

Elder Vernon Johnson

Colors

The Red Heifer

There is a very strong correlation between the bible color red and the bible subject of warfare, blood, and judgment. This correlation is manifest in what the scriptures have to say about the sacrifice of the red heifer.

Num. 19:2 "This 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: 3 And 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: 4 And 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: 5 And one shall burn the heifer in his sight; her skin, and her flesh, and her blood, with her dung, shall he burn: 6 And the priest shall take cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet, and cast it into the midst of the burning of the heifer. 7 Then 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. 8 And he that burneth her shall wash his clothes in water, and bathe his flesh in water, and shall be unclean until the even. 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."

The water of separation, which had as one of its principle components the ashes of the red heifer, was used in the ceremonial cleansing of the tabernacle, its instruments, the priesthood, and the children of Israel and their uncleanness. The descriptive requirements of the red heifer sound very similar to the descriptive requirements of the other animal sacrifices offered under the law. There was one big difference, however, the red heifer is female and the other animals sacrificed were male. We know that the male animals sacrificed are typical of Christ. However, of what is the red heifer typical?

There is a biblical doctrine known as "substitutionary atonement." Almost all the animal sacrifices in the Old Testament teach this principle. This doctrine teaches that Christ suffered and died as a substitute for his bride, "the elect family of God." The experiences of Isaiah the prophet illustrate this doctrine: Is. 6:5 "Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. 6 Then

flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: 7 And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." In this example, the live coal from off the altar cleansed the uncleanness of Isaiah. Of course, the live coal is a figurative representation of Christ on the cross and there redeeming the uncleanness of Isaiah.

Christ was sold for thirty pieces of silver. The Old Testament prophecy of this said the following: Zec. 11:12 "And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. 13 And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD." Note that the Lord said, "a goodly price that I was prised at of them." The Lord said that it was a goodly price, yet, the price of a male servant at thirty three years of age is listed as being fifty pieces of silver: Lev. 27:3 "And thy estimation shall be of the male from twenty years old even unto sixty years old, even thy estimation shall be fifty shekels of silver, after the shekel of the sanctuary." However, the price of a female servant at that age is thirty shekels of silver: Lev. 27:4 "And if it be a female, then thy estimation shall be thirty shekels."

We conclude that Christ was valued at the price of a female servant, which the Lord said was a "goodly price." Christ did not go to the cross to suffer and die for any sins that he committed, for he committed none. He went to the cross to suffer and die for the sins of his bride, the elect family of God. He went there as their substitute in the wrathful judgment of God. Under the doctrine of substitutionary atonement, the substitute paid the judgmental penalty for the guilty part. As an example, if Joe had committed a theft and was sentenced to five years in prison and Bob substituted for Joe and served the five years, then the penalty against Joe would be considered in the eyes of the law to have been satisfied. Joe committed the crime and the penalty against Joe was satisfied. While the American judicial system does not allow for substitution, yet in God's system of justice substitution is allowed if a worthy substitute is found. Christ is that worthy substitute.

Now we come back to the red heifer. The red heifer represents the bride of Christ (God's covenant people). Christ's substitution for his bride had the same judicial effect as though she had suffered the penalty herself. The result is that she is declared righteous for her sins debt has been paid. I can look upon the red heifer and see God's covenant redemption for the sins of his people and see that my sins have been atoned for.