

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

Leviticus 16: 15-19

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the Bible again. We'll continue to read Leviticus chapter 16, and today we'll read from verse 15 to verse 19.

On the Day of Atonement, the high priest was extremely busy, as all the sacrificial duties had to be performed by him personally. Therefore, he would remove his beautiful outer garments—the ephod and breastplate—and put on the holy linen tunic, along with linen trousers, a linen sash, and a linen turban. Aaron would first offer a sin offering for himself and his household. He would slaughter a bull, then take the bull's blood into the Holy Place.

On regular days, according to the instructions in Leviticus 4:6-7, Aaron would sprinkle the blood seven times before the veil of the Holy Place and apply some of the blood on the four horns of the golden incense altar. However, on the once-a-year Day of Atonement, he was allowed to enter the Most Holy Place. But before doing so, he had to carry a censer filled with burning coals from the altar and a handful of finely ground incense. He would enter the Holy Place, pass through the veil into the Most Holy Place, and, in the presence of the Lord, put the incense into the censer. The smoke from the incense would rise, covering the Ark of the Covenant and its lid, the mercy seat, filling the entire Most Holy Place with fragrance.

Incense symbolizes the prayers of the saints. Aaron, once a year, could enter the Most Holy Place to meet with God at the mercy seat, engaging in communion with Him. At this moment, Aaron would also sprinkle the blood of the bull seven times before the veil in the Most Holy Place and seven times on the mercy seat. The number seven represents a complete number in time; signifying that the blood of the bull in this period of time, had opened a way through the veil for the high priest.

In the presence of God, the sprinkling of the blood on the mercy seat fulfilled God's requirements of holiness, righteousness, and glory. This act covered the sins of the high priest and the priests, bringing peace between them and God. The period of completeness lasted for a year, until the next Day of Atonement. After the high priest offered the sin offering for himself and his household, he then had to offer the sin offering for the people, continuing the process of atonement.

Verse 15: “Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering, which is for the people, bring its blood inside the veil, do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it on the mercy seat and before the mercy seat.”

The high priest first offered a sin offering for himself and his household, then he had to offer a sin offering for the people. Aaron would come out to the entrance of the tabernacle and take the goat that had been chosen by lot for the Lord, which was the sin offering for the people. After slaughtering the goat, Aaron would bring the blood of the goat into the Holy Place, pass through the veil, and enter the Most Holy Place. He would sprinkle the blood on the veil and on the mercy seat, just like he did with the blood of the bull. Likewise, in God's presence, this action satisfied God's holiness, righteousness, and glory. This blood covered the sins of the Israelites, and peace was made between God and the people.

Verse 16: “So he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, for all their sins; and so he shall do for the tabernacle of meeting which remains among them in the midst of their uncleanness.”

The translation in the Chinese Union Version is not entirely accurate in this verse. If you read the English version, it becomes clearer. The Chinese version mentions "performing the atonement ritual in the sanctuary," but it should actually be "atoning for the sanctuary." This verse elevates the concept of the Day of Atonement to a higher level. Normally, we think of the sin offering as atoning for

the sins of people, especially for the sinful nature that is inherent in humanity. This understanding is correct and is carried out in daily practice.

When the priest, leader, or a common person commits an unintentional sin, which arises from their innate sinful nature rather than a deliberate act, the guilty person must immediately offer a sin offering. This prevents the accumulation of sin and ensures that the person's conscience remains cleansed. Since any unintentional sin committed on a regular day must be dealt with through the sin offering immediately, why is there still a need for the annual Day of Atonement and its sin offering?

This verse clarifies that the sin offering on the Day of Atonement not only serves to atone for the sins of the people but also to atone for the sanctuary. This is a very distinct idea, and the sanctuary here refers to both the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. Moreover, it tells us that atonement must also be made for the tabernacle. This is a whole new concept. The Most Holy Place, the Holy Place, the tabernacle, and all its furnishings are not capable of sinning themselves, so why do they need atonement? This verse clearly explains that it is due to the impurities, transgressions, and all the sins of the Israelites.

Originally, God's tabernacle was within the camp of Israel because He desired to dwell among His people. Since God's tabernacle was among the Israelites, and they were filled with iniquity and transgressions, even though they were instructed to immediately deal with their sins according to God's ordinances, the tabernacle, the Holy Place, the Most Holy Place, and all the furnishings within the tabernacle could become defiled or contaminated by the people's sins and impurities. Therefore, God commanded that once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest would enter the Most Holy Place and, in the presence of God, use the blood of the sacrificial animals to cleanse and remove any accumulated defilement, restoring the tabernacle to its state of holiness.

Dear brothers and sisters, the Holy Place and the tabernacle were where the priests performed their duties, and the various objects in the tabernacle were the instruments that helped them serve. In the Old Testament, the Israelites had to

atone for the Holy Place and the tabernacle on the Day of Atonement, or more precisely, the Holy Place and the tabernacle had to be cleansed. This was because the priests serving there, and those involved in the service, might not have dealt with their sins properly, leading to contamination of the places where the priests ministered.

