

The Goat Has Left The Building

“**Elvis Has Left The Building!**” The guy who first said that just “left the building” himself four years ago. Horace Lee Logan, founder and longtime producer of Louisiana Hayride, the country-music radio show that gave Elvis his big break, died October 13, 2002 at age 86.

Elvis was a radical departure from the country crooners who were the staple of Hayride lineups at the time. (One of the acts that preceded Elvis on his first night was a yodeler!) But Logan decided to take a chance. On October 16, 1954, Elvis debuted on the show, which was broadcast live on KWKH, a 50,000-watt station in Shreveport, Louisiana, that reached 28 states. The studio audience responded politely to the young singer, but Logan saw his potential and signed him up for a regular gig. Soon teenage girls discovered him and Elvis was on his way.

After two years of touring and drawing increasing national attention, Elvis bought out his contract with Hayride for the unheard-of sum of \$10,000, with the stipulation that he give one last performance, which was on December 15, 1956. By this time he was verging on superstardom. Ten thousand kids jammed the youth building on the Shreveport fairgrounds and screamed at the top of their lungs for the duration of Elvis's forty-five minute show. It was hard to tell if the band was even playing. After Elvis had given his final encore and left the stage, the crowd headed for the exits, even though many other Hayride acts were still waiting to perform. Logan took the microphone and pleaded with Elvis's fans to return to their seats: “Please, young people. Elvis has left the building. He has gotten in his car and driven away. Please take your seats.”

Those words became part of the Elvis legend and were repeated at many subsequent shows – ironically, to disperse the audiences who lingered in hopes of an Elvis encore! They've now become a catchphrase whose meaning, usually tinged with irony, is clear to all: show's over, that's all she wrote, move along, nothing more to see here, disperse, beat it, hit the road, pack it up, turn out the lights, time's up, toodle-oo, class dismissed, back to work, end of story, so long, hasta la vista, later gator, get lost, and “buh-bye!”

The phrase has since become a pop culture catch phrase and punchline, used to refer to anyone who has “exited” in some sense.

- Baseball announcers use the phrase as a humorous way to describe a home run, which is hit over the outfield fence and into the stands.
- It might be used when someone makes a dramatic exit at the end of an argument, partly to relieve tension among those who remain.
- It refers to anything that is permanently gone and never coming back!

THE LOVE OF GOD, by Frederick Lehman (1917) *(before sermon)*

The love of God is greater far than tongue or pen can ever tell;
It goes beyond the highest star, and reaches to the lowest hell;
The guilty pair, bowed down with care, God gave His Son to win;
His erring child He reconciled, and pardoned from his sin.

Oh, love of God, how rich and pure! How measureless and strong!
It shall forevermore endure – the saints' and angels' song.

Could we with ink the ocean fill, and were the skies of parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill, and every man a scribe by trade;
To write the love of God above would drain the ocean dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole, though stretched from sky to sky.

Ephesians 3:14-21 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the **breadth**, and **length**, and **depth**, and **height**; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

BREADTH: “WIDE is the gate, and broad is the way” (Matthew 7:13)

LENGTH: “GREAT” joy – 6X in NT (4X – birth and resurrection of Jesus in both Matthew and Luke, 2X in book of Acts)

DEPTH: “launch out into the DEEP” (Luke 5:4)
“the well is DEEP” (John 4:11)

HEIGHT: “power from on HIGH” (Luke 24:49)
“exceeding abundantly ABOVE all” (Ephesians 3:20)

Psalms 103:8-12 The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. **For as the heaven is high above the earth**, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. **As far as the east is from the west**, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

ILLUSTRATION: very long measuring tape (“immeasurable”)

The western mind thinks in terms of definition, but the eastern mind thinks in terms of story, image and metaphor (i.e. the prodigal son). So, to explain His mercy, God gave Israel some very powerful “pictures.”

Leviticus 16 describes the Great Day of Atonement in the nation of Israel, which happened on the tenth day of the first month. New Year’s Day in Israel was called the Feast of Trumpets, and that began ten days of fasting and soul searching on the part of every Jewish person. Ten days of getting real and getting right before God: *Where have I sinned? Where have I let God down? Where have I broken His laws? Where have I failed?* It was a solemn time that they called the days of “awe.”

On this day there were several ceremonies, but two in particular stand out. The first was when the High Priest went behind the veil into the Holy of Holies to sprinkle blood on the Mercy Seat. The atmosphere was tense, because if the High Priest’s offering was not accepted the sins of the entire nation (a whole year’s worth!) would not be forgiven.

On this day, the High Priest alone officiated. He had lived in the Temple the entire week, and had stayed up all night the night before studying the law to make sure he didn’t make any mistakes. Throughout the day, he would wash his whole body five times and his hands and feet ten times. He started the day in his priestly garments, but before the atonement ceremonies he changed into a simple robe of plain white linen. He was coming before God humbly, as an ordinary (and definitely nervous!) man, to ask forgiveness ... and WHITE is the color of forgiveness in Scripture.

