

The Scapegoat

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Date: 28 January 2018

Preacher: Jim Patterson

- [0 : 00] In your Bibles to Leviticus 16, to the Day of Atonement as it was led down by Moses, as God gave it to him.
- You know, in the beginning God created, and he created a perfect world. And that world was damaged and fell and sin entered into our world and everything changed.
- Sin and the curse came. But straight away God promised that he was going to redeem the world. Straight away he promised a serpent crusher.
- Someone who was going to come and crush the serpent's head. In time he called a man, Abraham. He became Abraham.
- In time he created a nation, the Israelites. They were slaves in Egypt for 400 years. Then he brought them out of Egypt, through the Red Sea and into the desert.
- [1 : 07] And here we join them as they were encamped in the shadow of Mount Sinai. About 1,250 years before Jesus was born.
- A nation of freed slaves, traveling through a great wilderness. Now they had experienced the redemptive acts of the Lord. God freeing them from Egypt.
- The plagues. The crossing of the Red Sea. They had seen and heard, or they were seeing even and hearing, the thunder and the lightning on Mount Sinai.
- They knew God was powerful. God had promised to be their God. And they were to be his people. But how was that relationship to be maintained?
- That's the question. How could a sinful people live in the presence of a holy God? And that's what was happening.
- [2 : 04] Because God had, God was in the middle of them. The tabernacle had been built. It was in the middle of the camp. The pillar of fire was above it by day.
- The pillar of cloud was by night. How could a nation of sinful men and women live with a holy God in the middle of them? Without being destroyed because of their sin.
- The visible presence of God's presence. The visible symbol, rather, of God's presence was there. And how could sin be dealt with?
- Now God gave lots of instructions to Moses. How sin was to be dealt with. And Leviticus 16 is part of those instructions.
- Part of those instructions. It starts with a warning. Verse 1, 16. 1. The Lord spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron.
- [3 : 09] When they drew near before the Lord and died. Now what had happened here? What had happened here? Two sons of Aaron. Two young priests. Nadab and Abihu.
- They had gone into the tabernacle. The tent of meeting. They had gone in on their own initiative. And they had offered unauthorized fire.
- A strange fire. Before the Lord. In a way that he hadn't commanded. Because God had explained what should be done. And they had thought they would do it a different way.

They would do it our way. And they died for their own initiative. For presuming that they could come to God in their own way.

You see our God is a consuming fire. He had told Aaron and his sons how to approach him. And the two boys. These two young men. And priests. In their priestly robes.

[4 : 14] And all. But they had disobeyed God. You see the Israelite nation had to learn to obey God. And to approach God in the way he had planned.

They had to learn that they couldn't just come before him any way they liked. And that's why. In verse 2 of our chapter. The Lord has said. Remember what happened to the two boys.

Nadab and Abihu. Tell Aaron. The Lord said to Moses. Tell Aaron your brother. Not to come at any time into the holy place. Inside the veil. Before the mercy seat that is the ark.

So that he might not die. He couldn't. He wasn't just to come in when he felt like it. When it seemed a good day to do it. You remember the tabernacle.

The tabernacle was enclosed by a courtyard of a curtain all the way around it. Hanging all the way around it.

[5 : 13] And you come into the courtyard. And the first thing you met was the altar where sin offerings were made. And then you went on past that. And there was a big bowl of water.

The laver where the priests washed. And then you came to the tent of meeting. And the tent of meeting had the first part which was the holy place. It had the table of showbread in it.

And the candlestick. And the altar of incense. And the priests went in there all the time. To maintain. Change the bread. To keep the lamps burning.

To keep the burning incense. They went in there all the time. But then the tent of meeting was divided in two with a veil, a curtain. And behind that was the most holy place.

Where the Ark of the Covenant was. And in it were the two tablets of stone. That had been given to Moses on the mountain. And on top of that was the atonement cover.

[6 : 13] As it was called. A gold cover with two cherubim looking, facing each other across it. And it was called the mercy seat. And that was in the most holy place.

It was sometimes called the holy of holies. And this is what God is saying to Aaron. You're not to go in there just anytime you like. You're not to go inside the veil.

Before the mercy seat. Because I am holy. All through these journeys in the wilderness. And through the Old Testament.

God had been teaching the Israelites that he was holy. Remember when Moses met God at the burning bush. And there was the bush burning.

