

# The Feast of Atonement

## The Particulars of the Day

The annual Feast of Atonement is recorded in detail in Leviticus 16 with additional references in Leviticus 23.26-32 and Numbers 29.7-11. Leviticus 16 emphasises the responsibilities of the *priests* (sacrifices); Leviticus 23 emphasises the responsibilities of the *people* (affliction).

The Day of Atonement was a single day feast which took place annually on the *tenth* day of the **seventh** month (Leviticus 23.27). It was Israel's national day of repentance and cleansing from sin. The events of this day provided the basis on which God could continue to dwell with His people. Leviticus 23 emphasises *atonement* (x3), *affliction* (x3) and *no work* (x3). If the people were going to enjoy **reconciliation** (on the basis of atonement), then there must be **repentance** (affliction) and **rest** (no work). It is, of course, the same today in relation to salvation.



## The Procedure of the Day

According to Leviticus 16, the principal events of the day (and *aspects of its typical significance*) were as follows:

1. Aaron first washed with water, then was attired in the holy linen garments (16.4). *This speaks of purity and humility. The High Priest must be typically what Christ was personally.*
2. Next Aaron took two goats from the children of Israel for a *single* sin offering (16.5). Lots were cast upon these goats to determine the one to be sacrificed for the Lord and the other to be the scapegoat (16.7-10). *The goat is a type of the stateliness and beauty of Christ's life and walk (Proverbs 30.29, 31).*
3. Aaron killed the bullock of the sin offering which was to make atonement for himself and his house (16.6, 11). *Aaron's house is not his immediate personal family, but the whole order of priests. This is a picture of the household of faith, the priestly house of this dispensation which is composed of all true believers (1 Peter 2.5).*
4. Aaron's first entrance into the holiest was with a censer of burning coals and hands full of sweet incense (16.12-13). *Without the cloud of incense enveloping Aaron, the brilliance of God's glory and presence would have slain him. He thus stands accepted in the fragrance and worth of Christ's person and work. We are accepted in the beloved (Ephesians 1.6).*
5. Aaron entered into the holiest a second time to sprinkle the blood of the bullock. This he did **once upon** the mercy seat (for the eye of God), and **seven** times **before** it (to meet the need of man), thus making atonement for himself and his house (16.14). *The moment the blood of the bullock was sprinkled, the High Priest and priestly family entered into the good of forgiveness – a picture of the church today. How do we know we are forgiven? **Albert Leckie**: The one who died for us now appears in the presence of God for us, in all the value of His sacrifice and precious blood once shed (Hebrews 9.24).*
6. The goat of the sin offering for the people was slain and Aaron entered the holiest a third time to sprinkle its blood on and before the mercy seat (16.15). *Provision has been made at Calvary for the cleansing and forgiveness of the nation.*
7. Having made atonement for the holy place which was defiled because of the uncleanness of the nation (16.16), Aaron **went out** before the people (16.18). *This is yet future for Israel. The High Priest is still in the holiest. When He comes out of heaven unto His earthly people they will be converted and restored. This is the fulfilment of the Feast of Atonement. In the meantime, believers of this dispensation, as priests, enter into the holiest where He is (Hebrews 10.19-22).*

8. Aaron laid both his hands on the head of the scapegoat, confessing the sins of the children of Israel over him. This living goat (Azazel, v.10) was then sent away into the wilderness by the hand of a fit (able, ready) man, in picture, bearing all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited (16.21-22). *This was not done for the priestly family, just the nation. The blood of the slain goat on the mercy seat made forgiveness available, but the nation did not know this forgiveness until the High Priest emerged from the holiest, confessed their sins on the scapegoat and sent it away. The blood on the mercy seat made salvation **available**; the hands on the head made salvation **availing**. Note. **Azazel** means 'entirely removed' or 'wholly put aside'. The people required a sign to show that their sins had been removed.*

9. Finally, Aaron removes the linen garments and dons the garments *for glory and beauty* once again (16.23-24). *What a glorious day it will be when Israel finally recognises in Christ the true glory and beauty that is His.*

In summary, atonement has been made for Aaron's household (the church) and the congregation of Israel in virtue of the blood sprinkled on the mercy seat, a picture of Calvary (Leviticus 16.17). However, Israel as a nation will not enjoy the full benefit of the work of Calvary until He 'comes out' of the Holy Place. He shall appear a second time apart from the sin question (Hebrews 9.28) and thus effect the restoration of the nation in a coming day. **Ian Jackson**: *At the present time Israel does not know what has been accomplished in relation to propitiation just as on the Day of Atonement the nation did not know that blood had been sprinkled on and before the mercy seat until the high priest reappeared. When he appears to the nation a second time it will be all together apart from the question of sin which he dealt with at Calvary. However, he will make good to the nation the salvation that he secured when he appeared the first time.*

#### The Prospect of the Day

As noted previously, the Feast of Trumpets will be fulfilled at some point after the visible return of the Son of Man to the earth and before the setting up and manifestation of the millennial kingdom. Given the fulfilment of the previous feasts to the day, it is likely the Feast of Atonement will take place on the *tenth* day of the **seventh** month, nine days after the re-gathering of the nation (Feast of Trumpets).

It would appear that the godly remnant will mourn and endure great affliction of soul as their eyes are opened to recognize that the Lord Jesus is their Messiah. *Now, surely they will have seen Him before this point in time, but on the 10th of the seventh month they shall, as a nation, look on Him as they never did before. Then shall the Spirit seal to their consciences their blood-guiltiness as never before in intensity. And the Spirit will open the understanding of all as never before and bring home to their souls the mighty value of the satisfaction for sin that their Messiah wrought on the cross.*

**Zechariah 12.10-11**: *And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, And they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, And shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem.* Zechariah goes on to state that **every** family of the nation shall mourn including the families of **David** and **Nathan** (representing the highest and lowest of the *royal* line), and the families of **Levi** and **Shimei** (representing the highest and lowest of the *priestly* line). Following this individual repentance and confession (possibly in the words of Isaiah 53) *a fountain shall be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness* (Zechariah 13.1) – the fulfilment of the Feast of Atonement. This is no fountain of blood! The blood has been once and for all shed at Calvary and thus a fountain of *water* (see Ezekiel 36.25) is opened to make good to the nation all the blessings of the blood once shed at Calvary.

**Ezekiel 36.24**: *For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land (FEAST OF TRUMPETS). 25 Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you (DAY OF ATONEMENT). 31 Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.*

All this is beautifully foreshadowed in the lives of **Joseph** and **Thomas**. On the Feast of Atonement Christ shall reveal Himself to Israel as *Joseph* did to his brethren at their second visit (Genesis 45.3; Acts 7.13). In the case of *Thomas*, he was unbelieving at first, but a revelation of the risen Christ brought him to bow in worship (John 20.26-29).