

(Lev. 16:1) - This was when Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, offered "*strange fire before the Lord (Leviticus 10:1-3)*". The only fire acceptable to God was to be taken from the brazen altar where this fire fell from heaven to consume the sacrifice and was placed into the golden altar of incense in the holy place. Nadab and Abihu offered common fire against God's commandments. God's judgment fell upon them. The burnt offering, the fire, and the altar of incense, all pictured salvation and acceptance with God through the death of Christ. Without His death, His satisfaction to justice, for us, and without His intercession, there is only eternal death.

(Lev. 16:2-3) - The following verses describe in detail the Day of Atonement (*cf. Lev. 23:27-28*), which was the most solemn holy day of all the feasts and festivals for the Israelites under the Old Covenant Law. It occurred once a year on the tenth day of the seventh month of the Hebrew calendar. On that day, the high priest was to perform elaborate rituals to atone for the sins of the people. It had to be repeated each year because this ritual involving the blood of bulls and goats could not and did not actually put away the sins of the people in a spiritual and eternal way before God (*Heb. 9:9; 10:1-4*). They only accomplished a physical, temporal, and ceremonial covering of sins by which God had determined to be the way in which He would deal with this nation in a physical, temporal, and ceremonial way (*Heb. 9:6,13*). But the fact that this ritual was once a year signified that the Lord Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah, would come in time and by His ONE SACRIFICE for the sins of God's chosen people (God's elect), which had been imputed to Him, would accomplish eternally, not a temporal and ceremonial covering of sins, but a complete purging away of all the sins of all His people forever and ever (*John 19:30; Heb. 1:3; 9:14; 10:14*).

Aaron, and all high priests descended from him, during the time that the Old Covenant was in force (*Heb. 9:10*), were to go into the holy of holies one time a year on this day of atonement. This is where and when God would reveal His glory within the veil before the mercy seat. The ritual began with Aaron coming into the holy of holies. God told Moses to warn Aaron not to come into the most holy place except on this special day once a year, and not without blood, lest he die (*Heb. 9:7*). The people were to understand that atonement for sin was to be done God's way. This shows us that God's way of our eternal salvation from sin, God's way of establishing righteousness by which He justifies sinners, is HIS way, the way of sovereign grace through the merits of Christ's blood (His righteousness imputed) (*John 14:6; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 10:17-22*). The day of atonement pointed to the day of the cross in which Christ, as our Surety and Substitute, accomplished our complete and eternal redemption by His death on the cross. THIS WAS (AND IS) INDEED THE GREATEST OF ALL DAYS IN REDEMPTIVE HISTORY.

(Lev. 16:4) - On this day, before entering the holy of holies, Aaron had to wash himself in water and then put on special garments that God designed and ordained for the high priest. This typified the purity and holiness of Christ in the glory of His Person as God in sinless human flesh. Christ was made sin for us but He himself knew no sin. He was (and is) the impeccable Christ, the Lamb of God without spot or blemish. He was made sin only by the imputation of the sins of God's people to His account.

(Lev. 16:5-6) - Aaron had to offer sacrifice first for himself and his family because he himself, and his family, were all sinners who needed an atonement for their own sins. There are those who erroneously apply this part of the type to Christ Himself claiming that He had to first offer Himself as a sacrifice for His own sins and then offer Himself for the sins of His people.

This is not so! This is heresy! Again, Christ had no sins of His own. The proponents of this heresy say that our sins became His sins, and they quote passages such as *Psalms 69:5* where David writes of himself, and also prophetically of Christ Whom David typified - "*O God, Thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee.*" As one interpreter wrote, "David might truly say this but not our Lord, unless he refers to our sins imputed and laid to his charge. He was made to be sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21)."¹ The sins of God's elect DID become Christ's sins, but only by the imputation of the debt of those sins to His account. Christ was never corrupted or contaminated with our sins, but He did become legally responsible for our sins. Unlike Aaron and all human high priests under the Old Covenant, Christ was not a sinner and did not have to offer Himself unto God first for His own sins. This is a major aspect of His superior priesthood over the priesthood of Aaron (*Heb. 7:22-28*).

(Lev. 16:7-10) - After this, Aaron was to bring two goats. He was to "*cast lots upon the two goats.*" The one upon which the lot fell was to be sacrificed for the people (*Lev. 16:16*), and its blood was sprinkled on the ark of the covenant on the mercy seat. The other goat was used as a "*scapegoat.*" Aaron placed his hands on its head, confessed over it the sins of the Israelites, and sent the goat out "*with a fit man*" who released it into the wilderness never to be seen again (*Lev. 16:20-23*). The goat carried on itself all the sins of the people, which were forgiven for another year (*Lev. 16:30*). "*Putting their sins upon the head of the goat*" is a clear and classic type of the imputation of our sins to Christ. That goat was not made a sinner. Sins were not transferred into that goat in any way. That goat typified Christ upon whom all of the sins of all of God's elect were charged and for which He paid with the price of His own blood. Christ suffered "*the just for the unjust*" (*1 Pet. 3:18*), and God was just to punish His sinless Son for the sins of His people imputed to Him (*Rom. 3:21-26*). God is just to justify His people (sinners saved by grace) based on Christ's righteousness imputed to them (*Rom 4:1-8; 2 Cor. 5:19-21*).

Leviticus 16:29-31 tells us that this day of atonement was to be a "*statute forever*" and a "*sabbath of rest*" unto them "*by a statute for ever.*" Does this mean that these sacrifices would never cease and that we should be offering animal sacrifices today? NO! The context of this passage as well as the whole Bible shows us that this meant a continual statute during the whole time of the Old Covenant. It was all to be fulfilled and vanish away by the coming of Christ to accomplish eternal salvation for His people (*Heb. 8; 9:1-14*). All of this shows us how Christ is the complete atonement for our sins and how He, by Himself for our sins, satisfied God's justice in our stead, and brought in an everlasting righteousness which God has imputed to His chosen people for our justification. Christ, our fit Man (Godman) and our Scapegoat has carried our sins away forever and ever. Christ is our great High Priest (*Heb. 4:14*). He is also our Lamb, sacrificed for our sins. *2 Corinthians 5:21* says that Christ was "*made sin*" for us so that we "*might be made the righteousness of God in Him.*" Our sins were laid on Christ Who in Himself had no sin and remained so even under the justice of His Father's wrath. In this work, He brought forth and finished an everlasting righteousness of infinite value to glorify God in the salvation of His people (*cf. Isa. 53*). And Christ fulfilled what the scapegoat represented - the complete removal of our sins from any record in God's sight (*Rom. 8:33-34; Heb. 8:10; 10:17*). There is no longer a need to sacrifice animals or impute sins to a scapegoat to have them carried away. Christ has been sacrificed, and He has "*scapegoated*" for us. Because of Christ's death and resurrection, ONCE FOR ALL His people, our sins have been purged and have been removed never to be brought up again.

¹ Mahan, Henry, *With New Testament Eyes, Vol. 1*, page 252.