

# Jesus Died For Me (4): The Scape-Goat

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[ 0 : 00 ] Please turn again with me to Leviticus chapter 16. Leviticus 16, I suppose, especially to the words we find in verse 22.

The goat shall bear all their iniquities on itself to a remote area, and he shall let the goat go free in the wilderness.

Heavenly Father, we bow in your presence. May your word be our rule, your spirit our teacher, and your greater glory our supreme concern, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen. It wasn't so long ago that I was in getting my eyesight checked by Lois Miller in her job as an optometrist.

I went into her surgery, and I sat down, and after making me feel very much at ease, Lois told me to focus my eyes on a chart on the wall behind her.

[ 1 : 15 ] Now, I don't know anything about what she was checking for, but while peering into the back of my eye with a strong torch, she asked me to focus on the cross in the center of the chart.

More than once she said to me, look at the cross in the center. Focus upon the cross in the center. Now, knowing Lois like I do, I jokingly said to her afterwards, thanks for reminding me to keep my eyes focused on the cross, and to make sure the cross is at the center of my life.

As I reckon she knew exactly what she was saying, and meant more by it than her average customer would have perhaps understood. But to me, it was a great encouragement on that morning, and a spur to remind myself to keep the cross of Jesus Christ, the wonderful truth that Jesus died for me, the doctrine of substitutionary atonement, central.

Mike Morales is a deeply unassuming, humble man, a loving husband, a devoted father, and a committed Christian.

You'd never know from meeting him that Mike is the evangelical world's foremost academic when it comes to the study of the book of Leviticus.

[ 2 : 41 ] Morales has written a simply amazing and spiritually heartwarming book called Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord, which is all about Leviticus.

He insists that Leviticus 16, the description of the Jewish Day of Atonement, is the pinnacle of the first five books of the Bible, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

He insists that the cross of Jesus Christ is nowhere else more powerfully presented than in this sacred chapter of the Word of God. With unerring skill and the wisdom of a pastor, Morales, in his way, reminds the church of what Lois, in her way, reminded me.

That the sacrifice of Jesus to take away our sins is central to who we are. And if we are called to do one thing as Christians, it is to look at the cross in the center.

Focus on the cross, the center. Now, the Jewish Day of Atonement, the so-called Yom Kippur, is still one of the most important festivals in the Jewish calendar.

[ 4 : 10 ] Tragically, the vast majority of Jewish people still do not see the cross of Christ signified and described by the sacrifices of Yom Kippur.

However, as you could see from this chapter, we could just as easily call it the Two Goats Festival. The Two Goats Festival. Two goats were chosen. One was to be sacrificed as a burnt offering for the sins of the people.

The other goat was to be let loose into the wilderness as the scapegoat. Perhaps it would be even better to call the Day of Atonement the Day of the Scapegoat.

It's the scapegoat which is the cross of Leviticus chapter 16. It's the scapegoat we want to focus our attention upon.

That goat upon which were laid all the sins of Israel. That goat which was cast out into the desert. Now, the word scapegoat, used in Leviticus 16 in the King James Version to describe this animal

cast out into the wilderness, is a word we often use in modern English.

[ 5 : 30 ] According to the Cambridge Dictionary, a scapegoat is a person who is blamed for something someone else does. A person who is blamed for something someone else does.

That's an easy and helpful definition of a scapegoat. This scapegoat here in Leviticus 16 is an animal which is blamed for something someone else has done.

That's an easy definition of why Jesus died on the cross. The Messiah who is blamed for something someone else has done.

Jesus died for me, blamed for the things I had done. That's the doctrine of Leviticus 16. That's why it's so important that as Christians we look at the cross at the center.

That we focus on the cross at the center. That's why Leviticus 16, according to Morales, is the beating heart of the first five books of the Bible. On the cross, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ was being blamed for the sins we had committed.

[ 6 : 47 ] When they were babies, they won't remember this, but when they were babies, I used to sing or croon to my children the hymn, I'm special because God has loved me because he gave the best thing that he had to save me.

