



## Chapter 26

# ***TEMPLE RITUALS AND THE CRUCIFIXION***

We now arrive at one of the most important aspects of this new research. When it is realized that the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus took place near the southern summit of the Mount of Olives, the spiritual significance behind many historical, prophetic and doctrinal teachings of the Old and New Testaments becomes much more intelligible. Sections of scripture that may have been difficult in the past to comprehend can now make perfectly good sense. In this chapter I wish to discuss some of the interesting teachings that are able to emerge once the true site of Golgotha is recognized.

Let us now rehearse some of those important Temple rituals involving the sacrifices that *typified* Jesus and his role in human salvation. Indeed, Christians in the first century believed that Jesus fulfilled *all* of the sacrificial rituals performed in and around the Temple. For example, every animal which was considered a Burnt Offering (Leviticus 1) had to be killed at the slaughter area just to the north of the Altar of Burnt Offering. *All* the peace offerings (Leviticus 2) and the sin and trespass offerings (Leviticus 4 and 5) also had to be killed at the same place. The single exception to this

was the Red Heifer which was killed and burnt to ashes at the Miphkad Altar on top the Mount of Olives (Numbers 19). Even the bullock and the goat which were sacrificed on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16) had to be killed near the Altar of Burnt Offering within the Temple and then their carcasses were required to be taken out the eastern gate to the Miphkad Altar at the Mount of Olives and there they were burnt to ashes (Leviticus 4). Besides that, *all* of the ashes of the animals killed and burnt in the Temple were required to be taken to the area of the Miphkad Altar on Olivet and poured out at the base of the Altar which was called the Beth ha-Deshen (which was the Ash Pit) (Leviticus 4:12,21; 6:11). The ashes were poured out at this location so that, with rain water or water carried to the area was poured out, the ashes could descend through a conduit system into the Valley of the Kidron below.

### ***Jesus is Compared in the New Testament with the Temple Rituals***

With these ritualistic facts in mind, look at what happened to Jesus. Since we now know that he was officially condemned and sentenced to die by the High Priest and the Sanhedrin at the Chamber of Hewn Stones *on the Temple Mount*, then (for symbolic purposes) Jesus himself was reckoned “killed” in the very heart of the Temple. That is where he was judged to be killed. But there is more. Let us look at the sin offerings associated with the Day of Atonement. Since it was necessary for those sin offerings on that most holy day to be taken eastwards from the Temple, out the eastern gate, over the two-tiered arched bridge that crossed the Valley of the Kidron, and then up to the summit of the Mount of Olives to be burnt to ashes, so Jesus was also taken from the same Temple, out the same eastern gate (Hebrews 13:10-13), also over the two-tiered bridge, and up to the summit of Olivet just south of the Miphkad Altar and there he was crucified (and stoned to death). The similarity involving these geographical features must have struck early Christians as highly significant. Even the ashes of *all*

the animals sacrificed and burnt in the Temple had to be taken out the same eastern gate, over the two-tiered bridge, and up to the summit of Olivet to be poured out at the base of the Miphkad Altar.

This means that Jesus, with the events that happened to him on the day of his trial and crucifixion, followed the *same* path of *all* the animal sacrifices (or their ashes) in the ritualistic ceremonies of the Temple. With an understanding of these geographical and ritualistic indications associated with the passion of Jesus, we are provided with even more symbolic and theological teaching that Jesus did in fact fulfill the role of the sin-bearer, and that he was the prophesied one to offer a pure and complete sacrifice to God for all people in the world.

### *Jesus was Likened to the Sin Offerings*

And another point. Let us look at a ritual which also *typically* prefigured Jesus in his role as the sin-bearer. Notice the most mysterious of the sin offerings (as the Jewish authorities have reckoned it to be over the centuries). This was the burning of the Red Heifer at the Miphkad Altar on the summit of Olivet. There is hardly any offering that figuratively represents Jesus more precisely than that of the Red Heifer. Let us notice the parallel.

When it was time to offer a new Red Heifer (and in the time of Jesus only *nine* had been burnt since the time of Moses, see *Parah* 3:5), it was essential for a priest (traditionally the High Priest) to leave his own residence in Jerusalem and spend seven days being purified at what was called the House of Stone at the northeast corner of the Temple complex (*Parah* 3:1). After this seven days' stay on the Temple Mount in one of the priests' residence, the priest then took the Red Heifer and escorted it out of the Temple area via the *eastern* gate, over the two-tiered arched bridge spanning the Valley of the Kidron, and up to the Miphkad Altar where it was killed and burnt to ashes.

