

Intro:

I noticed a remarkable thing in my studies this week. The word I plan to preach on for our Romans message (yes, we are moving at a rapid speed!) is a word that is wrapped up in the meaning and understanding of one particular chapter in the Old Testament.

That chapter happens to be the one that we are scheduled to look at in our Leviticus communion series which happens to be today.

I didn't plan this at all, in fact, I am in a little bit of a scramble in my studies, what with all the extra things I am doing right now. I am barely keeping up with myself.

Beyond question, then, it is the Lord's doing that we are in this chapter and this verse today.

So I have decided to switch our Leviticus message to the morning and the Romans message to the afternoon. That way you will be able to get the full impact of our next phrase in Romans when we look at it this afternoon.

Now I want to remind you of something we have been saying about Leviticus all the way through the laws of cleanness and uncleanness:

A key principle for understanding Leviticus:

- The legal sections are framed by and for the historical sections, not the other way around.
- Lev 1-7 [the sacrifices] are given for clearer understanding of the background of Lev 8-10 [the ordination of the priests]
- Lev 11-15 [laws of cleanness and uncleanness] are given for clearer understanding of significance of Lev 16 [Day of Atonement]

We have been trying to hold in our minds for some months now this idea: The significance of the Day of Atonement lies in the laws of cleanness and uncleanness.

Now the Laws of Cleanness and Uncleanness covered these topics:

- The laws of clean and unclean animals for food (11)
- The laws of cleanness after childbirth (12)
- The laws of leprosy (13-14)
- The laws of bodily discharges (15)

We see that there is a provision in the Law for sins.

- The sacrificial system is designed so individuals to make individual atonement for their sins.

- The sacrificial system is designed to constantly make national atonement for the sins of the nation.

We also see that there is such a thing as uncleanness, the ‘taint of death’ that attaches itself to man and clings to him so that his fellowship with God is broken. There is a provision in the law for cleansing from these things as well.

The Day of Atonement is a combination of sacrifice and cleansing, but the whole meaning and focus is something that is designed to turn men’s hearts away from self and toward God, to understand both their need before God and God’s gracious provision for man.

I have entitled our message:

The Day of Affliction

... for that is what it was intended to be in ancient Israel, a day of affliction.

Read Lev 16, but give this basic outline as you read:

- Introduction (1-2)
Note: the historical connection – the focal point of the first 16 chapters of Lev is the consecration of the priests and the failure of Nadab & Abihu
- Preparation – animals and dress (3-5)
- Summary – brief outline of ceremony (6-10)
- Detail – more detailed description (11-28)
 - Blood sprinkling (11-19)
Note in particular:
 1. The incense burned first in H of H
 2. The blood sprinkled to atone for Aaron and sons
 3. The blood sprinkled to atone for the people
 - The scapegoat (20-22)
 - Cleansing of the participants (22-28)
- Duty of the people (29-34)
The last thing to note is the things that are being atoned for (33):
 1. The holy sanctuary (*i.e.*, holy of holies)
 2. The tabernacle
 3. The altar (in the courtyard)
 4. The priests
 5. The people

Also notice the emphasis on *cleansing*. The Day of Atonement, the Day of

Affliction, is a cleansing ritual. The accumulated uncleanness of the nation, year by year, had to be removed in order for the people to have *any* access to God at all.

Proposition: Human contact with God is constantly hindered by persistent uncleanness and sin.

I. Human contact with God renewed by private ritual

A. Atonement must be made in private, not in public

1. Notice the emphasis on privacy

- a. The high priest may not enter 'at any time' to the holy place (*i.e.*, any old time) (2)

This is because of the presence of the Lord in the sanctuary.

- b. The specifics of his entrance are carefully spelled out (3-5)
c. The burning of the incense creates a cloud of smoke to 'cover' the mercy-seat lest Aaron die (13)

It is as if even Aaron isn't allowed to see clearly what he himself is doing.

