

The Scapegoat

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Preacher: Rev Andrew Coghill

[0 : 00] Now I want us to look for a little while this evening at this 16th chapter in Leviticus, particularly the subject of the scapegoat.

Now scapegoat of course is a term that has found its way into ordinary parlance in our language with a general sort of reference to someone who takes the blame on behalf of others.

Someone upon whom the blame or the sins are laid even though they themselves may not be guilty. Exactly as the scapegoat is in this chapter of whom we read that Aaron shall put his hands upon the head of the live goat and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, all their transgressions and all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat and shall send them away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness.

Perhaps what is sometimes neglected when people use that phrase lightly about scapegoat is that the scapegoat is in one sense, and we'll come to this in a way, in one sense is the one that lives rather than dies.

And I say why in one sense because eventually of course it would die, but as I say we'll come to that. The scapegoat is the one then upon whom the sins of all the people are laid and pronounced.

[1 : 21] But of course this chapter is not about the scapegoat and isolation. That is part of the chapter. But there are other elements in here, and there is of course, as in every text, a context.

And at the beginning of this chapter the context is the Lord speaking to Moses and saying, Say to Aaron, make sure he doesn't come into the holy place of the tabernacle just any old time, just whenever he feels like it.

That he come not at all times into the holy place within the veil before the mercy seat, that he die not. But I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat. So in other words, it's not just to come in whenever he feels like it.

And the context of this is, as it says in verse 1, After the death of the two sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, when they offered before the Lord and died.

And we read about it if you turn back a few pages in chapter 10. That's what happens there in chapter 10. You might think, James, that's a bit rough.

[2 : 40] Surely they're priests. They're meant to have incense in their censers. This is their job, to offer incense before the Lord. Virtually, that seems a bit steep.

But it is not just, it's not the incense that the Lord specified. It's just stuff of their own provision or at the time of their own desiring. They were taking on themselves that which the Lord had hitherto set apart only for their father.

At this stage, as the high priest to burn incense before the Lord, they were going in presumptuously into the holy place. And as we see a little further down that chapter, from verse 8 onwards, the Lord spake unto Aaron, saying, Do not drink wine, nor strong drink.

Thou know thy sons with thee when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die. There is an implication. It's only conjecture. But an implication that perhaps they were drunk at the time when they did it.

Now, as most of us know, when people have had a bit to drink, they become puffed up with bravado. They think they can do anything. They think they can jolly well impose their will on somebody.

[3 : 46] If they can do whatever they decide, because they are full of guts, courage, and they are full of their own importance. And in the context, it may well be that that was what Nadab and Abihu were guilty of.

But the Lord does not suffer such foolishness. He does not suffer such light sin. And this is the first thing that we need to recognize.

And I would suggest to you tonight five headings I'd like us to look at. They won't all be of equal importance. And some of them you could sort of concertina into one. But five headings, and this is the first one.

The seriousness of sin. Secondly, there will be the holiness of God. Thirdly, the helplessness of man. Fourthly, the absolute necessity of sacrifice.

And finally, the absolute removal, destruction, and disappearance of sin. Now notice these two are like bookends. They've got the seriousness of sin at one end, and the absolute removal, destruction, and disappearance of sin at the other end.

[4 : 50] And in between, you've got God's working of grace. So these five headings, if you like, and they won't all, as I say, be of equal weight. They won't all be of equal length. But this is the first point, the seriousness of sin.

Sin is defined because it is a violation against God. It is a transgression of God's holy laws and commands.

That is why it is so serious. It's not just one of us doing something bad to suck to another one of ourselves, you know, of our friend, of our colleague.

That can also be sin. We sin against each other when we are bad to each other, when we do things that hurt others, or when we deliberately lie, or whatever. But ultimately, we sin against God because it is His laws and commands that we are breaking.

And there is no concept, usually, in fallen man of the absolute seriousness of sin.

[5 : 51] There is no escape from how darkly God views the vileness of sin. He will do anything to remove it.

He will not suffer it. We see even, for example, you know, in verse 16 here, all the things that have to be cleansed by the blood. And it's all shall He do for the tabernacle of the congregation.

The tabernacle itself needs to be cleansed with blood. And what is the tabernacle's crime? This inanimate object which has been made at the direction of God, every detail of all the curtain hangings, and the fence posts, and the tent pegs, and all the content of it.

What is the tabernacle's crime? Why does it need to have an atonement made for it? Because it remaineth among them in the midst of their unclaimers. That's its sin, if you like.

