

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Leviticus 16: 6-14

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. Today, we will continue to read Leviticus 16: 6-14.

The Day of Atonement is the central focus of the entire book of Leviticus. The preceding 15 chapters reveal that through the sacrifices and the service of the priesthood, peace is established between God and man. These chapters also introduce the laws of purification, helping the Israelites remove the uncleanness of their daily lives. After these 15 chapters, God's people are prepared, and on this day, the Day of Atonement, the high priest is able, according to the rituals revealed by God, to enter within the veil, come before the mercy seat, and meet with God.

The rituals of the Day of Atonement are very intricate, with many details, and every detail is a foreshadowing of Christ. The grace freely given to New Testament believers came at a great cost to Christ. For us, it is free, but for Christ, it was neither cheap nor convenient. Everything had to be done according to the will of the Father and in line with the holiness, righteousness, and glory required by God.

Yesterday, we read that on the Day of Atonement, it was the high priest Aaron who personally offered the sacrifices. Therefore, he had to remove his glorious and beautiful outer garments, the ephod, the breastplate, and the golden plate on his head, and instead put on the linen tunic, sash, and turban. This symbolizes Jesus Christ, who laid aside His heavenly glory as the Son of God, became flesh, and served in His gentle and pure humanity.

Aaron, as high priest, could only prefigure Christ in his role, for Aaron himself was human, with a sinful nature and sinful actions. Therefore, Aaron had to first offer a sin offering for himself and his household, which included all the priests, before he could offer the sin offering and burnt offering for the people of Israel. Because the rituals of the sin offering are so intricate, in verses 6 to 10, God first provides a

general description of the sin offering, and then from verses 11 to 28, He reveals the entire detailed process of the sacrifices.

Verse 6: "Aaron shall offer the bull as a sin offering, which is for himself and make atonement for himself and for his house."

Aaron was the high priest, and his descendants were the priests. On normal days, the priests helped the people with their sacrifices and managed various spiritual matters within the tabernacle. For instance, the fire on the altar was not to go out, and the priests were to offer burnt offerings daily, morning and evening. However, their standing to serve in the tabernacle was based on this once-a-year event—the Day of Atonement—when they would completely cleanse themselves and the sins of the people of Israel.

On the Day of Atonement, the high priest Aaron was required to first offer a bull for himself and his household as a sin offering. This sin offering differed from the usual daily offerings, with more detailed instructions provided in verses 11 to 19, which we will examine when we reach that part of the text.

Verse 7: "He shall take the two goats and present them before the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of meeting."

The sin offering Aaron was to offer for the people consisted of two goats, different from the regular sin offerings for the people. On ordinary days, a single goat sufficed for the sin offering. As described in Leviticus 4:22-31, if a leader sinned, he was to offer a male goat, and if one of the common people sinned, they were to offer a female goat. These were their usual sin offerings. However, on the Day of Atonement, Aaron was to present two male goats for the entire nation of Israel. Why two goats? This has significant meaning. Aaron was to present both goats before the Lord at the entrance to the tabernacle of meeting.

Verse 8: "Then Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats: one lot for the Lord and the other lot for the scapegoat."

Aaron was to cast lots for the two goats. In the Old Testament, God's people did not have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, so they often used the casting of lots to determine God's will. For New Testament believers, who have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we no longer rely on casting lots but rather seek God's will through prayer.

The last time the Bible records the use of casting lots was in Acts 1:26: "And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles." After Judas betrayed the Lord and lost his position as one of the twelve apostles, the disciples used lots to choose Matthias to replace him. This occurred before the Holy Spirit descended at Pentecost. Once the Holy Spirit was given, believers no longer used lots to discern God's will. Instead, New Testament believers are guided by the indwelling Holy Spirit, who leads them from within in their life and provides external empowerment for specific tasks and purposes.

Here, however, the high priest used the casting of lots to select between the two goats: one would be for the Lord, and the other would be for Azazel. The term "Azazel," which the Chinese Union Version translates directly, is a transliteration of the Hebrew word. This term comes from two Hebrew words: "az," meaning goat, and "azal," meaning gone or removed. Together, they form "azazel," meaning "the goat that departs" or "the scapegoat." In English translations, this is often rendered as "scapegoat." Thus, the two goats represent two things: one belongs to the Lord, and the other becomes the scapegoat.