And then this line, his own son Jesus crucified to take the blame for all the bad things I had done. Yes, there he is, Jesus, dying outside the walls of Jerusalem.

Jesus, the God of Israel, taking the blame for all the bad things I had done. My fall guy. My scapegoat.

Now the heart of the idea of the scapegoat is found in this chapter in verses 21 and 22. So we focus on the cross at the center, remembering that this chapter is the beating heart of the first five books of the Bible and looking forward to Jesus.

[ 8 : 02 ] We want to see two things this morning about Jesus, our scapegoat, dying for us. First, Jesus carried my sin.

And secondly, Jesus removed my sin. Jesus carried our sin. Jesus removed our sin.

This is the heart of the gospel. This is the cross. Lois urged me to keep looking at and focusing upon.

First of all, Jesus carried our sin. He carried our sin. Having sacrificed one goat, Aaron the priest was now to present the other goat to the Lord.

We read in verse 21, And Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel and all their transgressions and all their sins.

[ 9 : 09 ] And he shall put them on the head of the goat. The goat shall bear all their iniquities. Well, the Lord Jesus designed the Lord's Supper to be a visualization of his death upon the cross.

The bread his body, the blood his wine. But it doesn't get much more visual than when Aaron, the high priest, lays both his hands on the head of this live goat.

This is pure theater in the best sense of the word. This is God's prior reenactment of the cross where all our sins and all our guilt are loaded onto the shoulders of our Lord and he carries them for us as our scapegoat.

When I was a young child carrying wood down from the forest to cut up for our household fire in the north, sometimes the wood was too heavy and my father who was beside me would say, just give it to me and I'll carry it for you.

And he'd take my few tiny knobbly wee sticks and he'd join them with this massive load on his shoulders and he'd continue walking back to the house. My father would carry my load.

[ 10 : 33 ] My dad would bear my burden. And it's clear from this passage in Leviticus 16 that the burdens of the entire Israelite community are being loaded onto the head of this goat.

The priest's action of laying his hands acts somewhat as an electrical conductor, transferring the sins from the people into the goat.

The priest lays his hands on the head of the goat and through those hands passes all the guilt and all the blame and all the culpability of all the people of Israel.

That goat is now full of sin from the bottom of its hooves to the top of its horns. The text tells us about a certain trinity of evil the goat carries.

Transgressions, iniquities, and sins. I quote, all the iniquities of the people of Israel and all their transgressions and all their sins. Iniquities correspond to the religious sins of the people.

[ 11 : 46 ] Transgressions, their civil sins and the word sins, the generality of the many ways in which they had broken the law of God. That's the theater of this chapter.

The priest lays his hands on the head of the goat and it's as if all the iniquities and all the transgressions and all the sins of the entire community of Israel are being transferred from his hands into the goat.

The animal carries all their sins. The text tells us, He shall put them onto the head of the goat and then the goat shall bear all their iniquities.

The goat becomes the sin bearer. My father who carries my load of tiny sticks except it's not a tiny load. It's all the sins and all the transgressions and all the iniquities of all of God's people.

It may be just the goat but it's like that image of Atlas carrying the world on his shoulders. But in this case, it's the world of sin on its head.

[13:06] And then we see Jesus, the blameless, innocent Lamb of God. As he trudges those long miles to Jerusalem, he is bearing a world of sin on his shoulders.

All the sins and all the transgressions and all the iniquities of all his people. And he's carrying them there because he loves us and he knows that we cannot carry them there ourselves.

And we see Jesus beating down and weeping great drops of blood in the garden of Gethsemane on the night of his betrayal. But what we can't see there is that he's got a world of sin, mine included, on his shoulders.

That's what he's doing and that's what he is. If you only had eyes to see, we would see all our own sins on his shoulders. Our sins as individuals, there's my greed on his shoulders.

There's my temper on his shoulders. There's my idolatry. There's my worldliness. There's my selfishness. There it is on his shoulders. He's my scapegoat.

[14:23] He's carrying them all for me. So lovingly but so forcefully lifting them from my shoulders and placing them onto his. Your sins were there also.