Because the children of Israel are sinful, and the tabernacle is there, plumped in the middle of them. It is then, by implication, in the eyes of God, contaminated by the fact of Israel's sin.

[7 : 03] Contaminated in such a way that it too requires an atonement to be made for it. Even the tabernacle needs atonement.

That's how seriously the Lord takes sin. But if we were in any doubt, we only see that what the Lord's ultimate answer to sin is, is the coming of Himself, and the paying of the price for sin with His own blood, through His own beloved Son, upon the cross in the fullness of time.

The seriousness of sin, we just don't grasp. We do not understand. It's like, it's like perhaps, you know, if you're a wee child in a car, sitting in the back, and your mum or your dad are driving along, you don't realise, as you're sitting there in the back, that every time you pass another car, on the road, as it's going past and you're going in the other direction, it would only take a tiny little twist of the wheel by the person driving to cause a fatal smash.

You pass each other on the road, maybe less than a foot, a foot or two feet apart, and just a little turn of the wheel would send these two cars smashing into each other.

That is how much you literally dice with death every time you get in a car, every time you go on the road. But we don't think about that. Otherwise, we'd never set foot outside the house.

[8 : 30] And so, likewise, the seriousness of sin, insofar as it both kills and contaminates, and does so for all eternity, we just don't grasp.

Sin, the wages of sin is death. That's why there is death in this world, because sin has entered into it. We are separated from the one who is the source of all life. That is why there is death in this world.

And that is why, unless we be redeemed and reconciled to God, we will not only die physically, we will die eternally. The seriousness of sin, most of us simply do not get.

And this is one reason why the price for sin is so divinely high, because the seriousness of sin is so hellishly deep.

It both kills and contaminates. We think of even the tabernacle itself having to be cleansed with the blood of these sacrifices.

[9 : 37] And in that context, it becomes less amazing that Nadab and Abihu, whether they were drunk, or whether they were just puffed up with bravado, or whether they thought anything their father could do, they could jolly well do as well.

They can swagger into the Holy of Holies. They can take their incense with them. They can worship God any old way that they desire. God is to be approached, not as we might devise, but in accordance with what his word directs.

And following on from the seriousness of sin, we might say that the second heading is almost the flip side of the same coin. The seriousness of sin and the holiness of God.

That's second heading. The holiness of God is such that he is not to be worshipped just by any device that we might think of out of our own head. It's not enough just to say, oh, I'm doing this sin.

This is my worship of God. You know, this is my truth. That's your truth. We all just have our own truths, you know. No, God has revealed through his own holy and inspired word how he is to be worshipped.

[10 : 49] And in this context, in these chapters, God has made it clear how he is to be worshipped. And the seriousness of sin combined with the holiness of God is indicated here by God saying to Moses and to Aaron, look, you don't just come in here whenever you feel like it.

You don't just swagger in with your own incense. I am a holy God. This is how you will approach with what my word directs. Now, at the time of the Reformation, of course, as some of you will be aware, this became known as what was called the regulative principle.

The idea that the worship of God should contain only that for which there was an expressed scriptural warrant. And therefore, if there was something that wasn't in the Bible, wasn't there for New Testament worship, it was to be done away with.

And that's one reason why at the time of the Reformation, they did away with all manner of so-called Christian festivals and saints' days and all the other things. And again, this is where you get the argument about worship wars and musical instruments and non-inspired materials and so on because that's the basis.

If it's not there in the Bible, we don't have the right to put it in because of the holiness of God and what he himself has devised and what he himself has revealed.

[12 : 14] But there is a tendency then with man, of course, in his fallen state, to say, ah, well, that's the situation. But I just shrug my shoulders and I'll walk away.

If it's going to be this much, I'm not going to bother. I don't want to go there. I don't want to take the risk of entering into this holy God if I'm just going to be struck down.

God's desire is not that we should shun him or be shunned by him, but that we should approach to him and be received by him.

But in order that we should approach safely, he has specified how it is to be done. That is what he's doing here in this chapter. That is what he's saying about Aaron and about the priests and about the sacrifice.

He is specifying what is required. He is to be approached. He is not to be shunned. He's not to be walked away from.

[13 : 14] But at the same time, he desires us to approach, but that we may do so in a right and appropriate and safe manner, he has specified how it should be done.

He has revealed his will and his truth unto us. Anyway, you know, if we're inclined to say, well, I don't want anything to do with that God. I don't want to take any risk.

