Jesus in the Day of Atonement

1. Introduction

a. Last week we looked at the seven feasts in Leviticus 23 and how they find their fulfilment in Jesus' first and second coming. However, as we have already seen when we looked at Jesus in the Passover, there are often more than one type of Jesus in the passages of scripture we have been looking at.

b. As we saw at the beginning of this series Jesus and the apostles clearly pointed to Jesus as *patterned, prophesied and present* in the Old Testament. Last week we saw Jesus prophesied in the Day of Atonement; today we will see Him patterned in much of the detail of the events of that day as instructed in Leviticus 16.

Leviticus 16:1-10 *The Lord spoke to Moses after the death of Aaron's two sons when they approached the presence of the Lord and died, **2** and the Lord said to Moses: "Tell Aaron your brother that he must not enter at any time into the Holy Place inside the special curtain in front of the atonement lid that is on the ark so that he may not die, for I will appear in the cloud over the atonement lid.**3** "In this way Aaron is to enter into the sanctuary—with a young bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. **4** He must put on a holy linen tunic, linen leggings are to cover his body, and he is to wrap himself with a linen sash and wrap his head with a linen turban. They are holy garments, so he must bathe his body in water and put them on. **5** He must also take two male goats from the congregation of the Israelites for a sin offering and one ram for a burnt offering. **6** Then Aaron is to present the sin offering bull which is for himself and is to make atonement on behalf of himself and his household. **7** Next he must take the two goats and stand them before the Lord at the entrance of the Meeting Tent, **8** and Aaron is to cast lots over the two goats, one lot for the Lord and one lot for Azazel. **9** Aaron must then present the goat which has been designated by lot for the Lord, and he is to make it a sin offering, **10** but the goat which has been designated by lot for Azazel is to be stood alive before the Lord to make atonement on it by sending it away into the desert to Azazel.*

c. These verses contain all the information about the animals and priestly dress used in the ceremonies and an outline of the events of the day (vv. 6-10). As we will see each of these have a New Testament fulfilment in Jesus.

d. We see here an emphasis on priestly purity and on the importance of holiness when entering the presence of Yahweh. What follows is instruction about when and how the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies. It is only through our High Priest, Jesus, that we can enter into such a holy place.

2. The basic requirements

a. The high priest had to make elaborate preparations for entering the holy of holies by cleansing himself spiritually and physically. The offerings he made were a bull as a sin offering and a ram as a burnt offering, both to cover his own sins

Heb. 5:1-3 *For every high priest is taken from among the people and appointed to represent them before God, to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. **2** He is able to deal compassionately with those who are ignorant and erring, since he also is subject to weakness, **3** and for this reason he is obligated to make sin offerings for himself as well as for the people*

b. He also had to wear special clothing, not the ornate garments that he usually wore to carry out his regular duties. This clothing consisted of four white garments and made him appear more as a slave than as a king. Among his fellow men his dignity as the great mediator between man and God is unsurpassed, and his splendid clothes draw attention to the glory of his office. But in the presence of God even the high priest is stripped of all honour: he becomes simply the servant of the King of kings, whose true status is portrayed in the simplicity of his dress. Also elaborate garments might have detracted from the sombreness of the occasion, when atonement for sin was the basic concern.

c. Aaron had to wash his body, symbolizing his cleanness. He also offered two goats as a sin offering and another ram as a burnt offering for the Israelites. The high priest entered the holy of holies only once each year on the Day of Atonement to make these special sacrifices.

Heb. 9:7 *But only the high priest enters once a year into the inner tent, and not without blood that he offers for himself and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance.*

d. Aaron first offered the bull as a sin (purification) offering to cover his sins and the sins of the other priests (v. 6). Then he cast lots to decide which of the two goats would die as a sin offering for the people and which one would be sent into the wilderness (vv. 7-8). Then he sacrificed the goat that was to die (v. 9). Finally, he brought the other goat before the Lord and then dispatched it into the wilderness (v. 10).

Lev.16:15-22 *"Aaron must then slaughter the sin-offering goat which is for the people. He is to bring its blood inside the curtain, and he is to do with its blood just as he did to the blood of the bull: He is to sprinkle it on the atonement lid and in front of the atonement lid.* ***16*** *So he is to make atonement for the Holy Place from the impurities of the Israelites and from their transgressions with regard to all their sins, and thus he is to do for the Meeting Tent which resides with them in the midst of their impurities.* ***17*** *Nobody is to be in the Meeting Tent when he enters to make atonement in the Holy Place until he goes out, and he has made atonement on his behalf, on behalf of his household, and on behalf of the whole assembly of Israel.* ***18*** *"Then Aaron is to go out to the altar which is before the Lord and make atonement for it. He is to take some of the blood of the bull and some of the blood of the goat, and put it all around on the horns of the altar.* ***19*** *Then he is to sprinkle on it some of the blood with his finger seven times, and cleanse and consecrate it from the impurities of the Israelites.* ***20*** *"When Aaron has finished purifying the Holy Place, the Meeting Tent, and the altar, he is to present the live goat.* ***21*** *Aaron is to lay his two hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the iniquities of the Israelites and all their transgressions in regard to all their sins, and thus he is to put them on the head of the goat and send it away into the desert by the hand of a man standing ready.* ***22*** *The goat is to bear on itself all their iniquities into an inaccessible land, so he is to send the goat away into the desert.*

