

## The Red Heifer Sin Offering Parallels Christ

One of the most unique offerings instituted by Moses under the Law was the “Red Heifer” offering of Numbers 19. The Talmud claims that this offering of the red heifer (cow) was the only one of God’s commands that the wise King Solomon did not understand. While we are not going to figure it all out, there are three clear and direct ways this Sin Offering foreshadows and parallels Christ and his sacrifice for us. First, like Christ, this offering of the Red Heifer is extremely rare. Second, unlike all other offerings, the Red Heifer was sacrificed in the same general location where Christ was crucified. Third, the ashes of this offering had the function of cleansing from the most filthy of defilement’s under the Law, contact with a dead body. The cleansing power of the sacrificial work of Christ was so vastly effective that it fully cleansed us from our sins, as well as the “death passed upon all men” from Adam (Romans 5:12).

### **The offering of the Red Heifer, like Christ, was extremely rare.**

Numbers 19:1-6:

And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying,

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:

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:

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:

And *one* shall burn the heifer in his sight; her skin, and her flesh, and her blood, with her dung, shall he burn:

And the priest shall take cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet, and cast *it* into the midst of the burning of the heifer.

This offering was rarely done because a cow that was entirely “red” was so unusual. The ancient Jewish writings stated, “from the time of Moses to the final destruction of the Temple, only seven, or else nine, such red heifers had been offered: first by Moses, the second by Ezra, and the other five, or else seven, between the time of Ezra and that of the taking of Jerusalem by the Romans.” The pure red heifer being very rare and valuable, the cost was covered by the temple treasury. (Alfred Edersheim, The Temple, p. 355).

A completely red cow was genetically very rare, hence the reason it was so seldom offered. This was the only sacrifice under the Law where the specification made it almost unattainable. No other offering under the Law was so distinctive and so rare.

The Red Heifer foreshadowed Christ in how rare and precious he was. The red represents that precious blood of Christ; its uniqueness and rarity.

**The Red Heifer sacrifice parallels Christ WHERE it was slain.** The Red Heifer offering was singularly unique from all other Old Testament offerings in the location of the sacrifice. The Red Heifer was sacrificed “outside the camp” in contrast to all other sacrifices that took place in the Tabernacle area or Temple area before the altar.

Hebrews 13:10-13:

We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.

For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned **without the camp**. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify

the people with his own blood, suffered **without the gate**.

Let us go forth therefore unto him **without the camp**, bearing his reproach.  
(emphasis added)

The focus point of these verses is the location where Christ was crucified: outside the city gate of Jerusalem. When the exact location of the Crucifixion is understood these verse take on a depth previously unrecognized.

Ernest Martin in his book, Secrets of Golgotha, documents exactly where “outside the gate” Christ was crucified. He shows that Christ was crucified east of the city on the Mt. of Olives. He says the location referred to in Hebrews 13:11, where the offerings were burned outside the camp, was on the Mt. of Olives where Christ was crucified. Additionally, this location on the Mt. of Olives is exactly where the Red Heifer was sacrificed.

This gives the Red Heifer the unique distinction of being the only sacrifice under the Law slain in the location where Christ died. While Martin’s conclusions contradict centuries of tradition, it is the only explanation which fits together the Old Testament, New Testament and rabbinical and historical records. While we do not have space to explore his research here, his is the only satisfactory explanation I have seen **from the Scriptures** of the location for the crucifixion of Christ. (See Note).

The Passover Lamb takes on great significance in that it was slain the exact month, date, and time of day that Christ was crucified. With the Red Heifer, it is not the timing, but the location that is so noteworthy. Remarkably, this very unique offering was slain at the same location where Christ was crucified. What a unique significance and singular parallel this offering has to Christ!

Understanding the location of the crucifixion helps explain Hebrews 13:10, a difficult verse to understand: “We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.”

What altar do we have? Certainly not one which any man has built. Our altar is the cross of Christ. It is the once and for all sacrifice of Christ for our sins.

“...Whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.” Eating the sacrifices of the tabernacle represented identification with those sacrifices. “We have an altar” whereof we do have

a right to eat. We are identified with Christ and his sacrifice on our behalf. By eating and drinking the bread and the wine of Holy Communion we symbolize that wondrous reality of our full spiritual identification with the sacrifice of Christ.

I Corinthians 10:16-18:

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion [*koinonia*, sharing fully] of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion [*koinonia*] of the body of Christ?

For we *being* many are one bread, *and* one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.

Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers [*koinonia*] of the altar?

Those that ate of the sacrifices shared fully with the altar. The altar represented the sacrifices offered on it. In eating these Old Testament sacrifices there was a full sharing, an identification, with these sacrifices.

In like manner, with the sacrifice of Christ there is also an identification with that great offering and all the accomplishments of it. Eating the bread and wine in Communion is a powerful object lesson to remind us of our identification and sharing fully in Christ’s sacrifice. In this sense we have an altar where we have a right to “eat.” We share fully in complete oneness with all that was accomplished for us when Christ laid down his life.

**The Red Heifer sacrifice parallels Christ’s sacrifice for us in its function of cleansing.** This offering foreshadowed Christ in its capacity of cleansing and purification. Hebrews refers to the Red Heifer offering in chapter nine.

Hebrews 9:13, 14:

For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the **ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean**, sanctifieth to the purifying [cleansing] of the flesh: (emphasis added)

How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge [cleanse,

purify] your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

“...The ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean” refers to this unique offering of the Red Heifer.

Numbers 19:9

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 [offering].

