

Day 152 - THURSDAY: May 11th

Numbers 5;

Numbers 5:1-31 NKJV

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: "Command the children of Israel that they put out of the camp every leper, everyone who has a discharge, and whoever becomes defiled by a corpse. You shall put out both male and female; you shall put them outside the camp, that they may not defile their camps in the midst of which I dwell." And the children of Israel did so, and put them outside the camp; as the LORD spoke to Moses, so the children of Israel did. Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the children of Israel: 'When a man or woman commits any sin that men commit in unfaithfulness against the LORD, and that person is guilty, then he shall confess the sin which he has committed. He shall make restitution for his trespass in full, plus one-fifth of it, and give it to the one he has wronged. But if the man has no relative to whom restitution may be made for the wrong, the restitution for the wrong must go to the LORD for the priest, in addition to the ram of the atonement with which atonement is made for him. Every offering of all the holy things of the children of Israel, which they bring to the priest, shall be his. And every man's holy things shall be his; whatever any man gives the priest shall be his.' " And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'If any man's wife goes astray and behaves unfaithfully toward him, and a man lies with her carnally, and it is hidden from the eyes of her husband, and it is concealed that she has defiled herself, and there was no witness against her, nor was she caught— if the spirit of jealousy comes upon him and he becomes jealous of his wife, who has defiled herself; or if the spirit of

jealousy comes upon him and he becomes jealous of his wife, although she has not defiled herself— then the man shall bring his wife to the priest. He shall bring the offering required for her, one-tenth of an ephah of barley meal; he shall pour no oil on it and put no frankincense on it, because it is a grain offering of jealousy, an offering for remembering, for bringing iniquity to remembrance. 'And the priest shall bring her near, and set her before the LORD. The priest shall take holy water in an earthen vessel, and take some of the dust that is on the floor of the tabernacle and put it into the water. Then the priest shall stand the woman before the LORD, uncover the woman's head, and put the offering for remembering in her hands, which is the grain offering of jealousy. And the priest shall have in his hand the bitter water that brings a curse. And the priest shall put her under oath, and say to the woman, "If no man has lain with you, and if you have not gone astray to uncleanness while under your husband's authority, be free from this bitter water that brings a curse. But if you have gone astray while under your husband's authority, and if you have defiled yourself and some man other than your husband has lain with you"— then the priest shall put the woman under the oath of the curse, and he shall say to the woman —"the LORD make you a curse and an oath among your people, when the LORD makes your thigh rot and your belly swell; and may this water that causes the curse go into your stomach, and make your belly swell and your thigh rot." 'Then the woman shall say, "Amen, so be it." 'Then the priest shall write these curses in a book, and he shall scrape them off into the bitter water. And he shall make the woman drink the bitter water that brings a curse, and the water that brings the curse shall enter her to become bitter. Then the priest shall take the grain offering of jealousy from the woman's hand, shall wave the offering before the LORD, and bring it to the altar; and the priest shall take a handful of the offering, as its memorial portion, burn it on the altar, and afterward make the woman

drink the water. When he has made her drink the water, then it shall be, if she has defiled herself and behaved unfaithfully toward her husband, that the water that brings a curse will enter her and become bitter, and her belly will swell, her thigh will rot, and the woman will become a curse among her people. But if the woman has not defiled herself, and is clean, then she shall be free and may conceive children. 'This is the law of jealousy, when a wife, while under her husband's authority, goes astray and defiles herself, or when the spirit of jealousy comes upon a man, and he becomes jealous of his wife; then he shall stand the woman before the LORD, and the priest shall execute all this law upon her. Then the man shall be free from iniquity, but that woman shall bear her guilt.' "

Daily Deep Dive:

Here is the UCG reading plan for this day which does an excellent job of explaining a difficult set of scriptures: "The offering of jealousy can seem to be one of the strangest offerings in all the Bible, offered by a jealous husband who suspects his wife of infidelity. Stranger yet, perhaps, is the awful ritual the wife is required to undergo. But there is a purpose to everything God commands. *The Nelson Study Bible* notes, "This text can be read as an exceptionally harsh judgment on an unfaithful wife [or even a faithful one!]. But there is a sense in which this law ameliorated the harsh realities for a woman in this time period. A woman could be divorced in the ancient world on the mere suspicion of

unfaithfulness [thus leaving her destitute]. Without the limitations of laws such as this, a woman might even have been murdered by a jealous husband just on the suspicion of unfaithfulness. Here at least there was an opportunity for the woman to prove her innocence before an enraged husband" (note on Numbers 5:11–31).

