

Do You Have A Scapegoat?

by Wayne Goff

Scapegoat: one who is blamed for the faults of others

In our society, we understand the meaning of the word “scapegoat.” It is blaming someone else for our own faults, especially when it is a matter of expediency or convenience. But from where did the idea of a scapegoat come?

Interestingly enough, it is a biblical concept found in Leviticus 16. On the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) the children of Israel were commanded to make an atonement for all their sins of the past year. Leviticus 16:16 reads: “So he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, for all their sins; and so he shall do for the tabernacle of meeting which remains among them in the midst of their uncleanness.”

As you read the instructions for “atonement” you understand that the high priest and the priesthood offered sacrifice for themselves, a sacrifice was made for the tabernacle, and then one for the entire congregation. By “atonement” the Bible means “payment and removal of sin.” During this procedure, two goats were brought to Aaron and lots were cast for them. One goat represented the price for sin and was killed as a “sin offering” for Jehovah (vv. 8-9). The other goat represented the removal of sin from among the congregation of the people (vv. 8, 10). This became the scapegoat because on this animal Aaron placed both hands and symbolically transferred the guilt of the nation upon this animal (vv. 10, 21-22). Notice what the Bible says in verses 21-22: “Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man. The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness.”

Though the goat was literally innocent, yet it bore all the iniquities on itself and carried them far away! The scapegoat. Do you have one today?

Christians understand that the Old Testament symbolism on the Day of Atonement was a shadow of good things to come (Heb. 10:1). The blood of bulls and goats could not really take away sin, but it pointed to the coming sacrifice of the very Son of God whose own blood could take away our sins, and on whose body our sins were borne (Heb. 9:24-26, 28). Jesus is our sin offering and our scapegoat! It was expedient for us that Jesus die in our stead (Jn. 11:49-50). The high priest Caiaphas unwittingly prophesied this truth. In the words of the apostle Peter, Jesus “...Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed” (1 Pet. 2:24).

Is Jesus Your Avenue of Escape?

Jesus does not automatically become the scapegoat for the entire world. You must appropriate His sacrifice and blood to your own soul in order to receive the benefit. So how is that done? The New Testament clearly states that the blood of Christ is given to those who believe with all their hearts that Jesus is the Son of God (Jn. 8:24), and who are willing to turn from all their sins in repentance (Acts 2:38), and who will confess their faith in Jesus as God’s Son (Acts 8:37), and who then are baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 22:16; Rom. 6:3-4). Then and only then does Jesus become your scapegoat to take away all your sins. Won’t you accept Jesus in faithful obedience?

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