

YOM KIPPUR, LEVITICUS 16

Ancient Access Codes #6

◆**Intro:** No one appreciates cleansing who doesn't feel dirty. In Israel, one day a year they celebrated Yom Kippur. You've seen it on calendars probably. It means day of atonement. Cleansing. On that day the whole nation of Israel gathered as the High Priest prepared to enter the Holiest Place in the Temple/Tabernacle. It was behind a curtain as thick as a man's hand. It took dozens of men to hang it originally. In this holy place no one ever went except the High Priest, and then only once a year on Yom Kippur, and then only once in his life-time. No one just waltzes into the place representing God himself!

◆Verse 1 points us back to the two sons of Aaron who, in chapter 10, DID waltz into the temple kinda playing around without instruction from God. They were both struck dead. In fact, Jews had a habit of tying a rope around one ankle of the Priest who went behind the curtain, in case he was struck dead. No one was going to go in after him!

◆Behind the curtain was the Ark of the Lord, a gold covered wooden box with two gold angel statuettes on the top with wings pointing toward one another. Inside the box were two stone tablets on which God wrote the Ten Commandments, a jar of the miraculous manna God fed the Israelites with in the desert for 40 years, and Aaron the first High Priest's staff. The top of the Ark is referred to in the Bible as the "mercy seat", the "atonement cover", and "God's footstool." God, of course is not in the box. You can't put God in a box. He's not sitting on it either. You can't

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house God in a temple either. He's bigger than the solar system after all. This was all to remind his people that not one *deserves* or just *gets* to relate to God, or be near the one true God.

Something was necessary for his love and power to be in their lives: atonement, cleansing from sin. Sin and sinners, you see, disintegrate and blow away in the presence of the Holy God who created them out of dust! It's an unchangeable equation. So you don't really appreciate it if you think you're pretty darn good already.

◆ Lets look at pictures in this text:3

◆1. **The Priest.**

◆A. The priest reminds us that we need a mediator, a go-between with God because we sin. We are damaged goods. Solomon wrote in the book of Proverbs that the eyes of the Lord are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good. That means that while you may be hiding a few things from others, you're not hiding anything from God. And when we break his rules, we are chalking up debits that are going to come due. Whatever shall we do when they come do?

◆As a mediator the Priest represents God to the people, and the people to God. That's why he wears different clothes on the day of Atonement. His usually ornate robe, with 12 precious gems representing the 12 tribes of Israel, and his turban with the gold medallion on it, and his artistically woven sash –these are all put aside for a simple linen robe of a servant. Nobody goes into the

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Holiest Place as though they got it going on. Nobody, not even the priest. When he represents God to the people he is dressed with authority. When he represents the people to God, he is dressed humbly.

◆**B.** So the Priest here also is a picture of Jesus our Savior. Good Friday corresponded to the Day of Atonement. Jesus, the only mediator between God and man...

◆ *"For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus," 1 Timothy 2:5, NIV.*

◆...is the only eternally qualified person. Because he is God's Son he represents the Godhead to us with authority. Because he is a human, he represents us to God. That makes him the eternal High Priest.

◆ *"We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest for ever..." Hebrews 6:19, 20, NIV.*

◆It's good to have an eternal High Priest!

◆**2. The Sacrifices:** On the day of Atonement, the priest first sacrifices a bull for his own sins and the other priests.

◆**A.** Then for the sins of the people that they may not remember. They brought sacrifices all year long, anytime they needed to be forgiven (stole their neighbors camel and went for a joy ride/ got in a fight / told lies about someone to get them in trouble -you know.) But what about when they do things they don't even know

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are sinful? They're still sinful. The payment for any sin is still death (Rom.6:23). A town couple came to me once wanting to get married. So I explained what Christian churches believe about marriage, how sex is for marriage only, how it's permanent and sacred in the eyes of God, how it takes self-denial, how not following God's rules always ends up hurting us somehow. The girl was staring at me mouth a-gape. I asked her if I was making sense to her. She said, yes but that this was the first time in her life she had ever heard anything about these things! Yom Kippur sacrifices remind us that we need forgiveness of sin we don't even know about! (Heb.9:7)

◆ If we are honest before God, the ways we have gone against God that we know about are shameful enough. The hate we've felt. The jealousy and envy. Our lusts. The sacrifices remind us there are tears that need mending if we are to find joy that only God can give.

◆ **B.** The peoples substitutes were two goats. The killed goat represented the consequence of sin. The scapegoat was abandoned in the desert representing how God promised to remove sin from us, to take it away. To throw it away for good somehow. Is anyone glad about this?

◆ *"He will not always accuse, nor will he harbour his anger for ever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as*

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the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him;"
Psalms 103:9-13, NIV.

◆ The sacrifices also represent God's compassion. They were symbolic payment of the final bill paid by Jesus on the cross of Good Friday. God was accepting a substitute!

◆ "Such a high priest meets our need--one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself." Hebrews 7:26, 27, NIV.

◆ Now why would anyone die for anyone else? Because they love them. Jesus, you see, fulfills everything. He is the Priest that climbs up on the altar as the lamb to be slain. He is the person pushing you out of the way of the bus and getting hit instead. He is the brother asking to be hung by the neck until dead, so you can go home. He is the husband of the Church, giving her that last seat in the lifeboat as the ship sinks. He is a father, going to jail so his son can have a chance to grow up and live. He is a teacher stepping in front of a student as a terrorist opens fire. He is all these things and much more. He is the Son of God, taking our sin, our cross, our shame, and giving us his name, his glory, his merit.

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◆**3. The People.** The Day of Atonement was a day for the whole nation. It's wasn't a couple of priests doing their thing at the Tabernacle. The whole group was supposed to come and witness it. It was, after all, their sins getting laid on the goats, right? The People gathered is a picture of repentance and humility.

◆v21 The priest lays his hands on the goats head and what? "Confesses all the sickness and rebellion of the people, symbolically putting them on the goat.

◆So what is the peoples part here? The people represent us. The are to humble themselves (v29, 31 "deny": this is an act of humility), admitting their sin by their very presence there and accept atonement.

◆You will notice v30 says they are cleansed. They don't do it for themselves. They accept it. Its the same for us. There is no dirtiness that Jesus cannot cleanse you from.

◆**Conclusion:** so in a minute you are invited to sort of walk through the Day of Atonement here tonight. You opportunity is to follow the steps of the priest in Leviticus

◆1) to wash at the first station as a symbol of your need to be washed inside.

◆2) at the second station, to lay your hands on the sacrifice by marking a lamb red, thereby symbolically putting your sins on the lamb of God who willing accepts them

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- ◆3) at the third station, to trade your sins for body and blood of Jesus the Messiah by leaving your lamb and taking the Lord's supper.
- ◆4) the last step is to enter behind the curtain, symbolizing the truth the Jesus has opened the way to God for you. His sacrifice is your entrance in to life eternal. You may pause before the cross there if you like and then exist following the lighted pathway.
- ◆This will be the conclusion of our worship time tonight. You needn't come back in the sanctuary but depart in the peace of the Lord.
- ◆
- ◆"With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!"
Mark 15:37-39, NIV.
- ◆
- ◆"When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are

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ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!" Hebrews 9:11-14, NIV.



◆"And where [sins] have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin. Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience ..." Hebrews 10:18-22, NIV.