

# More purification rituals

Purification from the dead was another important ritual in Judaism. Numbers 19 tells us this was accomplished with the ashes of a red heifer.

## **The Yokeless Heifer**

The heifer was to be spotless, with no blemish, and must not have ever been yoked. It was to be taken outside the camp and slain in front of the priest. Christ was spotless; in His flesh and character there was no blemish. He had never been under a yoke. The yoke is used by the Bible to describe subjection or service.

“Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour.”

*(1 Timothy 6:1)*

Christ was equal with God; He was not a servant, when He came to the earth He learned obedience.

“Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.”

*(Hebrews 5:8)*

Being a Son was not a statement that spoke of inferiority but equality, and thus Christ's claim to be the Son of God infuriated the Jews:

“Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.” *(John 5:18)*

Being in the form of God, and equal in position to God, He humbled Himself and also became the Son of Man.

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” *(Philippians 2:5-8)*

Being found in the likeness of men He humbled Himself in obedience unto the death of the cross. Christ came to earth to bear the yoke alone so we don't have to. He can pity, He can relate, and He can save. He says:

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” *(Matthew 11:29)*

In taking the yoke of Christ upon ourselves we enter into fellowship with His work and His sufferings. We unite with Christ in the work of salvation. The yoke joins two together, but they must cooperate. We cannot be yoked to Christ and have our

own way. The Bible tells us that we can conceive with lust or be yoked to Christ. Both images are a vivid depiction of the unity of two: one increases riches, one increases responsibility. One is in labor that ends in pleasure; one is pleasure that ends in labor and travail. When sin is finished it brings forth death; when the work of the field is finished it brings forth the Bread of Life.

The red heifer was to be burned outside the camp. This was not the only sacrifice that was burned without the camp. The sin offering for the entire congregation, the sin offerings on the day of atonement, and the sin offerings for Aaron and his sons at the dedication of the tabernacle were also burned without the camp. Paul opens our eyes to the significance of this act:

“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. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.” *(Hebrews 13:11-14)*

Christ suffered death without the camp, outside the city of Jerusalem. Paul is calling his readers to bear the reproach of being an outcast from the earthly Jerusalem so that they may be found in the heavenly New Jerusalem. The significance of this act is brought to view when we understand the Jewish culture. The heavenly New Jerusalem is to the Christian what the earthly old Jerusalem was to the Jew. To suffer without the gate, apart from holy ground, was to die the death of the lost.

“For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.” *(Revelation 22:15)*

Christ, that He might sanctify and purify us, suffered the death of the wicked. He suffered the wrath of God, as if He were outside the gates of the New Jerusalem.

“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.” *(Numbers 19:5-6)*

Here again we see the same three materials that are used in the cleansing of the leper. This time they are cast into the fire. Christ, who had been from of

2 old, set His face like flint and exercised stubborn, persistent faith in the promises of His Father. He suffered the fiery wrath of God, giving His body and blood to protect and nourish His children. The ashes of this sacrifice were reserved in a clean place for future use.

“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.” (*Numbers 19:9*)

The righteousness of Christ is eternal. One sacrifice was sufficient to cleanse any and all men of dead works. It is reserved in heaven where nothing can defile, corrupt, or steal it. There can be no failure of His supply.

“But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.” (*Hebrews 7:24-27*)

The ashes of purification were used to cleanse the highest form of impurity: defilement from contact with the dead. It also served to cleanse certain spoils of war and captives.

“And whosoever toucheth one that is slain with a sword in the open fields, or a dead body, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days. 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: And a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip it in the water, and sprinkle it upon the tent, and upon all the vessels, and upon the persons that were there, and upon him that touched a bone, or one slain, or one dead, or a grave:” (*Numbers 19:16-18*)

Again we see the hyssop being used in a cleansing. It serves an important purpose we will soon explore. Before we do, we need to know what this ritual symbolized. Paul tells us what it was a type of:

“For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (*Hebrews 9:13-14*)

The defilement that came from contact with the dead was symbolic of the defilement that faithless works bring to those who are in contact with them.

The only thing that can cleanse us from faithless works is the Finger of Christ. He must apply His merits to our hearts in fulfillment of the living and active promises of God. Christ is the Living Word of God in a human, earthen vessel. He is clean, and therefore, able to cleanse us from all our unrighteousness.

We have a part to play; we must cooperate with the work. The unclean had ample opportunity to refuse to be cleansed, but if he refused the cleansing, he would be cut off from Israel as unclean.

“But the man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation, because he hath defiled the sanctuary of the LORD: the water of separation hath not been sprinkled upon him; he is unclean.” (*Numbers 19:20*)

This purification carries an important lesson: while the righteousnesses of Christ is limitless, we can certainly miss our opportunity. We have a time limit.

“Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.” (*Hebrews 12:15-17*)

Peter tells us how the Christian is to be purified from dead works:

“Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit...” (*1 Peter 1:22*)

The only purification available to those who have been corrupted by faithless works is obedience to the truth through the power of the Holy Spirit, the finger of God.

“But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.” (*Luke 11:20*)

“But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.” (*Matthew 12:28*)

Though Christ is in Heaven, He is still able to touch us here on earth. The same hand that healed every suffering soul that came to Him in faith is reaching out to us. He wants to purify and cleanse us through the merits of His sacrifice, the power of the Spirit, and the washing of the Word. This ministration is more glorious than that of the old covenant. The work of Christ changes His children from glory to glory.

“Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy

tables of the heart. But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away:" (2 Corinthians 3:3)

"How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory." (2 Corinthians 3:8-9)

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Corinthians 3:18)

It was this purification that David earnestly longed for after he sinned with Bathsheba. God had seen fit to cause the wages of adultery—death—to pass upon David's son. Imagine the guilt and pain David felt as he looked upon the pale, cold face of his child. He was to blame, and now he was separated from God unless he took part in the purification ritual. More than this, when he looked upon the face of his dead son, he saw the face of the innocent Firstborn, slain for the sins of another. David saw what he had done to God, the punishment helped him to have true repentance.

And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. (Zechariah 12:10 KJV)

David mourned and was in bitterness, he mourned for what he did to Christ as one that mourns for the death of his own son. It was in reference to the purification from the dead that he plead:

"Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. . . Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me." (Psalm 51:7, 10-11)

Those who had been cleansed with the water of purification on the third day were commanded on the seventh day to wash their clothes and bathe themselves with water. The exceeding precious promises in the word of God were given to sanctify and cleanse us. And through the death of Christ, all of these promises are made available to the sinner. Those who dwell in heaven:

"Have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Revelation 7:14)

Faith in the sacrifice of Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit, and the promises of God are able to cleanse the soul from the defilement of dead works.

"Through all our trials we have a never-failing Helper. He does not leave us alone to struggle with temptation, to battle with evil, and be finally crushed with burdens and sorrow. Though now He is hidden from mortal sight, the ear of faith can hear His voice saying, Fear not; I am with you. "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore." Revelation 1:18. I have endured your sorrows, experienced your struggles, encountered your temptations. I know your tears; I also have wept. The griefs that lie too deep to be breathed into any human ear, I know. Think not that you are desolate and forsaken. Though your pain touch no responsive chord in any heart on earth, look unto Me, and live. "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." Isaiah 54:10." (Desire of Ages, pg. 483.)

### Women's Discharge Purification

This is part of the Levitical laws, and we will cover the important lesson that God intended to teach. Here are the relevant verses:

"And if a woman have an issue, and her issue in her flesh be blood, she shall be put apart seven days: and whosoever toucheth her shall be unclean until the even." (Leviticus 15:19)

"And whosoever toucheth her bed shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even. And whosoever toucheth any thing that she sat upon shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even." (Leviticus 15:21-22)

Under normal conditions a woman was unclean for seven days only. After this she was able to resume normal life and whoever touched her or things she sat upon was not unclean until evening. However, if the flow persisted past 7 days, the woman would have to offer a sin offering and a burnt offering when she was clean. After the flow ended, she would have to number an additional seven days before she was clean.

The Bible uses a graphic description to describe the works of mankind:

"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." (Isaiah 64:6)

The filthy rags spoken of here are those that have been defiled by a woman during her time of uncleanness.

We have become unclean through sin and have just as much control over sin robbing us of our lives as a woman has over her flow of blood. Imagine what this meant to the mind of a Jew. When we do good works they are like torn robes that have been defiled by uncleanness coming from the unclean.

4 Doing good works in an attempt to make ourselves righteous is like a woman trying to stop the bleeding with rags. An external attempt to fix something internal. This is a lesson must humble the pride of man. Our works of righteousness are as vile to God as the filthy rags of a woman who cannot even be touched by her husband. Christ is our Husband, and our sins have separated us from Him. We offer the defiled rags of our works to Christ as proof that we are cleansed. What a powerful lesson the Jews had the opportunity to learn! But they did not learn it. Anyone who offers their works to God as an offering will end up being murderers like Cain. Guilty of the death of Christ. This is because they are completely blind to the reality of their sinful condition.

God does not leave us to perish in our separation. He gave a powerful promise to Ezekiel:

“Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own way and by their doings: their way was before me as the uncleanness of a removed woman. . . For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your uncleannesses . . .” —Ezekiel 36:17,24-29

Christ taught this lesson through a miracle:

“And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment. For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague.” —Mark 5:25-29

The righteousness of Christ can do more than block the flow of defilement, it can stop it. Sin is something that no mere man or doctor can save you from. We might be able to hide our wickedness with good works, but it will not solve the problem

in our hearts. Nothing less than the righteousness of Christ will suffice to cleanse us. Everything else will just become defiled.

“And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately. And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.” —Luke 8:47-48

Can you imagine the response of the people when they realized they had come in contact with an unclean woman? This was an act of self abasement, she told the people exactly what she was without Christ's healing touch. Christ alone can purify the springs of the heart and stop sin and wickedness from flowing from it.

It is impossible for us, of ourselves, to escape from the pit of sin in which we are sunken. Our hearts are evil, and we cannot change them. “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.” “The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” Job 14:4; Romans 8:7. Education, culture, the exercise of the will, human effort, all have their proper sphere, but here they are powerless. They may produce an outward correctness of behavior, but they cannot change the heart; they cannot purify the springs of life. There must be a power working from within, a new life from above, before men can be changed from sin to holiness. That power is Christ. His grace alone can quicken the lifeless faculties of the soul, and attract it to God, to holiness. —Steps to Christ, pg. 18

Will you be made whole? Will you reach out and touch the hem of His of righteousness? Will you let Christ fix your heart?

*For a finished work*

**Jonathan Taylor**

*Wisdom is justified of all her children. -Luke 7:35*

*More Food for the Little Flock —*