Verse 9: "And Aaron shall bring the goat on which the Lord's lot fell, and offer it as a sin offering."

Aaron was to offer the goat that was selected by lot for the Lord as a sin offering for the people. The sin offering on the Day of Atonement was distinct from the

regular sin offerings, with specific details provided in verses 15 to 19, which we will explore in detail when we reach those passages.

Verse 10: "But the goat on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the Lord, to make atonement upon it, and to let it go as the scapegoat into the wilderness."

The goat that was selected for Azazel was not to be killed but kept alive before the Lord to make atonement. After the priest completed the sin offering, a person was sent to release the scapegoat into the wilderness, designating it for Azazel. This practice is rich in spiritual symbolism.

Here we see that two goats were used for atonement. One was killed on the altar for the people's sins, clearly representing Christ being crucified for our sins. The other, the scapegoat, was released into the wilderness for Azazel. What does this mean? Scholars have two different interpretations.

The first interpretation is based on the literal meaning of "Azazel." The word "Azazel" means "removed" or "gone," implying that the sin was carried away by this goat into the wilderness, completely removed from the camp of Israel and no longer remembered. This symbolizes the work of the cross, which fully removes sin, so that it is taken away from God's people.

The second interpretation is based on the structure of the sentence, where one goat is for the Lord and the other is for Azazel. Here, "Azazel" is viewed as an opposite to God, suggesting that the second goat is given over to Satan, God's adversary. Some scholars, through historical research, have found that "Azazel" was also the name of an idol, symbolizing Satan. According to this interpretation, the scapegoat is sent to Satan, bearing the sins of Israel.

Personally, I lean toward the second interpretation. Since Satan is the source of sin, this scapegoat, bearing Israel's sins, is sent back to Satan. God, being holy and righteous, requires death for any creature that bears sin in His presence. On the

other hand, Satan is the origin of sin, and the goat, still alive, returns to Satan. This continues until the end of the Millennial Kingdom, when Satan, along with everything and everyone associated with sin, will be cast into the lake of fire. That is Satan's and sin's final destination.

This view is further supported by Leviticus 17:7, where it says, "They must no longer offer any of their sacrifices to demons to whom they prostitute themselves." The word "demons" in the original Hebrew means "goats." This passage refers to the scapegoat being associated with Satan. Now, moving on to verses 11 to 14, we will examine the sin offering of Aaron and the other priests.

Verse 11: "And Aaron shall bring the bull of the sin offering, which is for himself, and make atonement for himself and for his house, and shall kill the bull as the sin offering which is for himself."

Here, we see that Aaron personally had to kill the bull as a sin offering to atone for himself and his household. Because Aaron was actively performing this service, he wasn't wearing his glorious outer robe, but rather the inner linen garments used for priestly duties. This symbolizes Jesus Christ, who, during His earthly ministry, set aside His divine glory and took on human nature to serve mankind, ultimately offering Himself on the altar to atone for humanity's sins.

According to Leviticus 4:1-12, when a priest offered a bull for a sin offering, its blood had to be handled in a specific way. The fat and kidneys were burned on the altar, and the rest of the bull was carried outside the camp to be burned. However, on the Day of Atonement, the handling of the blood was different, and before dealing with the blood, Aaron had to offer incense.

Verse 12: "Then he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from the altar before the Lord, with his hands full of sweet incense beaten fine, and bring it inside the veil."

The high priest, Aaron, had to take his own censer and fill it with burning coals from the altar before the Lord. We are reminded in Leviticus 9:24 that when Aaron made his first offering, fire came from the Lord and consumed the burnt offering and the fat on the altar. This fire was from heaven, and since that time, the fire on the altar was never allowed to go out. Therefore, the coals Aaron took from the altar were not common fire, but fire from God Himself.

Incense could not be burned using common fire, which was why Aaron's two sons, Nadab and Abihu, were consumed by fire, as they had used unauthorized fire. Aaron also had to take a handful of finely ground incense. The censer and the incense allowed Aaron to enter behind the veil into the Holy of Holies, the most sacred part of the Tabernacle.

Verse 13: "And he shall put the incense on the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of incense may cover the mercy seat that is on the Testimony, lest he die."

