

*THE ASHES
OF THE RED HEIFER*

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DWAYNE CONYERS

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First Edition

For Dr. Gary Gregor



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Introduction

During my expatriation to the Republic of Singapore, I took advantage of many of the Christian activities that are so abundant on the island. Christianity (especially the “charismania” I’ve adopted over the years) is a relatively new concept for this predominantly Chinese nation, although there was a great hunger and thirst for ministry.

Despite the fact that American traditionalism (exported by the major denominations on the island) was poisoning many of the Singaporean converts, there was a “Second Chapter of Acts-like” freshness about the worship there. The Holy Spirit was moving in many of these congregations with greater freedom than I have witnessed in any American church.

The most inspiring event was a seminar on Prophetic Gifts conducted by Dr. Gary Gregor of California. My initial meeting with Gary was unplanned and quite a (pleasant) surprise. My good buddy Francis Ng (whom I had met during an Assemblies of God “Campmeeting” in Malaysia) was starting a fellowship group/church known as the

“Prayer Tabernacle” and I was anxious to pitch in with any assistance I might offer.

During one of Francis’ Sunday morning services at the Novotel on Bukit Timah Road, a gregarious “ugly American” entered with an acoustic guitar. Up until that moment, I had grown used to being the only “Ugly American” in the house. As Clint Eastwood would say, meeting Dr. Gregor *made my day*.

His preaching style was intense. Clear, and to the point. After the sermon, he offered to lay on hands and prophesy over each person in the congregation. Generally, I’m skeptical of such goings on, but I was willing to give God (if not Gary) a chance. Gary’s prophecy over me was on target. Dead reckoning -- bullseye. It was a word that I carry with me to this day.

I was so impressed by this former Rock-&-Roller (and part-time bodybuilder) and his ministry that I signed up for a three-month class on Prophetic Gifts that he was conducting at the Bible House on Armenian Street (right behind the American Embassy). It was during that class that the inspiration for this booklet came about.

During one of the sessions, Gary made mention of “The Ashes of the Red Heifer.” It was a brief, almost casual reference that many in the class might have missed. However, I was intrigued. But Gary was not one to spill the beans. If anyone really wanted to

know what he was talking about, we had to look it up for ourselves.

And, with that challenge, the foundation for this study was laid. Armed with Larry Pierce's *On-Line Bible* software and nearly a ton of reference books, I began what turned out to be an illuminating study. I hope that, as you follow this text, you too will be inspired by the Ashes of the Red Heifer.

Chapter One

The Law as a Harbinger of the Dispensation of Grace

Under Mosaic Law, we see a multitude of rituals proscribed to the children of Israel. Many of these were strictly of a spiritual or religious nature (e.g., ensuring that the Israelites remember the mighty acts of God on behalf of their forefathers). Others were issued to protect them from spiritual contamination (from the idolatrous practices of the heathen nations surrounding them). Still others existed to prevent physical contamination (e.g., the spread of disease through activities and behavior which would foster the spread of disease-causing bacteria and/or microbes).

In this study, we will focus on one specific ritual, a ritual which involved the ashes of a red heifer. Although the primary purpose of this ritual was to provide cleansing from defilement involving a corpse, there is a very powerful spiritual significance to this act. Specifically... a significant which points to the sacrificial death of Jesus, the Anointed One, upon the

cross at Calvary. Although the Old Testament people did not have a clear picture of Jesus or His birth, death and resurrection, we can look at this matter from our vantage point of hindsight to receive the greater blessing from this passage of scripture.

By way of exposition, we should be cognizant of the fact that God had given strict instructions to His children in regard to the matter of coming into contact with dead bodies. Part of the rationale seems to stem from the fact that the heathen nations surrounding Israel were apparently practicing necromancy and similar abominations. God surely must have wanted to protect His children from the spiritual defilement such practices would foment... not to mention the physical defilement from decaying human flesh. For the Nazarites, a sub-group within the nation of Israel, contact with the dead was forbidden under any circumstance.

¹And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them, When either man or woman shall separate [themselves] to vow a vow of a Nazarite, to separate [themselves] to the LORD: {to separate...: or, to make themselves Nazarites} ³He shall separate [himself] from wine and strong drink, and shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes, or dried. ⁴All the days of his separation shall he eat nothing that is made of the vine tree, from the kernels even to the husk. {separation: or, Nazariteship} {vine...: Heb. vine of the wine} ⁵All the days of the vow of his separation there shall no razor come upon his head: until the days shall be fulfilled, in which he separateth

[himself] to the LORD, he shall be holy, [and] shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow. ⁶*All the days that he separateth [himself] to the LORD he shall come at no dead body.* ⁷*He shall not make himself unclean for his father, or for his mother, for his brother, or for his sister, when they die: because the consecration of his God [is] upon his head.* {consecration: Heb. separation} ⁸All the days of his separation he [is] holy to the LORD. (Numbers 6:1-8)

You are probably aware of the fact that Samson was included under this restriction. Unfortunately, Samson wasn't known for his faithfulness. When it came down to obeying God or satisfying his desires, Samson's desires won out every time.

