

### The ten thousands of Ephraim and the thousand of Manasseh

The tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh have been very numerous in the past, and the power of Ephraim was such that it became the leading tribe for the northern kingdom after the division in the days of Rehoboam son of Solomon. All this was in fulfilment of Jacob's prophecy to Joseph at the time he blessed Ephraim and Manasseh: "the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth" (Gen. 48:16, AV). Jacob went on to say of Manasseh, Joseph's first-born: "he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations . . . In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh" (vv. 19,20, AV).

In spite of Ephraim being the more powerful of the two tribes in later history, it should be noted that Manasseh was much more numerous than Ephraim at the second numbering shortly before Moses blessed the tribes. As a consequence the tribe of Manasseh required the greater allotment of territory, with portions on either side of the Jordan. At the second numbering Ephraim's men of war amounted to 32,500, whilst Manasseh at 52,700 was more than half as much again (Num. 26:34,37), whereas the reverse was the case at the first numbering (Ephraim 40,500 and Manasseh 32,200).

In fact, the meanings of the names Joseph (He will add) and Ephraim (Twofold increase)<sup>5</sup> are themselves prophetic of the numerical fruitfulness of the two tribes which descended from

Joseph. From Moses' prophecy, "they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh" (Deut. 33:17), we can conclude that, in the Kingdom age, Ephraimites will be more numerous than Manassites.

As well as that, the blessing of Moses on Joseph should also be seen as being applicable in the millennial age to all Israel, both natural and spiritual. Perhaps the two horns at this level of interpretation can be seen to apply to natural Israel and spiritual Israel. If so, Manasseh (Forgetting) could be representative of spiritual Israel, who, as the bride of Christ, is instructed to "forget [her] own people . . . and [her] father's house" (Ps. 45:10). However, from another point of view, Ephraim could represent spiritual Israel because of spiritual fruitfulness (Mk. 4:20), and Manasseh natural Israel who needs to forget past rebelliousness when entering into the new covenant.

An alternative view concerning the thousands of Manasseh and the ten thousands of Ephraim is that these numbers refer to the enemies destroyed when the peoples are pushed to the ends of the earth, and so indicate the relative power of the two tribes in battle. Similar words are used of Saul and David to describe their success in battle: "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (1 Sam. 18:7, AV). In the past, notable leaders, such as Joshua, an Ephraimite, and Gideon, a Manassite, have been blessed with great success in battle; likewise it will be the same in the future under the leadership of the greater Joshua.

(To be continued)

5. *The Proper Names of the Old Testament expounded*, Alfred Jones, Samuel Bagster, 1856.

## A living sacrifice\*

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**T**HE TWELFTH CHAPTER of Romans obviously commences a fresh section of the epistle. As in his other epistles, Paul first sets forth the doctrine, and upon that he bases practical words of exhortation.

The expression, "by the mercies of God" (v. 1), gives the key to the previous teaching; it speaks of the mercy of God manifested in His grace, which was revealed in His redemptive work centred in His Son. It is upon this basis

that Paul exhorts the believers to present their bodies as living sacrifices. The word "present" is a proper term for bringing an offering to the Lord.

In the phrase "living sacrifice" we have something of a paradox, an apparent contradiction in terms, for we usually associate a sacrifice with something that is dead. Under the Law, however,

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there were at least two exceptions to dead sacrifices, and a brief consideration of these will help us to perceive what is involved.

In Leviticus 16 we are given details concerning the Day of Atonement. Aaron was told to take two goats; one was to be killed and the other was to be set free, the latter becoming, as it were, a living sacrifice. Without a doubt, Jesus is represented here, the one “by whom we have now received the atonement” (Rom. 5:11). The goats represented him in two aspects; the one as a sacrifice for sin in his death, the other as one who was made free from the consequences of sin, being made alive for evermore. We have a similar case recorded in Leviticus 14, where two birds, one slain and the other set free, typify Jesus in his sacrifice for sin and in his freedom from it and its curse by his resurrection.

So Jesus was literally a living sacrifice. But, it might be asked, what connection is there between him and Paul’s exhortation to believers in Rome?

Paul gives the answer in the sixth chapter, where he makes it clear that baptism links us, not only with Christ’s death, but also with his resurrection. After the figure of death, “our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed”, so that, after the figure of resurrection, “we also should walk in newness of life” (vv. 6,4).

Jesus is represented as a living sacrifice, and on this basis believers are called upon to be “dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God” (v. 11). They are exhorted not to present their members as “instruments of unrighteousness”, but to present themselves unto God “as those that are alive from the dead” (v. 13). Just as Jesus took up his cross and crucified self, so the believers are each to take up their cross, to deny themselves and follow him.

As the apostle in the twelfth chapter refers to this sacrifice as “holy” (v. 1), so in the sixth

chapter he calls on believers to “yield [their] members servants to righteousness unto holiness” (v. 19). And he calls this a “reasonable service” (12:1)—not merely a service which is fitting, but a service rendered by the reason, in contrast to the unreasoning animals under the Law.

How is this transformation to be accomplished so that we may become living sacrifices? It can only be achieved by a “renewing of [our] mind” (v. 2); this renewing is a process which commences at baptism, and is a lifetime’s work. The renewing of the mind will enable us to answer the apostle’s call to walk in newness of life.

This change can only be brought about by the reading of the Word of God. This is emphasised by Peter in his First Epistle, where he exhorts believers to get an appetite for “the sincere milk of the word” (2:2). One writer has said concerning newborn babes and milk: “It is their only occupation, so strong is their desire for it”. In the same way, believers should get an appetite for the Word of God.

The expression “of the word” is the same in the original as “reasonable” in Romans 12:1. So we have the thoughts of the Word imbibed, not by the lips, but by the reason, which will bring about that necessary renewal of the mind and the consequent “newness of life”, making us into “living sacrifice[s], holy, acceptable unto God”.

By our own strength we shall accomplish little. Can we think of a greater contrast than, “apart from me ye can do nothing” (Jno. 15:5, RV), and, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phil. 4:13)? It is Christ who makes all the difference, as Paul indicates in his letter to the Galatians: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (2:20).

It is by the enlightenment resulting from the study of the Christ-Word given to us in the Scriptures of truth (and by this enlightenment alone) that men can attain that unity in Christ which is signified by incorporation with the branchship of the true vine. And it is only by continuance in this enlightenment that the connection can be maintained. Therefore saith he, “Abide in me and I in you”. This implies the need for effort on our part. We cannot abide in Christ, nor he in us, without aiming to do so. Practically, it means letting the truth abide. “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” (Col. 3:16). Or as Christ expressed it, let “my words abide in you”.

Robert Roberts, *Nazareth Revisited*