

Red Heifer

"...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 19:2

Once again the children of Israel had sinned against the living God, this time by rebelling against His prophet, Moses. We read of this rebellion in Chapter 16 where part of the tribe of Levi, led by Korah, and part of the tribe of Reuben, led by Dathan and Abiram, confronted Moses with these words, *"...Ye take too much upon you, seeing, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?"* (Numbers 16:3). These words betray jealousy in the accusers against the priestly leadership of Moses. Besides, rather than bringing up this concern directly to Moses in private, Korah first gained the support of *"...certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown"* (Numbers 16:2). Korah had a valid issue within his flawed argument—*"all the congregation are holy"*—but went about airing his grievance in a wrong manner, *"if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone..."* (Matthew 18:15). Too often people seek out the encouragement of others without first going to the person with whom they do not see eye to eye.

Moses was deeply saddened by this attempt to undermine the way of God. Rather than defend his position, he invited his accusers to join him the next day around the word of God to allow Him to decide who was right, *"...to morrow the LORD will shew who are his, and who is holy..."* (Numbers 16:5). (The eventual resolution of this confrontation assures us that differences in scriptural understanding can be resolved if all parties would prayerfully seek His guidance found in His word, the Bible.) The following day, with everyone gathered at the door of the tabernacle, God made His decision known when, *"the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods"* (Numbers 16:32). Korah was in the wrong! Terror filled the people as they hurriedly fled the scene *"...Lest the earth swallow us up also"* (Numbers 16:34). God was not finished. He continued by consuming the two hundred fifty men from the tribe of Reuben by sending fire from heaven. This should have been sufficient evidence to convince anyone of Moses' Godly calling, yet the entire congregation still sided with Korah's unjustified attack on Moses, *"But on the morrow all the congregation of the*

children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the LORD" (Numbers 16:41). As Jesus later pointed out, it is very difficult to listen to the truth once one is convinced of the wrong, *"And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead"* (Luke 16:31). As a direct result of their rejection of God, fourteen thousand seven hundred people died from a plague before Aaron got God to stay it. And yet there was little change. God made one more appeal to the people by causing Aaron's rod to bud in absence of anyone else's rod from budding, and the rod was brought *"... before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the rebels..."* (Numbers 17:10). Finally the people trembled because they came to believe that they would die and be eternally separated from God if they tried to come near the tabernacle, *"Whosoever cometh any thing near unto the tabernacle of the LORD shall die: shall we be consumed with dying?"* (Numbers 17:13). They had been awakened by God to the fact that they were corrupt and without hope of salvation as long as this sin of rebellion hung over them.

God could have directly forgiven these penitent people but, as always, He used His church to affect that. The guilty people were instructed to bring a red heifer, without spot or blemish and upon which no yoke was placed, for sacrifice to the priest. This sacrifice was to provide ashes which, when added to water, could be used for *"a purification for sin"* (Numbers 19:9). The priest sprinkled the heifer's blood before the tabernacle for remission of sins, *"And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission"* (Hebrews 9:22). This ordinance foreshadowed Christ.

Although all things for the forgiveness of sins were prepared according to God's perfect plan, the guilty still had to willfully submit to this plan. Under Levitical law each person who was burdened by sin and who offered an animal for burnt sacrifice to rid himself of sin did so *"...of his own voluntary will at the door of the tabernacle..."* in the presence of a priest (Leviticus 1:3). Thus, any guilty person could come before a priest at the door of the tabernacle and hear and believe that his sins were washed away in the blood of the sacrifice according to God's ordinance. Likewise, under this ordinance of the red heifer, an unclean person could not cleanse himself, *"the clean person shall sprinkle upon the unclean..."* (Numbers 19:19). Moreover, if one became aware of his sin and did not submit to God's

offer of forgiveness he remained bound to sin; *“But the man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself... the water of separation hath not been sprinkled upon him; he is unclean”* (Numbers 19:20).

Today all people have access to the gospel of Jesus Christ—the forgiveness of sins proclaimed by His ambassadors on earth. Let us pray that no one would neglect this free gift of eternal life.

God’s Peace,
Charles Korhonen

Oct 1	Ken Storm	Holy Communion
Oct 8	TBA	
Oct 15	TBA	
Oct 18	Bi-annual mtg	7pm
Oct 22	TBA	6pm
Oct 29	TBA	

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