Still, to some this whole proceeding might conjure up images of witch trials from medieval to colonial times, in which women were dunked in water to see if they drowned. A survivor was considered a witch and burned at the stake, leaving drowning as the only proof of innocence. Yet there are major differences here. For one, the faithful wife did not die but was exonerated in childbirth, and her unjustly jealous husband made to look the fool for his unfounded accusation.

Yet there is another, even more important difference. Whereas God never commanded and had no part in the completely absurd witch trials just described, He directly commanded and was an integral part of the trial of jealousy. Notice: "Bitter water that brings a curse was not a 'magic potion,' nor was there some hidden ingredient in the water. The addition of dust from the floor of the tabernacle to a vessel of holy water and the scrapings from the bill of

indictment (verse 23) were signs of a *spiritual reality*. Holy water and dust from the holy place symbolized that *God* was the One who determined the innocence or guilt of the woman who had come before the priest" (note on 5:18)—not freak happenstance or the reasoning of ignorant people." [END]

Verse 7 – We covered the trespass offering details in Leviticus 5.

Verse 12 – This verse states, “if any man’s wife goes astray...” This is the first time in the Bible this Hebrew word for “goes astray” is used. This word means to “deviate from duty” (Strong’s) or “to turn aside, go aside” (BDB). This word is only found here in Numbers 5 (verses 12, 19, 20 & 29) and two places in Proverbs. In Proverbs 4:15 it is used for turning away from some evil in general and in Proverbs 7:25 for turning away from an adulteress. However, here in Numbers it is used for turning off of the right path and way (one of remaining faithful to a husband) and turning toward sin. So we see we can “turn aside” to do evil, or “turn aside” from evil to obey God. Here in Numbers 5:12, it says she turns aside and “behaves unfaithfully” to him. The Hebrew words for “behaves

unfaithfully” are the same words translated “commits a trespass” back in Leviticus 5:15 & 6:12. At that time I shared that Ellicott’s commentary states: “It literally denotes to cover, then to act covertly, to be faithless, especially in matters of a sacred covenant made either with God (Leviticus 26:40; Numbers 31:16; Deuteronomy 32:51, &c.), or between husband and wife (Numbers 5:12; Numbers 5:27).”

Verse 13 – This verse tells us in what way the wife turns aside and commits a trespass (acts unfaithfully). It says “a man lies with her carnally”. “Carnally” is two Hebrew words that in Leviticus 15:16–18 is translated as “emission of semen” and would literally be translated “seed of lying down”.

Verse 14 – This verse now introduces that when this “spirit of jealousy” comes on a husband, it’s possible it’s true that the wife has “defiled” herself or it’s possible that it is not true and she has not “defiled” herself.

Verse 15 – Here there is an “offering of jealousy” to figure out whether the matter is true or not. It also calls it an “offering of remembering”. This is the same word most

often translated as “memorial” (compare Exodus 12:14 regarding Passover). This offering was discussed up above in the UCG reading plan so I won’t again cover the details here.

Verse 18 – Regarding “uncovering her head”, John Gill’s commentary states: “as a token of her immodesty and non-subjection to her husband, and that she might be seen by all, to cause shame in her”.

Verse 19 – If she is innocent of adultery, she shall be “free” from the curse. This word for free is most commonly translated “unpunished, guiltless, innocent”.

Verse 25 – This grain offering is taken from the woman, and is waved (presented) before God, and His portion is consumed on His altar.

Verse 31 – Jewish historian Josephus details that this curse caused the woman to die if guilty (Antiquities of the Jews, Book 3, Chapter 11, Section 6). Therefore the husband would be guiltless (free) from any sin regarding her death.