

Jesus, the Atoning One and Scapegoat

HOLY GOD, WHOLLY GIVEN: LENT IN LEVITICUS · LEVITICUS 16 · APRIL 6, 2025 · PASTOR RUTH CARVER

"The next day John (the Baptist) saw Jesus coming toward him and said, 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!'" (John 1:29)

How could a holy God dwell with His sinful people?

- God is like the sun – so good but dangerous.
- Sacrifices to atone for ritual impurity and moral failure couldn't keep up.

God gave His people the Day of Atonement as a grand catch-up day.

- Five animals
 - Bull and ram for the high priest and his household
 - Two goats and a ram for all the people
- Sprinkling and smearing of blood on the altars
- Aaron (high priest) goes alone into the Most Holy Place.
- Ceremony of the two goats

Seeing Jesus in the Day of Atonement

- Jesus was our atoning sacrifice, like goat #1.
- Jesus was our scapegoat, like goat #2.

Takeaways

- Learn from your Jewish friends.
- Approach God with awe and gratitude.
- Take comfort from God's visual aid to us of the scapegoat.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Moses offered himself as a substitutionary atonement for the people's sin, although God didn't allow it (Exodus 32:30-34). Why do you think God did not allow it?
2. What do you think the writer of Hebrews means by comparing the curtain in the Most Holy Place to Jesus' flesh? (Hebrews 10:19-20)
3. The emphasis on purifying the temple and ritual purity in general might seem irrelevant to us. We don't do animal sacrifices at all, and we don't have a holy physical place like the tabernacle or temple today. But 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 talks about how we as Christians are the temple of the Holy Spirit. How does this enlighten us?
4. Isaiah chapter 53 is considered one of the clearest Messianic psalms that predicts Jesus' death on the cross for us. What connections to the Day of Atonement do you see in this chapter? See verses 4-6 and 8 especially.
5. How do Jesus' words in Mark 10:45 show that he saw himself as the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53?
6. Isaiah says the Suffering Servant was "cut off from the land of the living" (Isaiah 53:8). How does this remind us of the Day of Atonement?
7. Discuss this statement: "The crucifixion of Jesus means more than substitutionary atonement, but not less."
8. What is a next step you can take in your relationship with Jesus Christ that today's sermon encouraged you to do?

DIG DEEPER:

- Watch some version of "Kol Nidre" ("All Vows") which is sung on Yom Kippur in Jewish synagogues today. Here is a beautiful version: [youtube.com/watch?v=fPlIQDICFFc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fPlIQDICFFc)
- In the Hebrew text, the lot that fell to the second goat, which we know as the scapegoat, was marked "to Azazel" (Lev 16:8, 10). We are not sure what Azazel refers to, although many scholars believe it was a desert demon. Look up Azazel in a Bible dictionary or online to explore this issue.