⁵Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother, to Timnath, and came to the vineyards of Timnath: and, behold, a young lion roared against him. {against...: Heb. in meeting him} ⁶And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he tore him as he would have torn a kid, and [he had] nothing in his hand: but he told not his father or his mother what he had done. (Judges 14:5-6)

While en route to fool around with heathen women (an act of blatant disregard for God's law), Samson was attacked by a young lion. . Through the power of the Spirit of God, Samson easily dispatched the beast. And so, it would appear, Samson had triumphed in his encounter with the roaring lion. But, did he really? The lion was dead. What further threat could it be?

⁷And he went down, and talked with the woman; and she pleased Samson well. ⁸And after a time he returned to take her, and he turned aside to see the carcase of the lion: and, behold, [there was] a swarm of bees and honey in the carcase of the lion. ⁹And he took of it in his hands, and went on eating, and came to his father and mother, and he gave them, and they ate: but he told them not that he had taken the honey out of the carcase of the lion. (Judges 14:7-9)

Samson chose to enjoy the sweetness of the honey rather than to obey God's commandment to avoid contact with dead carcasses. The Lord God declared that Samson would be a Nazarite from birth (see Judges 13:5). The word "Nazarite" literally means "people of the vow." In a figurative sense, the word "Christian" means the same thing.

Although Nazarites were under a strict prohibition against contact with the dead, the average Israelite had provisions for cleansing himself after having come into contact with the dead. It is that provision that we will find to be of greatest interest.

A Practical Application

From a purely physical point of view, the ritual cleansings proscribed in the Law ensured the health and welfare of God's chosen people. Although there was no human knowledge or understanding of the existence of germs, viruses or microbes, disease could be easily spread by dead bodies. Interestingly, the plagues which ravaged Europe were caused (at least in

part) by a sanitation standard which was opposite that of what had been practiced thousands of years earlier in Israel.

The Spiritual Perspective

From a purely spiritual point of view, these ritual cleansings were “sneak previews” of what was to come through the Messiah (Christ Jesus, our Lord). Those of us who were dead in sin (Ephesians 2:1-5 and Colossians 2:13) needed cleansing... more than what could be provided by an animal sacrifice. Therefore, God sent His Son to be the ultimate sacrifice for us.

What Christ provided was greater than what could be provided by animal sacrifice. When God sent His Son, He became the *ultimate* sacrifice for us.

Chapter Two

Harbinger of The Messiah's Perfect Sacrifice

Our study of the Ashes of the Red Heifer begins in the Book of Numbers, chapter 19. In this passage, we see the ordinance regarding the red heifer which, in the Hebrew, is 'adom parah {pronounced: aw-dome' paw-raw'}.

The children of Israel were to utilize the red heifer as a sacrifice for sin. A close inspection of this scripture reveals a foreshadowing of Jesus and His sacrificial death for the sins of the world.

¹And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, ²This [is] the ordinance of the law which the LORD hath commanded, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring thee a red heifer without spot, wherein [is] no blemish, [and] upon which never came yoke. (Numbers 19:1-2)

As we can see from the above scripture, the red heifer had to be perfect. In his commentary on The Pentateuch, Rashi stated that the heifer "should be

faultless in redness, so that if there were upon it two black hairs, it was disqualified (Parah, Chap. 2).”

The Color Red

It is notable that the heifer was to have a perfectly red hide, and never had been used for plowing a field. Red could symbolize blood... representing the blood of Jesus that was shed for the sins of mankind.

²²[In fact] under the Law almost everything is purified by means of blood, and without the shedding of blood there is neither release from sin *and* its guilt *nor* the remission of the due *and* merited punishment for sins. (Hebrews 9:22 [Amp.]

Alternatively, red could represent mankind. The Hebrew word for “red” is very close/similar to Adam’s name... providing a link to man or mankind. Regardless of what the red color stood for, it is more important to consider that the heifer had to be perfect, and should exist for only one purpose. Jesus lived a perfect life, and no one needed to remind Him of His purpose. Even when satan tried to dissuade Him (see Mark 8:31-33), Jesus would not be shaken.