The Miphkad Altar was not the normal type of altar which was

made of stones with a ramp to an elevated square area. It was in the form of a pit (*Parah* 4:2). The transport of the Red Heifer to this spot was a very solemn procession from the Temple Mount to the summit of the Mount of Olives. Not only did priests ascend the mountain, but it was led by all of the elders of the land (*Parah* 3:6,7). And once at the designated place, the Red Heifer was placed with its head facing the Temple and it was then killed and burnt to ashes. These ashes were then mixed with pure spring water and they served for all matters of purification dealing with the holiest affairs associated with the Temple.

### ***Remarkable Parallels with Jesus***

Now note how this *typically* prefigured what happened to Jesus. He was judged to be killed by the High Priest and the Sanhedrin in the Temple itself. This is where the Red Heifer was selected. After Pilate gave his permission for them to carry out the sentence of death according to *their* Law, Jesus was then led from Fort Antonia past the Temple on his right, out the *eastern* gate of the Temple, over the two-tiered arched bridge, up to the summit of the Mount of Olives. But instead of being killed at the Miphkad Altar, he was taken a short distance south (to where criminals could be executed “in the presence of God,” that is, in sight of the Temple) and there he was crucified (and stoned to death). And what is interesting, just as the Red Heifer was preceded by all of the top officials of the nation, the apostle John said that it was the chief priests themselves that led Jesus up to the place of crucifixion and it was they who had him put to death (John 19:15,16). We now know that the final sentence of excommunication and death happened in the Sanhedrin chamber at Bethphage on the Mount of Olives. So, Jesus was proclaimed a Gentile (a non-Israelite and a blasphemer) and then led to the site of the crucifixion. In a geographical sense, there could hardly be any closer agreement between Jesus and the Red Heifer. It is no wonder that the first century author who wrote the *Letter of Barnabas*, stated quite categorically that Jesus and the calf (the Red

Heifer) were identical (8:2).

Of course, these *typical* parallels between the Red Heifer sacrifice (and the other sin and burnt offerings) are only possible if we recognize that Jesus was judged in the Temple (his own Father's House) and taken up to the Mount of Olives to Bethphage and then to his execution. But with the new information in this book showing the *real* geographical locations where these important events took place, we are granted a marvelous historical scenario of the figurative agreements of Jesus' sacrifice for the sins of the world with the sin and burnt offerings that Moses gave to ancient Israel.

There is one other point, however, that needs to be mentioned. Since the Red Heifer was taken to the summit of Olivet and *burnt* to ashes, why was not Jesus also *burnt* in order for the figure to be precise? This is a good question. But even here it is possible to see a major parallel. What needs to be recognized is the fact that the example of the Old Testament regarding the disposition of a dead body of a *blasphemer* (or one who was considered "accursed of God") was that of Achan in the time of Joshua. What happened to the body of Achan after he was killed by stoning? He and his possessions were grouped together into a pile and they were then *burnt* to ashes (Joshua 7:15,25,26).

### *An Accursed One*

Achan was the example of dealing with an "accursed one," as the apostle Paul said Jesus was reckoned (Galatians 3:13), and this meant that his corpse had to be treated like that of Achan who was also reckoned as "accursed" (Joshua 7:15). There can hardly be a doubt that the authorities in Jerusalem were in the very process of placing Jesus' dead body on a pile of wood (along with the tree on which he was nailed) and they were getting ready to *burn up the accursed thing* with all the items that had come in contact with him. Only his garment was going to be spared which the Roman soldiers (being Gentiles) secured for themselves.

It is no wonder that Joseph of Arimathea rushed quickly to Pilate to crave for the body of Jesus to be given to him, and the Greek wording shows his boldness was because of utmost urgency (Mark 15:43). Pilate then gave Joseph his request and the body of Jesus was placed in his charge. Had this not happened, there is every reason to believe that the body of Jesus would have been *burnt* to ashes like the body of Achan, the accursed (thus fulfilling the sacrifice of the Red Heifer to a tee). The reason the authorities were wanting his body burnt up was to prevent his disciples from stealing the body and making out later that he was resurrected from the dead as he had been telling people would happen (Matthew 27:63-66).

### ***The Severity of Judgment if One were Accursed***

But note this point. Though Jesus' body was not actually burnt up (as the authorities in Jerusalem no doubt wanted), it could be said that he was "burnt up" in a typical sense (just as the author of the Book of Hebrews taught that Isaac was figuratively resurrected from the dead when a ram became a substitute for him). Though the body of Jesus was spared from being burnt up, this fate could hardly have escaped the tree on which he was crucified. Since *everything* that touched an "accursed one" was itself considered "accursed" (even the land around the place of execution "was defiled") (Deuteronomy 21:22,23), then it can hardly be imagined that the tree (or even if one considers the instrument of his execution to have been a Roman cross) would have survived their judgment. That instrument of execution had to be *burnt* to ashes. And it no doubt was. This would mean that the three crosses found under the Temple of Venus in the time of Constantine (that the people of the fourth century thought were those associated with the crucifixion of Jesus) could in no way have been genuine. One of the greatest hoaxes in history was accomplished (and it has proved so successful over the past sixteen hundred years) by Judas Quiriacus when he showed those false crosses to Helena the mother of

Constantine. Judas was pulling a trick on the emperor's mother.

Be this as it may, there is still more New Testament teaching to survey about the significance of the Red Heifer. There are several analogies from the apostle Paul that seem to be directly associated with the ritual of the Red Heifer and it is important that we consider them. Let us once again turn our attention to this most holy of sin offerings — the Red Heifer sacrifice.

### *New Testament Teaching and the Red Heifer*

The first point to consider is that the sin offering of the Red Heifer had to be a perfect female with red colored hair, never yoked (Numbers 19:2) and the rabbis understood that it should never have been mounted by a male (Mishnah, *Parah* 2:4). This Red Heifer was burnt to ashes and the ashes were mixed with clean spring water. It was with these purification waters that not only Israelites were purified from ceremonial defilements, but even the priests and the Temple itself were cleansed and purified in certain ways with these holy waters.

Thus, the Red Heifer was a most important sin offering. But what did it represent to first century Christians? The fact is, the animal was a *female* and how could this relate to Jesus who was a male? This is an interesting point, and we may find that the apostle Paul gave the proper interpretation of how this *female* sin offering (the holiest of all) represented Jesus in a figurative way though Jesus was a male.

Let us look at one central teaching of Paul in which he reckoned Jesus to be “female” in a figurative (or mystical) way. This was in regard to his “Body,” which Paul called the *Ekklesia* (which most translators today render as “Church”). Interestingly, the word *Ekklesia* is feminine. In using the word *Ekklesia* in the feminine was not simply a grammatical formality of Paul, but it had profound *typical* significance. This is because Paul called “the *Ekklesia*” the “Body of Christ” (I Corinthians 12:12-27). In this

case, the “Body” is feminine, not the actual masculine body of Jesus. This feminine “Body” certainly represented the Body of Christ because it was equivalent to “his flesh” (his *one* flesh ). This “*one* flesh” relationship is what Paul called the marriage union that Jesus has with his *Ekklesia*. In Paul’s teaching the husband and wife represented “one flesh.” To Paul, one was masculine (the husband) and the *Ekklesia* was feminine (the wife). Notice how Paul explained his teaching.

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it.... So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourishes and cherishes it, even as the Lord the Church: *for we are members* of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, *and they two shall be one flesh*. This is a great mystery, *but I speak concerning Christ and the Church*” (Ephesians 5:25-32).

In a *typical* sense the *Ekklesia* is the “wife” of Jesus who is glorified as the Christ. To Paul, the *Ekklesia* was *his* body, *his* flesh, and *his* bones. Since this figurative teaching of Paul was a central part of his theological understanding of what Christianity was all about, we may find that it explains (from Paul’s point of view) how the Red Heifer could be feminine and yet denote Jesus as well. Note that the Red Heifer was an animal that was required to be *free*, *unblemished*, and to be a *female virgin*. So holy were the ashes of this sin offering that even the most sacred items of the Temple itself were purified by the waters mixed with its ashes. In a word, the Red Heifer had to be “holy, without blemish” and not having spot. Also, its purification waters were able to sanctify people, to cleanse them, and to wash them clean from all impurities.

