

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

Leviticus 16:20-24

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 16:20-24.

On the Day of Atonement, the high priest Aaron personally offered sacrifices. He was to offer a bull for himself as a sin offering and a goat for the people of Israel as a sin offering. We have already read that Aaron took the blood of the bull and the blood of the goat into the Most Holy Place and sprinkled it seven times on the mercy seat, and also sprinkled it seven times on the bronze altar.

Verse 20: "And when he has made an end of atoning for the Holy Place, the tabernacle of meeting, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat."

The sin offerings on the Day of Atonement not only atoned for Aaron, his household, and the people of Israel, but also for the Holy Place, the tabernacle, and the altar. After completing these atonements, Aaron was to present the live goat. This goat, chosen by lot, was designated for Azazel. The Hebrew word "Azazel" essentially means "the departing goat" and also has the sense of "removal." This is why it's translated into English as "scapegoat." Some interpreters also believe this word refers to Satan, the source of sin, and understand that the scapegoat, bearing the people's sins, is sent to Azazel, symbolizing the return of sins to Satan.

Let us first read the following verses and attempt to explore different interpretations to see how they align with the teachings of the New Testament. Since Jesus came in the New Testament, His words are truth, and believers in the New Covenant have the indwelling Holy Spirit, who guides them into all truth. Therefore, we should use New Testament truth to interpret the imagery of the Old Testament. This approach allows us to truly understand God's will and to more fully appreciate the richness of the grace of Jesus Christ's redemption.

Verse 21: "Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man."

Aaron was to lay both hands on the head of this goat and confess all the iniquities and transgressions of the children of Israel. Through this act of laying on of hands, the sins and transgressions of Israel were transferred onto the goat's head, embodying the concept of the scapegoat. The sins of the Israelites were symbolically placed onto this goat, which was then led into the wilderness by a designated person.

Verse 22: "The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness."

This scapegoat bore all the iniquities of the Israelites and was sent into the wilderness, to a place where no one lived. This symbolizes the eternal removal of Israel's sins, much like Psalm 103:11-12 describes: "For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." This passage speaks to God's great love, which fully removes our transgressions from us. But where do these transgressions go after they leave us?

Micah 7:19 says, "He will again have compassion on us and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea." This verse further illustrates that God casts our sins into the depths of the sea. The deep sea, often seen as the devil's domain, represents the original source of sin, making it appropriate for the scapegoat to return the sins to the devil. Leviticus 16 only states that the sins are assigned to Azazel, but not how. Using New Testament scriptures helps us understand how sin is returned to Azazel.

The two goats offered as a sin offering for the people prefigure Christ. The first goat, sacrificed on the altar, bore the punishment for sin. "For the wages of sin is

death," and, having sinned, man deserves death, having offended God. Jesus Christ bore this death penalty on our behalf. Thus, the high priest brought the goat's blood into the Most Holy Place and sprinkled it on the mercy seat, signifying that the penalty for sin was paid. This represents the resolution of sin's impact on humanity before God. On the other hand, when Jesus was crucified, God laid the sins of humanity upon Him, making Him the scapegoat.

In Matthew 27:45-46, "Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?'" During these final three hours on the cross, from noon to 3 p.m., when the sun would typically be brightest, darkness fell upon the land as Jesus bore humanity's sins and faced God's judgment. Jesus, in agony, cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Soon after, He gave up His spirit. Where did He go after His death?

1 Peter 3:18-20 explains, "being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah." Peter tells us that though Jesus' body died, His spirit remained alive, and He descended into Hades, where He preached to the spirits in prison—those who disobeyed and perished in Noah's time. Jesus proclaimed His victory there. His time in Hades was brief, and Acts 2:24 tells us that "God raised Him up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it." Christ, the embodiment of resurrection, could not be bound by death. But why did Jesus go to Hades? Hebrews 2:14-15 gives the answer: "Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Jesus descended into Hades to break through its gates, overthrowing Satan's power to free those bound by the fear of death.

The Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16 depicts this through the sacrificed goat, representing Christ shedding His precious blood on the cross to atone for

humanity's sins. This blood was presented before God's mercy seat, satisfying His holy, righteous, and glorious requirements. Afterward, the other goat was released into the wilderness, symbolizing how Jesus Christ, through His death, descended into Hades, leaving the sins He bore there.