And Moses went along to see what is this. And the Lord says, don't come near. Take your sandals off your feet. For the place you're standing is holy ground.

[7 : 12] At Mount Sinai when they were getting the law. God said to Moses, set limits around the mountain. Tell the people not to come. Not to go up the mountain.

Not to touch even the edge of it. Whoever touches the mountain will die. Don't come up to look. Or you will die. Our God, you see, is a consuming fire.

As the Old Testament continues. And God's revelation of himself continues. In Habakkuk 1.13 we read. Your eyes, that is God's eyes, are too pure to look on evil.

You cannot tolerate wrong. God is holy. A holy God. Sin cannot come into the presence of God without a sacrifice.

Which clears it away. Isaiah met God in the temple. And the cherubim were saying, holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty.

- [8 : 13] And Isaiah's reaction was, woe is me. For I'm a man of unclean lips. And I dwell among a people of unclean lips. For my eyes have seen the King. The Lord of hosts.
- You see, the holiness of God made Isaiah aware of his own sin. So, we're taught that God is holy.
- Malachi wrote, who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? Sin cannot abide in the presence of a holy God.
- And we too must come to him in the way that he has provided. The way that he has told us to. And this is why, because God is holy.
- Because sin cannot approach God. This is why we need a mediator. And God has shown us that we need a mediator.
- [9 : 13] He shows us in this passage that we need a mediator. The tabernacle, as I've already said, showed us that the way to God was not yet open. He came via the altar where sin was paid for.
- But the ordinary people couldn't go any further. The holy place was for the priests only. And the most holy place was for the high priest only once a year.
- Only once a year. God had said to Moses, I will meet with you in there.
- I will meet with you at the mercy seat. I will speak to you from the mercy seat, from between the cherubim. And it was there that God said the high priest would make atonement for the people on the day of atonement, which is the day that we're reading about today.
- Let's read verses 15 and 16 again in our passage. Aaron has chosen one of the two goats, the one that was to be killed as a sacrifice.
- [10 : 34] And we read, Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring its blood inside the veil. And do with its blood, as he did with the blood of the bull, sprinkling it over the mercy seat, and in front of the mercy seat.
- Thus he shall make atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the people of Israel, and because of their transgressions, all their sins.
- And he shall do for the tent of meeting, which dwells with them, in the midst of their uncleanness. So he shall do for the tent of meeting, which dwells with them, in the midst of their uncleanness.
- You see, on the day of atonement, Aaron would go into the most holy place twice. He went in with the blood of the bull, and then later on he went in with the blood of the goat.
- He goes in twice to make atonement, to cover the sin of the people. And the rest of the year he didn't go in at all.
- [11 : 47] He wasn't allowed in there. Only that one day. The sin and the uncleanness of the people was dealt with by the shedding of blood, sprinkled in front of and on the mercy seat.
- The NIV uses the term here, the atonement cover. And it was the place where atonement was made. Atonement means covering of sin.
- So it's no longer there. But it also means removing guilt. And receiving the forgiveness of God. And it always involves a sacrifice. For the wages of sin is death.
- Sin cannot be forgiven without a sacrifice. William Tyndale, the great Bible translator, he used the term mercy seat for atonement cover.
- That's a wonderful term, isn't it? The mercy seat. For it's there that we find mercy. It was there that God had promised to meet with his people and to forgive them.
- [12 : 52] And the mercy seat was, in the Old Testament, that place where heaven's love and heaven's justice met. And God forgave his people.

But, as we've said, not everyone could approach it directly. Only the high priest could get there. And only he could come there once a year.

And he entered it with these sacrifices. First, the sacrifice of a bull, which was for himself and his family. And then the sacrifice of a goat for the people.

So we have the holiness of God. We have the need for a mediator. Here it's the high priest. And we have the need for sacrifices. A sacrifice. Or a substitute.

The soul that sins shall die. That's God's law. Sin will be punished. God is too holy to look on sin.

[13 : 51] Sin cannot abide in his presence. A lamb, a bull, a goat, an animal had to die in the place of the sinner. On the Day of Atonement, a bull was needed.

A ram and two goats. Aaron himself was a sinner. He needed the bull to cover his sin. And the sin of his family. But I want to think now of the scapegoat.

