

May 22

Scriptures: Read Numbers 5

Key Verse: “But if the woman has not defiled herself, and is clean, then she shall be free and may conceive children.”(Numbers 5:28)

Overview

In this chapter, we see that some of the regulations of purity that were given in the book of Leviticus are now being put into effect. Lepers and others who were ceremonially unclean were to be put outside the camp to live apart from the rest of the congregation. This was to illustrate the importance of keeping sin and any kind of defilement away from the camp and their lives, for they were admonished over and over again to be holy, and their standard of holiness was God Himself (Lev. 11:44).

This standard has not changed: We who follow God must also exhibit holiness in our lives. The church today would do well to follow the example of the early church in disciplining those of their fellowship who are in sin., God has provided for the church to judge and discipline such acts in a prescribed, loving manner (Matt.18:15-17), for if they do not: “a little leaven leavens the whole lump” (1 Cor.5:6, 11-12). Sin can be infectious, and therefore God’s people must separate themselves from it. God’s presence will not abide where there is defilement and sin.

A further provision of separation from sin was demanded by one who had transgressed and sinned against another person. In this case, a public confession of the sin and restitution was required. For transgressions, which did not involve restitution to be made to another person, the payment of restitution was to go directly to the priest as an honorarium. God shared with His ministers those things, which belonged to Him.

A large portion of this chapter served to show to God’s people the importance of separation from the sin of marital infidelity. The sanctity of the marriage bed was, and still is, extremely important in the sight of God. If an Israelite man and woman were caught in adultery, the penalty was death for both (Lev.20:10). God provided an unusual test of guilt or innocence for the wife whose husband suspected her of committing adultery and yet did not have proof, in which God alone would be the judge, for He knows and sees all things. This test was established to help produce a high level of marital purity within the covenant community.

There was nothing in the water itself (5:17), which could bring about the curse for one who was guilty; only God could do this and since He established this test, He would preside over it and intervene with His judgment. It seems that the figurative language used in curse (5:21) means the woman would not be able to bear children, but the opposite would be true if she was found innocent: her fertility would be a blessing from God because she was found clean. Not only would she be blessed, but we also read, “she shall be free” (5:28). Sin brings bondage, but purity before God brings freedom.

This test would protect the unjustly charged woman and God would vindicate her. The innocent woman would find harmony within her home and reconciliation with her husband (healing of the marriage). Since his jealousy had proven to be unwarranted, the test would kill the root of jealousy so it would not grow and cause destruction (Song of Solomon 8:6). God desires to see harmony in our lives and between marriage partners, but purity and keeping His laws are essential for harmony.

Prayer

O Holy God, we pray for hearts filled with love, purity and understanding. Help us to be like Jesus in forgiving others and in calling for repentance. May they hear of You. O Lord, come on all of us as it did upon the early church.