Hades, where Satan held authority, was a place of bondage because all face death. But Jesus Christ is an exception; as the resurrection itself, He was unbound by death, overcame Hades, and triumphed over it, rising from the dead. He was the first but not the last, for all who trust in Jesus Christ's redemption will follow in His footsteps and rise from death at His return. This is why Paul triumphantly declares in 1 Corinthians 15:55, "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?"

Verses 23-24: "Then Aaron shall come into the tabernacle of meeting, shall take off the linen garments which he put on when he went into the Holy Place, and shall leave them there. And he shall wash his body with water in a holy place, put on his garments, come out, and offer his burnt offering and the burnt offering of the people, and make atonement for himself and for the people."

After Aaron placed the sins of Israel on the scapegoat and sent it into the wilderness, he returned to the tabernacle to change his clothes. Although Scripture doesn't specify what he wore next, understanding the significance of changing clothes and washing might help us infer it. The sacrifice was not yet complete; why, then, did Aaron need to wash and change before continuing? Grasping this reason might clarify what clothing he might have donned afterward.

Aaron's atoning work had two aspects. First, the sacrificial aspect provided a penalty for sin, allowing the people to be cleansed of guilt and distanced from sin, as "the wages of sin is death." Therefore, blood was required on the mercy seat to satisfy God's holiness, justice, and glory. It was also sprinkled on the altar to cleanse the conscience, while the scapegoat took away sin to Azazel. After completing this aspect, Aaron needed to remove his garments and wash, as the sacrifices involved with sin were considered unclean.

The second aspect of atonement was affirmative, representing reconciliation and God's acceptance. This foreshadowed Christ's resurrection, ascent to heaven, and seating at God's right hand. Here, Aaron's actions symbolize the resurrected, ascended Christ, so it's likely he wore the high priest's glorious and beautiful garments. Returning to the tabernacle entrance, Aaron offered a ram as a burnt offering for himself, followed by another ram as a burnt offering for the people. The burnt offering was cut into pieces, washed, and entirely burned, ascending as a sweet aroma to God.

The high priest's burnt offering prefigures Christ, who offered Himself wholly and was accepted by God, now seated at the Father's right hand. The Israelites' burnt offering points to New Testament believers, who are also called to present themselves as offerings. Paul echoes this in Romans 12:1: "Therefore, brethren, I urge you by the mercies of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." Each person saved by grace is called to dedicate their body as a living sacrifice. This is our reasonable service.

This verse, "to offer his burnt offering and the burnt offering of the people, to make atonement for himself and for the people," indicates that offering a burnt sacrifice is indeed part of atonement. This concept challenges a common perception, where redemption and dedication are viewed as separate events. We often think of Jesus as having completed our redemption through His sacrifice; by believing and accepting it, we are redeemed, and our sins are forgiven. Offering ourselves to God, however, is often viewed as a separate, later step, once we feel "ready," perhaps after accumulating enough resources or reaching retirement.

Yet here, the Scripture reveals that presenting ourselves as an offering is part of atonement. If we don't offer ourselves, our redemption is incomplete. This understanding calls us to realign our thinking: when we accept Jesus' salvation, He has redeemed us with His life, meaning we no longer belong to ourselves but to Him. Without dedicating ourselves, our redemption remains unfinished.

In the Day of Atonement sacrifices, we see a twofold picture of redemption. In the first part, the high priest wears linen garments, symbolizing service in humility. In

the second part, he dons his glorious, beautiful robes, representing Jesus' victory and exaltation. Accepting only the first part of redemption while avoiding the second, glorious part would mean missing out on the fullness of God's intention for us.

Giving ourselves to God isn't a mere sacrifice or abandonment on our part; it's a privilege, an entry into blessing. William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, a man who understood dedication, wrote: "When one renounces the enticements of this world and lives for God, one gains immeasurable riches beyond words, as all belongs to Him, life, death, and everything in between. Christ is his life, breath, and dwelling." His song contrasts those who accept only the first part of redemption, saying, "How astonishing, that I should share His throne, yet unwilling to accept His call!" Booth urges, "Consider the exchange; all things and all people are yours."

Let us pray: Lord, thank You for showing us the preciousness of Your salvation through the atonement sacrifices. We now see that forgiveness of sins is only part of redemption. We need to offer ourselves to You as a burnt offering, pleasing to You, to complete the work of redemption in us. Grant us the grace to yield control of our lives to You, so our lives and service may be pleasing in Your sight. In Jesus' name I pray.