



EXPLORE THE BIBLE.

Genesis Sermon Series

Supports Session 1: A Substitute

Sermon Title: "The Mystery of Blood Atonement" (Leviticus 16:15-24)

Connection to Session 1

In Genesis 22, God provided a sacrificial lamb as a substitute for Isaac. Many years later, when God instituted the Day of Atonement, He required priests to offer bulls and goats as substitutionary sacrifices for the sins of the people.

Introduction/Opening

The most solemn feast on the Jewish calendar was the Day of Atonement. On this day, the high priest would offer a series of sacrifices to atone for the sins of the people. The priest would take the blood from these sacrifices into the Holy of Holies and sprinkle it on the mercy seat, which was the top of the Ark of the Covenant. Christians today don't observe this day, and the book of Hebrews tells us why. These animal sacrifices were only a symbol of a much greater sacrifice that would one day atone for man's sins once and for all—the Lord Jesus Christ.

Outline

1. It was a solemn occasion.

Many of the Jewish feasts had joyous aspects. For instance, Passover commemorated the delivery of the Jews from slavery in Egypt, so it was a celebratory feast. The Day of Atonement was a time of deep reflection and soul-searching.

- a) God instructed them not to do any work (v. 29). What did this mean in practical terms?
 - i. Traditionally, Jews are to abstain from eating and drinking, bathing, anointing the body with any oils, wearing shoes, and sexual relations on this day.
 - ii. Reformed Jews aren't as strict in their requirements, but even they forbid eating and drinking on this day.
- b) Why did He require them to do this? (v. 30).
 - i. To remind them of God's holiness.
 - ii. To remind them of their own sinfulness.

2. It was a substitutionary act.

- a) The high priest was commanded to perform a series of rituals.
 - i. He was to select two young goats: one would be a blood sacrifice, and the other would be the scapegoat.

- ii. He was to sacrifice a bull then sprinkle its blood on the Ark of the Covenant and all around the Holy of Holies. This was to make atonement for his own sins (vv. 6-14).
 - iii. He would then sacrifice one of the goats and do the same with its blood. This was to atone for the sins of the people (vv. 15-16).
 - iv. The priest would place his hands on the scapegoat and confess over it “all the Israelites’ iniquities and rebellious acts” (v. 21). He would then have the scapegoat taken far out into the wilderness where it could never find its way back (vv. 20-22).
- b) Why did God command these rituals?
- i. To demonstrate the high price of sin.
 - ii. To teach people the concept of substitution (they deserved to die, but the goat died in their place).
 - iii. To symbolize the substitutionary death of Jesus.

3. It was a symbolic sacrifice.

- a) These sacrifices had to be repeated every year (v. 34). This proved their insufficiency to take away sin (Heb. 10:1-4).
- b) They merely symbolized the coming sacrifice of Jesus.
 - i. Animal sacrifices were only symbols of atonement, but Jesus literally took our sins upon Himself.
 - ii. Animal sacrifices had to be repeated year after year, but Jesus died for our sins once and for all.

Conclusion

Some time ago, I came across an old “Peanuts” comic strip that appeared during the Christmas season many years ago. Charlie Brown’s friend Shermey said, “I’ve got this Santa Claus thing all figured out, Charlie Brown. If there is a Santa Claus, he’s going to be too nice not to bring me any presents no matter how I act, right? And if there isn’t a Santa Claus, then I haven’t really lost anything, right?” After Shermey left, Charlie Brown said, “Wrong! But I don’t know where!”

Unfortunately, a lot of people today seem to view God in the same way. They think if there is a God, then He’s much too loving to send them to hell regardless of what they do. And if there is no God, then what does it matter? There is a God, and He loves you. Yet the Bible also says He is holy. Because He is holy, He cannot tolerate any kind of unrighteousness. The same Bible also says that you and I have sinned against Him, and thus we’re under His judgment. There is good news. Jesus gave His life on the cross and paid the full penalty that we deserve. He has made final atonement. He has risen from the dead, and He offers forgiveness and eternal life to those who repent of their sins and place their faith in Him. Through Jesus, we can receive full cleansing and full pardon.

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