

# Who Fulfills The Azazel Goat— Satan Or Christ? (Part Five)

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***Forerunner*, "Ready Answer," September-October 2017**

A defining characteristic of the church of God is its commitment to truth. The book of Acts describes Christians in Berea as “more fair-minded” than others in that “they received the word with all readiness, and *searched the Scriptures* daily to find out whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11; emphasis ours throughout). In contrast, Christ frequently rebuked those in Judea and Galilee for holding fast to traditions that made the Word of God of no effect (Matthew 15:1-9; Mark 7:1-13).

Some have questions about Christ’s fulfillment of both goats in Leviticus 16, and this article will provide answers to the most common ones. Before getting to them, though, we ask the reader to consider these: What is the source of the teaching that the *azazel* represents Satan? Does this teaching spring readily from Scripture, or is it read into Scripture as a result of tradition? With a Bible and concordance, could we prove what the live goat typifies?

To hold fast to the truth, church of God members are accustomed to rejecting non-biblical tradition, even though taking such a stand sometimes comes at the cost of close relationships. Every false doctrine begins with a false premise that is accepted as true and then built up into seemingly plausible teaching. We have done due diligence in rightly dividing topics such as Christmas, Easter, the Trinity, going to heaven, and Sunday worship, concluding that these practices have arisen from the traditions of men—even blatant paganism.

These beliefs are so entrenched that professing Christians attempt to prop up such fictions with proof-texts, never considering that they are justifying a conviction handed to them by tradition. However, if one begins with Scripture instead, considering the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27), we expose these ideas for what they are: farces.

The largest Protestant, Sabbath-keeping organization, the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, holds a likely familiar view of the *azazel* goat: The *azazel* is a representation of Satan, on whose head the sins of humanity will be placed before he is bound for 1,000 years. Upon digging into the writings of Seventh-Day Adventist scholars, it becomes plain that they have no qualms about basing this doctrine on the apocryphal *Book of Enoch*.

Even the various versions of the *Ambassador College Correspondence Course*, produced by the Worldwide Church of God, begin with “ancient Jewish literature” (Lesson 37, 1965 edition, p. 4), “apocryphal literature” (*ibid.*), “apocryphal Jewish works” (Lesson 29, 1986 edition, p. 10), and even Arabic/Islamic tradition (*ibid.*)—which comes so long after the Pentateuch that it has no relevance—to build a case that the live goat represents Satan. Are the traditions of men a valid starting point for doctrine within God’s church? On the contrary, tradition is not an acceptable primary source at all. The only doctrinal foundation that will hold is the Word of God.

### **Does the Binding of Satan Fulfill Leviticus 16?**

The same apocryphal Jewish work provides a textual—though not scriptural—link between the *azazel* goat and the binding of Satan. In the *Book of Enoch*, “Azazel” is the name of a demon blamed for all the sins of mankind (Enoch 10:8). He is not the chief demon—not actually Satan—but subservient to a demon named “Semjaza” (Enoch 6:3; 9:7). Azazel is bound and cast into darkness, confined to the desert until the day of judgment:

And again the Lord said to Raphael: ‘Bind Azâzêl hand and foot, and cast him into the darkness: and make an opening in the desert, which is in Dûdâêl, and cast him therein. And place upon him rough and jagged rocks, and cover him with darkness, and let him abide there forever, and cover his face that he may not see light. And on the day of the great judgment he shall be cast into the fire. (Enoch 10:4-6)

Bizarrely, all of humanity’s sins are ascribed to this demon, not to the chief demon, yet the sins of the world are allegedly placed on Satan’s head. This is the myth—a clever counterfeit—that links the Hebrew word *azazel* with

something evil. Without the *Book of Enoch*, nothing ties Leviticus 16 to the binding of Satan, whether in terms of actions, purposes, or effects.

Notice the contrast between what happens to the biblical *azazel* (“goat of departure”) and what befalls Satan:

***The live goat*** : “Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man. The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness.” (Leviticus 16:21-22)

**Satan**: “Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.” (Revelation 20:1-3)

The goat is sent away into the wilderness to an uninhabited land, where it is released, never to be seen again. However, a strong angel binds Satan and casts him into a pit but later releases him. The animal is set free, while the Devil is fully constrained for a millennium. The *azazel* disappears from view, while Satan may actually be on display while in the pit (Isaiah 14:15-16). There is no parallel between what happens to each.

