

arrives at 600,000, the number of adult males who left Egypt. However, there would not have been the same number of males in each tribe, so the connection would be symbolic at best.

The second possibility is to take the term in the sense of 'well girt', 'armed', 'equipped' (so the Syriac, the Targums, etc.; the term apparently carries this sense in modern Hebrew as well). It would be derived from the noun for 'belly', appropriate given that the soldiers' midriffs would be girt. Propp's commentary

suggests that both terms may go back to a root meaning 'be resolute'; this makes good sense, and the meaning of 'well girt', 'equipped' (compare the eating of the Passover with loins girt), is appropriate here. Other occurrences are in Joshua 1:14; 4:12 ('armed') and Judges 7:11 ('armed men'). A comparison of Deuteronomy 3:18 and Joshua 1:14; 4:12 suggests the meaning 'armed', since all three passages are about the same thing, and the Deuteronomy verse uses a different word that definitely means 'armed'.

## Water, wine and the red heifer

### 3. Blood and water

Sarah Joiner

**H**AVING CONSIDERED in the [previous issue](#) the significance which the third day and the seventh day have in both the ritual of the red heifer and the miracle of turning water into wine, we move on now to another connection between Numbers 19 and John 2.

#### Ashes of blood

The first point made about the heifer is very significant: she had to be red (Num. 19:2). It is the only animal used for Mosaic ceremony that had to be a specific colour. Why? Red has connotations of life, health, sin and salvation. However, the most compelling reason why a red animal—and no other—had to be used is that it was a reminder of blood. A Scriptural analogy here would be with Exodus 35:7 and the specification that the tabernacle coverings were to be made of "rams' skins dyed red".\* The red dye symbolised blood, and looked back to the ram caught in the thicket, which in turn signified Christ's sacrifice. This emphasis on blood is compounded by the following facts:

- the red heifer was the only animal, under the law, to be burned *with* its blood
- scarlet was also to be burned with the animal.

Whilst the animal was burning, then, red would be the predominant colour seen. This still leaves us with the conundrum of why blood should be underscored so repeatedly. Wenham offers this suggestion:

"What is important here is producing ash with purificatory properties. It is for this reason that the blood is burnt, something with-

out parallel elsewhere in the Old Testament. Blood is the most potent cleansing and sanctifying agent in the Bible (cf. Heb. 9:22). For the same reason, other traditional cleansing agents are thrown into the fire to fortify the ash: cedarwood, hyssop . . . and scarlet stuff . . . Presumably, similar reasons lay behind the insistence on a red heifer. Normally the animal's colour did not matter. This one had to be red to resemble blood".<sup>1</sup>

\* All Scripture quotations are from the NKJV unless otherwise stated. Citations of articles from *The Christadelphian* are from the electronic edition produced by Logos Library Systems on behalf of the Christadelphian Magazine and Publishing Association.

1. Gordon J. Wenham: *Numbers* (Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, IVP, 1981, p. 146). Brother C. C. Walker also highlights the connection between the colour red and blood: "We briefly ponder the elements of the case separately. The heifer was 'red'. Why red? Red is the sin colour, blood colour; it is used in the symbolism of the Bible in that connection, 'Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow'. But then this red heifer was to be 'without spot', and having no blemish. There, in the antitype—Christ—we have the spotlessness of his character, not of the flesh—the flesh was the same as any other flesh—but the blood of Christ, as has been remarked, 'was the only blood of all the human race that never energized a man to sin', and in his obedience in pouring out his soul unto death, there is the preciousness of the blood of Christ. It is the moral aspect of the case, the spotlessness of his character, sealed by his obedience unto death". C. C. Walker: "The Water of Separation" (*The Christadelphian*, vol. 52, 1915, p. 205).

Blood is indeed “the most potent” cleansing agent in Scripture, for God decreed: “For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it for you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement, by reason of the life” (Lev. 17:11, RSV). But notice the emphasis here; the significance is not placed upon the blood itself, but on the life. Romans 5:10 further underscores this principle: “For if when we were enemies [defiled by sin and death] we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son [the slaying of the heifer], much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by *his life* [the ashes and living water]”.<sup>2</sup> When we refer to the shed blood of Christ, then, it is with the idea in mind of the giving of his life.

