

# Series: Light of the World

## Session Title: Jesus' Atonement (sections of Leviticus 16 and John 19)

Date and Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Students: \_\_\_\_\_

### Materials Needed:

- ☐ 2 stuffed goats or 2 pillows or 2 drawings of goats
- ☐ One “altar” (if possible, hold this lesson around your church’s communion table in the sanctuary; if not, use a table with a table cloth on it)
- ☐ Scrap paper (about two pieces per student)
- ☐ One pencil/pen per student
- ☐ Red cloth or a magic trick where a red cloth turns white (you can also use a red rope that turns white)

### Lesson Objectives:

As a result of this lesson, students will be able to...

- Define *azazel* as the scapegoat who takes a person's sins upon itself.
- Identify how Jesus is our *azazel*.
- Decide and declare whether they acknowledge Jesus as their atonement for their sins through confessions of corporate and personal sins.
- Participate in a recreation of the Day of Atonement.

### Pastoral Objectives:

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**Note to leader:** This lesson is meant to be experiential in relating to what the Israelites might have experienced on the Day of Atonement. You will essentially be preaching with some small group tasks included. Be creative in terms of lighting (perhaps using candles), appropriate background music especially as people enter, etc. I’d suggest keeping everyone out of that room until you are ready to begin. Escort them to the altar and teach this lesson.

**Note to leader:** Assign one of your adult volunteers or a senior student to lead the *azazel* out when you direct them to.

**Note to leader:** The majority of the content below comes from a sermon called “A Day of Atonement” by Rob Bell (preached July 11, 2002). You can purchase the audio CD from Willow Creek Association or watch the sermon online at [www.willowmessages.com](http://www.willowmessages.com). Feel free to use supplement additional materials as needed.

## Lesson Plan:

Leader says something like this:

*In Jewish culture, images and pictures are primary tools in teaching. God used images to help the Israelites understand what he was trying to teach them, and to help them see what God sees. One such occasion is called the Day of Atonement. This came after the Jewish New Year (Rosh Hashanah) and ten days of penitence (similar to lent) for self reflection that usually involved prayer and fasting. On the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), the entire nation of Israel was gathered around the tabernacle or temple. Imagine at least 100,000 people gathered in this one spot. There are a lot of very specific details Moses listed in Leviticus 16. Some ancient documents have described this ceremony as “a blurring between heaven and earth”. In other words, this ceremony was a picture of something bigger. There’s one specific spot I’d like to focus on starting from Leviticus 16:7.*

*Moses describes a sin offering that consisted of two male goats. [Exemplify with your goats.] By casting lots, one was designated as the sacrificed goat and one was the scapegoat. The Hebrew word for the scapegoat is azazel. In some of your Bibles, you’ll see a footnote that might name it “the goat of removal”; azazel more generally is defined as “to take away”<sup>3</sup>. The sacrificed goat was slaughtered before the people. Its blood was used to pay the penalty for sin. The blood would be put onto the atonement cover in the temple to remove the sins of the Israelites so that God’s presence could return (since the people’s sins forfeited God’s presence). With the azazel, the priest would place his hands on the goat. We’re not sure what position his hands were exactly or what his exact words of the prayer were. But the priest would begin confessing the sins of the people onto this goat. They believed that their sins were literally being placed on the goat’s head. When the priest was finished, a person (normally a gentile) remove the goat from the community out into the wilderness; later tradition says this goat was pushed off a cliff.*

*One additional custom we read in Jewish history is about a scarlet cloth that was tied to the horns of the azazel. After the goat left, tradition tells us that this cloth would miraculously turn white within the year, signifying that God forgave their sins. Isaiah alludes to this transformation in Isaiah 1:18: “Though your sins have been as scarlet, they shall be as wool.” (Note to leader: As you teach this paragraph, use the red cloth as your object lesson and place it on the *azazel*. If you have the magic trick, perform the trick as you’re talking through this paragraph.)*

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<sup>3</sup> Rob Bell “Day of Atonement” sermon

## Corporate Confession (10 minutes):

Have the students gather in groups of four or five and ask them to compile a list of sins that have been committed by the community (e.g. as a society, we've sinned against the environment through our pollution). Give the students about five minutes. After the five minutes, have the students approach the *azazel* and place/pin their papers on it.

Leader says:

*Earlier, I mentioned that this ceremony was a picture of something bigger. In fact, this picture signifies the death of Jesus Christ. In John 19:18 we read about Jesus being crucified. The Bible tells us that his blood was shed to forgive our sins. Jesus himself alludes to this in the last supper saying that his blood would be shed for us. But earlier in that chapter Jesus is also the azazel. Notice some of the similarities:*

- *John 19:2: A crown of thorns was pressed into Jesus' head. This would have caused a red ring to form on his head (from his blood), similar to the scarlet cloth that was placed on the azazel's head.*
- *19:15: When Pilate asks the crowd what they want to have done to Jesus, they chant, "Take him away, take him away ... [then] crucify him."*
- *19:16ff: Jesus is led out of the city by Romans (gentiles), echoing the role of a gentile in leading the azazel out of the community.*
- *John 1:29: John the Baptist even testifies, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"*

*The fact is, Jesus is our sin offering, both as the sacrificed one and the azazel. Because of his redemptive act, we have full access to God. In Matthew 27:51, the curtain in the temple, which symbolized the divide between God and people, was torn in half, signifying that God was now available to all of us.*

## Personal Confession (10 minutes):

Have each student take ten minutes alone. Have them list their own sins on a piece of paper. If and when they are ready, have the students bring the list up to the *azazel* and place it on the *azazel*, signifying that they want Jesus to take away those sins. Tell the student that if they are not ready that they should not feel pressured. They do not have to put their paper on the goat or even write on the paper at all. Make this a true and a safe option. When you sense that they are finished gather the group together. In silence, direct your assigned person to lead the *azazel* out of the room.

Leader says:

*In Hebrews 10:11-12, we read that the sin offerings needed to be repeated; the Day of Atonement was an annual event. However, Jesus' atonement was permanent. In fact, there is an ancient Jewish document (not Christian, but Jewish) which refers back to the scarlet cloth placed on the azazel. It states that around 30 AD, the scarlet cloth ceased to turn white, but remained red. Ever since 30 AD, around the death and resurrection of Christ, the scarlet cloth never turned white again. Jesus is indeed our azazel if we choose to let him take away our sins and have unobstructed access to God.*

This is the end of the lesson. Close as appropriate.