- d. No one is to be in the tent of meeting while Aaron is in the holy place (17)

- 1) Surely there were junior priests in assistance with the slaughter of the bull
2) All must file out before Aaron could enter the holy place

2. The ritual is intended primarily to cleanse the place of worship

- a. The daily life of the nation is polluting – the people are unclean, the sanctuary itself, in spite of elaborate precautions is also unclean

- b. The cleansing follows a progressive order, from most private to most public

- 1) Holy of holies
2) Holy place
3) Altar in courtyard
4) Finally scapegoat is sent out in the sight of all

Remember the privacy and hidden character of this ritual for our afternoon message – this is very important!

We don't have laws of cleanness and uncleanness as New Testament Christians, but let us consider what our attitudes and actions do to our personal relationship with God.

- Peter tells us that our prayers can be hindered because of the way we live.

B. Atonement can only be made by the priest as a slave, not a king (4)

1. The high priest's garments for the Atonement ritual

- a. All of linen – all white
- b. Simple, not ornate, in contrast to normal ornate priestly garments

These are the garments of a slave not a king.

2. The meaning of Aaron's roles

- a. Usual role as high priest: God's representative to the people – ornate clothing
- b. Day of atonement role: man's representative to God – simple clothing

This clothing calls to mind the work of Christ as prophesied by Isaiah, "Behold, my servant..."

Jesus laid aside his divine prerogatives and humbled himself, even to the death of the cross.

II. Human contact with God enabled by public forgiveness (20-22)

- A. The people wait outside the tabernacle complex through all the private ritual
- B. High priest appears with the live goat and confesses the sins of the people
- C. The goat is led out into the wilderness, symbolically bearing the sins of the people far away

This is the part of the ritual the people see. This is the significant thing to them: their yearly sins are carried away, never to be seen again.

The efficacy of the second goat lies in the death of the first goat:

- If the lottery had gone differently, the second goat would have been the one sacrificed.
- The sacrificed goat died in the place of the second goat, as well as in the place of the people.
- The sacrificed goat cleansed the tabernacle, so the people could have access to communion with God, so that the sending away of the second goat would mean something.

Both parts of this ritual are essential to enable the relationship between God and people to continue.

As we consider the NT, we see Jesus represented in the first goat and the second goat:

- As the first goat, he is the one who died to cleanse the sanctuary and gain an entrance for us.
- As the second goat, he is the one who bore our sins far away, to a place from which they never shall return.

III. Human contact with God restored by the day of affliction

A. Note that the day ends with the high priest wearing the garments of the priesthood (23-24)

1. No longer does he stand for the people as a servant
2. Now he stands before the people as if God himself were in their midst

Our Lord Jesus came as a servant and took away sins, as we have seen.

Our Lord Jesus will come again before his people and all the world, resplendent in glory.

- Every eye shall see
- Every knee shall bow
- Every tongue shall confess

- B. Note also that the day is solemnly impressed upon the people (29-34)
1. A statute for ever (29)
 2. You shall afflict your souls (29)
 3. You shall do no work [sabbath] (29)
 4. You and your sojourners (29)
 5. That is the day you shall be made clean (30)
 6. A sabbath of rest (31)
 7. You shall afflict your souls (31)
 8. A statute for ever (31)
 9. The priest shall officiate as a servant as the Lord prescribed (32-33)
 10. An everlasting statute (34)

Do you see how this is impressed on the people?

- Three times a permanent statute
- Twice you shall afflict your souls
- Twice a sabbath is invoked
- Sojourners are included in the sabbath rest

Conclusion:

Proposition: Human contact with God is constantly hindered by persistent uncleanness and sin.

The difficulty of restoring what Adam lost in the fall is approximated by the yearly Day of Atonement — but it cannot bring about permanent restoration.

It is a day.

Every year...

It is a day of anticipation.

For that, come back for our afternoon message.