



The Westside church of Christ 3736 West Monte Cristo - Phoenix, AZ, 85053

Assembly Sunday Morning at 9:30a.m. — Classes Sunday Afternoon at 5:00 — Classes on Wednesday at 7:30p.m.

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The Scapegoat

by Maurice Barnett

The “cross” is used literally in scripture to refer to the actual wooden beams on which Jesus was killed. But, it is also used as a symbolical *figure of speech* of the sacrifice of Jesus that involves more than just the literal crucifixion. It is used figuratively in various passages, such as I Corinthians 1:18-23, to stand for the entire gospel, all that was necessary for our salvation; when they “preached the cross” they did not just talk about the literal wooden beams. This is made clear by I Corinthians 15:16-17, which says—

“For if the dead are not raised, neither hath Christ been raised: and if Christ hath not been raised your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.”

If Jesus had just died only, there could have been no salvation. Just His death was not enough to accomplish reconciliation with God. This is why the heart of gospel preaching is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. We must also add the thought that He had to ascend to heaven to complete the offering for sin; He had to be raised from the dead in order to do that. The death of the goat and the sprinkling of his blood by the High Priest on the day of Atonement, Leviticus 16, was but a shadow pointing to this role that Jesus would play in our reconciliation with God. Two essential acts were performed at that point on the day of Atonement. First, the animal was slain by taking its blood, its “life.” This goat was designated “for Jehovah,” as an “offering for sin.” Second, the High Priest

took the blood of that animal into the Holy of Holies to sprinkle there for atonement. *Both acts were essential to making that atonement!*

This shadow of what was to come is clearly indicated in Hebrews 9. That chapter begins with describing these two acts and then says in verse 9, *which is a figure for the time present.*” In verse 22 it emphasizes, *“apart from shedding of blood there is no remission.”* Jesus was, first, the sacrifice slain: He shed His blood on the literal cross, gave His life. Following His resurrection, He ascended into heaven, and, acting as High Priest, offered His own blood before God in the heavenly Holy of Holies to complete the offering for sin. Hebrews 9:23-26, speaking of the necessity of blood shed—

“It was necessary therefore that the copies of the things in the heavens (earthly Holy of Holies, MB) should be cleansed with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ entered not into a holy place made with hands, like in pattern to the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us: nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place year by year with blood not his own; else must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world but now once at the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin *by the sacrifice of himself.*”

This is why just the *death* of Jesus on the literal cross was not sufficient to bring remission of sins. For us to focus all attention and emphasis involved in redemption at the time of the death of Jesus is to ignore the scheme of redemption, nul-

lify the gospel, violating scripture.

But, where does the scapegoat enter the picture? It is usually used to support the *substitution theory* that Jesus *took our place* on the cross, and that it refers to Jesus literally “bearing” our sins while on the literal cross. None of this is true.

As the first goat is designated “for Jehovah,” the second goat is designated “for Azazel.” There has been some controversy over the meaning of *Azazel*. Its most likely meaning is in keeping with what was done with the scapegoat, it means “removal.” That is, it symbolized the removal of the sins of the people. Indeed, the word “scapegoat” comes from the old English “escapegoat,” that is, the goat “escaped” into the wilderness. Let’s look at some facts concerning the scapegoat to help us put it in its proper place.



First, Jesus is never likened to the scapegoat! He is connected only to the first goat, *the one for Jehovah*, the one whose blood was shed and then sprinkled in the Most Holy Place, as we have already seen. There are quite a few Scriptures in the New Testament about the sacrifice of Jesus, Hebrews chapters 7-10 for example, but nowhere is the Scapegoat even mentioned in the New Testament.

Second, the scapegoat appears in the scenario only *after* the offering for atonement in the Holy of Holies, Leviticus 16:20, that furnishes the shadow of what Jesus did. If one should say that the scapegoat was also chosen to “make atonement” as was the other goat, keep in mind that when the poor offered fine flour for a sin-offering it was also referred to as “atonement,” Leviticus 5:11-13; *no blood was shed*. The fact that the English word “atonement” was used does not establish that the scapegoat’s place was in the death of Jesus on the cross. The scapegoat was not slain, none of its blood was shed; it could not have portrayed any of what Jesus did on the literal cross. Remember that only by blood that is shed and offered can there be remission of sins.

Third, if the scapegoat enters the picture at all in the New Testament order, it would have to be *after* Jesus ascended into heaven and completed His offering for sin, Hebrews 9. If the scapegoat has any counterpart in what Jesus did for redemption, it could only have come *after* He sat down at the right hand of God, “*when he had made purification for sins,*” (Hebrews 1:3). It could only be a *symbol* of the “removal” of sins just as it was on the day of Atonement.

TODAY

PRAYERS

Paul Sharp
Jordan Myers
Bobby Banks

SONG LEADER

Alex Durazo

LORD’S TABLE

Wayne Clark
Jeremy Banks
Brent Haugen
Mike Franklin

SCRIPTURE READ

Jerry Acosta

SERMON

Maurice Barnett

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Bobby Banks

WEDNESDAY

PRAYERS

Alex Durazo
Jeremy Banks

SONG LEADER

Michael Banks

TEACHER

Skeet Franklin

NEXT WEEK

PRAYERS

Jerry Acosta
Mike Franklin
Bobby Banks

SONG LEADER

Alex Durazo

LORD’S TABLE

Joe Davis
Steve Webb
Doug Fenn
Jim Pierce

SCRIPTURE READ

Paul Sharp

SERMON

Maurice Barnett

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Bobby Banks