

What's the Message – Lesson 32

Today we continue our study of the Book of Leviticus, and focus on . . . atonement.

Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Savior. We pray that The Lord will use this study to bless you with a deeper understanding of the doctrine of atonement . . . an understanding that is richer because you know the full significance of the shedding of the blood of Jesus for your sin.
Amen.

Last time we learned that the Book of Leviticus is much more than a mere recitation of the ritual of the law of sacrifice, it is most importantly a statement of the gospel news of forgiveness of our sin . . . in reality, the doctrine of atonement. Today we shall dig into this doctrine deeper, to gain a greater understanding of how it applies to us.

In chapter 16 we read the inauguration of the practice of a special day, once a year, when atonement was to be made for all of God's people. This Day of Atonement is still practiced today by observant Jews. The story begins with the Lord instructing Moses and Aaron how, as High Priest, Aaron was to prepare himself before entering into the presence of God in the Tabernacle.

First, Aaron was to offer a bull as a sin offering to make atonement for himself and his family. Then he was to select two goats . . . and then cast lots on them to select one for a sin offering to make atonement for the people . . . while the other was to be used as the scapegoat to carry the sins of the people away into the wilderness. Only then was he to cleanse himself and to come into the Tabernacle and make atonement for himself and for the people.

As we read, beginning in verse 29: *“And it shall be a statute to you forever that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict yourselves, and shall do no work . . . for on this day shall atonement be made for you, to cleanse you . . . from all*

your sins you shall be clean before The Lord. . . . And this shall be an everlasting statute for you, that atonement may be made for the people of Israel once in the year, because of all their sins.”

And Teacher, although I didn't read the exact words, this process was quite bloody, with some of the blood of the bull and the goat sprinkled on the front of the Ark of the Covenant, some of it before the ark, some of it on the altar, and the rest was burned. It was quite an elaborate ceremony with many elements. But what does it all mean? What is atonement in the first place, and what is the message for us?

Yes, it was an elaborate ceremony, and it is emphasized as an important step, to be done once a year to make a general atonement for all the sins of the people. This was to cover any sins that might not have been specifically remembered, with sacrifices brought to cover those sins. The objective of these various ceremonies, of course, was to obtain forgiveness for all of the sins of the people of Israel.

And this forgiveness was obtained by the process of atonement . . . a way to restore ourselves to God . . . a way to be at-one again with God. In the Old Testament it was done by substituting the blood of animals, but in the New Testament it was accomplished – once and for all – by the blood of Jesus, who died for us on the cross.

As we read in chapter 17 of Leviticus, verse 11: *For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it for you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement, by reason of the life.* And again, as we read in the New Testament letter to the Hebrews, chapter 9, verse 22: *Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.*

The bottom line message is this: no matter whether a person lived in Old Testament times, or today in the New Testament, we all need forgiveness for our sinful nature. And God has always

provided a means to accomplish this. For us today that means is the blood of our Savior, Jesus the Christ.

Next time we shall study the closing chapters of Leviticus, and God's command to Israel to be holy.

This series has been developed and written by our director of teacher training, Mr. D. A. Senter, and is copyrighted by Lamb of God Lutheran Church in Flower Mound, Texas. Your narrator is Dale Gaus.

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