Execution of the Red Heifer

After meeting the qualifications for selection, the red heifer was taken into a ritual ceremony which culminated in its death. As we continue through Numbers chapter 19, we will continue to see parallels

between the sacrifice of the red heifer and the sacrifice of our Messiah.

³And ye shall give her unto Eleazar the priest, that he may bring her forth without the camp, and [one] shall slay her before his face: (Numbers 19:3)

As Jesus was crucified outside of the city (John 19:16-17), so the heifer was taken out of the camp. The high priest did not perform the actual slaying, however. This was done by a layman who, according to Rashi's commentary, slew the heifer while Eleazar looked on. This seems to symbolize how God the Father looked on as Jesus died on the cross, crucified by the Roman government as a result of the Pharisees' conspiracy.

⁴⁶And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? (Matt 27:46)

Although God had always been with Jesus, the point came when He had to look away from His Beloved Son. When our sins, sicknesses and diseases were poured out upon Jesus, God had to turn His face away and leave Jesus to suffer alone.

“It Is Finished (Complete)”

⁴And Eleazar the priest shall take of her blood with his finger, and sprinkle of her blood directly before the

tabernacle of the congregation seven times: (Numbers 19:4)

Eleazar was to sprinkle the blood seven times (seven being the number of fullness or completion). This reminds me of how Jesus cried out, “It is finished” before breathing His last upon the cross.

Rashi commented that as the blood was sprinkled toward the front of the tent of meeting, “He {*Eleazar*} stood to the east of Jerusalem and looked intently upon the door of the Temple at the time of the sprinkling of the blood (Siphre; Zeb. 105).” This act is reminiscent of a significant event following Jesus’ crucifixion. After He had laid down His life and the price for our salvation had been paid at Calvary, the veil in the temple was rent in twain. Was it God’s intense gaze at that place of atonement that caused the thick fabric of the veil to tear in two?

Burned with Three Elements

There was a specific “recipe” to be followed in the sacrifice of the red heifer:

⁵And [one] shall burn the heifer in his sight; her skin, and her flesh, and her blood, with her dung, shall he burn: ⁶And the priest shall take cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet, and cast [it] into the midst of the burning of the heifer. (Numbers 19:5-6)

The heifer was burned in its entirety. Skin, meat, blood... even the contents of its intestines. Nothing

would escape the consuming fire with which the heifer was to be burned. This complete destruction of every trace of the heifer is symbolic of the complete price that Jesus paid for our sins. David wrote, prophetically, of our Lord's crucifixion:

¹⁴I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. (Psalm 22:14)

It is interesting that the Lord commands that the heifer be burned with cedar-wood (representing durability), hyssop (representing healing) and scarlet (representing blood). What is it that makes these elements so unique, and why did God command them to be burned along with the red heifer?

Cedar Wood: For Purification

Cedar wood (*erez* in the Hebrew) was known for its strength and durability. The wood came from an evergreen tree (probably a type of juniper or fir tree) which is known to grow to heights in excess of 100 feet.

A fragrant wood, cedar is resistant to the rot and mildew prevalent in the hot and humid climates of the Middle East and Mediterranean areas. A "fine" wood, cedar does not have "knots" and other anomalies common to other types of trees.

Cedar wood seemed to have a special value in the culture of Israel. For example, the king of Israel dwelt in a house of cedar wood (see 2nd Samuel 7:2) and Solomon used cedar wood in building the temple (see 1st Kings 6:9). Because of its many valuable properties, cedar wood was frequently used in ritual purifications.

Hyssop: For Healing and Cleansing

Hyssop is a plant in the mint family and is similar to marjoram (which you might have on your spice rack at home). An aromatic shrub that grows roughly three feet tall, hyssop grows primarily on rocky crevices.

Hyssop was also used for cleansing (see Psalm 51:7). It was used by the children of Israel to place the blood of the Lamb onto the lintel and doorposts of their homes (forming the sign of a cross) to avert the death angel. Also, hyssop was used to serve vinegar to Jesus as he hung on the cross (John 19:29).

Scarlet: For Penance

Scarlet seems to be an obvious reference to blood in this instance. Blood is a very important element in regard to spiritual cleansing. Specific to us, the Blood of Jesus is the only thing that can wash away our sins.

²²And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. (Heb 9:22)

Scarlet was a color worn by the wealthy (see Lamentations 4:5) and those in positions of authority (see Daniel 5:29). Isaiah (in 1:18) uses this color to describe sin. In Matthew 27:28, Jesus was made to wear a robe of scarlet.