Inside the veil was the Ark of the Covenant, where the Lord would appear over the mercy seat. Aaron was required to place the incense on the coals of fire before the Lord, and the fragrant smoke would rise, covering the mercy seat. This action prevented Aaron from dying when he entered God's presence.

In Exodus 30:34-38, the recipe for the incense included four ingredients: stacte, onycha, galbanum, and pure frankincense. These ingredients symbolized different aspects of Christ's death and resurrection: redemption, the defeat of the enemy, and the sweet fragrance of Christ's victory in resurrection. To fully understand the significance of these symbols, one would need to study the daily readings of Exodus. For now, it is enough to recognize that the incense represents both Jesus Christ's death and His resurrection.

When the incense was burned with fire from heaven, it released a fragrance that symbolized the pleasing aroma of Christ's sacrificial death and resurrection, which satisfied God. Under the cover of this fragrance, Aaron could approach the mercy seat and enter God's presence without dying.

In the Bible, incense often represents the prayers of the saints, as seen in Revelation 5:8: "Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints." Through prayer, believers today can draw near to God's mercy seat and have intimate communion with Him.

In the Old Testament, the high priest could only enter God's presence once a year. But under the New Covenant, believers have the privilege of approaching God at any time through prayer. It is unfortunate that many saints often neglect this great privilege. Another important lesson here is that prayer is symbolized by the burning of incense, and incense could only be burned with fire from heaven, not ordinary fire. This teaches us that our prayers should not be driven by earthly concerns but by God's divine will and direction. Only such prayers, aligned with God's heart, receive His response.

On the Day of Atonement, Aaron first had to kill the bull for the sin offering. This bull symbolized Jesus Christ, who died on the cross for our sins, removing the barrier and separation caused by sin, so that people could return to God's presence. After this, Aaron entered the Holy of Holies with the censer to burn incense before the mercy seat. The fragrant smoke, symbolizing Christ's death and resurrection, pleased and satisfied God, allowing Aaron to stand in God's presence and have close fellowship with Him.

Verse 14: "He shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it with his finger on the mercy seat on the east side; and before the mercy seat he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times."

The high priest was required to take some of the bull's blood from the altar and bring it into the Holy of Holies. He was to first sprinkle the blood on the east side of the mercy seat, although the number of times is not specified. Afterward, he was to sprinkle the blood seven times before the mercy seat. Here, we see two kinds of blood sprinkling. The first sprinkling was on the east side of the mercy seat. The tabernacle faced east, and the high priest would enter from the east, moving

westward into the Holy of Holies, where the Ark of the Covenant stood. Sprinkling the blood eastward symbolized the covering of the veil before the Ark.

Leviticus 4:6 records that on regular days, when the high priest offered a sin offering for himself, he would sprinkle the blood seven times outside the Holy of Holies because he could not enter it on ordinary days. But on the Day of Atonement, when the high priest was allowed to enter the Holy of Holies, he still sprinkled the blood seven times, this time behind the veil. The number seven signifies completeness, and the act of sprinkling blood on both sides of the veil represents Jesus Christ's death on the cross, which tore the veil from top to bottom, removing the barrier between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place.

The death of Jesus Christ opened the way for believers to enter the Most Holy Place. As Hebrews 10:19-20 says: "Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh." This sprinkling of blood behind the veil symbolizes the spiritual reality of Jesus Christ's sacrificial death, which gives us direct access to God.

The second sprinkling, this time before the mercy seat, seven times, signifies that Christ's blood satisfies the righteous demands of God's holiness, justice, and glory. With this, believers can confidently come before the mercy seat to meet with God, as Hebrews 4:16 says: "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

The high priest's act of bringing the blood into the Holy of Holies opened a new and living way for us, so that we can come directly to God to seek mercy and grace in times of need.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You for clearly setting before us the ordinances of atonement. While we no longer need to follow such complex rituals in the New Covenant, every detail of these ordinances represents the work of Jesus Christ for us. Grant us spiritual wisdom to appreciate what Christ has done for us. Help us to experience this deeply in our lives, so that our understanding of the grace of Christ's

redemption goes beyond mere knowledge to become a living, personal experience.
Bless our daily lives. In Jesus Christ's holy name, we pray.