e. The first goat that 'is for the Lord' was sacrificed and its blood was taken into the Holy of Holies to cleanse it because of the sin of the Israelites. The high priest alone could enter here and none other. The blood would be applied to the atonement cover. it was a silent and solemn time for those watching and awaiting the return of the high priest. According to Jewish writings, the other priests would wait outside in

silence and when the high priest had finished his duties he would come out of the Most Holy place and say 'It is done'.

f. For the second goat, the scapegoat, the high priest would place his hands on its head. In doing so all the sins of Israel would be confessed and placed onto this goat. It would then be lead away, alive, into the desert.

3. Messianic fulfilment in Jesus first coming

a. As we have seen in our previous studies the Levitical priesthood, which was patterned on the heavenly priesthood of Melchizidek, has now been replaced by the order of Melchizidek with Jesus as our High Priest. The Levitical order was an earthly expression by the law of sin and death which has now given way to the order of Melchizedek by the law of the spirit.

Heb.7:23-27 ***23*** *The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office,* ***24*** *but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues for ever.* ***25*** *Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.*

b. Jesus is our high priest but His offering is not of bulls or goats. It is of Himself. Thus, both the high priest and the goats find their fulfilment in the person of the Lord Jesus. The high priest who alone could go into the presence of God is a type of the Lord Jesus and he had specific garments as instructed in Exodus 28:3-6

4. The High Priest

a. The sacred garments were made of fine linen and were made from gold, blue, purple and scarlet thread. This all pointed to the nature and character of our high priest Jesus. Fine linen in the Bible speaks of righteousness (Rev 19:8). Each of the colours is instructive of Jesus. Gold speaks of the divine nature and shows that Jesus was God. Blue speaks of the heavens thus showing the origins from which He came. Purple speaks of kingship and shows that this priest is also a king! And lastly scarlet speaks of a blood sacrifice. Though divine and the king of kings, the one from Heaven was willing to lay down His life as a sacrifice.

b. However, the garments of the high priest on the day of Atonement were different. He did not come in with the rich colours of gold, blue, purple etc. On the day of Atonement he only wore white. The other priests also wore white. This symbolized the need for forgiveness and purity that governed this holy day. These white garments speak of our sinless Saviour.

c. However, the white garments are also prophetic. During the sacrifices required on this day the garments of the high priest would be stained with blood. This is a pointer to the ultimate fulfilment of this day when the true high priest returns and makes His way up Jerusalem.

Isaiah 63:1-3 *[1]Who is this coming from Edom, from Bozrah, with his garments* ***stained*** *crimson? Who is this, robed in splendour, striding forward in the greatness of his strength? "It is I, proclaiming victory, mighty to save." [2]Why are your garments* ***red****, like those of one treading the winepress? [3]"I have trodden the winepress alone; from the nations no one was with me. I trampled them in my anger and trod them down in my wrath; their blood spattered my garments, and I stained all my clothing.*

Revelation 19:11-14 *Then I saw heaven opened and here came a white horse! The one riding it was called "Faithful" and "True," and with justice he judges and goes to war.* ***12*** *His eyes are like a fiery flame and there are many diadem crowns on his head. He has a name written that no one knows except himself.* ***13*** *He is dressed in clothing dipped in blood, and he is called the Word of God.* ***14*** *The armies that are in heaven, dressed in white, clean, fine linen, were following him on white horses.*

5. The two goats

a. Jesus is also the fulfilment of both goats. In the goat 'for the Lord' Jesus had to be sacrificed for the sins of the people. Just as the blood from this goat was used to cleanse the Holy Place, so it was Jesus' blood that cleansed the heavenly sanctuary. The New Testament is clear on this.