### ***The Similarity of the Ekklesia and the Red Heifer***

Remarkably, these are the identical factors the apostle Paul associated with the *Ekklesia* (the “wife” of Christ), because he thought that the *Ekklesia* was also a *free* woman and one “without

a yoke” as the Red Heifer (see Galatians 4:22-31). He told the Galatians to “stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free” (Galatians 5:1).

But Paul was even more specific. In the section of Ephesians quoted above, there is one portion I deliberately left out of the context a few paragraphs back, but it needs to be re-inserted and emphasized. Paul’s description of the *Ekklesia* as being Jesus’ wife is typical of the requirements associated with the ritual of the Red Heifer. Here is the quote.

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that he might *sanctify it* and *cleanse it with the washing of the word*, that he might present it a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be *holy* and *without blemish*” (Ephesians 5:25-27).

Everything that Paul was saying in this scripture (even the technical words he was using) fits the ritualistic qualifications of the Red Heifer. But the apostle Paul’s analogy doesn’t stop here. Note that the *Ekklesia*, like the Red Heifer, was considered by Paul a chaste virgin.

“For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as *a chaste virgin* to Christ” (II Corinthians 11:2).

This figurative analogy is even carried further by the apostle John in the Book of Revelation when he spoke of the hundred and forty four thousand.

“These are they which were not defiled with women; for *they are virgins*. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God” (Revelation 14:4,5).

These figurative descriptions make good sense when one recognizes that the apostles Paul and John were applying familiar and

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typical teachings of the ritualistic ceremonies of the Law of Moses that Christians at the time would have understood. The apostles saw Jesus as fulfilling the rituals involving the animal sacrifices as substitutes for the sin of humans in a precise way. But in the case of the Red Heifer (being feminine), it no doubt represented the virgin wife of Jesus who had become the Christ. The *Ekklesia* was (and is) Christ's feminine Body, and it is reckoned as being as much a part of his body as his own flesh. "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones" (Ephesians 5:30).

### ***The Red Heifer and Jesus***

Thus, the Red Heifer sacrifice being *feminine* can also be applied to Jesus, but to the *feminine* part of Jesus — the *Ekklesia*, his mystical wife. In a spiritual way, Paul identified the *Ekklesia* as also "dying" with Jesus when he met his death on the Mount of Olives (Colossians 2:20). And when Jesus was raised from the dead, so were the members of the *Ekklesia* (in a typical sense). And this resurrection from the dead of the *Ekklesia* is made abundantly clear in Colossians 3:1. And, as a result of the *Ekklesia* being resurrected with Jesus, the *Ekklesia* is now figuratively seated (in Jesus) on the very throne of God in heaven (Ephesians 2:6).

Of course, all of this is symbolic teaching, but so was every ritualistic act associated with the Red Heifer and all the other animal sacrifices. This could mean, in a mystical way, that the *Ekklesia* (as Jesus' "wife" and being "one flesh" with him) also died "with him" as shown by the sacrifice of the Red Heifer. Paul's spiritual language and his knowledge of the Temple ceremonies (and his penchant for explaining their significance in a symbolic way) would certainly allow this interpretation.

If it be true that the early Christians saw the symbolism of the Red Heifer as fulfilled in Jesus through his feminine body, the *Ekklesia*, then this is just another reason why the Jewish Christians right after they returned to Jerusalem subsequent to its destruction

by the Romans in A.D.70, built a building for the Mother *Ekklesia* of all Christendom at the summit of the Mount of Olives as Eusebius said they did. But more important than anything, the southern summit of Olivet also pointed out the precise place where Jesus was crucified (and stoned to death) and where he was buried and resurrected from the dead. It was at Olivet where the greatest purification for sin (the sacrifice of Jesus) ever took place. That place was even analogous (besides other sin offerings) to the altar where the sin offering promised to Cain and his descendants was to be sacrificed for them.

When the proper geographical locations for Jesus' trial, his sentence by the Sanhedrin, and the actual place of his crucifixion (on the southern summit of the Mount of Olives) are recognized, then we are provided with a much better understanding of what the New Testament teachings are all about. In the next chapter we will see just how important these historical and geographical evidences really are in comprehending spiritual principles.