No, I'm just going to walk away. What is the end result of that? Without the Lord, we die. Without drawing near to the Lord to be saved, we perish. Without the forgiveness of our sin, they remain upon us.

All our sins, we answer for them ourselves. It's either God's way or else we can say, or my way, but my way is no way. I become then, if we can use this analogy, I become like the goat sent out into the wilderness.

Never heard of again. Eventually, it will perish and it will perish with all the load of sin upon it. That is what I do if I turn my back on God.

[14 : 22] Now, this is something, of course, which is significant when we think about, you know, the Lord's table. When we think about the Lord's table, which we've not long had, of course, ourselves, and there are those who in all sincerity and in all humility genuinely think that they are better off staying away from the Lord's table for fear of approaching wrongly, for fear of perhaps or fending against the holiness of God or not being good enough or righteous enough or whatever, the holiness of God is such, I'm better to stay away.

And then I can't be guilty of anything. But nor can you be cleansed from anything either. You are guilty of all the sin of your life. I am guilty of all the sin of my life.

But if I am to be cleansed from that sin, there is only one solution and that is the blood of Christ that cleansed us from all sin.

The holiness of God is such that he would not have us just waltz into his presence any more than Esther could have waltzed in to the royal presence of her husband without being killed, even though she was queen.

She had to have the scepter stretched out to her that she might be spared, just as anybody else would. And if that is so for an earthly monarch, how much so, more so for the holy God, the holiness of God.

[15 : 51] His key is to be approached not as we might devise, but in accordance with what his word directs. But he is to be approached and he is to be worshipped.

And if we turn our back on the Lord, we are turning back our back and our only hope that says, oh, you've been shipwrecked. And you're splashing about in the water and beginning to freeze and along comes a boat, a lifeboat, well, I think that boat's a bit leaky.

And I'm worried that if I try and climb into that boat, well, I might slip down again and go underneath it and then I'll be worse off than, oh, I'll just paddle away and I'll do my own thing here. Eventually you're going to get so tired you won't be able to keep going anymore.

Eventually you're just going to sink and you're going to drown. Here's a boat. Here's a means of being saved. Here's a means of being dragged out of the water. You might think, oh, well, I'm not all that sure about it. I'm not sure I can cope with it.

I'm not sure that this is the right one for me. What alternative do we have? If we are not going to be redeemed by Christ, we're not going to be redeemed at all. Christ alone is sufficient for the holiness of God.

[17 : 01] Because in line with the holiness of God, we've had the seriousness of sin, the holiness of God, we have, again, linked in with that, the helplessness of man.

The helplessness of man, even the earthly priests had no strength of their own. In Adab and Abihu, if we went back to chapter 10, might have thought, hey, we're priests.

We've got the right to go into this tabernacle. You know, our father's a high priest. We can waltz in whenever we like. Those plebs out there, the Israelites, they can't do it, but we're priests. We can go in. We go into the Holy of Holies.

We take our incense. We have the access. We're special. No, you're not special. You're a sinner just like anybody else. And if you presume upon the goodness of the grace of God, well, you see what happens to them.

And you see what will happen to any of us who presume upon the goodness of God in our terms instead of on us. The helplessness of man. The helplessness of man is seen by the requirement that even Aaron, the anointed high priest, when he comes to make this atonement before he does anything else, he has to offer the bullock of the sin offering for himself and for his family, his house.

[18 : 17] He can't even begin to discharge the functions of the priesthood until his sins are covered by the blood of a sacrifice.

Now, bullock, of course, that would be the largest, strongest, most costly of sacrifices. That's what must pay for his sin and that of his house.

The young bull for a sin offering and the lamb for a burnt offering and he shall put on the holy linen coat, verse 4, and have the linen breeches upon his flesh. We think, yep, that's him putting on the priestly garments.

But if you actually look back to Exodus 28, Exodus 28, the priestly garments are specified as to how they're to be made and you find there not only these linen breeches and linen coat and a miter, you find a rich blue over, I was going to say overcoat, you know, overhaul tunic that comes over the top of this linen garment.

You've got the holy breastplate with all the jewels in it, the four rows of three, one for each of the tribes of Israel. You've got the holy miter to go on its head with the golden crown that says, holiness to the Lord.

[19 : 30] You've got the pomegranates and the bells interspersed. You've got these rich and beautiful priestly garments which are designed to show forth both beauty and holiness, the sanctity of the priesthood.

