THE THREE PICTURES IN THE ATONEMENT

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 16  
  
INTRODUCTION

The apostle John, wrote in his Gospel, "***For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life***".

And that same apostle in the book of revelation writes in [Revelation 13:8](http://www.sermoncentral.com/bible/NIV/Revelation-13.asp?passage=Revelation%2013%3A8&ScrptureHover=sermon-60252-Three%20Pictures%20In%20Atonement) ***[All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the Lamb’s book of life, the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world.](http://www.sermoncentral.com/bible/NIV/Revelation-13.asp?passage=Revelation%2013%3A8&ScrptureHover=sermon-60252-Three%20Pictures%20In%20Atonement)***

that, Christ the lamb of God "was slain from the creation of the world".

Before God even created the world, before He set the stars in place, before He breathed the breath of life into the nostrils of man, God knew that Mankind would fall, He knew that mankind would sin and rebel against Him. And knowing this, God planned and God set in motion, the means for mankind’s redemption, through the death and atoning sacrifice of the Lamb, His Son, Jesus Christ.

And that plan would dramatically unfold throughout the years of human history, and at just the right time, at just the right moment in human history, God came and dwelt with man, to make atonement for, and to redeem fallen men. The world in Palestine 2000 years ago was ripe, it was ready and it was prepared for the coming of the Lamb of God, like no other time before or since.

Today, we are going to study, The Day of Atonement, that is described in detail for us in the 16th chapter of Leviticus. The day of atonement was part of the annual feasts the Israelites were to celebrate. Starting in April, (their first month, with Passover, the feast of Unleavened Bread. This took place on the 15th day of the first month to remember how God brought the Israelites of our slavery in Egypt. On the day before the Passover began, a lamb had to be killed at 3:00pm. Three days later they had to offer the first-fruits of the harvest to God. It’s not difficult to discern the similarities in pattern with Jesus’ death and resurrection.

Fifty days after, that they were to hold the Feast of Pentecost, (*pente* meaning 50), or the Feast of Weeks. This was the day that the law was given on Sinai. They were to remember this and give thanks for it. When the law was given at Sinai on the very first Pentecost, 3,000 people were put to death because of their sin. Centuries later, when the Spirit was given at Pentecost, 3,000 were saved.

Next comes the feasts towards the end of the year (the 7th month), or our September/October. At the Feast of Trumpets, the shofar, the old ram’s horn was blown. This signaled a whole new round of feasts.

Then came the Day of Atonement, the crucial day when the scapegoat was pushed out of the camp with all the sins of the people on its head.

The feast of tabernacles (AKA Succoth) came after that, lasting eight days. For this feast they moved out of their houses and lived in shelters. They had to be able to see the stars through the roof of the shelter to remind them of their 40 years of foolish wandering in the wilderness when they could have reached the Promised Land in 11 days.

What I see in this is three pictures, and God the master painter, takes out the canvas, the paint, and the brush of His Word. And, as He skillfully blends the colours that make up this masterpiece, the words of the 16th chapter come to life on the canvas. And as He dips His brush, for that last and final stroke of red, the heart of God is heavy, and a tear rolls down the cheek of the Almighty God, as the colors, as the shadows, and as the images on the canvas, tear at His heart bringing to his mind, the great suffering that His own Son would one day endure.

Today as we study Lev 16, we will stroll through the art gallery of the word of God. And we will see 3 masterpieces, 3 great works that bring to life the power and the purpose of the day of atonement.

***Leviticus 16:1-10, 15-17, 20-22***

***And Jehovah spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they offered before Jehovah and they died. And Jehovah said to Moses, Speak to Aaron your brother, that he does not come at all times into the sanctuary within the veil before the mercy-seat, which is on the Ark, so that he will not die. For I will appear in the cloud on the mercy-seat. Aaron shall come into the sanctuary this way: with a bull, a son of the herd, for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering. He shall put on the holy linen coat, and he shall have the linen breeches on his flesh, and shall be girded with a linen girdle, and with the linen miter he shall be dressed. These are holy garments. And he shall wash his flesh in water and put them on. And he shall take from the congregation of the sons of Israel two kids of the goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering. And Aaron shall offer his young bull of the sin offering which is for himself, and make an atonement for himself and for his house. And he shall take the two he-goats and present them before Jehovah at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And Aaron shall cast lots on the two he-goats; one lot for Jehovah and the other lot for a complete removal. And Aaron shall bring the goat on which Jehovah's lot fell, and offer it for a sin offering. But the goat on which the lot fell to be the complete removal shall be presented alive before Jehovah, to make an atonement with him, to let him go for a complete removal into the wilderness.***

***Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering that is for the people, and bring its blood inside the veil. And he shall do with that blood as he did with the blood of the young bull, and sprinkle it on the mercy-seat and before the mercy-seat. And he shall atone for the sanctuary, because of the uncleannesses of the sons of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins. And so he shall do for the tabernacle of the congregation which remains with them in the midst of their uncleannesses. And there shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goes in to make an atonement in the sanctuary, until he comes out and has made an atonement for himself, and for his household, and for all the congregation of Israel.***

***And when he has made an end of reconciling the sanctuary and the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, he shall bring the live goat. And Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the sins of the sons of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send away by the hand of a chosen man into the wilderness. And the goat shall bear on him all their sins to a land in which no one lives. And he shall let the goat go in the wilderness.***

In this text we will see painted for us in the power of God’s Word, 3 great pictures.   
  
I. The first picture that we come to is entitled, "The Great Priest", and it is a Portrait of Christ our mediator.

As with all the pictures that we will look at today, we will first look at the picture, in the shadow of the Old Testament. After which, we will pull the picture off the wall and enjoy, it’s full beauty and glory as we examine the painting in the light of its New Testament fulfillment.

The crowd slowly gathered, they were quiet, they were reverent and a little afraid, as they gathered around the tent of meeting.

This was the great Day of Atonement, this was the day that God Himself had appointed, this was the day when Aaron their High Priest, would be their Mediator, When Aaron their High Priest would stand between, God and the people. On this day, (7th month 10th day) atonement would be made for their sins. This Atonement provided the way (by removing their sin) for the people to be AT ONE with God.

Aaron was the high priest, he was the one chosen to be the mediator, chosen to stand between God and the Israelites. Even though this was without doubt, a high and honorable position, Aaron was allowed to go into the Most Holy place, only once a year, on the Day of Atonement.

The Most Holy Place was located behind the thick veil in the tabernacle. And it was in this room that the Ark of the Covenant was kept. And on top of the Ark of the Covenant made of Gold was the Atonement cover with 2 angels on top with their wings folded down bowing towards the center of the cover.

And above that center was a cloud in which dwelt the presence of God. Only Aaron the High Priest could enter here, and only once a year. Can you imagine how Aaron must have felt as he slowly walked through the Holy place (passed the table of showbread, passed the golden lamb stand, and finally passed the altar of incense) and then with head bowed low he walked passed the thick veil, and now he was in the Most Holy Place, The Holy of Holies, And he turned and there right above the ark of the covenant was the very glory of God.

Jewish Tradition tells us that they sewed bells into the bottom hem of the High Priests robe. And they also tied a rope around his ankle. So that whenever the High Priest walked around in the Holy of Holies, they would hear the bells, if the bells stopped ringing, that would mean something had happened to the High Priest. And no one dared to enter the Holy of Holies to see what happened, so the rope was used, to pull out the High Priest.

The God of Israel, our God is a Holy God, and man, even if he is the High Priest, could not simply crawl out of bed, and walk out of his tent and walk into the presence of God. There are certain things that the High Priest was required to do, before he was allowed access to the Holy of Holies, if he came in without meeting the standard set by God, he would be met with the same fate as Nadab and Abihu (Aarons sons).

Aaron had to bathe himself and he had to put on sacred garments. The High Priest had to be spotless in dress.

And because Aaron was not without sin, he first had to make atonement for his own sins and for the sin of his household by sacrificing a bull.

Only when Aaron, the high priest had made himself ready, could he take the blood of the sacrificed animal into the presence of God, to make atonement for the people. [verse 17]

Every year the High Priest bore the heavy burden of being the mediator between God and His people.

Every year he would offer the same sacrifices. And every year the responsibility was all his, he had do to it alone. No one was allowed to be with him or help him as he carried out this vital task.

What a tremendous weight, what a colossal burden, the High Priest carried and after each year he knew that in 365 days he would have to do it again. So painstaking and trying was his work that after it was over the Jews would gather around him with sympathy and congratulations that he was brought through it safely.

Now, we will walk over and take this Old Testament painting, "The Great Priest", off the wall, and we will view it in the LIGHT of the New Testament.

Aaron was a good High Priest, and over the next 1400 years I am sure there were more good and honorable HP. They did the best they could but they were merely men.

Friends, today, we too have a HP, But our HP, is much greater and is far better than any of the Aaronic Priests. Our HP is Jesus Christ our Lord.  
And as the light of God’s revealed Word shines on the OT High Priests, we will see that it is a portrait of Christ, who is our Mediator, The ONE who stands between God, and all people.

Let read some scripture from the book of Hebrews, These passages will clearly demonstrate that Christ is a far better high priest.

***Hebrews 7:26-27. For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners and made higher than the heavens, who does not need, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice daily, first for his own sins and then for the people's sins. For He did this once for all, when He offered up Himself.***

***Hebrews 9:11-15 But when Christ had become a high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building nor by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered once for all into the Holies, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean sanctifies to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ (who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God) purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause He is the Mediator of the new covenant, so that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, those who are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.***

***Hebrews 10:11-14 And indeed every priest stands daily ministering and offering often the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right of God, from then on expecting until His enemies are made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are sanctified.***

In Jesus the Glory, splendor and power of the HP comes to full life. Earlier we mentioned how Aaron bore this heavy burden of responsibility all alone. However, it was only a picture of the much more crushing load which lay on upon the shoulders of our HP. All through His life, this heavy weight was upon Him, pressing with ever increasing force upon His soul.

And in the garden we see this burden reach it’s cruel, crushing climax.

He was on His face praying, He was tired, He was afraid, and yet He was determined to do His father’s will.

He saw in the distance the flickering lights of torches and He heard the familiar sound of soldiers in armor as they marched up the hill.

He knew the time was at hand.

He what the coming hours would bring.

He would stand before Jewish and Roman leaders.

His back was destined to be whipped raw as a Roman scourge 39 times tore across His flesh.

Beatings, mockings, insults, pain, nails and a cruel cross of wood is what lay before Him. As he stood up from His place of prayer he watched as His disciples scattered in terror. No one could help Him or be with him as He performed His High Priestly duty, even His Father would have to turn His back on Him.

Jesus is our High Priest and He is far better than any other.

Aaron was spotless in dress; Christ was spotless in character

Aaron entered the earthly tabernacle; Christ entered the heavenly tabernacle.

Aaron entered behind the veil; Christ ripped opened the veil

Aaron offered for his own sins; Christ offered only for our sin

Aaron entered once a year; Christ entered once for all

Aaron offered for the whole nation; Christ offered for the whole world.

Aaron offered many sacrifices; Christ offered one sacrifice

Aaron offered blood of animals; Christ offered His own blood  
  
Christ brings to life and adds color and beauty, to the OT painting, ’The Great Priest".  
  
II. As we continue down the hall of the art gallery of the word of god we see another painting, it is entitled "the great pardon" and it is a portrait of Christ our "redeemer".

The Atonement for the people involved 2 goats. These goats were Syrian goats, a graceful, dignified and clean animal. They were often used as symbols of leadership and loyalty. They were very highly appreciated by the Jews, and were one of their most valuable domestic possessions.

Aaron brought the 2 goats to the entrance of the tent of meeting. And there the fate of each goat was determined. One goat was to be sacrificed and the other goat was to be the scapegoat.

Israel’s sin demanded an offering, it required the payment of a price, and the sacrificial blade came down upon, the innocent goat’s throat, killing the animal, it’s blood pouring out into a bowl.

It wasn’t enough, however for the goat simply to be sacrificed, it wasn’t enough merely for its blood to flow. For the blood to accomplish its purpose of atonement, it had to be carried into the Holy of Holies by the High Priest, it needed to be carried into the presence of God.

The 1st Goat symbolized the payment of the price, the 2nd goat symbolized to the people the results of the atonement.

Then Aaron placed his hand on the head of 2nd goat, the scapegoat, and confessed the wickedness, the sin and rebellion of the people. Then the goat was sent away, out into the desert, carrying with Him the sins of the people. God had forgiven, and God had forgotten the sins of the people. (as FAR As East...)

As we take a closer look at the painting, "The Great Pardon", We see that it is a portrait of Christ our Redeemer.

For over 1400 years, God had watched from heaven the endless sacrifices of lambs, rams and goats. These were a mere rehearsal for the true atonement.

And now, as they led Jesus out of the garden, the moment of truth was at hand. Now, was the moment when the True Lamb of God would be led, tied and bound like a lamb to the slaughter.

With vindictive, cruel hatred they beat, mocked, and whipped The Lamb of God. After which they led Jesus’s tired and battered body up the road to Golgotha, carrying a heavy wooden crossbeam.

How do you think God felt as He looked down from heaven? How did God feel as He saw the suffering of His son. Max Lucado in his book 6 Hours one Friday, captures in piercing detail the thoughts of God.

"Soldiers, you think you led Him? Ropes, you think you bind Him? Men, you think you sentence Him? He heeds not your commands. He winces not at your lashes. It is my voice he obeys. It is my condemnation he dreads. And it is your soul He saves."

"Oh my son, my child. Look up into the heavens and see my face before I turn it. Hear my voice before I silence it. Would that I could save you and them. But they don’t see and they don’t hear."

"The living must die so that the dying can live. The time has come to kill the lamb."

"Here is my cup, my son. The cup of sorrows. The cup of Sin".

"Slam mallet! Be true to your task. Let your ring be heard throughout the heavens."

"Lift Him soldiers. Lift Him high to His throne of mercy. Lift Him up to his perch of death. Lift Him above the people who curse His name."

"Is there no angel to save my Isaac? Is there no hand to redeem the redeemer?" Here is my cup my Son. Drink it alone"

"Every lie, every lure, every act done in the shadows was in that cup. Slowly and hideously they were absorbed into the body of the son. The final act of incarnation.

"The spotless Lamb was blemished. Flames began to lick at His feet. The King obeys his own edict "Where is the poison, there will be death, Where are the goblets there will be fire"

The king turns away from his prince. The undiluted wrath of a sin-hating Father falls upon His sin filled son. The fire envelops Him. The shadow hides Him. The Son looks to his Father, but His Father cannot be seen. My God, My God ...WHY?  
  
Jesus Christ shed His blood, paid our penalty, suffered our death. And Jesus rose from the dead, and He carried his blood atonement into the throne room of The Heavenly Father, removing our sin.

III. We have looked at 2 pictures (priest and pardon) and there is still one more to look at, the great possibility

Let’s read Leviticus [29-31]

The simple fact that the atonement sacrifice was made did not guarantee that an individual Israelite would benefit. They were not come to the Day of Atonement half-heartedly. But they were to deny themselves and come humbly before the Lord, recognizing and acknowledging their sin and need for atonement.

As we take this painting off the wall to get a look at it in the light of the New Testament, we see that it is different to the others. It’s a mirror and the portrait in the great possibility is a portrait of ourselves.

Jesus’s death burial and resurrection has made Atonement, His sacrifice has made forgiveness of sin and eternal life "a great possibility for everyone".

He has made it possible for you, and for me, to be saved from our sin and to live an abundant life here on earth as we wait to go to our heavenly home.

Look into the picture one more time, and see the great possibilities that are yours, if you submit completely to His Lordship.  
  
In the atonement we see 3 pictures,

The Great Priest  
The Great Pardon  
The Great Possibility  
  
Today as we come to our time of commitment, I asked you are you washed in the blood of the Lamb. True Jesus has through His death conquered sin, BUT this doesn’t automatically save anyone. We, like the Israelites have to come humbly, we have to deny ourselves and be obedient to God’s word. Which teaches that to be forgiven of our sins, to have the Atoning blood of Jesus applied to our lives we MUST Repent and be baptized (Immersed)

Jesus’s atoning blood will only save those who have humbly obeyed his Word.