And as Jesus hung upon the cross, the weight of all the sins and all the transgressions and all the iniquities of all his people over the course of thousands and thousands of years are there upon his shoulders.

He is there for me. He's bearing my sin and guilt with God himself, the Father, having laid his mighty hands on Jesus and transferring my guilt to him.

If anyone here is a Christian today and I trust that most if not all of us are, it is not because they have carried the weight of their own sin but by faith in him have laid it on the blameless holy head of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Like me as a young child who couldn't carry my load, Jesus has borne it for me. Jesus has carried it for me. He's become our scapegoat.

[15:40] He's taking the blame for all the bad things we had done, for things that someone else had done. Taking our blame, taking our sin, taking our guilt, taking our shame, all upon himself.

Don't you see this? Don't you understand this? Does this not simultaneously humble you but also make your heart sing for joy at the very thought that sin which once was mine is now his to deal with?

And so the hymn begins bearing shame and scoffing rude. whose sin was Jesus bearing? Not his own surely but our sin.

Andrew Boner's perhaps even more famous brother Horatius Boner the Scottish hymn writer he wrote his first ever hymn we're going to sing we're going to sing it at the end of the service you've probably never heard it before but its first verse goes like this this is his first ever hymn I lay my sins on Jesus the spotless Lamb of God he bears them all and frees us from the accursed load I bring my guilt to Jesus to wash my crimson stains white in his blood most precious till not a stain remains tell me have you laid your sins on Jesus children have you laid your sins on Jesus have you brought your guilt to Jesus even now in your in your mind's eye place your hands on the spotless

Lamb of God and pass all your sins and iniquities and transgressions to him what need do we have to continue carrying their weight when Jesus offers to carry it for you Jesus carried our sin second Jesus removed our sin he removed our sin again in verse 21 22 we read and he that's Aaron shall put them Israel's sins on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who is in readiness the goat shall bear all their iniquities on itself to a remote area and he shall let the goat go free in the wilderness now earlier on this chapter in verse 8 verse 10 twice the goat is described as being destined to be sent away into the wilderness of atzatzel over the years there have been several interpretations of atzatzel ranging from the

[19:02] Hebrew word for a cliff the idea being the goat was thrown over the edge of a cliff to the name of a local demon called atzatzel but my own view is that this word atzatzel is to be understood

in terms of removal the scapegoat is sent into the wilderness as a sign that the sins and the transgressions and the iniquities of the people of God having been laid on its head are now removed whereas before their sins were on their own heads now in the imagery of that goat being led away into the wilderness they have a visual representation that their sins are being removed removed and as they watch that goat being led away by a man commissioned for that task as they watch that goat headed over the horizon never to be seen again they're being reminded that

God has taken away all their sins all their iniquities and all their transgressions God has removed them imagine the scene having watched Aaron lay both his hands on the head of the goat you now see that goat being led away into the desert where it goes you do not know but what you know is that the guilt of your sins is gone your sins no longer rest upon you they're being carried away by that goat as I said earlier this is pure theatre the goat is carrying the burden of their sins these sins which are being taken away the goat is bearing all their iniquities on itself to a remote place you can imagine as the

Old Testament people of God saw that goat becoming smaller as it was being led away into the distance they'd realised that all their iniquities and all their transgressions and all their sins were being taken away until finally the goat went over the horizon and they could see it no more their sins were gone the punishment their sins deserved was gone the guilt of their sins was gone taken far away never to be held against them again never again to be seen the goat has been exiled from the camp it has been cast out and cut and cut off in those days an impure person had to leave the Israelite camp but now seeing that goat being led away to the ultimate exile the people of God were to understand that it was being exiled it was being cast out for them it was being exiled on account of their uncleanness it was being banished for their sins so that they could always remain within the camp and then we see

