

Leviticus 4:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he shall do with the bullock as he did with the bullock for a sin offering, so shall he do with this: and the priest shall make an atonement for them, and it shall be forgiven them.

Analysis

And he shall do with the bullock as he did with the bullock for a sin offering, so shall he do with this: and the priest shall make an atonement for them, and it shall be forgiven them.

This verse falls within the section on **Sin Offerings**. The sin offering (חטאת, chattat) provided atonement for unintentional sins, addressing the defilement sin causes in God's holy presence.

The Hebrew word kaphar (כָּפַר) means 'to cover' or 'to make atonement.' The sacrificial system provided temporary covering for sin, pointing forward to Christ's perfect, once-for-all sacrifice. The Aaronic priesthood mediated between God and Israel, offering sacrifices and maintaining the tabernacle. This prefigured Christ's superior priesthood after the order of Melchizedek. The five main offerings (burnt, grain, peace, sin, and guilt) addressed different aspects of relationship with God, all fulfilled in Christ's comprehensive sacrifice.

The New Testament reveals that Christ's sacrifice accomplishes what the Levitical system could only symbolize—complete forgiveness and restoration of relationship with God.

Historical Context

The sin offering (חטאת, chattat) provided atonement for unintentional sins, addressing the defilement sin causes in God's holy presence. Leviticus was given to Israel at Mount Sinai, shortly after the tabernacle's construction described in Exodus. The name 'Leviticus' (from Latin Leviticus, referring to the Levites) reflects its focus on priestly duties, though the Hebrew title Wayyiqra ('And He called') emphasizes God's initiative in revealing these laws. The first seven chapters detail the five main offerings, providing both worshiper instructions and priestly procedures. Ancient Near Eastern cultures had various sacrificial systems, but Israel's sacrificial worship was unique in its ethical foundation, monotheistic framework, and emphasis on atonement rather than appeasement. Unlike pagan rituals focused on manipulating deities, Israel's sacrifices acknowledged God's sovereignty and sought reconciliation based on His gracious provision. Archaeological discoveries at sites like Ugarit reveal Canaanite religious practices Israel's laws explicitly rejected, confirming the Bible's historical reliability and the distinctiveness of Israelite worship.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. In what ways does this verse deepen your appreciation for Christ's atoning sacrifice and the seriousness of sin?
2. How does Christ's superior priesthood, prefigured in this verse, assure you of access to God and effective intercession?
3. What does this verse teach about the costliness of true worship and dedication to God?

Interlinear Text

וַעֲשֵׂה	לִפְנֵי	בָּאֵשׁ ר	וַעֲשֵׂה	לִפְנֵי	
And he shall do	with the bullock	H834	And he shall do	with the bullock	
H6213	H6499		H6213	H6499	
הַחֲטָאת	יְיָ	וַעֲשֵׂה	לְ	וְכַפֵּר	עָלֶיהָ
for a sin offering	H3651	And he shall do	H0	shall make an atonement	H5921
H2403		H6213		H3722	
וְהַכֹּהֵן	וְנִסְלַח	לָהֶם:			
with this and the priest	for them and it shall be forgiven	H1992			
H3548	H5545				

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 15:25 (Sin): And the priest shall make an atonement for all the congregation of the children of Israel, and it shall be forgiven them; for it is ignorance: and they shall bring their offering, a sacrifice made by fire unto the LORD, and their sin offering before the LORD, for their ignorance:

Leviticus 12:8 (Sin): And if she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons; the one for the burnt offering, and the other for a sin offering: and the priest shall make an atonement for her, and she shall be clean.