With this understanding, should we also regularly offer prayers of cleansing for the places where we gather and for the equipment we use during worship, so that the church can be completely holy and pleasing to the Lord?

Verse 17: "There shall be no man in the tabernacle of meeting when he goes in to make atonement in the Holy Place, until he comes out, that he may make atonement for himself, for his household, and for all the assembly of Israel."

On the Day of Atonement, all the sacrifices were personally administered by the high priest. Not only that, but when he went into the Holy Place to make atonement, no one else could be present inside the tabernacle. The Israelites, of course, were not allowed to enter, and even the priests and Levites who normally ministered in the tabernacle were not permitted to enter. Only the high priest could be there, and he had to complete the atonement for himself, his household, and the entire congregation of Israel. During the entire process, no one else was allowed inside the tabernacle.

In typology, Jesus Christ is the great High Priest of the New Testament believers, and the work of atonement could only be completed by Jesus Himself. No one else could do it, and no one could assist Him in this work. As Peter declared in Acts 4:12, "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Dear brothers and sisters, on this point, we must be very clear: the forgiveness of our sins is entirely the work of Jesus Christ, and only He could accomplish it. During His time on earth, He lived a life without sin, which qualified Him to walk the path to the cross and die for the sins of humanity. He was not only 100% man, able to

die for humanity, but He was also 100% God, able to rise from the dead. Because of this, those of us who believe in Him not only receive forgiveness of our sins through His death but are also justified by God through His resurrection.

Verse 18: “And he shall go out to the altar that is before the Lord, and make atonement for it, and shall take some of the blood of the bull and some of the blood of the goat, and put it on the horns of the altar all around.”

Leviticus 16:17 mentions that Aaron enters the Holy Place to make atonement for the people. Afterward, he is to come out and go to the altar that is before the Lord, which refers to the bronze altar in the courtyard of the tabernacle. The translation in the Chinese Union Version says that he is to make atonement "on the altar," but this is not entirely accurate. As the English translations indicate, Aaron is to make atonement "for the altar."

We know that throughout the year, many offerings are made on this altar—burnt offerings, grain offerings, sin offerings, guilt offerings, and peace offerings. The bronze altar was very busy, witnessing thousands of sacrifices throughout the year.

Similarly, due to the possible negligence or transgressions of the priests and the people, the altar itself could become defiled. Therefore, on the Day of Atonement, atonement had to be made for the bronze altar as well. Aaron was to take the blood of the bull (for the priests) and the blood of the goat (for the people), and apply it to the horns of the altar. The blood, which has the power to cleanse, was applied to the four horns, symbolizing the power of atonement that reaches to the four corners of the earth. By applying the blood, the sacrificial system's effectiveness was restored, enabling it to deal with sin and remove any hindrances between the people and God.

Verse 19: “Then he shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times, cleanse it, and consecrate it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel.”

Aaron was instructed to sprinkle the blood of the bull and the goat on the altar seven times to cleanse it and consecrate it from the uncleanness of the Israelites. Aaron first sprinkled blood on the mercy seat in the Most Holy Place seven times, symbolizing the satisfaction of God's holiness, justice, and glory, covering the sins of the people so that God would no longer hold them accountable. After leaving the Most Holy Place, he would sprinkle the blood on the altar seven more times, symbolizing how God's grace and forgiveness, through the blood, reached the four corners of the earth, bringing peace to the people's consciences.

Dear brothers and sisters, the Day of Atonement not only addressed the issue of sin but also sanctified the sanctuary, the tabernacle, and the altar in the outer court. This is similar to Isaiah's experience in Isaiah 6:1-5, where he saw the Lord seated on a throne, and His robe filled the temple. The seraphim stood above, proclaiming, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!" In this atmosphere of such glory and holiness, Isaiah responded in verse 5, "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."

In Isaiah's encounter with God's holiness, he became keenly aware of his own uncleanness and the sinfulness of the people around him. This mirrors how the sacrificial blood cleansed not only the people but also the sacred space where God dwells. It serves as a reminder that God's holiness reveals our need for purification and redemption.

In the same way, after being saved by grace, New Testament believers gather every Sunday to offer worship and praise to God. If we, like Isaiah, truly behold God and His glory, our response would mirror Isaiah's: recognizing how unworthy we are. Even in our offerings and service, there is often a mixture of impurity. Every time we realize this, we should come before God with a sacrifice of atonement, not only for the forgiveness of our personal sins but also to purify the place of our gathering and the tools we use in worship. This ensures that the Lord receives genuine worship and praise.

Let us pray together: Lord, lift our understanding of You to a higher level while deepening our awareness of ourselves. You are so holy and glorious, and we are so unworthy and defiled. Though we are cleansed each time through confession and the precious blood of Jesus Christ, we still carry many hidden sins that we are unaware of. These sins find their way into our worship and praise, and even in our labor and service, impure motives often lurk.

Lord, grant us light to see our true condition. May we, through the sacrifice of atonement, be sanctified, and may our surroundings and the place of our gatherings be cleansed by You. Let every saint who comes to worship behold Your holiness and glory. Bless the church I belong to, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen!