

An Attempt To Listen To God

Christ in The Scriptures
Numbers

By

Rowan Jennings

Introduction

In the book of Numbers there are at least four lovely pictures of the Lord. Among those perhaps least known in this book are:

- a) "Lawgiver" (ch. 21:18)
- b) "Star out of Jacob" (ch. 24:17)
- c) "Scepter shall rise out of Israel" (ch. 24:17)

The four best known are:

- a) The brazen serpent (ch. 21:5-9)
- b) The red heifer (ch. 19:1-22)
- c) The silver trumpets (ch. 10:2-8)
- d) Aaron and his endorsement as High Priest by the rod that budded (ch. 17:1-13)

In musing on the red heifer very quickly, there is observed the unique features of this sacrifice.

- a) It is the only sacrifice with the triple declaration of its perfections (ch. 19:2)
- b) It is the only sacrifice where specific mention is made of its color (ch. 19:2)
- c) It is the only sacrifice killed outside the camp (ch. 19:3)
- d) It is the only sacrifice where nothing of it is burned at the altar (ch. 19:3). There are three sacrifices which were burned on the altar, part of which was burnt on the altar and the balance outside the camp:
 - i) The bull for the induction of Aaron and his sons (Ex. 29:13-14; Lev. 8:16-17)
 - ii) The bull for the sin offering of the anointed priest (Lev. 4:10-12)
 - iii) The goat and the bull for the sin offering (Lev. 16:24-28)
- e) It is the only sacrifice where all participants are unclean until the evening (Num. 19:7, 8, 10, 19, 21)
- f) It is the only sacrifice where its blood is sprinkled before the Tent of the congregation (Num. 19:4)
- g) It is the only sacrifice where the ashes were kept to make the water of purification for the removal of defilement incurred through contact with the dead (Num. 19:11-16)
- h) It is the only sacrifice specifically said for the stranger among them (Num 19:10)
- i) It is the only sacrifice particularly for defilement by contact with the dead (ch.16:13, 16) or being in the environment of the dead (Num. 19:14)
- j) It is the only sacrifice entirely burned without the camp (Num. 19:3-5). Notice that "without the camp did not always denote an unclean place" (Lev. 4:12; 6:11; Num. 19:9)
- k) It is one of only two sacrifices where cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet were used (Num. 19:6; Lev. 14: 4, 6, 49, 51, 52)
- l) It is one of three sacrifices in which a heifer could be sacrificed:
 - i) The peace-offering (Lev. 3:6)
 - ii) The red heifer (Num. 19:2)
 - iii) The heifer which was beheaded (Deut. 21:4), but this animal was never offered in sacrifice.
- m) An interesting feature is that neither in this or the offerings of the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16) is there any mention of forgiveness.

It is evident that information separates major offerings, that is, we read of the Passover (Ex. 12), then some time later there is a collection of sacrifices: the Burnt Offering, Meal Offering, Peace Offering, Sin Offering, and Trespass offerings (Lev. 1-6). More information followed by the offerings on the "Day of Atonement" (Lev.16), and finally more data, and then the Red Heifer offering (Num. 19). Why not just put them altogether? We observe that the situations or events before the various sacrifices gave way for each sacrifice.

- a) The children of Israel were slaves in Egypt and needed full liberation which required death to their relationship to Egypt, that is, they needed redemption before they could ever be liberated. This enslavement in Egypt was the backdrop for their redemption through the shed blood of the Passover lamb. (Ex. 12)
- b) Having been redeemed and liberated, God's desire was to dwell among them and therefore they were instructed to build Him a Tabernacle. It was a building which consisted of three areas: the court, the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. The Holy Place and Holy of Holies were two rooms in the one tent, and

within the Holy of Holies God dwelt. When the Tabernacle was raised up such was the glory of God that Moses could not enter the Tabernacle (Ex. 40:35). Man must learn that although redeemed, he could not just come to God as he deemed fit, yet God desired communion with man. To enable man to come and stay in fellowship with God, He provided priests who were taught the way of approach to God. Man could only come to God by means of a sacrifice and a man ordained by God who knew how to present the sacrifice to God. It was due to the desire of God to have fellowship with man, yet for man to learn God as the approachable, so the information was given about the offerings (Lev.1-6). The result was that Moses and Aaron were able to come into the Tabernacle and come out and bless the people (Lev. 9:23).

