

God's Way to Forgive and Remove True Guilt

International Bible Lesson

Leviticus 16:11-19

Sunday, February 21, 2016

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"In this way the high priest will make atonement for the Most Holy Place because of the uncleanness and rebellion of the Israelites, whatever their sins have been. He is to do the same for the tent of meeting, which is among them in the midst of their uncleanness" (Leviticus 16:16).

The intentional sins and rebellion of the Israelites did more than morally and spiritually contaminate them and rupture their relationship with God. Even the tent of meeting that covered the Most Holy Place became unclean in the midst of an unclean community. The Israelites had to live with their spiritual uncleanness and moral guilt in the midst of an unclean people until the Day of Atonement in the seventh month of the Israelite calendar. By God's grace, on that one Day of Atonement the Israelites could avail themselves of God's way of making sacrifices so the high priest, all the priests, and the people could be forgiven for their rebellion against God and "whatever their sins have been." Through arrangements God commanded, the high priest used a scapegoat to bear away sins and remove true guilt. By the sacrificial sprinkling of blood from a bull and a goat, everyone learned that the consequence of sin is death, and only by the shedding of blood can believers be cleansed morally and spiritually. The sacrifices on the Day of Atonement pointed to the sacrificial death of Jesus the Messiah. Jesus came to be the perfect High Priest, Scapegoat, and Sacrifice. Jesus shed His blood to forgive, cleanse, remove the guilt, and empower to serve God all who will believe in Him. Not just on one special day a year, but every day, Jesus remains ready to save those who will trust in Him. — L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

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Thinking Further

1. In what month did the Israelites celebrate the Passover? In what month did the Israelites celebrate the Day of Atonement?

2. What did the High Priest sacrifice for his sins and the sins of the priests? What did the High Priest sacrifice for the sins of the people?

3. Why did the priest burn incense in the Holy of Holies?

4. How did the priests and people know that the High Priest had done what was needed for the forgiveness of their sins?

5. How do we know that Jesus' death on the cross was an acceptable sacrifice to God for the forgiveness of our sins, our cleansing from sins, and the removal of our guilt?