



Daily Verse and Comment

Leviticus 16:21-22

(21) 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. He shall send the goat away into the desert in the care of a man appointed for the task. (22) The goat will carry on itself all their sins to a solitary place; and the man shall release it in the desert.

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The sins in view are human sins, yet some propose that what is being expiated is *Satan's portion* of human [sin](#). In other words, in any given sin, the individual plays a part and [Satan](#) plays a part, and thus [God](#) must deal with Satan's sins after the first goat is offered to cover humanity's sins.

However, we need to double-check that math very carefully. The Bible says nothing about a co-sinner. God does not split up the death penalty, such that a person earns part of the death penalty, while Satan earns the rest.

[Leviticus 5:17](#) says, “If a person sins, and commits any of these things which are forbidden to be done by the commandments of the LORD, *though he does not know it*, yet *he* is guilty and shall bear *his* iniquity” (emphasis ours). Sinning in ignorance—including transgressing due to deception—does not mean that less of a sin has been committed against God's holy, spiritual law. Regardless of what led to the infraction, when a sin is committed, the sinner earns the wages of sin. There is no concept of a partial sin or divided guilt in the Scriptures. If a sin involves two beings, then *each* has committed sin, and *both* earn the death penalty, as in the case of Adam and Eve (cf. [1 Timothy 2:13-14](#)). That is the correct biblical math.

Think about this in terms of money. We each incur our own debt when we sin, and the debt is not shared, no matter how we incurred it and no matter

who said what. If a generous benefactor pays our debt for us, then we are in the clear. Our debt's cancellation, though, is in no way pertinent to the slick salesman who suggested that we take it on in the first place. The deceiver is responsible for his lies, and we are responsible if we listen to him and make ourselves indebted.

The principle of “the soul who sins shall die” ([Ezekiel 18:4](#)) is why the Bible places such emphasis on drawing near to God, resisting Satan, loving the truth, and guarding ourselves against deception. The danger is not that Satan will make us sin, as he cannot force anybody to sin. The danger is that *we* will sin and incur the death penalty by not taking heed. That God gives us so many admonitions means that *we* incur guilt when we let that happen—it is ours, not Satan's.

Symbolically, to represent the guilty party, the substitutionary animal has sins placed on it that are not its own. Obviously, Satan has his own guilt, so he cannot be a substitute for anyone else. The Bible says these are human sins, and it is fallacious to try to explain away its clear statements.

In addition, *if* Satan were responsible for all human sin, then what would be the need to show a symbolic transference taking place? Under this assumption, the sins of mankind are already on his head! His guilt has never left him, so it does not need to be placed *back* on him. Yet, the Atonement ritual specifies that the sins be placed on an *innocent* party's head—one that is not already responsible for those sins. At every turn, Satan fails to fit into what Leviticus 16 says.

— David C. Grabbe

To learn more, see:

[Who Fulfills the Azazel Goat—Satan or Christ? \(Part Two\)](#)

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