Jesus being led outside the city walls of Jerusalem to the cross as Isaiah says of him being cut off from the land of the living and as the writer to the Hebrews says going outside the camp we see Jesus dying in the wilderness and we realize that he is being cast as our scapegoat the sacrifice who takes the blame for our sins for our transgressions for our iniquities he's being cut off cut off so that we may be engrafted he's being cast out so that we may belong but we see him there on that cross our sins are upon his shoulders and he's dying in the wilderness and in his death all our sins are removed and utterly taken away the cross on which

Jesus died it was outside the city walls of Jerusalem Jesus our scapegoat was taking our blame and removing it far away like a ship which leaves its dock and slips over the horizon so in his death our sins are gone they're removed they're never coming back all our greed all our selfishness all our idolatry all our doubt all our rebellion all our worldliness they're all gone they've all been removed by the cross well as we close let me remind you or let me suggest to you two applications from this this marvelous theater of the scapegoat of the day of atonement the first is this don't go looking for the scapegoat don't go looking for the scapegoat it's out there in the wilderness on no account go looking for the scapegoat

[ 24 : 59 ] God has taken the guilt of your sins away don't go trying to get them back those sins which you committed and which you have repented they're gone they are gone God no longer holds them to your account so why should you keep holding them to your account too many Christians keep holding their own sins against themselves when God has already freed them of the guilt are there sins in your past of which you have repented you're still carrying the guilt in your heart stop looking for the scapegoat stop mounting expeditions into the wilderness to try and find your sins again they're gone God's removed them and taken them all far away if Jesus died on the cross to take all your sins away what right do you have to go searching for them again live rather in the liberty of the forgiveness of your sins

I can't remember who it was but someone once said God has cast your sins into the sea of his forgetfulness and he's put up a sign saying no fishing if you should obey Lois' advice to keep your eyes on the cross then you need not continue to carry the guilt of all the sins of your youth they're gone rather live your life to please the Lord in the fullness and fruitfulness of a cross centered life that's the first application don't mount expeditions looking for the scapegoat the second is this the scapegoat doesn't belong but you do the scapegoat doesn't belong but you do that scapegoat carrying all your sins was cast out of the camp it was sent into the wilderness so that all you can see if you were in the camp was that goat being sent away it was sent away so that you could belong in the camp in the cross of

Jesus you belong because he was cast out however grievous your sins have been you belong among the people of God you belong close to the heart of God our society craves for belonging and in this theater of the scapegoat you're being reminded that you belong to God and you belong to the people of God do you ever feel sometimes that you don't belong you don't belong to God you don't belong among Christian people love Lois reminded me that day when I went to get a new pair of glasses to focus on the cross at the center the more you listen to Lois's words and let them percolate into your heart the more you understand what Mike

Morales is getting at in his book on Leviticus the more you begin to experience that sense of belonging you belong as a son and daughter of God because Jesus took the blame for your sins as a sacrificial scapegoat Portree Free Church has as its strapline we have equip as our strapline but Portree Free Church has as its strapline a place to belong a place for you this is the message of the scapegoat when you look upon that cross you say to yourself a place to belong a place for me when Lois said to me that day as she was testing my eyes look at the cross in the centre focus on the cross in the centre she's reminded me she was reminding me my sins are gone they've been loaded onto the worthy shoulders of the scapegoat the Lord

Jesus Christ and he's taken them far away and she was reminding me that I belong to the family of God however I feel and even now as I think of these words her words filled me with the joy of forgiveness and the security of belonging so thanks to Lois for that reminder and thanks to Mike Morales for the reminder all that's left is for me now to remind you as often as I can and for you to remind each other as often as you can of Lois's words look at the cross in the centre focus on the cross in the centre let's pray Lord we thank you for the theatre of

[ 31 : 11 ] Leviticus 16 theatre fulfilled in the cross of Jesus Christ when he was burdened by our sins loaded onto his shoulders taken outside the camp and crucified Lord if we have had faith in Jesus Christ if we have believed in him then keep us from mounting expeditions to go looking for our sin again remind us oh Lord that our sin has been taken away and that we have no right to re-burden ourselves with its guilt fill us also with a sense of belonging that we belong to you and to one another not in some slavish way but that here is the place of acceptance and security close to you in Jesus

Christ Amen