It is this principle which is taken up in Hebrews 9:22: “And according to the law *almost all things are purified with blood*, and without shedding of blood there is no remission”. Notice the emphasis on blood as a purifier. It is the same emphasis in verses 13 and 14, where Christ is compared with the red heifer itself: “For if the blood of bulls and goats and *the ashes of a heifer*, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the *purifying* of the flesh, how much more shall *the blood of Christ*, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, *cleanse* your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”. So it is Christ’s blood in particular that is typified in the ashes of the heifer, and the blood of Christ is a far better purifier and cleanser than ashes.

So, then, when the ashes are mixed with water to create a purifier, it is almost as if blood is being mixed with water, which brings us back to John 2. At the marriage of Cana we are once again met with the idea of purification: “Now there were set there six waterpots of stone, according to the manner of *purification* of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece” (v. 6).

The water that would have been used for purifying during the marriage feast, presumably for the washing of hands, crockery and so on,<sup>3</sup> is now turned into wine, a symbol of Christ’s precious blood. This sign, therefore, is both a picture and a pledge of the total purification from sin and death which was to be achieved on the cross through the blood of our Lord.

#### Living water

Also of interest is the type of water that had to be mixed with the ashes of the heifer: “And for an

unclean person they shall take some of the ashes of the heifer burnt for purification from sin, and *running water* shall be put on them in a vessel” (Num. 19:17). They could not be mixed with any water, it had to be “running water”. The Hebrew word “running” is *chay*, which means ‘alive’ or ‘living’. It is the same word that God uses to swear by Himself: “but truly, as I live [*chay*], all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD” (14:21). Gesenius puts it this way: “Fresh . . . as of running water, opposed to that which is stagnant and putrescent, which in Arabic is called dead water”.<sup>4</sup>

Where would the people find running water in the desert? Oases or pools would in a sense be stagnant. One suggestion is that the running water could be taken from the waters of life which poured out of the smitten rock (Ex. 17:6). This seems to be confirmed by the ritual of the red heifer as it was carried out during the time of Christ; here the water used had to be taken from the Pool of Siloam.<sup>5</sup> This is highly significant, as for the Jews the Pool of Siloam represented the rock smitten in the wilderness:

“During the feast [of Tabernacles] a priest brought water in a golden vase from the Pool of Siloam and poured it upon the altar.<sup>6</sup> The ceremony was attended by the sounding of trumpets and demonstrations of joy . . . The annual ceremony of the drawing of water was kept as a memorial of the water from the smitten rock”.<sup>7</sup>

The running water for the water of separation, then, was probably water of God’s provision, the water of life from the rock struck by

2. See Tom McCarthy: “The Red Heifer” (*The Christadelphian*, vol. 123, 1986, p. 183). This article and the concluding one (p. 223) are highly recommended for further study on the red heifer.
3. “For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders. When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, like the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches” (Mk. 7:3,4).
4. Gesenius: *Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon* (Baker Book House, 1984), p. 272.
5. Edersheim: *The Temple* (The Religious Tract Society, London, 1908), p. 354.
6. For a fuller treatment of this ceremony see, Leen & Kathleen Ritmeyer: *The Ritual of the Temple in the Time of Christ* (Carta, 2002), p. 60.
7. John Carter: *The Gospel of John* (CMPA, 1980 edition), pp. 99,113.

