

Come to Understanding

They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding,
and they that murmured shall learn doctrine. — Isaiah 29:24

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The Scapegoat!

Most of us understand the term, “scapegoat,” to mean one who is blamed for the offences committed by someone else. The word is found in the instructions Yahweh gave to Moses for the Day of Atonement. The high priest, Aaron, was to first wash himself in water, put on holy garments, and offer a sin offering for himself and his household. Then he was to present two goats before Yahweh. After casting lots for each of the goats, one would be offered to Yahweh as a sin offering and the other one would be let go in the wilderness as the “scapegoat.”

- 8 And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for Yahweh, and the other lot for the scapegoat.
- 9 And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which Yahweh’s lot fell, and offer him *for* a sin offering.
- 10 But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before Yahweh, to make an atonement with him, *and* to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness. -Leviticus 16

The first goat, the one for Yahweh, was to be sacrificed and its blood shed to atone for the sins of the congregation:

- 15 Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that *is* for the people, and bring his blood within the veil, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat:
- 16 And he shall make an atonement for the holy *place*, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remains among them in the midst of their uncleanness. -Leviticus 16

After the sacrifice was finished and the blood of the slain goat was sprinkled for the atonement of sins, the second goat was brought forward. This time, Aaron was to lay his hands upon the head of the live goat and “confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins.” Then, the sin-laden goat was to be released into the wilderness:

- 20 And when he has made an end of reconciling the holy *place*, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat:

21 And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send *him* away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness:

- 22 And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness. -Leviticus 16

While Yahweh instructed Israel to keep the law, such as this ordinance concerning the two goats on the Day of Atonement, we are reminded that their purpose was to serve as a “shadow” of the true, showing the good things that were yet to come:

- 1 For the law having a shadow of good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. -Hebrews 10

These sacrifices were instituted to served as a “type” or a “pattern” of the true sacrifice. If they had really taken away sins, then there would have been no further need to continue the sacrifices:

- 2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.
- 3 But in those *sacrifices there is* a remembrance again *made* of sins every year.
- 4 For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. -Hebrews 10

Clearly, the first goat, even though it was offered as a “sin offering,” could not take away sins. It was used to show the sacrifice that Yahshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ) would make as the final sacrifice for sin. He entered into the holy place *only once* and fulfilled the pattern of the law, obtaining our “eternal redemption:”

- 11 But the Messiah coming as a high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;
- 12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption *for us*. -Hebrews 9

What about the “scapegoat?” What does it show?

So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense,
and caused them to understand the reading. — Nehemiah 8:8

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As the crowds gathered in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost (Feast of Weeks) that followed the Passover when Yahshua (Jesus) was crucified, Peter reminded them what they had done. They had actually crucified the One who was both “Lord and the Messiah!”

36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God has made that same Yahshua, whom you have crucified, both Lord and the Messiah. -Acts 2

That meant the sacrifice had been made for their sins, just as the goat, being offered year after year on the Day of Atonement, had demonstrated. Once the crowd realized what had happened, they felt the emotion of godly sorrow as they were “pricked in their heart.” Now what? They asked Peter and the other apostles, “what shall we do?”

37 Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said to Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do? -Acts 2

Peter clearly told them what they must do:

38 Then Peter said to them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Yahshua the Messiah for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. -Acts 2

By being baptized in the name of Yahshua the Messiah, they would confess their belief that He had died as the offering for their sins (see Romans 6:3-7). By repenting, they would confess their sins before God and send them away from themselves, much like Aaron had done with the “scapegoat.” Through repentance and believing that Yahshua was our sin offering, our sins are completely (as far as the east is from the west) taken away from us:

12 As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. -Psalms 103

The same Greek word, “aphesis,” is translated in English as “remission” and as “forgiveness.” It is based on a Greek word which means “to send away.” (see *Strong’s Concordance*). Therefore, Yahshua, as our Savior, bore our repented sins as they are forgiven (remitted or sent away):

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31 Him has God exalted with his right hand *to be* a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. -Acts 5

Yahshua commands us to repent and believe the gospel:

15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent you, and believe the gospel. -Mark 1

The good news of the gospel is that the sin offering has already been made. However, only our past sins (those for which we have repented) have been forgiven:

25 Whom God has set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; -Romans 3

Yahshua died for the sins of the whole world:

2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins* of the whole world. -1 John 2

Even though He died for the sins of the whole world, many in the world still retain sin. They keep the sin either because they do not believe that Yahshua was the sin offering and/or because they have not repented for their sins.

They also retain sins because they have not forgiven others for the sins (trespasses) that they have committed against them. Unless we forgive (remit or send away) the sins that others have committed against us, we cannot expect God to forgive (remit or send away) the sins (trespasses) we have committed against Him:

14 For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

15 But if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. -Matthew 6

After Yahshua’s disciples received the Holy Ghost, He gave them clear instructions concerning retaining and remitting the sins of others:

23 Whose soever sins you remit, they are remitted unto them; *and* whose soever *sins* you retain, they are retained. -John 20

The word “retain” means “to have power of,” “to get possession of,” or “to hold in the hand” (see *Strong’s Concordance*). Therefore, if we hold onto the sins (trespasses) of others, then we take possession of them. Adopting them as our own, we hold onto them in the form of an unrepentant grudge. However, if we “remit” (forgive or send away) those sins, then they are sent unto the ones that committed them. When we release them, they no longer belong to us. The ones who committed the sins can then either “retain” them or they can repent (send them away as a thing of the past), believing that God has forgiven them by the power of the blood of Yahshua.

God has given us a choice. We can hold onto our sins (as well as the sins of others). Or, remembering the example of the sin-laden “scapegoat,” we can release them and send them away through repentance, believing that they are forgiven.