I just love the story of the scapegoat. Aaron had to have two goats that day. He had to have two goats.

And he had to choose between them. And he did it, if you like, by tossing a coin. By lot. By lot. But verse 9.

Aaron shall present. No, verse 8. Aaron shall cast lots over the two goats. One lot for the Lord. And the other lot for the scapegoat.

[14 : 53] And Aaron shall present the lot. The goat on which the lot fell for the Lord. And use it as a sin offering. So he chose between these two goats. By tossing a coin.

And he had them in front of him. And he took one of them. One that was chosen to be a sacrifice.

He takes it. He takes it into the altar. And it is sacrificed. It is killed. And parts of it are burned on the altar.

One died. One died. That died to cover the sin of the people. But, you know, the Lord was...

He wanted them to really understand what was going on here. So he had two goats. The other goat was a live goat. Right? What did he do with a live goat? Verse 20.

[15 : 57] When he had made an end of atoning for the holy place. And the tent of meeting. And the altar. He shall present the live goat. 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. All their transgressions. All their sins. He shall put them 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 our remote area. And he shall let the goat go free.

In the wilderness. This goat was not going to come back. It was taken far away from people. Right into the wilderness. It was let go.

It had become a wild goat. Wandering in the wilderness. And it took on its head. The sins of the people. The goat shall bear all their iniquities.

[16 : 54] To our remote area. Isn't that wonderful? Isn't that a wonderful picture? Of what God does for us. When he forgives us. The sins of the nation.

Carried away into the wilderness. Not coming back. And God says do this once a year. To deal with the sins of the nation. The scapegoat. The day of atonement you see.

It was both a ceremony. To deal with the felt sin. There and then. But it was also an acted out prophecy. Of what Jesus was going to do.

An acted out prophecy. It was pointing forward. To the day when Jesus. Would become our scapegoat. The true scapegoat.

The true sacrifice for sin. The book. Or the epistle to the Hebrews. If you turn with me to Hebrews chapter 10. In your Bibles.

[17 : 54] Hebrews. Is a great. Is a big commentary. On much of. The Old Testament law. And.

The writer explains. What it meant. And what it was about. Hebrews 10. Verse 1. For.

Since the law. Has. But a shadow. Of good things to come. Instead of the true form. Of these realities. It can never. By the same sacrifices.

That are continually offered. Every year. Make perfect. Those who draw near. Otherwise. They would not. Have ceased. To be offered. Since the worshippers. Having once been cleansed.

Would no longer have any consciousness. Of sins. But in these sacrifices. There is a reminder. Of sins. Every year. For it is impossible. For the blood of bulls.

[18 : 51] And goats. To take away. Sin. You see. The ceremonies. Of the Old Testament. They were shadows. Models. Acting out.

In some ways. Of what Jesus was going to do. The deaths of bulls and goats. Couldn't take away sin. A better sacrifice was needed. A better mediator was needed.

Than the high priest. And the glory of the gospel. And the wonder of God's love. Is that we have a better sacrifice. We have a perfect mediator.

Let's read again in Hebrews 10. Verse 11. And every priest stands daily at his service. Offering repeatedly the same sacrifices.

Which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time. A single sacrifice for sins. He sat down at the right hand of God.

[19 : 53] I shouldn't need to read that one. We could all repeat it together. Couldn't we? He sat down at the right hand of God. Waiting for the time. Until his enemies should be made a footstool.

For his feet. For by a single offering. He has perfected for all time. Those who are being sanctified. You see.

All the sacrifices. And especially the day of atonement. Pointed forward. There were shadows of the good things to come. Pointing the people of Israel forward.

To when the true Messiah would come. For when God would send the serpent crusher. To crush the serpent's hand. For when the day. For the day when the veil.

That separated ordinary folk. From the mercy seat. Would be torn apart. And of course Jesus did that. Jesus did that.

[20 : 51] When he went through the veil. And the veil was torn apart when he died. The veil of the temple. Jesus had opened up the way to God.

You see we don't need any more human priests. To offer bulls or goats or pigeons. Every believer now. Can come right to the mercy seat.

Right into the presence of God. And meet with our heavenly father. And every sinner can find forgiveness there. At that mercy seat.

You see the two goats. Illustrate what Jesus has done. It needed two of them. Because one of them had to die. And the other one carried the sins away.