John's water motif	Suggested significance
I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, "Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit" (1:33).	Waters of baptism = cleansing from sin; associated with baptizing with the Holy Spirit.
When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom (2:9).	Water turned into wine = picture and pledge of the blood of the new covenant. Of mysterious origin, but the servants knew where it was from, just as the Jews did not know where Christ was from, but his disciples did.
Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (3:5).	Waters of baptism (notice connection with Spirit again).
Jesus . . . said . . . " . . . whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life" (4:13,14); " . . . the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him" (v. 23).	Water = everlasting life (that is, salvation), with those who drink it being equated with those who "worship the Father in spirit and truth".
Jesus . . . cried . . . "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water". But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified (7:37-39).	Living water = Holy Spirit.
After that, [Jesus] poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded (13:5).	Jesus' actions here—laying down his garment, washing the disciples' feet, and taking up his garment again (v. 12)—echo his authority to lay down his life, atone for sin, and take his life up again (10:18).
But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out (19:34).	The water and blood of the Lord's sacrifice bring life to the redeemed and give birth to the bride.

Moses. We know that Christ is both the rock (1 Cor. 10:4) and the living water, and that the striking of the rock foreshadowed his crucifixion.

Bringing this information to bear on John 2, this first sign is an integral part of the fourth Gospel's water imagery. John's Gospel contains twenty references to water, more than the other Gospels put together. Water, therefore is a highly important motif. The table [above](#) gives a selection of verses to provide an overview of the ideas behind water in this Gospel.

We see from this that water is closely bound up with the following: the Lord Jesus's sacrifice, his message of everlasting life, baptism, cleansing, and the Holy Spirit—God's life-giving power through which the new creation is brought to birth (1:13).<sup>8</sup> Moody Smith sums this up succinctly: "water imagery recurs as symbolic of the salvation that Jesus brings".<sup>9</sup>

The "living water" of separation which was involved in the ordinance of the heifer thus perfectly foreshadows the Gospel writer's living water, which is both the Lord *and* his message.

The reference to the water in John 2 takes up the water theme from the water of separation of the red heifer ordinance, and the theme runs on to the account of the final offering for the purifying of the flesh—the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross—and the waters of life which flowed from his side. The water that was turned into wine is surely a graphic picture of the crucifixion, and a sure pledge of what God was bringing to pass.

### Melchizedek

The rite of the heifer and the sign of the water-made-wine are yet again bound together in their allusions to Melchizedek, and the better covenant. Remember that, as recorded in Genesis 14, God had empowered Abraham to defeat the four kings—Chedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of nations, Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar—who had kidnapped his nephew Lot. Upon his return, Abraham was greeted by the mysterious King of Salem: “Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said: ‘Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand’. And he gave him a tithe of all” (vv. 18-20).

We see in this episode a picture of Christ’s defeat of sin. Both Abraham and Melchizedek are types of Christ here, Abraham as the victor and Melchizedek as the one who brings forth the bread and wine of the everlasting covenant. Both of these types find their climax in the Son of God, who is the victor over sin and death, and who, in defeating this enemy, brings forth the bread of his own flesh and the wine of his own blood.

The writer to the Hebrews notes that Melchizedek was “without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually” (7:3). Indeed, Melchizedek appears in the narrative without warning, and similarly disappears almost without a trace. It is this attribute which binds the enigmatic King of Salem with the heifer, the wine and the Lord Jesus Christ: “We assume that when the ashes of one heifer were used up another heifer would be needed, but the fact that the Scripture does not discuss what happens when the ashes ‘run out’ as it were, is in itself a figure of the continuance of the benefits of this sin offering, rather in the same way that the absence of

a genealogy for Melchizedek typifies the eternal continuance of Christ”.<sup>10</sup>

Another connection between Melchizedek and the heifer is made by Brother F. E. Mitchell: “The heifer was not brought to the high priest himself, but to the high priest elect. Probably this can be taken as a forecast that the work of redemption would not be carried out by a high priest of the house of Aaron, but by a ‘better’ high priest . . . ‘after the order of Melchisedec’”.<sup>11</sup>

In a similar way, the water-made-wine has associations with this king-priest. The wine which Melchizedek brought forth for the fellowship meal with Abraham was a token of the wine of the new and everlasting covenant, just as the wine produced by Jesus at the marriage in Cana was a pledge that his blood would be shed to seal this covenant. Indeed, David, another king-priest after the order of Melchizedek (Ps. 110), also provided his people with bread and wine (1 Chron. 16:1-3).