Notice that these are conspicuous by their absence. Aaron is simply wearing the plain linen breeches upon his flesh, girding with a linen girdle, with a linen mitre shall he be a type, like an ordinary commoner garden priest.

Not the high priest in all the riches of his robes, but just an ordinary sinner like everybody else, the helplessness of man.

There is no rich fancy adornment here. We do not come with any strength of our own. We come helpless and humbled as we need to.

See the contrast here between Aaron and his almost, you might say, enforced humility here in the simplicity of his garments and contrast that with the ultimate high priest that we have.

[20 : 41] Hebrews 7 tells us about this, verse 18. For there is verily a disanulment of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.

For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did, by the which we draw nigh unto God. Now you might think, well, you know, here you are talking about the scapegoat and the sacrifices and so on, and here you are now reading Hebrews saying, well all that was just, it wasn't adequate, had to be done away with, had to be got rid of.

It's not in the sense of being thrown out. It's not in the sense of being overturned and disposed of as though it were rubbish. It is in the sense of being superseded.

Now I've used in the past the illustration of how betrothal engagement is superseded by the sanctity of marriage and nobody breaks their heart on the wedding day that the engagement is in a sense at an end.

The betrothal is over. Nobody breaks their heart saying, oh, a broken engagement, isn't that terrible because now they're having to get married? Because the wedding, the marriage itself is what the engagement was all about.

[21 : 56] It is superseded and it is fulfilled and gone on to something better. So likewise, you know, those of you who are younger perhaps, maybe fresh in your memory, but when you got your provisional driving license, I've used this illustration to you before, I can remember being so excited when I got my L plates, when I got my little provisional license and how I could go out with my mum or my dad, I could drive the car myself albeit with supervision and getting lessons and so on.

And it was exciting, it was part of being grown up. Of course, after you failed the test a couple of times, it wasn't quite so exciting then and you just wanted a pass, you just wanted to get rid of these earthquakes and you wanted to get a full license and in the fullness of time when you do, the provisional license is not done away with a chuck, as though it's a useless thing, the L plates do not look at get rid of them, it is that they have been superseded.

The provisional license is what has made way for the full license, the L plates have given way to the licensed, perfected, not the word perfect, but fulfilled, now legal driver, just as betrothal makes way for marriage, so the sacrifices, the priesthood, Aaron, all that went before, it makes way for that which is the fulfillment of it, because the law made nothing perfect, these things were great, they were good as far as they went, they were an advance on the previous state of affairs, but they were not the completion, they were not the fulfillment, so as we go on from verse 23 there in Hebrews 7, they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death, they got old, they died, but this man, because he continued ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood, wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing that he ever liveth to make intercession for them, for such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens, who needeth not daily as those high priests to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, then for the people's, for this he did once, but he offered up himself, for the law maketh men priests who have infirmity, like error and the stones, but the word of the oath which was since the law, maketh the son who is consecrated for ever more, now of the things which we have spoken, this is the son, we have such an high priest who is set on the right hand of the throne of the majesty of the heavens, a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the

Lord pitched, and not man, he is able to say, and say to the uttermost, as Paul wrote to the Romans, for I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

that contrast between what Christ is able to do, as opposed to what these earthly priests can do, what this sacrifice can do, the helplessness of man, even ordinary men, even the priests are not able to be there in the tabernacle, verse 17, you see that when Aaron offers up these sacrifices, they can't say, we're priests, we don't have to be here, we're special, no you're not, you're sinners, just like everybody else, all of us are, the seriousness of sin, the holiness of God, the helplessness of man, the absolute necessity of sacrifice, now all of these sacrifices, the bullocks, the goats, the rams and so on, what are they doing?

[25 : 55] All of these different sacrificial beasts, their blood is cleansing away, or rather being taken as the token of cleansing away the sin of God's people.

And they might think, well, okay, why have we got all these beasts, why have we got this fancy tabernacle with all the gold and silver and all these brightly colored tent and so on, you know, why don't we just go straight on to the Messiah, why didn't the Lord just bring it right away?

When I was a wee boy and started at school, I remembered my older sister who was in secondary when I started in primary one, and I remember how morning and groaning about homework and particularly about maths.

How she didn't enjoy maths and she hated maths. And then when we started in primary one and then the teacher began to introduce us and there's the art corner there and there's the reading corner there and there's the maths corner over there.

I thought, that's going to be a horrible place. And when I got there, it was like, you know, wee scales to measure up little weights and wee building colored blocks and you add them and you take them away and so many oranges and so many apples and lots of interesting, fun things.