- c) Acting presumptuously the two sons of Aaron sought to go before the Lord with strange fire, and immediately were slain by the Lord (Lev. 10:1-2). God began to teach the lesson of holiness on a lower level by explaining the seriousness of defilement (Lev. 11-15). This is followed by the sacrifices on the Day of Atonement. It was needed because as a nation they were not always aware of what was sin and defiling, so this sacrifice was for the cleansing of all the sins they had committed, or defilement they had contacted.
- d) Time passed and they were en route through the wilderness. It is against the background of a God being in their midst and of journeying with God en route to the promised land, yet being defiled by the way rebellious people who were dying under the discipling hand of God, yet with a new beginning the sacrifice of the Red Heifer was given.

Red Heifer

There are a series of truths relative to this sacrifice which are to be pondered:

1) It was a heifer

In the scriptures, a female is exalted to a high position being a type of Israel, and the church the bride of Christ. She is also spoken of as the weaker vessel. God has a government and in that government the order is God, Christ, man, and woman, but that is NOT the way the scriptures put it. It says the head of every man is Christ, the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God. Notice that God puts the woman between two others who are heads, and this has nothing to do with superiority, for Father and Son are both equal. Being a female the heifer indicates submission to the government of God. It was this that man rebelled against, that sin came in, and death, thus the animal is associated with death.

2) It was red

The question is why red, for the Lord does not specify the color of any of the other animals? It would be very hard to think of "red" without thinking of the "rams' skins dyed red" (Ex. 25:5), of Esau (Gen. 25:25), Esau's pottage (Gen. 25:30), sins (Isa. 1:18), the Lord in His clothing of judgment (Isa. 63:2), and the scarlet woman and the beast she rides upon (Rev. 17:3-4). Do these have any relevance to understanding the heifer being "red"? To me the emphasis on red indicates:

- a) From Esau, the natural man who lives for the things of the world (the hunt and the pottage) and sees no value in the blessings of the birthright.
- b) From the ram skins dyed red, which was called a covering (Ex. 26:14) and while not the same word as that translated "atonement", it would possibly indicate the covering of God's provision of the man who is the hiding place . . . "A covert from the tempest" (Isa. 32:2).

3) It was without yoke

Hosea writes: "Ephraim is as an heifer that is taught, and loveth to tread out the corn" (Hos. 10:11). It is the first part of the verse that relates to our subject for it speaks of Ephraim as a heifer that has been trained to bear the yoke. At first glance this seems to be in contradiction to the heifer "upon which never came yoke" (Num. 19:2). It is only when both are put together that the full picture of our Lord emerges. He was never under the yoke of man but lived being the "yokefellow" of God.

Manifestations as Christ never under the yoke or the yoke-fellow of man.

Peer pressure is a mighty force causing one to act, or not act, contrary to that which they know as right.

- a) It was peer pressure caused Peter to deny the Lord, and again to stop eating with the Gentiles and eat with the Jews (Gal. 2:12).
- b) When Moses was up in the mount with God Aaron was left to lead the people. They came to him and wanted a god to be made and Aaron fell under peer pressure and made the golden calf. (Ex. 32:1, 21-24).
- c) Herod made an oath to give the daughter of Salome anything she wanted, and because of peer pressure, he had John Baptist killed. (Matt. 14:9)
- d) On the other hand, Joshua and Caleb refused to bow to the opinions of the majority concerning entering the promised land. (Num. 13:26-14:10)
- e) Noah stood alone as a preacher of righteousness when all the world was steeped in sin and wickedness. (Gen. 6:5-9, 22)
- f) When we read of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego we are reminded of three men who did not bow under peer pressure despite facing the fiery furnace. (Dan. 3:1-21)

Christ of course is the supreme example of a man who never fell under peer pressure and was never under the yoke of men.

- a) Family members tried to bring Him under their yoke.

There was a time when his brethren, that is family members who did not believe in Him nor His miracles, taunted him to go to Jerusalem and show Himself. It was a very natural argument, "If you are a miracle worker, forget about the country villages, go to the big city, to Jerusalem, and get a name for yourself" (Jn. 7:3-5). His answer was: "My time is not yet come: but your time is always ready." (Jn. 7:6)

- b) The disciples tried to bring Him under their yoke.

On another occasion the news had come that His friend Lazarus was sick and had died, what should He do? He never asked the disciples what they thought for the only thoughts He wanted was the thoughts of God on the matter. Having determined that, He said: "Let us go into Judaea again" (Jn. 11:7). The disciples, who were quite vocal, opposed this idea saying: "Master, the Jews of late sought to stone Thee, and goest Thou thither again?" (Jn. 11:8). But he had come to walk in the light of the will of God, and knowing the will of God, He went to the tomb of Lazarus. The peer pressure of the disciples could not waylay Him. Peter did not want Him to go to Jerusalem to be killed. (Matt. 16:21-22)

- c) Satan tried to bring him under his yoke.

Although we normally think of the three times Satan tempted our Lord, they were not the only times. The scriptures record:

- i) "He departed from Him for a season." (Lk. 4:13)
- ii) When speaking to the disciples the Lord said: "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations." (Lk. 22:28)
- iii) Consider that which is the second in Matthew and third in Luke, the temptation of the devil seeking to get the Lord to cast Himself down (Matt. 4:5-7; Lk. 4:9-12). It was Satan's unceasing desire to have the Lord dead, but not to let Him of His own volition enter death.
- iv) Since God had pledged that the seed of the woman would bruise his head (Gen. 3:15), Satan had done all he could to prevent the birth of the baby.
- v) He had Cain rise up and kill Abel. (Gen. 4:8)
- vi) Abraham wanting God to bless Ishmael. (Gen. 17:18)
- vii) To slay all the male children in Egypt. (Ex. 1:16)

- viii) Athaliah to kill all the royal seed. (2 Kgs. 11:1)
- ix) Herod kill all the male children two years and younger. (Matt. 2:16)

Now the Lord was a man about to nullify the ways of Satan and ultimately fulfill the promise to Eve. Satan must not let Christ be victorious, therefore, he will use every possible means to have the Lord killed.

- i) He will bring a storm on the lake (Mk. 4:39). (*It is often wondered: "How do we know this storm was from Satan?" We know this to be so because the Lord would never have rebuked the activities of God. There was another storm and He did not rebuke it for there were lessons the disciples had to learn (Matt. 14:24, 30).*)
 - ii) Have the people bring the Lord to the brow of the hill (Lk. 4:29), and now he tempts the Lord (Matt. 4:1-10).
 - iii) In one temptation the Lord used the scripture to declare His trust in God (Lk. 4:4). Satan seizes on this and now he will use the scriptures to seek to get the Lord under his control (Lk. 4:10).
- d) The religious rulers wanted to bring Him under their yoke.

It seems evident that the religious leaders planted the man with the withered hand in a place in the synagogue where he could not miss being seen. We are told: "they watched Him" (Mk. 3:2). This was the Sabbath and they, with the apparent support of the scriptures, said it was wrong to do any work on the Sabbath day. Would he ignore the situation, and leave them pondering? That would never have done for they could have argued: "If he has the power why not heal?" If he does heal the man then He will be accused of doing work! He does not back down but calling on the man to: "Stand forth", He asks them the question: "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days or to do evil" (Mk. 3:4). They were cornered and knew it. Now He will show that he is not under their man made regulations for the Sabbath, but in fellowship with God, He heals him (Mk. 3:5). They tried to make Him submit to their teachings regarding divorce (Matt. 19:3), but they could never bring Him under yoke with themselves, their teachings, or interpretations of the law.

- e) The people wanted to bring Him under their yoke.

It was a stupendous miracle the people had seen, but it was more. They saw a man who had compassion on them, and knowing their weariness, had them sit down. How very considerate. Then added to that He knew they would be hungry and faint en route home, and miraculously fed "about five thousand men, beside women and children" (Matt. 14:21). Knowing that they only wanted Him for the bread (Jn. 6:26), He sent them away and departed into the mountain to be alone and pray (Matt. 14:23). He would not allow a situation to develop for the clamoring of man who would seek to bring Him under their yoke.

- f) Herod wanted to bring Him under his yoke.

