

## 4/13/14 Providence

### Part 3

In this series we have seen how we need more than luck, we need God's providence. Providence to do more than just fix things, but make things new. We're going to end the series with one of the dearest, most needed things that God provides.

~ Have you ever noticed how guilt and shame draw you inward in an unhealthy way? It theologically separates us from God, and separates us within.

**Problem:** We all carry failures with a gravitational pull toward isolation that creates separation and guilt. We get caught in on-going cycles of trying to make up for it, justifying it, numbing ourselves, or deflecting it onto someone else.

**Hope:** One of the most beautiful things God has ever done for humans was to provide redemptive grace that has the power to heal our souls.

**Set-up** To unpack this I want to look at what's known as the Day of Atonement.

The Hebrew New Year began with the Feast of Trumpets. For ten days the people would reflect on their own lives, to be honest about their sin and failures...the things we all try to justify, numb, or deflect. Then it would end with Yom Kipper, or the Day of Atonement, where God provides forgiveness for all their sins.

### Aaron

*Lev 16:3 "This is how Aaron is to enter the Most Holy Place:" Aaron is the first High Priest. The role of the High Priest was a mediator who could go before God and speak...*

*Lev 16:3-4 He must first bring a young bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. 4He is to put on the sacred linen tunic, with linen undergarments next to his body; he is to tie the linen sash around him and put on the linen turban. These are sacred garments;*

The whole community turns out for this. By the time the temple was built it is estimated that over 200 thousand people would stand on the temple mount for this ceremony.

Picture hundred's of thousands of people, who after 10 days of weeping, fasting, and soul searching they come before the tabernacle or temple to find grace and forgiveness.

There is one man who will prepare himself to go before God on their behalf to have their sins removed. God is the one who provides the mediator to overcome the sense of separation.

### Goat

On the Day of Atonement the High Priest has a bull, a ram, and two goats, to sacrifice.

I want us to pause for a second, In the Western world we're educated through definitions, precision, and linear systems. The Eastern mind-set thinks more with metaphors and pictures.

Jesus wants to tell people how much God loves them. He doesn't say: On a scale of 1-10 God's love is 10, and here are 3 points as to why. Jesus says - there was a day with two sons and one of them runs off.

~ So as we walk through this, you have to keep in mind what this pictures and the kind of power and emotion is would invoke. So, let's go back to the Day of Atonement, where we have a very nervous goat....

*Lev 16:20-21... "When Aaron has finished making atonement for the Most Holy Place, the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall bring forward the live goat. He is to lay both hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites—all their sins—and put them on the goat's head.*

So... feel the power of this living picture being played out before the people. Aaron is confessing all the sins of the whole community over the past year and symbolically places his hands on the head of the goat. Picture the imagery of this goat carrying all the failure, all the sin, all the guilt of all the people.

Q: What does the book of Leviticus call this goat? The scapegoat

Âzâ zêl      Âzâ zêl = goat - "go away"

*Lev 16: 21-22      He shall send the goat away into the wilderness in the care of someone appointed for the task. The goat will carry on itself all their sins to a remote place; and the man shall release it in the wilderness*

Later, when they built the Temple, the goat would be led out of Jerusalem and into the wilderness.

## Two Customs

Gentile - Part of the custom was to appoint a Gentile to lead the goat out of town, because the point was the goat taking sin away from anyone in Jewish community.

Cliff - The Gentile would take the goat and lead it backwards of the side of a cliff to its death.

Bad for the goat... but good for the people, because you can't have a loaded goat roaming around the country side... No one wants to see that goat.

## Red Cord

The Talmud... a very important Jewish text... records another custom adopted on the Day of Atonement. They took a red cord and tied it around the goat's head as a symbol of the sin, judgment and atonement it was taking on.

## Signal Flags

The people would wait while the gentile took the goat out into the wilderness... they would wait because there were a series of stations. When the goat was dispatched, the station closest to the cliff raised a flag... the next station would raise theirs upon seeing it... on & on until a final flag was raised signaling that it is finished... their sins have been carried off for another year... celebration.

So we have a High Priest, a goat, and a red cord, all on the Day of Atonement

## Not Finished

But... when the last flag was raised, and the red cord hung on the doors... it really wasn't finished. You always needed another goat... This had to be repeated year after year, after year. It always left people living the law, and needing another goat. The goat was never really gone...

A guy named John says... maybe we should re-think the whole goat thing. There was a guy named Pilate who had another man named Jesus, and a very interesting thing happen on our way to get another goat.

*John 19:1-2 Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head.*

Q: If you had a crown of thorns pushed down on your head, what color of lines would it leave down the sides of your head? Red

Pilate tries to settle this. He knows Jesus is not guilty. So he takes him before the community and asks, "What do you want me to do with him?"

Q: What do the people say first?

*John 19:15 Here is your king, Pilate said to the Jews...But they shouted, "Take him away! Take him away! Then they said Crucify him!"*

It's a little bit like *Âzâ Zel*.

## Gentiles

At this point who takes charge of Jesus? Gentile, Roman soldiers take him and lead him out of the city of Jerusalem where so many other scapegoats had gone before.

## Last custom - Red to White

Half of the red cord was brought back and hung on the sanctuary doors... where over the course of the next year it turned white... God's divine symbol

One text says they stopped doing this about 40 years prior to the destruction of the temple the cord stopped turning white. [Talmud, Tractate Yoma 39b] It stopped working. The Temple was destroyed in 70AD, which means the cord stopped working around 30 AD.

One way to understand what John is saying in his gospel is that when it comes to finding grace, and forgiveness, relief from our guilt and shame...you don't have to wait for a goat! The Goat has left for good!

When Jesus was led out of Jerusalem by gentile Roman soldiers with a red ring and strips down his head... John is saying, the Goat has left for good! When Jesus was nailed to a cross and raised up... that was the last flag needed in declaring God's provision of forgiveness and atonement.

You don't have to wait for a goat!

## Made New

Through Christ God provided redemptive grace that made you new, in Him. Hebrews says you have been made holy, forever. Scripture keeps says you have been remade.

## Application

Jesus was the last and ultimate *Âzâ zêl*. When we feel loaded down by failure or sin we can say, I don't have to wait for a goat!

When you feel overwhelmed by shame over a broken trust, or a moment of retaliation, and it feels like there's no going back... you have to know...you don't have to wait for a goat!

When someone holds you in contempt, or judgment... you can say I'm sorry but I don't see the goat.

When someone you know is struggling in darkness in their soul and it keeps them from relationship, keeps them from what's good in life... keeps them from God - say: "I don't see a goat anywhere. You don't have to wait on another goat!"

God knows He knows about the addiction, the abortion, He knows about the hurt, and the hate. He knows the secrets that you fear.

So... Jesus, before crimson lines ran down his head, before he was led out of Jerusalem by gentiles, and raised up on a cross, took a moment with his followers to give them something to help remind them that they would never need another *Âzâ zêl* ever again.