

Chasing Scapegoats

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake from Internet Sources)

Introduction:

A. Lev. 16:5-10, 20-22

1. Guidelines for the annual Day of Atonement, highest and holiest day in the Jewish religious calendar. On this day the High Priest was allowed to enter the Holy of Holies and sprinkle blood on the mercy seat to atone for the sins of the people.
2. A second ritual that day was the sending away of the scapegoat. This symbolized the taking away of the sin of the people.

B. Background

1. Ancient Syria - A concept superficially similar to the Biblical scapegoat is attested in two ritual texts in archives at Ebla of the 24th century BC. They were connected with ritual purification on the occasion of the king's wedding. In them, a she-goat with a silver bracelet hung from her neck was driven forth into the wasteland of "Alini"; in the report of the ritual involves the whole community. Such "elimination rites", involve an animal that is the vehicle of evils chased from the community.

2. Ancient Greece - The Ancient Greeks practiced a scapegoating rite in which a cripple or beggar or criminal (the pharmakos) was cast out of the community, either in response to a natural disaster (such as a plague, famine or an invasion) or in response to a calendric crisis (such as the end of the year). The pharmakos was stoned, beaten and driven from the community.

3. The Bible - The scapegoat was a goat that was designated (Hebrew) la-aza'zeyl; either "for absolute removal" (Brown-Driver-Briggs Lexicon) or possibly "for Azazel" (some modern versions taking the term as a name) and outcast in the desert as part of the ceremonies of the Day of Atonement, that began during the Exodus with the original Tabernacle and continued through the times of the temples in Jerusalem.

4. Throughout the year, the sins of the Israelites were transferred to the sin offerings outlined in Leviticus 16. Once a year, on the tenth day of the seventh month in the Jewish calendar, the Day of Atonement, the High Priest of Israel sacrificed a bull for a sin offering for his own sins. Subsequently he took two goats and presented them at the door of the tabernacle to address the sins of the nation of Israel. Two goats were chosen by lot: one to be "The Lord's Goat", which was offered as a blood sacrifice, and the other to be the scapegoat to be sent away into the wilderness. The blood of the slain goat was taken into the Holy of Holies behind the veil and sprinkled on the mercy seat, the lid of the ark of the covenant. Later that day, the High Priest confessed the sins of the Israelites to Jehovah placing them figuratively on the head of the other goat, the Lazazel scapegoat, who took them away never to be seen again. The sin of the nation was thus atoned for by the Lord's Goat and the Lazazel Goat.

5. In the Christian Dispensation, this process prefigures the sacrifice of Christ on the cross through which God has been satisfied and sins taken away. Jesus Christ fulfilled both of the Biblical types: the Lord's goat that pays for the pollution of sin and the scapegoat that carries away the burden of sin.

6. Since the second goat was sent away to perish in the wilderness, the word scapegoat has developed to indicate a person who is blamed and punished for the

sins of others. We are familiar with scapegoats in our culture. We see them in politics. Someone will make a mistake, and another person will step forward to carry the blame. Criminals claim that they are nothing more than a scapegoat. They want us to believe that they are innocent and that people have just transferred the blame to them because they were handy.

I. TWO GOATS ARE SELECTED

A. Their Source - Lev. 16:5-8

1. "Of the congregation": These goats were ordinary. They were not held to the same standards as other offerings. They were not special.
 - a. Jesus - Isa. 53:2; Matt. 13:54-55

B. Their Sanctification -

1. The goats were presented to the Lord and were set apart as holy.
 - a. Jesus is pure, sinless and holy
 - b. 1Peter 2:22; 2Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 1John 3:5

C. Their Selection - By casting of lots.

1. Not gambling; reinforces the point that one was not more special than the other - Ecc. 9:11
2. There were two goats; they just served two different purposes:
3. The Lord's Goat - Was to serve as an atoning sacrifice
 - a. 1John 2:2; Heb. 9:24-28
4. The Living Goat - Was to serve as a substitute for the people. It symbolized the removal of their sins.
 - a. Heb. 2:9; Isa. 53:5; 1Peter 2:24

II. ONE GOAT IS SACRIFICED

A. The Pain - Lev. 1:8-9

1. The altar of Moses was a horizontal pile of stone; the altar of Christ was an upright wooden cross, but the process was painful and the purpose was the same
2. Isa. 52:14; Psalm 22:6-7, 15, 17

B. The Purpose - To atone for sin - Rom. 6:23; Heb. 9:22; Rev. 1:5

C. The Picture - Every single goat that was killed throughout the history of Israel failed to remove sin and pointed ahead in time to the day when Jesus became the sacrificial goat for the sins of the world.

III. ONE GOAT IS SENT AWAY

A. Lev. 16:10, 20-22 - It took two goats to portray what Jesus was able to do all alone. The first goat speaks of Christ's substitutionary death on the cross to satisfy God by paying man's sin debt. The second goat speaks of the results of Christ's redemptive work on the cross, the removal of all the sins of those who obey the gospel

B. Lev. 16:21 - Sin Transferred - What was confessed was:

1. Iniquity - means "that which is bent or crooked" - Rom. 3:10-12, 23
2. Transgression - means "rebellion; to step over a boundary"
 - a. James 2:10

3. Sin - means "to miss, or to fall short"; describes our inability to ever fully measure up to God - Rom. 3:23
4. He carried all of our sins - Isa. 53:6; 2Cor. 5:21; Matt. 27:46
5. Somewhere during those dark hours on the cross, God the Father placed every sin of every human on the person of His Son. At that moment, God judged Jesus in the place of every sinner.

C. Lev. 16:21-22 - Sin Taken Away - Jesus has the power to remove sin forever

1. Isa. 53:4; John 1:29; Psalm 103:12; Micah 7:19; 1John 1:7

2. The Jewish people set up stations at intervals along the way to the wilderness. As the "Fit Man" and the scapegoat passed the stations, the man was given refreshments and the occupants of that station went with him to the next station. When the goat finally arrived at the wilderness, the "Fit Man" finished the job of leading the goat away by himself. However, those at the last station would hold up a red flag to notify the next station that the job had been accomplished. Each station would then signal back until the word arrived at the camp of Israel that their sins had been taken away. At the time, the people would begin to worship the Lord and to praise Him with songs and with shouts. Up until this time, they had been subdued and quiet in worship. "It Is Well With My Soul"

D. Jesus was also the "Fit Man" or "Suitable Man"

1. He knew the way to the wilderness.
2. He was able to endure to the end.
3. He was able to withstand the ordeal: loneliness, fatigue, thirst, isolation
4. He would not stop short of the goal.
5. He could find His way back again.

Conclusion:

A. Jer. 50:20; Psalm 38:4; Rom. 7:22-25