Pilate sent our Lord bound to Herod. This was the Herod who was afraid when he heard of the miracles of the Lord and thinking it was John the Baptist risen from the dead (Matt. 14:2). It was this man who in a rash oath and peer pressure came under the yoke of Herodias and his associates, and had John the Baptist killed (Matt. 14:6-11). This man had rejected the voice of God through John, and indeed had silenced it forever, and now he seeks to treat the Lord as a subject of entertainment. He wanted to see a miracle done by the Lord, but the Lord would not be brought under his yoke.

In the government of God he submitted Himself, in that He was willing to be the Lamb foreordained before the foundation of the world. He came into the world, He declared God in the world, and He manifested the Father to the disciples.

4) **The heifer was brought forth without the camp v. 3.**

There are several thoughts here. First the great antitype was brought forth, and ultimately without the camp.

- a) "Pilate therefore . . . brought Jesus forth" (Jn. 19:13)
- b) "They that had laid hold on Jesus led Him away" (Matt. 26:57)
- c) "When they had bound Him, they led Him away" (Matt. 27:2)
- d) "Led Him away to crucify Him" (Matt. 27:31)
- e) "Led Him away into the hall" (Mk. 15:16)
- f) "Two other, malefactors, led with Him to be put to death" (Lk. 23:32)

Outside the camp.

- a) "Suffered without the gate" (Heb. 13:12)
- b) "Unto Him without the camp" (Heb. 13:13)

There are truths in these expression which we shall not enter into because it is not related to our theme, except for to mention the following, He suffered "without the gate". To the Jewish mind there would have been thoughts of the Tabernacle and the "gate" of the court (Ex. 27:16), and normally outside the gate and camp was unholy ground. This would have been astounding to them that outside the gate and camp, in the unsanctified place, the Lord suffered to sanctify the people.

5) **The Lord was yoked with God, His true yoke-fellow**

It would seem that it would be unnecessary, and yet it must be said that our Lord never was under the yoke, the control of any man or men. There are those today who present the Lord as a "rebel" and a "troublemaker" for He stood against the false teachings of the day. I state very clearly, our Lord was never a rebel against the highest government, that is God, nor the truth of God. If we look carefully, we find there are at least eight titles and descriptive terms all beginning with the letter "R" in the scriptures. There is:

- a) Redeemer (Isa. 49:7)
- b) Rose of Sharon (Song of Sol. 2:1)
- c) Restorer (Psa. 69:4)
- d) Righteous (1 Jn. 2:1)
- e) Refuge (Deut. 33:27)
- f) Reconciler (2 Cor. 5:18-19)
- g) Rock (1 Cor. 10:4)
- h) Root of David (Rev. 5:5)
- i) Red heifer (Num. 19:2)

NEVER is He called a rebel. Being in subjection to the will of God, He clarified the meaning of the Sabbath, the light blazed as he spoke against the distortion of the law (Mk. 2:27); and declared as wrong priorities that which men treasured (Matt. 6:1-5, the applause of men). A rebel acts in defiance of constituted government and is the manifestation of an internal attitude of rebellion against the government or authority God has set in place.

It has been said by some that our Lord was rebelling against God when on the cross he spoke the words: "Why art thou so far from helping me . . . our fathers trusted in thee . . . and thou didst deliver them?" (Psa. 22:1, 4). It will be observed that the Lord never said these words on the cross.

6) **Without spot or blemish**

This sacrifice was for cleansing from defilement from death. When musing on it one is impressed with the virtue of our Lord, who by reason of His deity, the moral perfection of His humanity, and the merits of His work at Calvary, He secured forever a perfect cleansing. A cleansing that cleanses from every sin (1 Jn. 1:7, 9). That meritorious fountain "cleanseth us from all sin" and can "cleanse us from all unrighteousness". Paul writes on the same strain: "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus" (1 Cor. 6:11). Such is His sacrifice that it can: "purge your

conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (Heb. 9:14). John is so thrilled with the wonders of the judgment executing Christ and its fearfulness, that to those who are redeemed he writes: "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Rev. 1:5).

Due to the eternal efficacy of the cleansing blood of Christ, fellowship with God can be a reality of life. It would seem that the writers of the New Testament were musing on this offering as they wrote salient truths concerning Christ.

