

HWMR - CRYSTALLIZATION STUDY OF NUMBERS, Book 3, Week 17

The Water for Impurity

MR Hymns: 639

Scripture Reading: Numbers 19

G. The water for impurity — 19:1-22

- Num 19:1 - Then Jehovah spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying,
- Num 19:2 - This is the statute of the law which Jehovah has commanded, saying, Tell the children of Israel to bring you a **red heifer** without defect, in which is no blemish and upon which a yoke has never come.
- Num 19:3 - And you shall give it to Eleazar the priest, and someone shall bring it outside the camp and slaughter it in his presence.
- Num 19:4 - And Eleazar the priest shall take some of its blood with his finger and sprinkle its blood toward the front of the Tent of Meeting seven times.
- Num 19:5 - And the heifer shall be burned in his sight; its skin and its flesh and its blood, with its dung, shall be burned.
- Num 19:6 - And the priest shall take cedar wood and hyssop and scarlet strands, and cast them into the midst of the burning of the heifer.
- Num 19:7 - Then the priest shall wash his clothes and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp; but the priest shall be unclean until the evening.
- Num 19:8 - And he who burns the heifer shall wash his clothes in water and bathe his body in water, and shall be unclean until the evening.
- Num 19:9 - And a man who is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer and place them outside the camp in a clean place, and it shall be kept for the assembly of the children of Israel as water for impurity; it is a sin offering.
- Num 19:10 - And he who gathers the ashes of the heifer shall wash his clothes and be unclean until the evening. And it shall be a perpetual statute to the children of Israel and to the stranger who sojourns among them.
- Num 19:11 - One who touches the dead body of any human being shall be unclean seven days.
- Num 19:12 - He shall purify himself with it on the third day and on the seventh day, and then he shall be clean; but if he does not purify himself on the third day and on the seventh day, he shall not be clean.
- Num 19:13 - Whoever touches a dead person, the body of a human being who has died, and does not purify himself, defiles the tabernacle of Jehovah; and that person shall be cut off from Israel. Because the water for impurity was not sprinkled upon him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness is still on him.
- Num 19:14 - This is the law when a man dies in a tent: Anyone who comes into the tent and everyone who is in the tent shall be unclean seven days.
- Num 19:15 - And every open vessel, which has no covering tied down on it, is unclean.
- Num 19:16 - And whoever in the open field touches one who has been slain with a sword or a dead body or a human bone or a grave shall be unclean seven days.
- Num 19:17 - And for the unclean they shall take of the ashes of the burning of the sin offering, and running water shall be added to them in a vessel;
- Num 19:18 - And a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip it in the water, and sprinkle it on the tent and on all the furnishings and on the persons who were there, or on the one who touched the bone or the one slain or the one who died or the grave.
- Num 19:19 - And the clean person shall sprinkle on the unclean on the third day and on the seventh day, and on the seventh day he shall purify him. And he shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water and shall be clean in the evening.
- Num 19:20 - But the man who shall be unclean and does not purify himself, that person shall be cut off from the midst of the congregation, because he has defiled the sanctuary of Jehovah; the water for impurity has not been sprinkled on him; he is unclean.
- Num 19:21 - So it shall be a perpetual statute for them. And he who sprinkles the water for impurity shall wash his clothes, and he who touches the water for impurity shall be unclean until evening.
- Num 19:22 - And whatever the unclean person touches shall be unclean; and the person who touches it shall be unclean until evening.

THE WATER FOR IMPURITY

After the **rebellion** of the children of Israel in Numbers 16 and 17 and as a result of God's **punishment**, their corpses lay throughout the land and the filthiness of **death spread everywhere**. The entire population of the Israelites was under the effect of death. They were all in a situation of impurity. Thus, in chapter 19 God told them to prepare the **water for impurity** with a **red heifer** that they might use the **water** to **get rid** of the filthiness of death with which they were affected. (Truth Lessons, Level 3, Vol. 2, Chapter 11, Section 2)

