

The Bulletin

Meeks St. Church of Christ

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October 31, 2021

“The Goat Who Came Home”

By Allen Dvorak

On the 10th day of the 7th month, the Levitical high priest annually carried out the ritual of the Day of Atonement. Although there were rams later offered as burnt offerings, the main part of the ritual involved a calf and two goats. On that most important day, the high priest would wash his body in the laver in the courtyard of the temple and then put on his white linen garments.

The calf was intended as a sin sacrifice for the high priest and his family. He would kill the calf in the courtyard and collect its blood which would be taken into the Most Holy Place. Before the high priest came into the Most Holy Place with the blood of the calf, he would cloud the room with incense. The Most Holy Place had only one piece of furniture, the ark of the covenant. The ark of the covenant was a box with a cover known as the mercy seat. On top of the mercy seat there were two cherubim molded with the gold of the seat. The high priest clouded the room with incense because the first time he entered with blood, he did so as a sinful man!



Once the Most Holy Place had been clouded with incense, the high priest would enter the room with the blood of the calf and sprinkle some of that blood on and before the ark. The blood was being offered at the ark of the covenant because that was where God’s presence met with man.

Leaving the Most Holy Place, the high priest would return to the courtyard and cast lots on the two goats there. The goat on which the Lord’s lot fell would be killed and its blood collected just as was done with the calf. The high priest would then take that blood into the Most Holy Place and do with it as he had done with the blood of the calf. It was the offering of a sin sacrifice for the rest of the people.

Returning to the courtyard, the high priest would then put his hands on the head of the remaining goat and confess the sins of the people. That goat, the scapegoat (translation of the KJV), would be taken by another person out of the courtyard of the tabernacle and (later) out of the city. The goat, bearing the sins of the people, would be released in the wilderness.

After the blood of the bull and the goat had been offered for atonement, it was also used to cleanse the tabernacle from the uncleanness of the people, but our focus in this article is on the scapegoat.

By the time of Jesus, the Jews had altered the ritual concerning the scapegoat somewhat. The Day of Atonement is described as a “day of solemn Sabbath rest” (Leviticus 16:31). The rabbis had determined in their traditions how far an individual could travel on a sabbath day (“a sabbath’s day journey”) and that wasn’t far enough to get the goat into the wilderness and far away from Jerusalem. So they devised a means of getting the goat farther.

Ten booths were set up, each one a half of a Sabbath’s day journey from the next. Typically, a member of one of the priestly families would begin the journey with the goat, but would hand off the goat to the occupant of the

first booth, and so on. When each man had handed over the goat to the next man, he would wait at the booth where he had handed over the goat. The last man to conduct the goat would take him to a precipice and push it over the edge to kill it.

Those were not the instructions given in Leviticus 16. First, the text of Leviticus 16 appears to contemplate only one man conducting the goat into the wilderness (compare verses 21 and 26; only one man bathes before coming back into the camp?). Furthermore, the goat was to be released into the wilderness.

But one year, something went wrong! The scapegoat was taken out into the wilderness and released as the law prescribed. But the goat found its way home and returned to Jerusalem, figuratively bearing the sins of the people, of course! I have heard of dogs finding their way home after being removed for scores of miles, but I didn't know that goats likewise had such built-in homing devices!

Easton (Easton's Bible Dictionary; "scapegoat") comments, "At a later period an evasion or modification of the law of Moses was introduced by the Jews." Quoting another author, he continues: "At this place the Judean desert was supposed to commence; and the man in whose charge the goat was sent out,

while setting him free, was instructed to push the unhappy beast down the slope of the mountain side, which was so steep as to insure the death of the goat, whose bones were broken by the fall. The reason of this barbarous custom was that on one occasion the scapegoat returned to Jerusalem after being set free, which was considered such an evil omen that its recurrence was prevented for the future by the death of the goat'" (Twenty-one Years' Work in the Holy Land).

Although the plan for preventing the goat from coming back home (kill it in the wilderness) might seem ingenious, it was a violation of the law of God. Someone might argue that the death of the scapegoat is an insignificant detail, but we need to remember the story of Uzzah who was killed by the Lord for simply touching the ark of the covenant in a well-intentioned effort to prevent the ark from toppling from the cart in which it was being carried (2 Samuel 6:1-7). God evidently intends that His instructions be followed precisely.

Deviations from God's instructions often begin in "small" details, perhaps even small changes that seem to be demanded by culture or temporary circumstances. Human reasoning offers the justification for such changes. For example, the practice of sprinkling or pouring water on individuals as "baptism" supposedly began as a means of "baptizing" those whose physical health did not permit them to be immersed in water (Mattox, *The Eternal Kingdom*, p. 150).

Affirming that immersion for the forgiveness of sins was the practice of the early church, Mattox notes that the first known case of "baptizing" the sick by pouring water on the head of the sick person was with an individual named Novation in A.D. 251. The important thing, however, is that a person is "baptized," right? So men decide to change God's instructions and identify "pouring water on someone" as baptism! Mattox comments further, "What was introduced as an exception later became the rule. Sprinkling was not commonly practiced in this era" (p. 151).

In the case of the scapegoat, the reason for killing the scapegoat seems to make sense from a human standpoint, i.e., the sins are supposed to be carried off into the wilderness, not carried back into the city.

But as soon as we begin to second-guess God's instructions to us, we are headed off in the wrong direction!