God’s stated purpose for the *azazel* goat is to “bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land.” His purpose for Satan’s binding is “so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished.” These purposes are also completely dissimilar.

Satan’s binding effectively and thoroughly stops his work as the “prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2). Once isolated in the pit, he will no longer be “the ruler of this world” (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). While the pit

facilitates temporary protection from his influence, God has determined to release Satan to deceive again (Revelation 20:7-8). He remains unrepentant and continues his evil work. His binding provides a reprieve but no atonement.

In contrast, the live goat acts as a substitutionary sacrifice, and by itself, this nullifies the possibility of it representing either Satan or another demon presumably named “Azazel.” The goat’s role was to bear iniquities until they were completely removed from view. In the ritual, the sins were those of the children of Israel. Scripture provides multiple witnesses that Jesus Christ bears mankind’s sins (Isaiah 53:11-12; I Peter 2:24; Hebrews 9:28) and that God would lay the iniquity of us all on the Messiah (Isaiah 53:6).

Conversely, neither Satan’s nor a demon’s sins are in view in Leviticus 16. An unblemished animal—symbolizing sinlessness—could in no way represent either of them, and for the same reason, neither qualifies to be a substitutionary sacrifice. In addition, there is no biblical basis for placing humanity’s sins on Satan’s or a demon’s head.

Revelation 20 makes no mention of atonement, justification, reconciliation, cleansing, propitiation, human sin, or any other theme found in Leviticus 16. Instead, Satan is bound in order to curtail his influence on the nations, not to satisfy God’s justice in any way. Scripture provides no legal foundation for his binding to pay the debt for sin, whether his own or mankind’s. The wages of sin is death, and the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ (Romans 6:23), but the confinement of Satan neither pays those wages nor facilitates that gift. Put simply, the binding of Satan does not—indeed, cannot—provide atonement. Only Christ’s blood does that.

### **Must Satan Be Bound for Humanity to Be One With God?**

It is commonly held that mankind cannot be “at one” with God until Satan is bound. Consider, though, how much this belief diminishes God’s power while elevating the status of the wicked one. God will bring all those alive during the Millennium to salvation without Satan being around, even as He is perfecting the firstfruits now *with* Satan around. God is sovereign, and thus neither limited by Satan’s presence nor dependent on it.

During Christ's final Passover, He speaks at length about what His upcoming sacrifice would make possible. His confident statements demonstrate that a close personal relationship with God is entirely possible even while Satan is still the ruler of this world. Jesus promises to love and manifest Himself to those who love Him and keep His commandments (John 14:21). He declares that both He and the Father will make Their home with those who love Him (John 14:23). His work allows humans to abide in Him, even while Satan deceives the whole world (John 15:4-5, 7). He assures us that we can have peace in Him, even as the world—under Satan's influence—is against us (John 14:27; 16:33; see also Acts 10:36; Romans 5:1; 8:6; II Corinthians 13:11; Galatians 5:22; Ephesians 2:14-17; Colossians 1:20; II Thessalonians 3:16). He reveals that the gift of eternal life is entirely His to give (John 17:1-3), and there is no proviso regarding Satan's presence. He promises oneness through the Father's keeping (John 17:11, 20-23)—not through Satan's binding. All the things covered in His prayer are not limited to the original disciples, "but also for those who will believe in Me through their word" (verse 20).

Jesus teaches that it is quite possible to be one with the Father and Son *without* Satan being bound. When we are brought to Christ, He "delivers us from this present evil age" (Galatians 1:4) and "from the power of darkness" (Colossians 1:13). Satan is powerless to stop God's work (see Job 1:10-12; 2:4-6). Since God's converted people are walking proof of oneness with God in the face of the Devil's influence, it makes no sense to conclude that humanity can be one with God only once Satan is bound.

The world needs the same covenant the elect are under now. Satan's binding will be a tremendous gift to those alive during the Millennium, so in no way should it be diminished, as it will remove a great deal of spiritual pressure. But is Satan's influence so vast as to prohibit the Father and the Son from working out Their plan in the Millennium? Certainly not!

### **Christ's Blood Provides Atonement, So Why Does the Ritual Use Two Goats?**

These articles have focused primarily on the live goat in Leviticus 16, but it is critical to remember that the Atonement ritual used *four* sacrificial animals. Each animal served a specific purpose in "tutoring" Israel

(Galatians 3:24), each aspect of the ritual pointing to the Messiah in some way.

