

Screenshots of Jesus

A companion study to the podcasts of Amber Albee Swenson

Day of Atonement:

Let's start with the definition of atonement. It means reparation for a wrong, or to make amends. In Christianity it means the reconciliation of mankind to God through Jesus Christ. An easy way to remember it is by saying we are "at one" with God through the work of Jesus.

God commanded his people to observe one special day during which the high priest would sacrifice for the people's sin. First, let's look at the people's observance and then we'll look at the role of the priests.

1. Read Leviticus 23:26-32. These are the rules for the people who were to observe the Day of Atonement. What two things were they to abstain from on this day?

To deny themselves was to fast. For 24 hours the people were not to eat, to observe the day that their sins were paid for and removed.

2. What was the punishment for those who ate or worked on that day?

Those are severe punishments! The day was to be a strict observance, not at all like our holiday celebrations.

3. What special day on our calendar would be comparable to the Day of Atonement?

Ok, now let's look at the role of the priests. Read Leviticus 16:1-2.

Of special note is that the priests couldn't just walk into the room known as the Most Holy Place or the Holy of Holies anytime they wanted. The ark of the covenant was in that room, and they were only to go in once a year.

Read Leviticus 16:3-5.

The People's Bible notes that the clothes the priest wore was much more simplistic than his normal clothes. The high priest was a position of great honor, and normally his clothes reflected it. But on this day, he was to wear simple clothes, more represented of a slave than a priest, because he was to go before the Lord in great humiliation.

"It was
not with
perishable
things...
that you
were
redeemed
... but
with the
precious
blood
of
Christ...
" 1
Peter 1:
18-19

4. What would it look like for us to go before the Lord in great humiliation?

Read Leviticus 16:6-10.

First, Aaron had to offer a sin offering for himself and his household. Then there would be a process of determining which goat would be sacrificed and which would be taken to the wilderness.

Read 11-19.

Here are some things to note:

The incense was to create enough smoke that the priest could not see the cover of the ark of the covenant, which symbolized the presence of God. The bull was sacrificed for the sins of the high priest and his family and the goat for the people.

This process showed the importance of sacrifice for redemption. Something had to die to remove the guilt from the people. And this ceremony had to be done year after year.

5. How do we experience the presence of God today?

Finally, read Leviticus 16:20-22.

Aaron would symbolically, through the laying of hands, transfer the sin of the people to the goat, after which the goat was led into the desert. It's not certain what became of the goat: it may have been left to wander, or it may have been dropped off a cliff (People's Bible).

After this Aaron bathed, put on his regular clothes, and burnt the offerings for himself and the people. The man who took the goat had to bathe and wash his clothes.

Meanwhile the people of the camp could not work or eat. It was a solemn day to remember their sin and the payment that was required for their sin.

Big Idea: The high priest could enter the Most Holy Place once a year to offer incense and blood as a payment for the sins of the people. The people would fast and refrain from work to observe the special day.

Action Item: Take a minute to appreciate that Jesus paid for everything once and for all. We are no longer required to feel the weight of our sin, because through Jesus, the debt has been paid in full.

Prayer: God, thank you for sending your Son to take away our sin. Thank you for removing the weight of guilt so we have nothing to carry. Let us never forget the enormous price Jesus paid. And help us to bask and fully appreciate the freedom of forgiveness. In Jesus' name, amen.