

Christ Pictured in Deuteronomy 21:1-9

"If one be found slain in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it, lying in the field, and it be not known who hath slain him: Then thy elders and thy judges shall come forth, and they shall measure unto the cities which are round about him that is slain: And it shall be, that the city which is next unto the slain man, even the elders of that city shall take an heifer, which hath not been wrought with, and which hath not drawn in the yoke; And the elders of that city shall bring down the heifer unto a rough valley, which is neither eared nor sown, and shall strike off the heifer's neck there in the valley: And the priests the sons of Levi shall come near; for them the LORD thy God hath chosen to minister unto him, and to bless in the name of the LORD; and by their word shall every controversy and every stroke be tried: And all the elders of that city, that are next unto the slain man, shall wash their hands over the heifer that is beheaded in the valley: And they shall answer and say, Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it. Be merciful, O LORD, unto thy people Israel, whom thou hast redeemed, and lay not innocent blood unto thy people of Israel's charge. And the blood shall be forgiven them. So shalt thou put away the guilt of innocent blood from among you, when thou shalt do that which is right in the sight of the LORD."

While this has real instruction for the future remnant of Israel, it is also a passage that can warm our own hearts as we apply it somewhat to our blessed Savior in the way He is revealed to us in the present day of grace.

We read *"Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour."* (Isaiah 45:15), and what joy it is to our hearts as we read in every passage of God's Word, to find yet another way in which we discover Him — perhaps in prophecies, in illustrations, or even the meanings of names—His word is rich with these lessons wherein He has "hid Himself", to be revealed to the rich delight of our hearts as we meditate in them. While we notice that it was the Lord in the garden who said *"Adam, where art thou?"*, it is His desire to be the object of our search too. *"I love them that love me; those that seek me early shall find me"* (Proverbs 8:17). We read of King Josiah that *"while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father"* (2 Chronicles 34:3). The Lord blessed King Josiah in this sacred search, and when we turn the pages of Scripture can likewise realize the blessing of finding Him afresh. *"I found him whom my soul loveth"* (Song of Solomon 3:4) *"Those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever"* (Deuteronomy 29:29)

In reading this passage recently, I noticed three ways in which our Lord Jesus has hid Himself in this story. He is the Man who died outside the city, the Sacrifice as illustrated in the heifer, and the LORD (Jehovah) who forgives. Perhaps you will find others.

The story begins with the man who was slain outside the city. *"Jesus ... suffered without the gate."* (Hebrews 13:12) We see a glimpse of an innocent victim of man's delinquency *"ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain"* (Acts 2:23) *"whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go."* (Acts 3:13)

The elders and judges come forth to address the injustice. Here we see the illustration by way of contrast in the case of our Lord Jesus, the "elders and judges" were instrumental in perpetrating the most blatant breach of justice in man's long, sad history. *"Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people."* (Matthew 26:47).

Next we see our Lord Jesus revealed to us in another role besides the innocent victim: this time the illustration shows Him as the perfect Sacrifice. The elders bring an heifer. The heifer speaks to me of the One who was "cut off in the midst of His days." Young bull calves generally grow up to be steers, are fattened, and butchered at about two years of age, or less. Heifers, on the other hand,

will generally grow up to be cows, and can have a relatively long life expectancy. It is not uncommon for cows to live two decades. Here the sacrifice is a heifer. "*He shortend my days*" (Psalm 102:23)

The heifer had not been wrought with, and had never drawn in the yoke. Scripture recognizes that man must work and be diligent, but this sacrifice was to be entirely for God. It was not to be used for man's business, reminding us of our Savior's words that He spoke to His earthly parents: "*wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?*" (Luke 2:49) To be in the yoke would be an illustration of fellowship or camaraderie in the labor. In contrast, this sacrifice was to have known what it was like to be alone, never yoked.

The elders then bring this sacrifice to a rough valley, or waterway, that had never been plowed or planted. Here again we see an illustration of what was to happen to our blessed Savior. Curiosity would ask "why a valley?" There are many mountains and hillsides that have never been plowed. I think one reason would be that a valley is hidden from sight. This place was to be where none of man's work would be happening, and where there would be no onlookers. "*Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.*" (Matthew 27:45) The only work happening then was that of our blessed Lord Jesus, completely hidden from the eyes of man by total darkness.

They were to "*break the heifer's neck there in the watercourse*" (JND). The neck reminds us of the will. Isreal was called "stiff necked". The Lord says of them "*I knew that thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass*" (Isaiah 48:4) Thus it is also with each of us, in some measure, but not with this sacrifice. The neck was to be broken. This beautifully and prophetically illustrates the words of the Lord Jesus when He said "*not my will, but thine, be done*" (Luke 22:42). "*Lo, I come to do thy will, O God*" (Hebrews 10:9)

It is interesting to see that now the priests are mentioned. We as Christians are illustrated here. "*Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood*" (1 Peter 2:9). It is noteworthy that the only part the priests have in this story is to "come near". It mentions that the Lord has chosen them (us), but at this moment their only action is to "come near". May it be so with us! The sacrifice is His perfect work, and we are the beneficiaries.

We have seen our Lord Jesus revealed as the Man who died outside the city and as the Perfect Sacrifice; next He is revealed to our hearts to be Jehovah. The word LORD in all capital letters is the way that the King James bible indicates the word Jehovah. The elders wash their hands over the heifer that had its neck broken. The guilt of innocent blood having weighed upon them, and looking at the freshly slain sacrifice, a "*shadow of things to come*" (Colossians 2:17, Hebrews 8:5, Hebrews 10:1) they say "*be merciful O LORD [Jehovah], unto Thy people Israel, whom Thou hast redeemed*". "*Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you*" (1 Peter 1:18)

"*And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.*" (Luke 24:27)

D.L., 2015