Before analyzing the sacrificial animals and their functions, it may help to understand that the Day of Atonement accomplished more than a singular atonement. The Hebrew word underlying “atonement” in the English phrase “Day of Atonement” is actually plural—*kippurim* (Leviticus 23:27-28; 25:9). Thus, the holy day is literally “the Day of Atonements,” which shows that more than one atonement took place during the ceremony.

In fact, Leviticus 16 mentions five atonements:

1. for the high priest and his house (verses 6, 11, 24, 33);
2. for the *azazel* goat (verse 10);
3. for the Holy Place and Tabernacle of meeting (verses 16, 20, 33);
4. for the altar of incense (verses 18, 33); and
5. for the whole assembly (verses 30, 33-34).

Though we may have little point of reference for these details, they are nevertheless critical in properly understanding how—and by whom—the various types were later fulfilled.

Leviticus 16:3 mentions the two animals that receive the least attention: “Thus Aaron shall come into the Holy Place: with the blood of *a young bull as a sin offering*, and of *a ram as a burnt offering*.” Though introduced early on, the day’s burnt offering was not made until after “a suitable man” led the *azazel* away and the priest removed the holy garments he had worn to enter the Holy Place (Leviticus 16:21, 23-24).

The burnt offering, as outlined in Leviticus 1, contained no contemplation of sin. It was “a sweet aroma to the Lord” (Leviticus 1:9) because the Lord was pleased with what it represented: wholehearted devotion and commitment to God. The substitutionary animal was completely burned up, even as a man’s life is to be consumed in service to God.

Jesus Christ was the epitome of this throughout His life, for even as a youth, He was dedicated to His Father's business (Luke 2:49). His human life was consumed by sacrificial devotion to His Father, up to the point of death. This spanned His life and concluded at His crucifixion. Without a doubt, the ram for the burnt offering was a type of Christ. His death simultaneously fulfilled the sin offering and completed His burnt offering, but in the order of sacrifices given in Exodus 29 and Leviticus 16, atonement had to occur before the sacrifice of the burnt offering. This teaches that we must have the right standing before God as a prerequisite to being utterly devoted to Him.

Leviticus 16:3 also mentions “a young bull as a sin offering,” which was in addition to the two goats used as a sin offering for the nation on Atonement. The law of sin offerings specifies that the offering of a young bull would cover the high priest's sin (Leviticus 4:3). Of the four sacrificial animals in Leviticus 16, three of them were used for sin offerings. The three animals did not represent three different personalities, but each pointed to the Messiah in a distinct aspect or role. We may consider one or more of these animals extraneous, but God had specific reasons for each part of this ceremony. Each animal had a common fulfillment in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

We find the instructions for the bull in Leviticus 16:6, 11, 14, 18-20, 27. To summarize, this sin offering for the high priest held a more meaningful purpose than the one outlined in Leviticus 4. In a typical sin offering for the priest, the blood was sprinkled “seven times before the Lord, in front of the veil of the sanctuary” (Leviticus 4:6). The priest also put blood on the horns of the incense altar and poured the rest at the base of the altar of burnt offering (verse 7). The blood thus provided a covering—an atonement—for those areas of the high priest's service that God considered defiled through his sin.

But on the Day of Atonement, the high priest entered the Most Holy Place with a cloud of incense. He did not stop at the veil, but instead went farther and sprinkled blood on and in front of the mercy seat (Leviticus 16:14).

The mercy seat—where God said He would meet and speak with the leader (Exodus 25:22; 30:6)—was the point of intersection between God and Israel, through her representative. On the day when atonement was made for the

nation, the cleansing began with the sacred meeting place between God and man. The first account to be settled was between God and the high priest (including his house), setting the stage for the remaining atonements.

After cleansing the mercy seat (including the ground in front of it), the blood of the bull purified the incense altar (Leviticus 16:18-19). Incense is a symbol of prayer, yet even prayer can be an abomination to God because of sin (Proverbs 28:9). Thus, the priest's instruments used in the worship of the Holy God had to be cleansed because of the defilement of sin.

