

Jesus: The scapegoat for our sins

Leviticus 16:8 And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for the scapegoat.

There were two goats of enormous significance for Israel during the Day of Atonement, *Yom Kippur*. The commandments concerning these goats pointed to the events surrounding the trial, judgement and death of our Lord Jesus during Passover. Hence, it is fitting that we study this prayerfully to commemorate the Lord's sacrifice for us all. Now, the two goats had two purposes: the one was to be sacrificed for the Lord and the other was the scapegoat. Let us begin with the first. "And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the Lord's lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering" (Leviticus 16:9). Let us say together, "the first goat is for the Lord". The first goat sacrificed was not for humans or any other creature – it was for the Lord God alone. Why? Simply because God is the God of righteousness. Perhaps we can now better understand Abraham's curious statement. "And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together" (Genesis 22:8). Thank God, the first goat is for God himself – God indeed has provided himself a lamb, Abraham! His name is Jesus! "Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went" (Ezekiel 36:22).

Consider this: what if none repented and accepted the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross of Calvary? Would he still have died? The answer is yes! God hates sin and he is determined to atone for sin, even if none accepts his sacrifice. God knew that no one in his own town Nazareth, where he grew up, would accept his first ever sermon. In fact, he knew they would try to kill him; and yet he preached about his mission and salvation. Why? Simply because of his righteousness! Let us say, "For his holy name's sake!" David knew that God was edifying him in the ways of righteousness, not because David was special or great, but listen to what he says: "He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake" (Psalm 23:3). Therefore, the first goat represents the righteousness of God – his zeal to sanctify the world and all that has been defiled.

"God will provide himself". What an amazing prophecy! We must understand that sin corrupted and defiled, not just the earth, but the entire cosmos, so to speak. How does the

Devil have access to the very throne room of God? He is depicted as appearing before the presence of God along with the holy angels in the book of Job chapter one. He answered that he has been moving to and fro the whole earth, and now found it quite convenient to come before the throne of God. Does this not mean that heaven has been defiled by this vile creature's presence? Something profound happened, not just when Adam and Eve sinned, but way before when Lucifer rebelled against God. The entire cosmos was defiled and needs sanctification. The following verses confirm this:

Hebrews 9:22 *And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.*

Hebrews 9:23 *It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.*

Thus God sanctified the cosmos by his own blood – his own righteousness. Once the heavens were purified by the blood of Jesus, Satan knew he has no power of movement or access to heaven anymore. Can we praise this mighty God, Jesus! He has determined that the enemy will not mock him and say, “Is this your great creation of which you said, ‘It is very good?’”

Isaiah 59:16 *And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him.*

This is why the Lord was silent when he appeared before Pilate. The Lord was first fulfilling the role of the first goat – the sacrifice is for the Lord's holy name. How could Pilate understand such a thing? He thought he was doing well in trying to free the Lord and wondered why the Lord was not cooperating with him. Imagine attempting to explain the role of the two goats to a corrupt and brutal Roman pagan! Better to remain silent. It is the Lord's sacrifice, and not for anyone else. However, the statement of the Lord sent a powerful hint to Pilate suggesting this matter is way beyond his understanding and control. “Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?” Pilate got the message and washed his hands. Let us say, “God has provided a lamb for himself!”

Leviticus 16:8 *And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for the scapegoat.*

Then there was the second goat – the scapegoat. With respect to this scapegoat, there was a different ritual to be performed.

Leviticus 16:21 And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness.

Notice that Aaron was to lay both hands on the head of the live second goat. The strange word, “scapegoat”, comes from the Hebrew *azazel*, and means “the goat of departure”. Hands symbolize our sinful deeds. By laying both hands on the head of the goat, the high priest signified the transfer of the people’s sins onto the head of the goat. What our hands have done is transferred to the head of the Lord Jesus Christ who also fulfilled the role of the second goat. Young people let me assure you that there is no heavier and more agonizing burden to bear in this life than the burden of sin. The Apostle Paul captured the dilemma of sin when he told the Romans, “For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do” (Romans 7:19). To sin is to break the commands of God. There are two kinds of sins, which is why two goats figured on the great Day of Atonement in Israel. We have already talked about the first sin for which the first goat was sacrificed – the sin against God’s righteousness. There are sins that do not affect our fellow humans, but violate God’s righteousness. One may be blameless in regard to relations with people around you, but guilty of violating God’s holiness. Let us say one secretly bows down before a false god. No human is hurt or offended if none found out, but God’s holiness and righteousness encapsulated in the first command is defiled. But now we are talking about the second goat and sins against our fellow humans.

Mark 15:15 And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified.

The people wanted Barabbas, and notice carefully, he was released “unto them”. In other words, Barabbas (his name means “the son of the father”) was free to live in their company, but Jesus (the son of God) was to be sent away from their company. This was not a coincidence but by divine appointment! The Lord Jesus was selected by the whole of Israel and the world by extension to be sent away from the company of humans, just as the scapegoat, *azazel*, was the goat of departure. Thank God he was chosen; thank God he became our *azazel*! Now sin cannot weigh us down and condemn us – we have put both hands on the head of our “scapegoat”, Jesus, and he willingly accepted our sins.

Luke 23:18 And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas.

Jesus truly took away our sins. The people did not know what they were saying when shouted, “Away with this man”. Leviticus 16:21 states concerning the scapegoat, “and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness”. This can only be a symbolic reference to the Devil. He stood there to ensure the Lord was condemned and crucified, taken away from the land of the living. However, the enemy was blind: concerning the mystery of the crucifixion, the Apostle Paul writes:

1Corinthians 2:7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:

1Corinthians 2:8 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

The second goat, the scapegoat, took away the sins of Israel into the desert where no human would ever set eyes upon it. The aim was to ensure no one ever found the scapegoat and all would forget it. This is precisely what Jesus has done for us, people of God! He died as the second goat and took our sins into the wilderness of eternity never to be found or remembered again.

Jeremiah 50:20 In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve.

This is the meaning of the season we commemorate as the Passover, people of God! Jesus has fulfilled the work of both goats – he said on the Cross, “It is finished!” (John 19:30). Can we say we have finished our part? Have you put all your sins on the head of the Lord Jesus Christ – your azazel? Have you put on Christ by being obedient to the command to be baptized in Jesus name? Have you gone further and sought for the infilling of the Holy Spirit in Jesus name (Acts 2:38)? Why do you tarry – Jesus is soon returning to gather all who have respected and honored his commands. Be like the Ethiopian eunuch – he was a treasurer which means he could immediately recognize the worth and value of something. It did not take long for him to make a decision – he was not going to waste this treasure. “And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” (Acts 8:36).