Symbolically. Whereas Jesus did it all. He did it all. He died and he took our sins away. But the second. The scapegoat. Symbolically showed.

[21 : 47] What Jesus was going to do. Our sins. Have been taken away. Into the wilderness. Never to be remembered against us anymore. Psalm 103 verse 12.

Tells us. As far as the east is from the west. So far does he remove our transgressions from us. As far as the east is from the west. Micah 7.19.

He will again have compassion on us. He will tread our iniquities underfoot. He will cast our sins. Into the depths. Of the sea.

I will cast. The hymn writer wrote. I will cast. In the depths of the fathomless sea. All the sins and transgressions. Whatever they be. Though they mount up to heaven. Though they sink down to hell.

They shall sink in the depths. And above them shall swell. All my waves of forgiveness. So mighty and free. I will cast all thy sins. In the depths of the sea.

[22 : 44] What a wonderful gospel. What a wonderful picture we have. In these sacrifices. In this scapegoat. Carrying our sins.

Away. Into the wilderness. What a wonderful. Saviour we have. Jesus. Our mediator. No need for a human high priest anymore.

Jesus has gone right through the veil. Into the presence of God. And he is there for us. Enabling us to follow him. He's our great high priest. He's our sacrifice.

He's the scapegoat. Did the job of them both. And he carries our sins. As far as the east is from the west. Into the depths of the sea.

Into an uninhabited land. The wonder and the glory of the gospel. Of our position in Christ. When we know him as our saviour.

[23 : 43] We know our sins have been carried away. Carried away. Never to be remembered against us. Anymore. This evening when we meet around the Lord's table. We'll be remembering that sacrifice.

And praising God. For carrying our sins away. But I wonder. Is there somebody here today. And you wonder. If your sins are too big. God is really willing to forgive you.

Can he forgive me. My sins are too big. Well he can. The perfect sacrifice. Of the Lord Jesus Christ. Is sufficient for the whole world.

You know. Sometimes. Even those who trust in the Lord. Sometimes you go through life. And wondering. Am I really forgiven?

Jesus gave his life. Once for all. Once for all time. No need for. A new sacrifice. He sat down at the right hand of God.

[24 : 42] The job was done. It is finished. Our salvation has been paid for. No one. Is. Has sinned so much. That he cannot forgive him.

No. Jesus said. No. If he comes to me. I will never. Cast out. Paul. The persecutor. And blasphemer. Was pardoned. The thief. On the cross.

Was pardoned. No time to do any good works. To earn his salvation. He was pardoned. So for all of us. The work has been finished.

The sacrifice. Is complete. Sins have been carried away. And in Christ. We are forgiven. The holy God. Our God.

Who is holy. Too holy to look on sin. He has provided a way. He has shown us what we need to do. He has provided a mediator. Our great high priest.

[25 : 39] The Lord Jesus Christ. He has provided a sin bearer. A sacrifice. A scapegoat. Again. Our Lord Jesus Christ. That we.

Might be forgiven. That we might become. Sons. And daughters of God. May God bless his word. To all our hearts this morning. Make this.

Make it living. And true. Let's pray. Father we do thank you. For the wonder of. Of your gospel. We thank you. That. You planned it.

Long before. Our Lord Jesus was born. Long before he died. For us. It was all planned. And you made a way for us. To come back to you.

And we thank you for that. This morning Lord. How we thank you. That all our sins. Every one of us here. Who's. Laid our sins on Jesus. The spotless.

[26 : 35] The spotless. Lamb of God. They've been carried away. They've been paid for. And carried away. Never. To be remembered against us. Anymore.

Thank you for that Lord today. Oh Lord. Warm our hearts. We pray. And write your word. On our hearts today. For we ask it.

In Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Let's sing. Now. From the Psalter. The.

Old. Older Psalms. Page 259. It's Psalm 40. 259. Psalm 40. A Psalm of praise.

For our forgiving God. I waited for the Lord my God. And patiently did bear. And lengthily he did incline. My voice. And cry to hear. He took me from a fearful pit.

[27 : 34] And from the mirey clay. And put on a rock. He set my feet. Establishing my way. He put a new song in my mouth. Our God to magnify.

Many shall see it. And shall fear. And on the Lord rely. Oh blessed is the man. His trust. Upon. The Lord relies. Verses. One. To five.

Double. Double verse five. Okay.