One interesting finding is that the Hebrew words shaniy {shaw-nee'}, towla` {to-law'} and (fem) towle`ah {to-lay-aw'} or towla`ath {to-lah'-ath}; or tola`ath {to-lah'-ath} describe an insect from which scarlet color was extracted for dying fabric. The Greek word kokkinos {kok'-kee-nos} also refers to this same insect.

In that regard, take note of the following quote from page 73 of Henry Morris' book, "Biblical Basis for Modern Science:"

"When the female of the scarlet worm species was ready to give birth to her young, she would attach her body to the trunk of a tree, fixing herself so firmly and permanently that she would never leave again. The eggs deposited beneath her body were thus protected until the larvae were hatched and able to enter their own life cycle. As the mother died, the crimson fluid stained her body and the surrounding wood. From the dead bodies of such female scarlet worms, the commercial scarlet dyes of antiquity were extracted. What a picture this gives of Christ, dying on the tree, shedding His precious blood that He might 'bring many sons unto glory' (Heb.

2:10)! He died for us, that we might live through Him!
Ps. 22:6 describes such a worm and gives us this picture
of Christ. (cf. Isa 1:18)”

The Waiting Period

⁷Then the priest shall wash his clothes, and he shall bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp, and the priest shall be unclean until the even.

⁸And he that burneth her shall wash his clothes in water, and bathe his flesh in water, and shall be unclean until the even.

(Numbers 19:7-8)

Washing with water was an important part of most Old Testament rituals. From a practical perspective, God used these rituals to prevent diseases and other problems caused by unsanitary conditions. From a purely spiritual perspective, it represents the state of holiness (clean from the stain of sin) which is required to enter into God’s presence. In the current dispensation, we are cleansed by the blood of Jesus (see Hebrews 4:16).

Chapter Three

Purification by the Red Heifer: Cleansing from Sin

Numbers 19:9-10

⁹ And a man [that is] clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and lay [them] up without the camp in a clean place, and it shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for a water of separation: it [is] a purification for sin.

¹⁰ And he that gathereth the ashes of the heifer shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even: and it shall be unto the children of Israel, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among them, for a statute for ever.

After the heifer was burned, the ashes were utilized (by someone who is clean/holy) for purification from sin.

Jesus Perfect Sacrifice

This study on the ashes of the red heifer is based upon an Old Testament scripture ... covering practices which (to a large degree) are specific to that era. Before you go out and buy a cow to slaughter in your

backyard, keep in mind that it is no longer necessary to sacrifice animals for atonement. Those sacrifices were merely harbingers of a **greater** sacrifice ... the *ultimate* sacrifice.

That sacrifice, of course, is the blood of Jesus (the Anointed One of God) upon the cross at Calvary.

Hebrews 9:12-14

¹² nor by blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, has entered in once for all into the [holy of] holies, having found an eternal redemption.

¹³ For if the blood of goats and bulls, and a heifer's ashes sprinkling the defiled, sanctifies for the purity of the flesh,

¹⁴ how much rather shall the blood of the Christ, who by the eternal Spirit offered himself spotless to God, purify your conscience from dead works to worship [the] living God?

Again, we see how the ashes of the heifer (mixed with "living water") brought purification and cleansing. This symbol seems a foreshadowing of what Jesus did for us on the cross.

The conclusion that we could draw from this is that we see an ordinance from the Lord that served as a harbinger of the propitiation that Christ would provide through his sacrificial death at Calvary.

Purification From Sin

Numbers 19:17

¹⁷ And for an unclean [person] they shall take of the ashes of the burnt heifer of purification for sin, and running water shall be put thereto in a vessel:

The ashes {Hebrew word reads “dust”} of the heifer are seen here in the same context, as purification for sin.

Living Water

The term “running water” in verse 17 above has an interesting reading in the Hebrew, “living waters shall be given.” God refers to Himself in Jeremiah 2:13 as the fountain of living waters.

Jesus told the woman in John 4:10 that He came to give living water that would permanently satisfy her (spiritual) thirst and spring up into everlasting life. John 7:39 reveals that the living water is, in fact, the Holy Spirit.

Chapter Four

One Greater Than the Red Heifer

Hebrews 9:12-14

¹² Nor by blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, has entered in once for all into the [holy of] holies, having found an eternal redemption.

¹³ For if the blood of goats and bulls, and a heifer's ashes sprinkling the defiled, sanctifies for the purity of the flesh,

¹⁴ how much rather shall the blood of the Christ, who by the eternal Spirit offered himself spotless to God, purify your conscience from dead works to worship [the] living God?

The red heifer served as a harbinger of the “new and better thing” that God did through Christ Jesus and his sacrificial death as the propitiation for our sins.

The heifer could purify the flesh (which is temporal), but Jesus can purify our eternal souls.

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