

ABC's of SALVATION

by

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CHAPTER ONE

ASS'S COLT

SEVERAL years ago a New England conservative senator created quite a commotion in the United States Senate by referring to some of the western liberal senators as “The sons of wild jackasses.” We doubt whether the accuser or the accused knew the scriptural basis of the term that was used. The Word of God often refers to unsaved man under the similes of animals and particularly under that of the wild ass. Let us notice some of the reasons why this animal is so used.

I. The Original State

It was formerly believed and taught that all animals were originally wild. Zoologists are changing their views on this matter and many now teach that all animals were originally tame. The Scriptures clearly teach this. In Genesis 2:19 it is written, “**And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.**”

There is no intimation of any ferocity in the animal kingdom on that morning when the unfallen Adam exercised his God-given dominion over it. A further confirmation of this truth is shown by the Scriptures which teach that during the millennial age the animal kingdom will revert to its original state (See Isaiah 11:6, 7; 65:25; Ezekiel 34:25; Hosea 2:18).

Man, too, as he came from the hands of his Creator was not the poor, fallen, sinful creature he now is. He was created body, soul, and spirit—a triune being in the likeness of his Maker. He walked in fellowship with God in a state of innocence. Sin touched the animal kingdom much, but it touched man more.

II. Man's Condition by Birth

It is written in Job 11:12, “**For vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt.**” This is the scriptural analogy. The aesthetic may object to this, yet it is not so bad as the evolutionary hypothesis which would make man a descendant of the animal—hence blood relationship.

The Bible only compares him to the ass. As the ass's colt is born with a wild nature—man is born with a sinful nature. The Psalmist cried out, **“Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me”** (Psalm 51:5).

III. Man's Vanity

In Jeremiah 2:24 it is written, **“A wild ass used to the wilderness, that snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure; in her occasion who can turn her away?”** This was one of the characteristics of this animal. In chapters 14 and 15 of the same book we read of the terrible drought in Palestine, yet in 14:6 it is written, **“The wild asses did stand in the high places, they snuffed up the wind like dragons; their eyes did fail, because there was no grass.”** In other words, with famine and starvation all around, yet they continued to stand and snuff the wind. God, through the prophet, uses this simile as a picture of His people. With destruction and death on every hand, they continued to **“snuff the wind,”** and there was no real turning to God from the sins which had brought on the drought.

This century has seen a worldwide war, a worldwide pestilence and a worldwide war has ended. In spite of all these things which have come to pass, there is little repentance and seeking the cause of all these calamities. Men are still **“snuffing the air”** for pleasure, sensuality and sin. Even now, in his vanity, man is talking about “a new world order,” yet God is left out of all of the planning.

IV. Both Man and Ass Subjects of Redemption

In Exodus 13:13 it is written, **“And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck: and all the firstborn among they children shalt thou redeem.”**

The ass was an unclean animal in every respect. It did not have a cloven hoof, neither did it chew the cud, yet God provided for its redemption. It was permitted to live only if a lamb be slain in its stead. Why was such a strange ceremonial instituted? Divine revelation gives the answer in the following words: **“And it shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this? That thou shalt say unto him; By strength of hand the Lord brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage: And it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the Lord slew all the firstborn . . . but all the first born of my children I redeem”** (Exodus 13:14, 15).

To the Israelite, the redemption of the ass by the slaying of the lamb gave a story in retrospect of the redemption of Israel by the blood of the passover lamb. The redemption of Israel by the blood of the passover lamb, was also a prospective picture of the redemption of lost man by the Lamb of God.

V. Man's Mouth, Like the Mouth of the Ass, God Can Open

In Numbers 22:28 it is written, **“And the Lord opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times?”**

I realize that the story of the ass speaking to Balaam has long been the object of the shafts of ridicule by those who deny the Word of God. But this narrative, like the equally ridiculed story of Jonah and the great whale, is full of spiritual truth. The redeemed ass saw the angel of the Lord in the way long before the bipedal one who rode upon her was conscious of the angel's presence.

A man may be poor, ignorant and lowly, but if he has been born from above, he is able to discern spiritual truths impossible for the worldly wise to see, for **“The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned”** (I Corinthians 2:14). **“But we have the mind of Christ”** (I Corinthians 2:16).

A great Bible teacher once said, “I would rather have my children taught the Bible by a black mammy in the south, if born again, than by the most learned unsaved college professor.” He spoke a truth which conforms to the teaching of the word of God.

VI. Man, Like the Ass, May be Used by the Lord

How would our Lord make His so-called “triumphal entry” into Jerusalem? Would He go in with dashing steeds hitched to a golden chariot? No, He chose to ride into Jerusalem upon a colt, the foal of an ass, in fulfillment of the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9. Who would have thought that the Lord of Glory would have chosen such an animal? But who would have thought that the Lord of Glory would have chosen poor, helpless, sinful man to carry the message of salvation to a lost world. The **“things the angels desire to look into”** (I Peter 1:12) are put into his hands to carry to the world. What a glorious privilege!

VII. Redeemed Man, Like the Ass, Should Know His Master's Crib

In Isaiah 1:3 it is written, **“The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.”**

The ass, redeemed and tamed, knew where to find its food. No longer did it stand out on the mountains in time of drought and snuff the air. By this figure of speech, God brought a terrific indictment against His people, Israel. God, speaking through the prophet, said, **“Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward”** (Isaiah 1:4).

Then in the following twelve verses is found a catalogue of their sins—sins that seem impossible for a people so blessed of God as Israel. This terrible catalogue of sins, failures and rebellions is followed by one of the most tender invitations found in the Word of God—**“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land”** (Isaiah 1:18,19).

Israel did not have the discernment of the ox or the ass. She turned from God and continued to browse on the mountain sides of sin, rebellions, and carnality. The dispersions are the price paid for her sins.

Today the nations are reeling from the impact of the most terrible war in the world's history. Few homes were not touched by this awful conflagration. The loss of life is appalling, and the debts upon the nations are staggering, yet there is no real turning to God. Men still play the part of the wild ass.

Not all the gold of all the world,
And all its wealth combined,
Could give relief, or comfort yield,
To one distracted mind;

'Tis only to the precious blood
Of Christ the soul can fly,
There only can a sinner find
A flowing full supply.

~ end of chapter 1 ~

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