

"Atonement is Provided for Iniquity"

By James Moriello, Firm Foundation Christian Church, Woonsocket RI, 2024

"In mercy and truth Atonement is provided for iniquity; And by the fear of the LORD one departs from evil" (Proverbs 16:6, NKJV)

Atonement is a major theme throughout the Bible. In the Old Testament, it deals with the covering of sins for a time. In the New Testament, it deals with the covering of sins once for all. The key Bible books concerning atonement are Leviticus and Hebrews.

In Leviticus 23:26-32, the Day of Atonement is listed as the sixth of the seven prescribed feasts of Israel in that chapter. The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) falls on 10 Tishri on the Hebrew calendar (in 2024 it begins on the evening of Friday, October 11th). It is a day of national and individual confession of and repentance for sin. The Jewish High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies once per year, on the Day of Atonement. The New Testament fulfillment is recorded in theological terms in Hebrews 9:16-15. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission" of sin (Hebrews 9:22). This Jesus did "once for all" (Hebrews 7:27).

Leviticus Chapter 16 is dedicated exclusively to the Law concerning the Day of Atonement. The priest would not approach the Lord with his priestly garments, but with the humble attire of a servant. The Glory of God would appear on that day in the form of a cloud above the mercy seat, which was over the Ark of the Covenant. Two types of offerings would be offered, the sin offering which speaks of justification, and the burnt offering which speaks of sanctification. There were also two goats. One goat would be killed as a sin offering, while the scapegoat would go free. Here we have wonderful pictures of Christ's work. First, as Christ is our sin offering, we go free. Second, the scapegoat can be seen as bearing sin into the wilderness, where it will be taken away. The afternoon service had Christological overtones. The High Priest would pronounce God's covenant personal Old Testament Name "YHWH", the only time this was allowed by oral law. One goat was associated with this Name, and the other was called "azel" (Hebrew: escape) or in an alternate tradition "Azazel" (Hebrew: a demon's proper name). The goat was offered, the bull was offered, and then incense was offered, filling the room with smoke. This is an earthly type of God's heavenly dwelling place (Cf. Isaiah 6:4). Then there would be the sprinkling of the blood, which portends "the precious blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1:19). Amen. Selah.