- a) The sacrifice had to be "without spot" indicating the loveliness of Christ who was "without sin" Heb. 4:15) despite the corrupting influences all around Him.
- b) It had to be such that: "Wherein is no blemish" indicating the internal character of Christ of whom it is stated "In Him is no sin." (1 Jn. 3:5)
- c) It had to be an animal upon which "never came yoke" indicating the conduct of the Saviour who "did no sin." (1 Pet. 2:22)
- d) It had to be slain outside the camp indicating complete fulfillment in the will of God so that the writer to the Hebrews writes: "Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate." (Heb. 13:12)

Lovely man on whom no stain contaminated Him, no distortion of man tainted Him, nothing ever seen or heard tarnished Him. He was immaculate in holiness, impeccable in activity, perfect in fidelity and integrity.

This lovely man took in His hand the hand of a little corpse, glorious truth, the hand of the Almighty grasped the hand of death and death must take its flight, and He was not contaminated (Lk. 8:54). When about to go into Nain, a funeral cortege was leaving and He "touched the bier" (Lk. 7:14), (*This was the receptacle on which the deceased lay, akin to a coffin or casket in our terminology. The same term is used when King David followed in Abner's funeral, 2 Sam. 3:31*) and was not contaminated. One cannot help but feel sadness for the leper, put through no fault of his own in the outside place, and was an untouchable. How many were the years since he had known a human hand in tenderness, then He met Jesus. Oh what a day! In his pathetic state he called on the Lord to: "make me clean". Then we read: "Jesus put forth his hand and touched him" (Matt. 8:2-3), and He was uncontaminated.

7) **Scarlet, cedar wood and hyssop**

In these days of blatant disregard for the authority of the Word of God and God Himself, there is a need to be reminded that:

- a) We cannot dare to disobey the word of the Lord but to tremble at it.
 - i) It is the admonition of Isaiah: "Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at His word" (Isa. 66:5)
 - ii) "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my Word" (Isa. 66:2)
 - iii) "Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled, at the words of the God of Israel" (Ezra. 9:4; 10:3)
 - iv) Belshazzar trembled at the word of the Lord, the wording is: "The joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another". (Dan. 5:6)
- b) We cannot dare to disobey the word of the Lord but to tremble at it. "Touch not the unclean thing" (2 Cor. 6:17). What is the "unclean" thing of 2 Cor. 6:17? Anything that is: "the filthiness of the flesh and spirit"; which hinders "perfecting holiness in the fear of the God" (2 Cor. 7:1). In this passage it is primarily that of attitude, and unifying with that which is contrary to God, and a disturbance of fellowship. It may be that in our darkened state we may not think of defilement as serious as actual sinning, however, God makes it clear that in Jerusalem in the millennial: "There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth" (Rev. 21:27). Isaiah writes: "And an highway shall be there . . . and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it" (Isa. 35:8). Again: "O Jerusalem, the Holy City: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean" (Isa. 52:1). Such verses make it clear that where God dwells there can be no defilement.

These show me that which Christ had to become for my cleansing from defilement.

- a) Scarlet, the word translated worm (Psa. 22:6), indicative of how low the Lord became.
- b) Cedar wood that was beautiful, even suitable for the house of God (1 Kgs. 6:15-20). A place that was beautiful for God to dwell in. Israel was a house (Heb. 3), but there was defilement?
- c) Hyssop. It is interesting that this bush is used for sprinkling (Num. 19:18; Heb. 9:19); is spoken by David in his penitent Psalm (Psa. 51:7); and for the cleaning of the leprous house (Lev. 14:52).

The benefits only came to man after all had gone up to God (Num. 19:5-8). There was no eating of this sacrifice by the priests or offerer, neither did man have the skin as in the burnt offering. It all went to God, and only when He was truly satisfied was man able to receive any benefits. All we have spiritually is because God is fully satisfied with the work of His Son. We are cleansed by His blood (1 Jn. 1:7); justified by His resurrection (Rom. 4:25); made "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17); and "children of God" (Rom.8:16); all dependent on the fulness of the blood sacrifice of the Lord.

**May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.
John 16:13**

Rowan Jennings, Abbotsford, British Columbia