After the priest had sprinkled the bull's blood before and on the mercy seat, the first goat was killed and its blood used in the same way—the priest first sprinkled its blood on and before the mercy seat (verse 15) then on the altar of incense (verses 18-19). The first goat is designated as “for the Lord” (verse 8), meaning it is for His satisfaction or appeasement.

As with the priest's sin offering, using the goat's blood on and before the mercy seat was unique to Atonement. These were not typical or general sin offerings; God expressly commanded them to cleanse the symbolic point of interaction with Him. Leviticus 16:19 explains that their blood was to “cleanse it, and consecrate it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel.” Verse 20 summarizes that the bull and the first goat were for “atoning for the Holy Place, the tabernacle of meeting, and the altar.” Access to God—both for the priest and the people—had to be opened through cleansing before the general removal of the nation's sins could occur. The first goat's blood, applied to the mercy seat and incense altar, appeased the Lord.

Hebrews 9:11-14 declares Christ's fulfillment of the bull and the first goat (as well as the purification rite involving the ashes of a red heifer in Numbers 19):

But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ,



who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God,  
cleansing your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

In addition to fulfilling the burnt offering, Christ's singular sacrifice also fulfilled all the "cleansing" sacrifices. As these verses show, the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, signified symbolic purification and cleansing. A covering of blood purified those points of contact between the holy God and defiled man. Through Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension, there is now a way into the "Holiest of All" (Hebrews 9:8). His blood opens access and makes Him the Mediator of a New Covenant (verse 15).

The Holy Place, Tabernacle, and altar had been cleansed—satisfying the Lord—but God still had another object lesson for Israel: He commanded a second goat to reveal another function. Leviticus 16:21-22 instructs the high priest to lay both his hands on the *azazel's* head to indicate a symbolic transference—a substitution—taking place. The priest "confess[ed] over [the goat] all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins."

Notice that these iniquities, transgressions, and sins were still outstanding, as it were. The blood of the first goat had not paid for them, so they still had to be resolved. Thus, God designated this fourth sacrificial animal—a "goat of departure" or "goat of complete removal"—to "bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land" (verse 22). The first goat cleansed the holy place, while the second goat bore the iniquities away, completely removing them from view.

The fulfillment of this goat should be clear to any Bible-believing follower of Christ, for Scripture states unambiguously that our iniquity was laid on Him (Isaiah 53:6), He bore our sins (Isaiah 53:11-12; I Peter 2:24; Hebrews 9:28), and He took them away (Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 10:4)—all the actions of the live goat—leaving no room or need for any other being to accomplish this.

Consider what would happen if God left out either of these two magnificent purposes. If we gained access to God but no forgiveness of sins, access to Him would be short-lived, for our sins would separate us from Him in short

order (Isaiah 59:2). Alternatively, if God forgave our sins but gave us no access to Him, we would never rise above merely being legally justified— never attaining to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ that comes through a relationship with Him.

The New Covenant, though, provides a way for us both to know God (access to God) and to have our sins forgiven and forgotten (Hebrews 8:10-12) so that we can have atonement as we grow in the image of God. Because of Christ's sacrifice, we have access to an altar others lack (Hebrews 13:10).

### **Why Were Lots Cast for the Two Goats?**

Proverbs 16:33 explains the use of lots most succinctly: "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord." The Israelites cast lots to establish God's will, particularly in contentious matters (Proverbs 18:18). Throughout the book of Joshua, lots determined the division of the Promised Land so each tribe received the inheritance God intended. Later, they cast lots to decide who would fill various functions within the government (I Chronicles 24-26).

Regarding the goats, recall that the instructions in this chapter follow the priesthood's profound failure in offering profane fire (Leviticus 16:1). The Day of Atonement may also be connected with the infamous priestly and national failures in the Golden Calf incident. God had them cast lots to remind them of the priest's fallibility and inability to choose correctly in the worship of God.

God determined which goat would be for Him and which would be sent away. In this, He was choosing between functions, not typified personalities. The concept of personalities only arises due to the tradition that holds that *azazel* is a demon's name. Without that assumption, the matter concerns merely which goat would fulfill which function, and God reserved that decision for Himself.

God remained the arbiter, and the priest had to look to Him for direction. Recall that God rejected Cain's offering because he chose to sacrifice

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according to what seemed good to him (Genesis 4:3-7). The lots provide a lesson that God dictates the terms of worship, even in things we might consider arbitrary.