Hebrews 11:13 (NKJB)

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

News and Notes: Sick and recovering: Tim Harris Sr, Tim Harris Jr, Chad Harris, June Lawson (Lisa Busby's Mom), Debbie Keplinger, Janis Johnson, Daniel Holloway, Peggy Harville (cancer), Linda Hunt, David Taylor, Randy Beaty, Sam Johnson, Sherry Doles, Randy Ferrell, J F Dancer, & Earl Mitchell.

Betty Hurst is in Rehab at Corner Stone in room B1 (across from Magnolia Hospital). She can have visitors for the present time.

Prayers for the family of Clois Wright, who sadly passed away.

Those Who Serve:

Sunday Morning 9:00 A.M. Service:

Opening Prayer:	Tim Harris Jr.
Preaching:	Brian Meade
Sermon #1:	<i>"Questioning Religious Beliefs"</i>
<u>Auditorium Bible Class: 9:35am:</u>	Fred Johnson
	1 Corinthians (Mike Willis)
	<i>Page 80, Question #10</i>

Sunday Morning 10:30 A.M. Service:

Announcements:	Doug George
Opening Prayer & Scripture Reading:	Lee Busby
	<i>Joshua 1:7-9</i>
Song Leader:	Paul Busby
Lord's Supper:	Fred Johnson
Assisting:	— —
Preaching:	Brian Meade
Sermon #2:	<i>"Successful Living"</i>
Closing Prayer:	Paul Johnson

Wednesday Evening: 7:00 P.M.

November 3rd

Upstairs Bible Class:	Paul Johnson
	Ecclesiastes & Song of Solomon (Mike Willis)
	<i>Page #47, Question #1</i>
Invitation:	Paul Busby
Song Leader:	Russell Briggs
Closing Prayer:	Blake Briggs

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“Questioning Religious Beliefs”

Lesson Text: **1 Peter 3:15.**

Intro. We live in day and age where people make think it is rude or even ugly to question people’s beliefs. But is it?

I. Bible Examples Of Questioning Religious Beliefs.

- A.** Elijah at Mt. Carmel- **1 Kings 18:21.**
- B.** Isaiah & Jeremiah- **Isaiah 58:1; 59:1-2; Jeremiah 8:19.**
- C. Malachi 1:7-8.**
- D.** Jesus at Jacob’s Well- **John 4:19-24.** Honest questions lead to truth.
- E.** Ethiopian Treasurer’s Question- **Acts 8:26-39.** Can lead to obedience?
- F. Acts 17:11.** Noble Bereans were Questioning Paul’s teaching.
- G. Acts 19:1-7.** Honest seekers can be shown their error.

Notes: _____.

II. Why Do We Need To Question Religious Beliefs?

- A.** Always To Lead People To Truth! **Colossians 1:28.**
- B.** Not Like The Chief Priests and Scribes- **Luke 20:19-20.**
- C.** To Determine Truth From Error- **1 John 4:1; 2 John 9-11; Rev. 2:1-2.**
(On such subjects as Baptism, The Church, Premillennialism; Calvinism...)
- D.** To Determine When We Can Extend Fellowship- **Acts 9:26-27.**

Notes: _____.

III. What Do We Do When People React Negatively?

- A.** We Need To Realize That Not Everyone Is Going To Allow Honest Investigation & Questioning Of Their Beliefs.
- B.** Remind Those Of Their Obligation To Respond- **1 Peter 3:15.**
- C.** Understand That Those Who Hold To Extra-Biblical Traditions and Dogmas Cannot Successfully Show Scripture For Their Beliefs.
Matthew 15:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:21.
- D.** Don’t Spend All Your Time On Them- **Matthew 7:6; Titus 3:10.**
- E.** Pray For Them To See The Truth- **2 Timothy 2:23-26.**

Notes: _____.

“Successful Living”

Lesson Text: **Joshua 1:1-9.**

Intro. What does it mean to be successful in life? How would we define what true success would be? What are the indicators of success?

Success: “the fact of getting or achieving wealth, respect, or fame; the correct or desired result of an attempt.” (Merriam Webster)

I. Success Or Failure In The Bible:

1. Some Are Always Failures- Cain, Rehoboam, Ahab & Jezebel, Belshazzar,
2. Some Are Always Successful- Enoch, Job, Samuel, Elijah, Joshua, Caleb, Barnabas...
3. Some Start Out Successful, But In The End Fail- Balam, King Saul, Judas, Demas...
4. Some Start As Failures, But Finish With Success- Rahab, King Manasseh, Prodigal son, Saul/Paul, John Mark, Onesimus....

II. Success Is In Reach For All Of Us.

A. Matthew 7:7-8; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27.

– But we must seek it with all of our heart- **Deut. 4:29; 2 Chronicles 31:20-21.**

III. The Conditions Of Success.

1. There Must Be A Fixed Purpose.

- David- **Psalm 17:3-5.**
- Solomon- **Ecclesiastes 12:13.**
- Daniel- **Daniel 1:8.**
- Barnabas- **Acts 11:23.**
- Paul- **2 Corinthians 5:9.**
- Do we have a fixed purpose in life?

2. Perseverance In Doing Right.

- Examples of men who persevered- **Edison, Lincoln.....**
- **Mark 13:13; Galatians 6:9.**
- **Hebrews 12:3-4—10:32-39.**
- Will we be tempted to give up?

3. Courage In The Name Of God.

- **Joshua 1:7; John 16:33; Mark 15:43.**
- **1 Corinthians 16:13.**
- Will there be times our courage will be tested?

4. Obedience To God’s Commands.

- **Joshua 1:8; Deuteronomy 29:9; James 1:22-25.**
- This why Many failed in the Bible!
- **Revelation 22:14-15.**