Hebrews 9:7-14 *But only the high priest enters once a year into the inner tent, and not without blood that he offers for himself and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance……* ***11*** *But now Christ has come as the high priest of the good things to come. He passed through the greater and more perfect tent not made with hands, that is, not of this creation,* ***12*** *and he entered once for all into the Most Holy Place not by the blood of goats and calves but by his own blood, and so he himself secured eternal redemption.* ***13*** *For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a young cow sprinkled on those who are defiled consecrated them and provided ritual purity,* ***14*** *how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our consciences from dead works to worship the living God.*

b. So the earthly tabernacle and temple was modelled on the heavenly sanctuary. Jesus had to enter this with, and by, His own blood. It is this blood that takes away all sins and gives believers in Him the confidence to enter into the presence of God.

c. The second goat, the scapegoat, shows how Jesus was the one who had all the sins of the people transferred onto Him. And just as those sins were sent away with the sending out of the scapegoat, so Jesus has taken them away completely, never to be seen or addressed again.

d. One goat was an offering to atone for sins, to symbolise a payment of the punishment for them. The other was to remove the presence of sin. The priest would confess the sins of the people over this second goat, the "scapegoat," to lay the weight of sinfulness on it. It became a representation of evil, was taken far from the city, and driven into the wilderness. In the same way Jesus' crucifixion took place outside the city walls.

e. But as a type, these two goats are somewhat imperfect. Ideally you'd have only one goat. But you can't kill a goat and then still have a live one to send out. However, in Christ, you have One who is killed as an atoning sacrifice, and yet as a living Saviour He removes our sins as far from us as the east is from the west.

f. If you go north, eventually you'll be going south again. But if you go east, you keep going east, or if you go west, you keep going west and you will never go east in that direction. It's a beautiful way to show that we will never meet up with our sins again once they have been laid on our scapegoat, Jesus.

6. The scarlet thread

a. During the second temple period a ritual was added to the sending out of the scapegoat. The Jews would tie a piece of scarlet cord to both the scapegoat and the temple doors. When the scapegoat was sent away many accounts state that the scarlet cord on the temple would miraculously turn from scarlet to white. By this the Jews knew that God had accepted their sacrifice for sins.

b. In the Jewish writings, in the lead up to the destruction of the second temple in 70AD, the Jerusalem Talmud states, *"Forty years before the destruction of the Temple, the western light went out, the crimson thread remained crimson, and the lot for the Lord always came up in the left hand. They would close the gates of the Temple by night and get up in the morning and find them wide open"*

c. In similar vein, the Babylonian Talmud says, *"Our rabbis taught: During the last forty years before the destruction of the Temple the lot ['For the Lord'] did not come up in the right hand; nor did the crimson-coloured strap become white; nor did the western most light shine; and the doors of the Hekel [Temple] would open by themselves"*

d. What this is saying is that God no longer accepted the day of Atonement sacrifice for the last 40 years before the destruction of the temple (30AD-70AD). This is HIGHLY significant! It means that Jesus, as the 'Lamb of God' was the last and final sacrifice. God was not going to accept any other sacrifice after this. And all God would now do is warn the Israelites of the coming judgement. The western light would go out at night despite all their efforts for it to be lit perpetually. The temple doors would open by themselves miraculously. (And these doors were 75 feet high and required up to 25 men to open one door!) Jesus sacrifice was once and for all. No other will be accepted.

7. Forgiven and cleansed

a. One goat was an offering to atone for sins, to symbolise a **payment of the punishment** for them. The other was to **remove the presence of sin**. The priest would confess the sins of the people over this second goat, the “scapegoat,” to lay the weight of sinfulness on it. It became a representation of evil, was taken far from the city, and driven into the wilderness.

b. It is important for us not only to be forgiven of sin but to be cleansed of it—to have it removed from our midst. Jesus doesn’t only pay the price for our sin but He also removes it from us as far as the east is from the west.

c. As we acknowledge the seriousness of our sin before God we can thank Him for removing our sins through Jesus. We can fully experience the freedom He gives—especially freedom from the fear of death which is the consequence of sin. Our sin is not only forgiven it is completely removed.

8. Conclusion

a. The Day of Atonement was the most sobering and sacred day in the Hebrew calendar. The holiness of God had to be taken very seriously and the way to approach that holiness and find forgiveness and cleansing required special clothes and rituals.

b. However, these weren't just rituals. They show us that our sin separates us from God but He has provided a way, as He did in the Day of Atonement, for our sin to be forgiven and removed – this time once and for all by the work of our High Priest, the sacrifice and the scapegoat! There is only one way and that is Jesus Christ.

2 Cor. 5:19-21 *In other words, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting people's trespasses against them, and he has given us the message of reconciliation.* ***20*** *Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making his plea through us. We plead with you on Christ's behalf, "Be reconciled to God!"* ***21*** *God made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we would become the righteousness of God.*

John 19:30 *When he had received the sour wine, Jesus said, "It is completed!" Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.*

It is finished!!!