

TTTINITTT

The sacrificial system of the Old Testament is at worst unknown and at best just confusing. But one of the rites that is still in our vernacular is that of the scapegoat from Leviticus 16. We often hear the word used, though repurposed for other uses: *This or that guy was some scapegoat for this or that company.* Yet the biblical origins of this term are often forgotten. Here is how it worked.

Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest would enter into the Holy of Holies. He would take two handfuls of incense and cast them on the altar of incense so that smoke billowed from the Holy of Holies and when the priest came near you, you could smell him before you could see him. Then some of the sacrifices for the Day of Atonement would commence and blood would be sprinkled on the altar and the people.

But then something strange would happen.

The priest would take a goat in the midst of the people as the people would surround the priest and this animal. The priest would **lay his hands on the head of the goat and confess over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins.** The sins of the people would be placed upon the goat and this scapegoat who bore the sins of the people would be sent off into the wilderness to take away their sins. That is what the word *scapegoat* means. It is that this animal would bear the sins of

the people and take them from the people. In this way the people **would no longer be enslaved to sin** but rather they would be **set free from sin**.

Now let us understand the baptism of Jesus in this same manner that in this Baptism of our Lord, Jesus brings to light the truth of this ancient rite. That He Himself is the scapegoat. You should think of His baptism in this manner.

Surely you have seen pictures of oil spills in the ocean yes? Whether it be Exxon or BP or some tanker or oil rig that spilled millions of gallons into the ocean. You have probably seen those horrendous pictures of the dark black oil-slick infecting the once pure waters. That was the spiritual state of the Jordan when John was baptizing those who were coming to him. They were entering the Jordan, confessing their sins to John and being baptized. In the same way as when you go to confession with pastor Weinkauff, when they left that place they left their sins in the Jordan. And so day after day, they were coming to John and confessing their sins, and the spiritual oil slick of sin grew bigger and blacker and deeper. But then...Jesus entered into the river. Jesus who committed no sin, nor had any sins to confess¹. He had no sin to be washed away in baptism and therefore needed no baptism! By such logic,

¹ 1 Peter 2; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15; 1 Jn 3:5

John was right to protest, saying that Jesus didn't need to be baptized. But it because Jesus didn't need to be baptized that He *was* baptized. Imagine Jesus entering into that Jordan river, oil slicked by that black darkness of the sin of the people present, your own sin, and the sin of the world. And then John the Baptist, like the High Priests of old, laid His hands on Jesus' head to baptize Him. But instead of being baptized to wash away sins, Jesus is baptized to receive sins. And imagine that as Jesus is baptized, all of that black oil slick of your sin starts to be absorbed into Jesus like a sponge. That all water begins to become holy and sanctified as Jesus is baptized. That in the baptism of our Lord, all water is now baptized so that you might be baptized in holy water. In the Baptism of our Lord, He baptizes all water for baptism. Here we see somewhat of a backwards baptism where He who is dipped is holier than the river. Where the water in *that* font is made holy by His baptism.

He is baptized into our sins so that when we are baptized, we are baptized into his righteousness and clothed with Him **as we have put on Christ** (Rom 6).

Your sin and the sin of the world has been placed on to Jesus who is the Scapegoat.

Then of course it is from this heavenly voice of the Father that we hear what the purpose of this scapegoat is. That He is the **beloved Son** of the Father who has come to take that sin of the world that has been placed upon Him and crucify it. And this is what pleases the Father. That Jesus, the perfect Son has come in perfect sinless obedience to the Father's will and has come to die for the sin of the world. And while we miss it in our reading, the very next verse tells us that directly after the baptism, **Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness** as the Scapegoat.

The sin that was washed off of you in your baptism is washed upon Jesus in His. Though he has no sins of His own and is the spotless Lamb of God, He is the lamb of God who has come to take away the sin of the world. And here at the baptism of our Lord is where your sin is placed upon Him.

Through the Baptism of our Lord in the Jordan, He sanctified and instituted all water to be a blessed flood and a lavish washing away of sin. He has made waters suitable for your baptism where the Spirit makes His Throne. And this is nothing new that He is doing for the Spirit has so often found His resting place upon the dignity of water. The Spirit of God hovered over the primordial waters in creation. He hovered over the waters of the flood and the Red sea. Now we see that He hovers over the waters of the Jordan and rests on Jesus so that any water that

Jesus has been cleansed may be the throne of the Spirit. Which means that when you entered into the waters of baptism you received the same Spirit.

This is where **all righteousness is fulfilled** – where your sin is placed upon this Divine Scapegoat is where all righteousness is fulfilled since it will be this same man who will put that sin to death on the cross in His own death.

This is where **all righteousness is fulfilled** – where these waters have been baptized by Jesus' baptism so that you might be baptized.

That is where **all righteousness is fulfilled** – where Jesus, true God and true Man, anointed with the Spirit and acknowledged by the Father has opened the way for fallen man to be re-incorporated with God in baptism.

And so you are. You are baptized into Jesus and your sins have been placed upon Him and crucified in His body on the cross. This means that **you must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Your old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that you would no longer be enslaved to sin.** You are called to a life of holiness...you are called to a life of repentance. So Repent.

Being united with Christ in baptism, **Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means!** That is the very definition of hypocrisy; cheap grace.

Where you think that just because you are forgiven means you have license to sin. Foolishness. We are called to even greater holiness than that of the Old Testament saints because now the fulness of God has been revealed in Christ. You have died in baptism and died to sin. So then **how can you who died to sin still live in it? You were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, you too might walk in newness of life.**

This walking in newness of life means that your whole life is one of conformity to this Son of God into whom you have been baptized. The life you are called to live is wrapped up in a single word: Holiness. Your life is now called to be a constant doxology to the Name you now bear.

You are this son in whom God is pleased because you are baptized into Christ. In your baptism, your identity has been radically altered. From the moment you came out of these baptismal waters, you have been baptized into Christ, the Spirit now dwells in you, and when the Father looks at you, He says, **this is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.**

To God be all **T** Glory forever and ever. Amen.