

"A Red Heifer and the Anti-Christ"

A red heifer was born in Israel seven months ago and is being recognized by Jewish religious authorities as a sign that the coming of the Messiah is at hand. For the Orthodox Church, we confess Christ to be the true Messiah. I could not find any Orthodox sources sighting a "red heifer" as a sign of anything. The sources do say is that there will be many coming as false messiahs who will deceive many.

The seven Churches described in chapter two and three in the Book of Revelations has been interpreted by the Fathers of the Church to depict the Church in different stages of Church history. The seventh Church of Laodicia describes the Church at the end times.

"I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing; not knowing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked." (Rev. 3:15-16)

To be a Christian and to be indifferent and apathetic is a contradiction. An alive Christian is burning with a desire to share Christ and to love Christ. The church has suffered throughout its history from lukewarm Christians. Many content with the exteriors of the faith do not bear witness to the "Light to the World." Consequently, lukewarm Christians hide the great treasure of faith from the world.

A study of network news programs between 1993 and 1996 revealed that of 176,000 reports, less than 1 percent touched on religion. The Catholic Church had 133 reports, Jewish topics 16, Muslim 15, Buddhist 5, Mormon 2 and Greek Orthodox 1. One out of one hundred and seventy-six-thousand reports is not the witness Orthodoxy deserves.

The book of Revelation identifies the source of lukewarm attitudes as being the result of buying into the false god of consumerism. The consequences of living for ourselves is depression, hatred, greed, jealousy, and contempt for our neighbor. Consumerism is anti-Christian because we are created to not consume but to give and offer. This is our "priestly calling." It is through Christians that the world and all that is in it is offered back to God.

The remedy to consumerism is to pursue true life, which comes from God alone.

"Therefore I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, that you may be rich, and white garments to clothe you and to keep the shame of your nakedness from being seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see." (Rev. 3:18)

The gold that we buy from God is eternal life, which never perishes. God's Kingdom is described as, "street(s) of the city being pure gold and transparent as glass (Rev. 20:21)." The martyrs and saints are given, "golden crowns" as signs of victory over sin

and the reward of Heaven. Pursuing the Kingdom of God ought to consume every thought contemplated, every word spoken and every deed committed.

The "white garments" which hide our shame refer to being clothed with the Holy Spirit. We were Chrismated with the Holy Spirit at Baptism. A "white garment" was placed upon us as a sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit dwelling within. Instead of clothing ourselves with self-love, pride and ego, we ought to be adorning our hearts in holiness, humility and love.

The "salve that anoints our eyes and allows us to see," is the Holy Spirit without whom we see the world as something to be consumed. When St. Paul heard the voice of Christ on the road (Acts 8), he stood up and his eyes were opened but still could not see. Ananias came to St. Paul, he laid his hands upon him and said: "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came, has sent me that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Ananias Chrismated Paul and then we are told his eyes were opened.

Having just celebrated Holy Pascha, the Holy Spirit fills all things with joy. To drink this new life of the Spirit, we must abandon false gods and external fascinations and cling to true life found in Christ. A sign of being healed in body and soul is the witness of Orthodox Christians not living for the world but for God's Kingdom.

If the red heifer is a sign that a "Messiah" is about to come, it means that he comes "instead of" the real and true Christ. He will deceive many into thinking that he is God's servant. With the prevalence of a consumer based mentality, a better religion will easily appear as the answer to all of life's problems. Are we prepared to witness the Truth- we may be the only bible some people ever read.

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