Numbers 19:9: (*Amplified*)

And a man who is clean shall collect the ashes of the heifer and put them outside the camp in a clean place, and they shall be kept for the congregation of the Israelites for the water for impurity; it is a sin offering.

Once this red cow was lead outside the camp and sacrificed it would be burned together with cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet. The remaining ashes were then mixed with water to form a solution that served as a “ceremonial disinfectant” that helped remove the ceremonial defilement of death. This “water for impurity” (“water of separation” in KJV) would be sprinkled on a person after he came in contact with a dead body.

The Amplified correctly supplies the word “offering” at the end of verse nine. The Red Heifer was one of the many Sin Offerings under the Law. The Sin Offerings mainly functioned to cleanse from sin.

Numbers 19:13: (*Amplified*)

Whoever touches the corpse of any who has died and does not purify himself defiles the **tabernacle of the Lord**, and that person shall be cut off from Israel. Because the water for impurity was not sprinkled upon him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness is still upon him. (emphasis added)

The main issue or problem of Numbers 19 is how to be purified from one of the most vile contaminations under the Law: contact with the dead. The purpose of this “water for impurity”

was to facilitate this cleansing from this defilement of death.

“The tabernacle of the Lord” in verse 13 was considered God’s dwelling place. Uncleanness rendered a person unfit to approach God, in the camp or in the temple area. The primary point of being cleansed under the Law was so God could be approached and worshipped. Then, secondarily, practical health issues motivated the Mosaic laws of uncleanness.

The unique and powerful cleansing ability of the “ashes of an heifer” has remarkable parallels to Christ’s sacrifice. This offering, as well as all Sin Offerings, demonstrate and foreshadow one of the prominent attributes of Christianity, the cleansed conscience.

Hebrews 9:14:

How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge [cleanse, purify] your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

While the “dead works” do not have the power to cleanse the conscience and remove the guilt of sin, the sacrificial work of Christ on our behalf does. Being dead in trespasses and sins we need to be cleansed, purified, by the blood of Christ. Death and sin had been passed upon all men from Adam. The sacrifice of Christ cleansed us from both sin and death.

Hebrews 10:22:

Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

Here New Covenant realities are expressed in Old Covenant terms. “Our hearts sprinkled” refers to the function of the Sin Offerings, cleansing, which Christ fully accomplished for us. Whether the blood of bulls and goats or the water from the ashes of a red heifer were sprinkled, the effect and function were the same: cleansing and purification. How much more efficacious is the blood of Christ in procuring a cleansed conscience? “Washed in pure water” is an Old Covenant reference to cleansing as well.

We are exhorted to draw near, to approach, God with a true heart in full assurance of faith or believing. Believing is what is required to manifest the cleansed conscience. You will manifest this cleansing in the measure and to the extent that you believe and act accordingly. Believing is by our free will. Believing is our role, our job, not God's.

What exactly is a believer supposed to believe in order to manifest this cleansing? Believe in Christ—and specifically what he has accomplished for you in this area of the cleansed conscience. By examining these Old Testament parallels to Christ I trust we have extended our reach and tightened our grasp on what Christ has accomplished for us.

### **Focusing on Christ**

In Christ we have been cleansed so we can freely approach God. Through the sacrifice of Christ, "his blood," our sins have been remitted. By the great Sin Offering of Jesus Christ we have been made righteous.

II Corinthians 5:21:

For He hath made him to be sin [offering] for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

The word "offering" should be supplied after "sin." Jesus Christ "was once offered to bear the sins of many." (Hebrews 9:28) As a Sin Offering all our sin was transferred to him. When Christ died all our sins died with him. Then righteousness of God was given to us.

As Christians we need to reboot our thinking, speech and lives to reflect the realities of God's Word. Often Christians are told not to sin for moral reasons. I encourage Christians not to sin because they are not living the reality of what Christ accomplished for them. If your sin has been carried off and crucified with Christ and you continue to wallow therein, you are living a lie. To have been made the righteousness of God through Christ and founder around in sin is not living the truth of what God has achieved for you. It is like a ragged homeless man pushing around shopping cart packed with bags of hundred dollar bills. In this case it is not a moral lapse that is of concern but rather this individual's complete disconnect from reality. When a Christian forgets that Christ has carried away all our sins to Calvary there is a disconnect from reality. When a believer loses

consciousness of the wondrous reality of the righteousness of God in him there is a disconnect from reality. Anchoring our thoughts, our confession and our lifestyle back into reality involves putting our focus on Christ. Our lives will change when we focus on Christ.

Hebrews 12:1b and 2:

...let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking [gazing resolutely] unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

We are to focus solely on Christ, to rivet and fix our gaze on him. II Corinthians 3:18 says, "But we all, with uncovered face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image..." You will change when you behold Christ. When you rivet your eyes intently on Christ you will be transformed. I don't mean an artist's conception of Jesus. I mean exactly what he accomplished for you by his sacrifice at Calvary. When you fix your attention, your gaze on what Christ achieved on your behalf, then you will be changed and start to live the reality of who Christ has made you.

**NOTE:** Walter Cummins taught a clear and easily understandable summary of Ernest Martin's research in "The Place—Golgotha" (The Way International SNS Tape #1323). Everyone agrees that the crucifixion took place outside the old city of Jerusalem. The big question is where. In the 4<sup>th</sup> Century St. Helena, Emperor Constantine's mother, picked a location to the west of Jerusalem according to a vision she had. This is where the average Bible atlas locates "Golgotha." Martin gives overwhelming and solid evidence from multiple sources and multiple angles that the location of the crucifixion was the Mt. of Olives. His web address: <http://www.askelm.com>

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