

# THE RED HEIFER

## Numbers 19

As is the case with all the types in the Levitical arrangements, the closer we scrutinize them the more beautiful they are seen to be.

Perhaps in this case the scrutiny must be more deep because it is exceptional in its detail.

- V.2 The red heifer is, however, consistent with all the others, in that the animal typifies Christ. But unusually here it is required to be a female. It is older than a calf but it has not attained to its milking stage, when it is at its highest value. Thus there is a suggestion of a premature death which reminds us of Isa. 53. <sup>8</sup> “He was *cut off* out of the land of the living”.

One might say of the heifer, “What a pity!” Its colour, a rich brown, we would call it, which when groomed has a beautiful gloss. It had neither spot nor blemish (1 Peter 1. <sup>19</sup>). But we think of Isa. 53; verse 2 says that “when we shall see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him”. That was Israel’s thought of Him. But those who get God’s view of Him declare Him to be “the chiefest among ten thousand”, “the altogether lovely” (S. of S. 5. <sup>10</sup>).

It must also never have borne a yoke. The Jews said “we were never in bondage to any man”. Whereas at that time they were under the yoke of the Romans and paid taxes to them! But the Lord was never under the yoke of man. “He took on Him the form of a servant”. And delighted to do His Father’s will. That was his *meat*, not a forced bondage.

- V.3 She was to be given unto Eleazar, the High Priest at that time, and so was God’s representative, and he was to bring her forth without the camp. And here is the most important difference from all the other burnt sacrifices, which were burnt upon the altar in the court of the tabernacle. Outside the camp was the place assigned to lepers and to those who were ceremonially unclean. And that is the place that the people gave our glorious Lord. (See Hebrews 13. <sup>11-14</sup>).

And there one was to slay her before the face of Eleazar the priest. He did not slay her, but as God’s representative he looked on.

- V.4 Then we are told that Eleazar was to take from her blood with his finger, no vessel being spoken of wherewith he could carry any into the

court of the tabernacle, to be sprinkled on the altar; but he was to take with his finger some of the blood and sprinkle it “toward” the tabernacle, seven times. We can hardly think, in these circumstances, that he carried the blood on his finger right into the camp to the tabernacle. The whole scene is without the camp. Man’s treatment of God’s beloved Son. Man was permitted to shed His blood, but God accepted it as an atonement for sin.

V.5 And one was to burn her *in the sight* of Eleazar, her skin, her flesh, her blood and her dung, all was to be disposed of as an undesirable thing. The word “burn” here is quite different from the word for burning on the altar, and suggests getting rid of something useless or loathsome.

V.6 Then the priest was to take cedar wood and hyssop and scarlet. Cedar wood is almost imperishable, and suggests the one Who is from everlasting to everlasting. Hyssop suggests humiliation (1 Kings 4. <sup>33</sup>). Scarlet suggests kingship. He was born “King of the Jews”, but in mockery they gave Him a scarlet robe and a crown of thorns. In these things we see God’s approval of His beloved Son; and the priest was to cast them into the burning as God’s last tribute to Him despite all the dishonour they put upon Him.

We read in Acts 2. <sup>23</sup> that “Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain”. This compares with the type exactly. For the priest brought her forth outside the camp to be slain, but the whole of the disposing of her was a type of the wickedness of those who were responsible for the crucifixion of Christ.

V.V. This helps us to appreciate the washing appointed in these verses.  
7-10 The priest himself must wash his clothes and bathe his flesh. He brought the heifer forth, therefore he did the counterpart of those who took the Lord at Gethsemane, and all who had any part in having Him crucified. But it was all according to the predetermined will of God, though it was done by wicked hands.

Therefore we see that the one that gathered the ashes had to wash his clothes also. God is so jealous of His types, that anyone who touched that which was *typical* of sin was to wash his clothes and be unclean till the evening. Does not this help us to see what God feels when leavened bread is used as a symbol of Christ’s sinless body?

The ashes had to be taken and deposited in a *clean* place outside the camp, and kept to be mingled with water for other ceremonial cleansing. They were a memorial of a sacrifice offered, and suggest that, according to Heb. 13, there is a position in this present time, outside the camp, where Christ our sin offering is kept in memory and in whose name we

gather to Him. It is not one geographical spot, it can be in a thousand different places, but it is separated from the world, and where two or three are gathered in this way He has promised them His presence (Matt. 18. <sup>20</sup>). \*But their worship is really in the heavenly place (Heb. 10. <sup>19-22</sup>).

The uncleanness for which the ashes were kept was caused by contact with a dead body, or a bone of one, or any thing which had been in contact with a dead body. Before we were saved we were "dead in sins" (see Eph. 2). A literal dead body does not defile us, but if we identify ourselves with those who are dead in sins in a way that involves us in their Godless ways, then we defile ourselves and need the cleansing of the blood of Christ and the water of His word. Such identity being like crucifying the Son of God afresh; Hebrews 6. <sup>4-6</sup>, "seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame". Jas. 4. <sup>4</sup>, "know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?"

Shall we not help one another to get God's standpoint as to our position in this world which is hasting on to God's terrible judgment? And so make our own preparation to meet the Lord in the air (Eph. 5. <sup>25-27</sup>)?

\*But this passage does not justify "two or three" celebrating the Lord's Supper. See pamphlet "The Lord's Supper".

## THE HEIFER

of expiation of uncertain murder  
Deut. 21

This is quite different from the "Red Heifer" in Numb. 19, and should be read in conjunction with Numb. 35. <sup>30-34</sup>.

If a murder was committed the whole nation was held guilty because it was a national responsibility to maintain righteousness, which could only be maintained by the shedding of the blood of the murderer, by which the nation was freed from guilt.

But if the murderer is not known, no one can be put to death. Therefore a heifer was to be brought forth and slain so that the principle of blood for blood was maintained. But that did not free the murderer from his guilt. And if he ever became found his blood would need to be shed.

The details of this ceremony are worth considering. The heifer had never to have done any work (verse 3). And it was to be brought down

into a rough valley, and there slaughtered by the elders of the city nearest to where the slain man was found. And the valley also was never to have been used. The significance of this I cannot say. But the priests had to be present to witness the elders declare their innocence. After which they were to beseech God that he would be merciful unto His people and lay not innocent blood unto His people Israel's charge. We see in that that the whole nation was held guilty till the blood of the heifer was shed.

Nothing is said about the disposal of the carcase of the heifer, nor was it required that any blood was to be sprinkled toward the tabernacle as in Numb. 19. <sup>4</sup>. The only point is blood for blood; and the heifer is the nearest to a man in value.

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Correspondence with a view to the unity of the faith welcomed.

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