Imagine the scene – tens of thousands of people are gathered around after ten days of fasting, waiting before God to have their sins forgiven. The destiny of the entire nation rests in the hands of one man, who is going in before the presence of God to make a sin offering on their behalf. They had better hope he doesn’t make a mistake! And what a collective sigh of relief when they saw him return from the Holy of Holies!

Only after this critical task was completed did the High Priest move on to the second unique ceremony on the Great Day of Atonement, the ritual (“picture”) involving two goats – the Lord’s goat and the scapegoat.

Leviticus 16:7-10 And he shall take the two goats, and present them before the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for the scapegoat. And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the LORD’S lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering. But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness.

The High Priest would cast lots to choose which of the goats was to DIE (the Lord’s goat) and which of the goats was to LIVE (the scapegoat). Some years it was the goat on the right hand (white stone) that got to live, some years it was the goat on the left hand (black stone). He then cut up a piece of RED WOOL, tying one piece around the THROAT of the Lord’s goat, one piece around the HEAD of the scapegoat, and one piece on the Tabernacle gate (later, it would be tied to the Temple door). *(Jesus’ head was also marked with a red circle by the crown of thorns.)*

John 19:2 And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe,

After the Lord’s goat was slaughtered and its blood sprinkled, the High Priest would lay both his hands on the head of the scapegoat. He would confess the sins of the entire nation and plead for the people. As he spoke that long list from an entire year of priests offering sacrifices for the sins of individuals, everyone listening would be reminded again and again of their guilt and their need for atonement.

Leviticus 16:21-22 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.

The scapegoat was then led out of the courtyard to a waiting priest whose job it was to take the goat several miles out into the wilderness and release it. Jewish history records that the piece of red wool tied to the gate/door miraculously turned white at the moment the goat was released, to symbolize the forgiveness of God for the nation.

Isaiah 1:18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

Imagine the scene – the High Priest and tens of thousands of people watching as the goat was taken away, until it was out of sight on the horizon. Imagine their excitement to know that the further that goat walked, the further their sins were from them – literally “taken away!” **AZAZEL (scapegoat in Leviticus 16) means “the goat of departure.”**

John 19:15-16 But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar. Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away.

In the centuries following the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, the Jewish people began writing two versions of their history, along with religious commentary. One was written in Palestine and became known as the Jerusalem Talmud, the other was written in Babylon and became known as the Babylonian Talmud.

JERUSALEM TALMUD:

Forty years before the destruction of the Temple, the western light went out, the crimson thread remained crimson, and the lot for the Lord always came up in the left hand. They would close the gates of the Temple by night and get up in the morning and find them wide open.

BABYLONIAN TALMUD:

During the last forty years before the destruction of the Temple the lot for the Lord did not come up in the right hand; nor did the crimson-colored strap become white; nor did the western most light shine; and the doors of the Temple would open by themselves.

Since both Talmuds recount the same information, the knowledge of these events was obviously accepted as fact by the widespread Jewish community. What is the significance of these unusual happenings?

- Always before, the lot came up randomly when choosing between the two goats. But for forty years before the destruction of the Temple, the High Priest always picked the black stone. The odds of this happening are 1 in 5.5 billion, and it caused great consternation.
- Always before, the red wool tied to the Temple door had turned white miraculously at the moment the scapegoat was set free in the wilderness. But for forty years before the destruction of the Temple, the wool remained crimson indicating that something was wrong with the ritual, and sins were not being forgiven.
- Always before, the priests replenished the oil in the golden lampstand every morning and evening, and the light never went out. But for forty years before the destruction of the Temple, the lamp went out every night of its own accord no matter what precautions the priests took (over 12,500 nights in a row!).
- Always before, the doors to the Temple had remained shut at night and there had been limited access to the holy places of worship. But for forty years before the destruction of the Temple, the huge gates swung open every single night of their own accord.

What in the world happened forty years before the destruction of the Temple that caused such dramatic and unusual happenings in Israel?

Just this – on the fourteenth day of Nisan in AD 30, Jesus Christ (Israel's Messiah, and the REAL scapegoat) took our sins far away from us!

No sacrifice was necessary the next day, the next week, the next month, or the next year, because JESUS PAID IT ALL! That's why God visibly demonstrated through these signs to the Jews that the Old Testament system was no longer working.

Hebrews 9:11-14 ¹¹ But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; ¹² Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in ONCE into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. ¹³ For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: ¹⁴ How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Hebrews 9:24-28 ²⁴ For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: ²⁵ Nor yet that he should offer himself OFTEN, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; ²⁶ For then must he OFTEN have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now ONCE in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. ²⁷ And as it is appointed unto men ONCE to die, but after this the judgment: ²⁸ So Christ was ONCE offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

Jesus was both the Lord's goat (the sacrifice that paid for our sins) and the scapegoat (the one who carried our sins away). The great thing about the scapegoat is that it was let go in the wilderness – and it kept on moving! That means my confessed sin gets further and further from me every minute I live for God. Not even Satan can catch up with it to bring it back. **THE GOAT HAS LEFT THE BUILDING!**

Hebrews 7:25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

When someone tries to bring up your past, just remember that the goat has left the building!