[27 : 06] I thought, this isn't bad stuff at all. I don't know why my sister makes such a fuss over this. This is all about counting up nicely colored blocks. It's all about so many apples and oranges. It's about weighing things up.

It's about adding them and taking away. This is fun. Listen, I can understand this. I can relate to it because it is made simple for a child.

It is made understandable. Bright colors, physical things, apples, oranges, pears, building blocks that you can count and add, little scales that you can measure and take away and add things so that they balance.

You can understand these things because they are made simple for a child. By the time you get on into secondary and it's all theory, it's all there in the theory, algebra, geometry and all these other things which you couldn't possibly expect a five-year-old to understand.

But you begin where people are. And when Israel, when the people of God are in their spiritual infancy, God likewise uses that which is physical, that which is filled with color and sight and tangible, understandable things, physical sacrifice, physical creatures, physical animals, physical blood, physical tabernacle with all its gold and silver, incense to remind them of the cloud of God's presence in the wilderness and the symbol of prayer, high priest robed in his garments, all of these things to teach to underline the absolute necessity of sacrifice to take away sin.

[28 : 51] For the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. And ultimately all of these sacrifices are pointing us to the one perfect sacrifice in Christ by which all of these old things are not thrown away as though they're rubbish but superseded.

When you have the fulfillment you no longer need to make a big deal about the preparation. Which of us now if we can drive long to stick the elk wakes back in the car and right away to Swansea for another provisional license just so I can live it all again?

No, you don't bother. Which of us if we are happily married wants to go back to just betrothal again so we have to live apart? So that we have to write to each other for each other?

So that we don't get now to share life anymore? Just go through the excitement of betrothal again compared to what you've got now? Betrothal becomes a venetable chore.

It becomes a separation. It becomes a sorrow because it's a backward step. So likewise when we have the sacrifice of Christ once and all for sin the wages of sin is death.

[30 : 10] That's why we need a sacrifice. The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ. Our Lord who wants to go back to tabernacles and temples and sheep and goats and bullocks and blood and burning incense and priestly garments.

We have our great high peace. We have the absolute necessity of the once and for all sacrifice. Because of the helplessness of man, because of the holiness of God, because of the seriousness of sin, we have the absolute necessity of sacrifice.

And this is where the scapegoat man comes in. All of this is leading up to the context of it. One thing I'd like you to notice here about these goats. In verse five, he shall take of the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats for a sin offering and one ram for a burnt offering.

These two goats, the one that is to be slain and the one that is to be sent into the wilderness, together they make one sacrifice. That's the first point. And then when we see what is to happen to them, take the two goats, present them before the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, cast lots upon the two goats, one lot for the Lord and the other for the scapegoats.

And he shall bring the goat upon which the Lord's lot fell and offering for a sin offering. But the goat on which the lot fell to be a scapegoat shall be presented alive before the Lord to make an atonement with them.

[31 : 47] It's not two separate sacrifices. The killed goat and the living goat together are one sacrifice, one atonement. The scapegoat does not exist separately from the goat that is slain.

They are both essential for what is being done here. Because what is happening here with these two goats, as well as the other beasts of goats, but let's focus upon these goats, is as we said, this fifth point, the absolute removal, destruction, and disappearance of sin.

All of this, remember, is tokens, illustrations of the reality. When we read it, verse 21, 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 and all their sins.

putting them up on the head of the goat and just send him away. How in the world is he going to be able to enunciate every sin, not only himself or his family, but you know, it's like two million people at that stage, 1.2 million perhaps that came out of Egypt and all the sins of all the Israelites and all the mixed multitude, how can he enunciate them all?

He cannot, of course. he is going to be pronouncing generalities of sin, headings that will cover all the multitude of their sins. He cannot detail them all.

[33 : 20] This is a symbol, this is a token of the reality of that which will ultimately block out every sin of every one of the Lord's redeemed people.

Lord, he shall put them upon the head of the goat and shall send them away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness. Now, two things here.

I mentioned how earlier, in one sense, we're like the goat that goes into the wilderness if we don't have the Lord. There is two possibilities for us.

When we come to Christ, we are, in a sense, dying to self. We sacrifice our old life. To the Lord, our old self dies.

And we have new life in Christ. The scapegoat almost becomes like the old self. It doesn't so new to the Lord. We go out into a wilderness. We go into a place uninhabited.

