the Holy of Holies; (4) The return of the High Priest after the performance of his duties. ... The spiritual meaning of Leviticus 16 is seen in Hebrews 9, and the 4 parts named above correspond to Christ’s Death, Ascension, Life in heaven, Second Coming – or what may be described as His Atonement, Approach, Appeal, and Advent (see Heb. 9:24-28). [Thomas 124-125]

The Talmudical treatise on the ritual of the day of atonement is entitled ‘Yoma,’ the day, which sufficiently expresses its importance in the series of sacrificial observances. It was the confession of the incompleteness of them all, a ceremonial proclamation that ceremonies do not avail to take away sin; and it was also a declaration that the true end of worship is not reached till the worshipper has free access to the holy place of the Most High. Thus the prophetic element is the very life-breath of this supreme institution of the old covenant, which therein acknowledges its own defects, and feeds the hopes of a future better thing. [Maclaren ii 249]

**The ‘holiness code’:  
‘You must be holy  
as I am holy ...’  
begins with the holy  
place and the  
sacredness of blood**

[16:34] And so, with an injunction to the perpetual observance of this day, this remarkable chapter closes. In it the sacrificial law of Moses attains its supreme expression; the holiness and the grace alike of Israel’s God, their fullest revelation. For the like of the great day of atonement, we look in vain in any other people. If every sacrifice pointed to Christ, this most luminously of all. What the fifty-third of Isaiah is to his Messianic prophecies, that, we may truly say, is the sixteenth of Leviticus to the whole system of Mosaic types – the most consummate flower of the Messianic

symbolism. All the sin-offerings pointed to Christ, the great High Priest and Victim of the future; but this, as we shall now see, with a distinctness found in no other. [Kellogg 272]

#### D. (17:1-9) The designated place for sacrifice

With this chapter begins another subdivision of the law. Hitherto we have had before us only sacrificial worship and matters of merely ceremonial law. The law of holy

**The day of atonement  
– 4 aspects of Christ’s  
work typified**

living contained in the following chapters (17-20), on the other hand, has to do for the most part with matters rather ethical than ceremonial, and consists chiefly of precepts designed to regulate morally the ordinary engagements and relationships of every-day life. The fundamental thought of the four chapters is that which is expressed, e.g., in 18:3: Israel, redeemed by Jehovah, is called to be a holy people; and this holiness is to be manifested in a total separation from the ways of the heathen. This principle is enforced by various specific commands and prohibitions, which naturally have particular regard to the special conditions under which Israel was placed, as a holy nation consecrated to Jehovah, the one, true God, but living in the midst of nations of idolaters. [Kellogg 367]

[17:9] Even the uncritical reader must be able to see how manifest is the Mosaic date of this part of Leviticus. The terms of this law suppose a camp-life; indeed, the camp is explicitly named (ver. 3). That which was enjoined was quite practicable under the conditions of life in the wilderness, when, at the best, flesh was scarce, and the people dwelt compactly together; but would have been utterly inapplicable and impracticable at a later date, after they were settled throughout the land of Canaan, when to have slaughtered all beasts used for food at the central sanctuary would have been impossible. Hence we find that, as we should expect, the modified law of Deuteronomy (12:15,16,20-24), assuming the previous existence of this earlier law, explicitly repeals it. To suppose that forgers of a later day, as, for instance, of the time of Josiah, or after the Babylonian exile, should have needlessly invented a law of this kind, is an hypothesis which is rightly characterised by Dillmann as "simply absurd." [Kellogg 369]

#### **E. (17:10-16) The sacred significance of blood**

[17:11] The background to this legislation is as old as Noah (Gen. 9:3-6); a standing reminder of man's limited rights over his fellow creatures. ... verse 11 is important for its clear statement of God's initiative in atonement. His 'I have given it for you' reverses the direction of flow that prevails in man-made religions, where the worshipper gives in order to receive. [Kidner 124]

[17:14,15] The moral and spiritual purpose of this law concerning the use of blood was apparently twofold. In the first place, it was intended to educate the people to a reverence for life, and purify them from that tendency to bloodthirstiness which has so often distinguished heathen nations, and especially those with whom Israel was to be brought in closest contact. But secondly, and chiefly, it was intended, as in the former part of the chapter, everywhere and always to keep before the mind the sacredness of the blood as being the appointed means for the expiation of sin; given by God upon the altar to make atonement for the soul of the sinner, "by reason of the life" or soul with which it stood in such immediate relation. Not only were they therefore to abstain from the blood of such animals as could be offered on the altar, but even from that of those which could not be offered. Thus the blood was to remind them, every time that they ate flesh, of the very solemn truth that without shedding of blood there was no remission of sin. [Kellogg 376]

***'I have given it for you ...'***  
**reverses the direction of flow prevailing in man-made religions**