**Was The Scapegoat A Type Of Christ?**

Leviticus 16:21-22 states “And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.” That passage sounds a lot like Isaiah 53 and the sacrifice of Jesus, doesn’t it? Compare the appropriate parts of Leviticus 16:21-22 to Isaiah 53:6c “and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” and 11c “for he shall bear their iniquities.” The wording is almost identical, isn’t it? It seems Isaiah 53 is quoting Leviticus 16 … three times. The scapegoat then is a type of Christ. In both the scapegoat type and the corresponding reality of Jesus, the people’s sins are placed on the one that then takes away their sin.

So then what does Isaiah 53 mean when it says Jesus bore our sins? I Peter 2:24 says the same thing - “Who … bare our sins in his own body on the tree.” Similarly Hebrews 9:28 states “Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.” There has been some debate among brethren about what it means that Jesus “bore” our sins. Thankfully Isaiah 53 clears the matter up for us. Verse 12e (“he bare the sin of many”) and 11c (“he shall bear their iniquities”) is defined in 6c as “the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” So Jesus bore our sins in the sense our sins were laid on him - duh. Similar to when a heavy load is laid on a pack mule, the mule bears or carries the pack. Except as regarding sin (which is an idea), we mean spiritually not physically – we are talking about Jesus bearing the responsibility/punishment for our sin (not the guilt as many Calvinists say). The scapegoat of Leviticus 16 affords this same definition for “bearing sin.” Verse 22 states “the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities” while verse 21 supplies the specifics of that - “all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat.” The goat bearing the sin simply meant the sins were placed on the goat. It is the same with Jesus bearing our sin.

So the scapegoat is a type of Christ - not in that it was sacrificed, but in the sense that:

* sins were placed on both the scapegoat (Lev 16:21) and Jesus (Isaiah 53:6c)
* the scapegoat (Lev 16:22) and Jesus then both bore those sins away (Isaiah 53:11c)

The scapegoat took away the Israelites’ sin in type; Jesus does it in reality.

And we better be glad Jesus bore the punishment for our sin (Isaiah 53:5c). If he hadn’t, there would be no possible way we could avoid the spiritual death (Rom 6:23a) we all deserve for our sins (Rom 3:23-26). Jesus bore our sins so we wouldn’t have to. In that sense, He substituted for us.