[34 : 18] And although we may encounter other people or other creatures, we are, to all intents and purposes, alone. Alone with the burden of all the sin that we carry. And there is none to take it away.

That is an alternative prospect. For us, if we will not die to self and sacrifice our old life to the Lord and the life that he offers.

We can be the goat that goes out alive with all its sin or we can be the goat whose blood is shed and atonement is made. Now, I realize I'm sort of reading that as an illustration.

That's not the actual technical meaning of this chapter and of these goats. But we can see a sense in which our own situation is paralleled in the different responses of these two goats here.

The one that is sacrificed and the one that is not. Because eventually, the one that goes into the wilderness is going to die. It's going to die out there. It's going to die probably alone.

[35 : 20] But in so far as it bears the sins of the Lord's people here, as it's described, the point is that it disappears without trace.

And there are both aspects of the sacrifice here. The absolute removal of the sin of the Lord's people. The destruction in death.

Because one goat is put to death. And there is a sense in which our sin is put to death in the ultimate sacrifice of Christ upon the cross. He dies.

He is crucified. He has made sin for us. Our sin dies there on the cross at Golgotha. It is put to death. There is another sense in which, however, one may say, well, where are our sins?

There's Jesus. He's dead on the cross. That's where our sins are. There's a sense in which one could almost try to dig up a corpse if that were possible. Dig up all the decay, all the sin that is there.

- [36 : 25] Sometimes we dig up our old sins from the past. But there's a sense in which our sin is not nearly put to death. It is banished. It vanishes without trace. There are a couple of verses that indicate this to us.

Most of you are familiar, of course, in Psalm 103, verse 12. As far as the east is from the west, so far have you removed their transgressions from us. As I'm sure you all know, you know, think of the earth like a globe.

You can go up the north pole, you can go up the south pole, and you can travel all the way to the north, so there's a point that we're by. If you keep on going, you won't be north anymore, you'll start coming back south. But there's never a point where you keep going east where you say, right, now I've reached the west.

You just keep going on and on and on and on. Or you go back westwards and it just goes on and on. You never reach a west pole or an east pole. You never reach it, it just goes on internally.

As far as the east is from the west, so far hath it removed our transgressions from us. Jeremiah 50 at verse 20 says, In those days and in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for and there shall be none.

- [37 : 34] And the sins of Judah, they shall not be found, for I will pardon them whom I deserve. Seeking for them, digging them up, and they're just not there at all.

Micah puts it differently in chapter 7. He says, Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage?

He retaineth not his anger forever because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us, he will subdue our iniquities, and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.

the Israelites were not seagoing people. The sea was frightening to them, it represented chaos. The depths of the sea, the ocean bed, was where nobody could ever go. They didn't have deep sea diving equipment.

If you went to the ocean bed, it was because you were dead, because you were drowned, because your ship had sunk. If it's on the depths of the sea, nobody's finding it. Nobody's digging it up. It is gone, and it is gone forever.

- [38 : 36] This is the sense in which the sins transferred onto the head of my goat, I'm gone, into a place uninhabited. We might say, well, the goat, eventually, it's going to die, but the point is, nobody sees, nobody knows, nobody ever has any record of a scapegoat coming back into the camp, and it's never ever being found, or it's never being identified.

When it's gone, it's gone. It is never heard of again. And all the sin that is placed upon its head is never heard of again.

This is the sense in which there is not only removal, not only destruction in the putting of our sins to death, but the absolute disappearance of all the sin of all the Lord's people.

We quoted Hebrews 7 a short while ago. Bring to verse 25. Wherefore he is able also to say then to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for him.

To the uttermost. If you are saved and redeemed by Christ, your sin may be searched for, but it will never be found. Your sin may be hunted for by the devil, but he will never be able to seek it out and bring it back to confront you.

- [39 : 55] It is done. It is paid for. It is put to death. It is banished to the ends not only of the earth, but of the universe itself. It will never be found. It will never be dredged up.

It will never come back to convict you. Such is the absolute removal, destruction, and disappearance of sin. That is what the scapegoat represents.

That is what the death of the other goat represents. That is what all the sacrifice and all the blood there represents. It is the utter removal of all sin from all who are trusting in what the Lord himself has given.

The seriousness of sin, the holiness of God, the helplessness of man, the absolute necessity of sacrifice. And by means of that sacrifice, the absolute removal, destruction, and disappearance of sin.

Think about the scapegoat, but above all, think about your Savior. Let's pray.