More than this, we are told in John 2:9 that, when the master of the feast tasted the new wine, he “did not know where it came from”. Likewise, we do not know where Melchizedek was from in terms of parentage. In John’s Gospel this mystery as to the origins of Melchizedek and the water-made-wine is mirrored by the ambiguity concerning the Lord’s own genesis:

- “Then some . . . said . . . ‘. . . we know where this Man is from; but when the Christ comes, no one knows where He is from’. Then Jesus cried out, as He taught in the temple, saying, ‘You both know Me, and you know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but He Who sent Me is true, Whom you do not know . . .’” (7:25-28)
- “Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true,

8. 1 John 5:6-9 provides a commentary on the threefold cord of water, blood and the spirit; any comments on what these verses might mean is welcome: “This is he who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the water only but with the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the witness, because the Spirit is the truth. There are three witnesses, the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree. If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; for this is the testimony of God that He has borne witness to His Son” (RSV).

9. D. Moody Smith: *The Theology of the Gospel of John* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 156.

10. Tom McCarthy: *op. cit.*, p. 223.

11. F. E. Mitchell: “The Red Heifer” (*The Christadelphian*, vol. 113, 1976, p. 452).

for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from and where I am going . . .” (8:14)

- “We know that God spoke to Moses; as for this fellow, we do not know where He is from” (9:29).

The Pharisees, therefore, cannot seem to make their minds up as to where they think the Lord is from, perhaps even casting the aspersion of fornication onto the circumstances of the Lord’s birth. The origin of the water-made-wine is only known by the Lord’s disciples. The wine epitomises every aspect of the Lord: his origins, teachings, life and sacrifice.

To summarise, the heifer being slain in a manner which seems to be almost independent of the Mosaic Law, and the Lord bringing forth the new wine of the everlasting covenant at Cana, both signal that the Aaronic priesthood was soon to be superseded by a new order, the order of Jesus Christ. He is our priest for ever after the

order of Melchizedek, and “is . . . able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7:25).

Indeed, Melchizedek is inextricably linked with the overall theme from the red heifer and the water-made-wine: an ecclesial bride who is born of blood and water, and who has prepared herself for the marriage supper of the Lamb. Melchizedek is a symbol of the everlasting covenant, the very covenant which unites the Lord Jesus with his bride forever.<sup>12</sup>

[\(To be concluded\)](#)

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12. Notice that, after Abraham chooses fellowship with Melchizedek and the things of God rather than subjection to the king of Sodom in Genesis 14, God confirms His covenant with Abraham in chapter 15. The words, “After these things” (15:1), clearly link the events of the two chapters.



*Principles, Preaching  
and Problems*

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## The baby in the manger

Trevor Maher

**E**ARLY IN SEPTEMBER 2003 the mainstream churches in Britain revealed details of their advertising campaign for the Christmas period. Central to this is a poster campaign which has adapted a seventeenth-century painting by the Flemish artist Gerrit van Honthorst. The poster consists of stable scene, showing Mary gazing down at the infant Jesus, who is clad in a red and white Santa suit, and the poster bears the caption, “Go on, ask him for something this Christmas”. This poster is to be displayed on billboards and church notice boards throughout the country, and will be supported by an advertising campaign targeting younger listeners to local and music radio stations.

A spokesman for the organisation which came up with this promotion, The Churches Advertising Network (which includes representatives from most churches but not the Roman Catholic), said, “The shops start doing Christmas ever

earlier and they are always trying to steal Christmas so we are fighting them on their own territory”. He said that using an image of Jesus as Santa Claus, in the so-called traditional red and white outfit (originally designed to promote Coca Cola in America), was not intended to confuse children but to start a debate: “The aim was to make a link between Santa Claus and Jesus in terms of being able to ask for something”.

### Debasing the Lord Jesus

This last point shows very clearly how debased and corrupted have become the teachings about, and presentation of, the Lord Jesus Christ today by so-called mainstream churches. This carries a grave warning for those responsible for preaching the true gospel. To depict our Lord in the manner they have chosen borders on the blasphemous, and displays the tendency, so prevalent in this world, to bring Christ and God down