



Sunday School Live

**DAY OF ATONEMENT &
INTERPRETING THE BIBLE
THROUGH A
WOMANIST LENS
Leviticus 16:11-19**

Women's History Month Emphasis with Dr. Martha C. Taylor

March 30, 2025

Day of Atonement Meaning

- ▶ On this day, the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies to make Atonement for his sins, sins of the Priesthood & the entire community
- ▶ Leviticus 16 points forward to Jesus fulfilling the role of high priest and sacrificial offering
- ▶ Day of Atonement was an annual event to purify the sanctuary & people from sin

A Day of Fasting, Repentance & Solemn Reflection

- ▶ Sin separates humanity from God & only through atonement can that be overcome
- ▶ THE PROCESS: Sin is covered & removed, allowing the people to be reconciled to God
- ▶ THE SACRIFICES: Blood of the bull & the goat given in place of people's sin

Ritual Involving 2 Scapegoats



Atonement Ritual

- ▶ Confess the sins of the people
- ▶ Slaughter the goat, take & sprinkle blood
- ▶ Send it to wilderness removing sin

The Live Goat

- ▶ Lay both hands on the head & confess wickedness & rebellion
- ▶ All sins are put on the goat's head

Jesus Became the Ultimate Scapegoat

- Jesus bears sins of the world & removes them, granting believers complete forgiveness & freedom from sin's power
- The Day of Atonement points forward to the Cross, where Christ's once-for-all sacrifice provides the perfect atonement for sin



The Lens of Womanist Theology



Womanism
is to
feminism as
purple is to
lavendar

Alice Walker

www.blackfeminisms.com

Womanist theology falls
under the umbrella of
Black Women's lived

experience is primary
source not initially
included in feminist &

Liberation from all
oppression: The “-isms”



**Alice
Walker**



**Rev. Dr. Katie
G. Cannon**



**Rev. Dr.
Jacquelyn Grant**



**Rev. Dr. Delores
Williams**

Foremothers of Womanist Theology

Womanist Is Contextual & Intersectional

- ▶ **Racism – Sexism – Classism – Ageism**
- ▶ **Analyze issues by examining the lived experiences of Black Women & our realities**
- ▶ **Apply the intersectionality to Bible stories that relate to our own lived experiences: What was said then & how it applies to now**

Searching & Interpreting the Bible

- ▶ **Hermeneutic of Suspicion = *Are certain Biblical interpretations reinforcing oppression?***
- ▶ **Look to see how texts are used to serve interests of power = *Social Manipulation***
- ▶ **Read & uncover biases as to how women are portrayed = *Are women oppressed & downplayed?***

Negative Portrayals of Women

- ▶ *Are women seen as property?*
- ▶ *Women caught in adultery but not the male?*
- ▶ *Women are often nameless & without a voice*
– Say Her Name!
- ▶ *Are any Bible books canonized by women?*
- ▶ *Why do so many storylines revolve around men, not women's experiences?*

Societal Obstacles that Reflect Oppression Against Women

PATRIARCHAL

Women have no power, are subordinate via social & political practices

PATRILENIAL

Heritance of land/property passed through males – not women

PATRILOCAL

Marriage customs where wife lives with husband's family, brothers have right to widows

Finding Yourself in the Story When Information is Missing

- ▶ **Midrash**: Practice of interpreting scripture utilizing imagination informed by scholarly findings; Seek deep meaning & examine texts
- ▶ Deal with perceived problems or unanswered questions or gaps in texts
- ▶ **EXEGESIS**: Amplify Black Women's voices & experiences – *Faith Under Fire, Harriett Tubman*

DOLORES WILLIAMS: IDENTIFICATION DISCERNMENT

- ▶ *How do you consider finding yourself in the story & where & how does God meet us in our lived experiences?*
- ▶ *Does Hagar's lived experience relate more to Black Women than Sarah's lived experience? Why?*