

# The Scapegoat



There is no mention of a Scapegoat in the story of the Crucifixion, but there certainly appear some similarities, if not direct references to a scapegoat. In the Old Testament book of Leviticus and chapter 16 the priests are given instructions concerning the *Day of Atonement*. If you remember the *Day of Atonement* is called *Yom Kippur* in the present day Jewish calendar. Once a year, in the fall of the year, the high priest was to make atonement for the sins of the people, by entering the Holy of Holies and sprinkling the blood of the lamb on the Mercy Seat above the Ark of the Covenant.

A second ritual was carried out by the high priest at that time that is outlined in Leviticus 16. It is called the ceremony of the scapegoat. The priest cast lots between two goats, one for the Lord and one for the scapegoat. The one chosen for the Lord is to be slaughtered and used as the blood sacrifice in the *Holy of Holies*. The other is the scapegoat. He is to be presented to the Lord alive. He is to lay his two hands on the scapegoat and confess the sins of the people and then send it into the wilderness symbolically carrying away the sins of the people. In a sense Jesus is both the sacrificial lamb and the scapegoat, carrying on himself the sins of us all. (Isaiah 53)

But in another sense Barabbas, the thief and murderer, is by tradition set free by Pilate at the Passover. He is the scapegoat. The guilty is set free because another paid the price of his sin. It was the high priest Caiaphas who suggested that Jesus be the scapegoat for the nation. John 11:48-51

John 11:48-

*48 If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.*

*49 And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, You know nothing at all,*

*50 You do not realize it is better for you that one man should die for the people than that the whole nation perish.*

*51 And this spoke he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; (should be the scapegoat.)*

1 Peter 3:18

For Christ also has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but made alive by the Spirit:

Isaiah 53:4-6

4 Surely he has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. 5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Barabbas

There has never been found any Jewish or Roman tradition of Pilate or any other governor releasing a prisoner on Passover. Therefore we must conclude that this was something done at the insistence of the high priest as a illustration of the scapegoat atonement. The high priest Caiaphas not realizing that Jesus was both the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and the scapegoat of the atonement.