Day 1

I. Numbers 19, a very special chapter in the Old Testament, is a record concerning the **water for impurity**.

SUMMARY

The **water for impurity** is the water which was used **to get rid of the filthiness of death** with which the children of Israel were affected. The water for impurity was **composed** of a red **heifer**, the principal component, which **signifies** that Christ, who is sinless and perfect and who has never been used by anyone, is our redemption. Other components were **cedar wood**, **hyssop**, and **scarlet strands**, **signifying** that the high and dignified Christ and the lowly and humbled Christ in His redemption were elements in the composition of the water for impurity. There was also **living water** for purification, which **signifies** the Spirit in the resurrection of Christ. Hence, the **water for impurity** **signifies** that **the efficacy of Christ's redemption with the washing power of the Spirit of His resurrection** can heal and cleanse the situation of God's people, a situation which is full of death, and annul the effect of death and impurity brought in by our committing of sins. (Truth Lessons, Level 3, Vol. 2, Chapter 11, Section 4)

II. The **impurity** in this chapter does not refer to sin but to **death**—vv. 11, 13-16:

- A. **Death** issues from **sin**, and **sin** is the **root** of **death**—Rom. 5:12:
 1. **Death** is more **defiling** in the eyes of God than sin—Lev. 11:24-25; Num. 6:6-7, 9.
 2. The most **hateful** thing in the eyes of God is death; death is an **ugly, abominable** thing, and we should detest it—vv. 6-7.
 3. The death that we need to avoid is **spiritual death**—Rev. 3:1-2; Rom. 5:12, 14:
 - a. Spiritual death is more **prevailing** on earth than physical death—v. 17.
 - b. Spiritual death is **everywhere**; not only sinful, worldly places but even the most moral, ethical places are full of spiritual death.
- B. From the **sin of rebellion** in Numbers 11 through 14 and in chapter 16, death became prevailing among the children of Israel—v. 49:
 1. After the rebellion of the children of Israel in Numbers 16 and as a **result** of God's judgment, the entire population of Israel was **under the effect of death**—v. 49.
 2. The **filthiness** of death had spread everywhere, and the people were in a situation of **impurity**.
 3. In chapter 19 God told them to prepare the **water for impurity** with the **ashes** of a red heifer so that they might use the **water** to remove the filthiness of death with which they had been affected.

Day 2

III. The **red heifer**, the **principal component** of the water for impurity, signifies the **redeeming Christ**—v. 9:

- A. The color **red** **signifies** the likeness of the flesh of sin, which is for the **bearing of man's sin** outwardly—Rom. 8:3; John 1:29.
- B. The **red heifer** was **without defect**; this **signifies** that although Christ was in the likeness of the flesh of sin, He did not have the sinful nature—v. 14; Heb. 2:14; 4:15; Rom. 8:3; 2 Cor. 5:21.
- C. That the **heifer** was **without blemish** indicates that Christ was **perfect**—Num. 19:2; Exo. 12:5-6.
- D. The **heifer** having **never been under a yoke** **signifies** that Christ was never used by anyone, especially by or for God's enemy, Satan—Num. 19:2; cf. Exo. 12:5.
- E. The **red heifer** was brought outside the camp and **slaughtered**; **Christ** was **crucified** outside the camp, on Calvary, a small mount outside the city of Jerusalem—Num. 19:3; Heb. 13:12-13; Matt. 27:33.

Day 3

IV. The slain red heifer was burned, and the priest took cedar wood and hyssop and scarlet strands, and cast them into the midst of the burning of the heifer”—Num. 19:6:

- A. **Cedar wood** signifies the honorable and uplifted humanity of the Lord, which enables Him to be our Savior—v. 6; cf. 1 Kings 4:33:
 1. In the Bible a cedar, a tall and strong tree, refers to a humanity that is filled with glory—S. S. 1:17.
 2. Cedar, in typology, indicates the resurrected, ascended, glorified, and honored humanity of Jesus.
 3. Cedar wood signifies Christ's heavenly humanity, His glorified humanity, and His heavenly human life—8:9.
 4. Just as the cedar tree far transcends over all other trees, Christ is the only glorified man among all men—5:15; Phil. 2:9-11.
 5. As signified by cedar, Christ is a person who has ascended into heaven and whose excellency and uplifted and noble humanity transcend all others—S. S. 5:15.
- B. **Hyssop**, which is among the smallest of plants, signifies that the Lord was willing to be lowly, becoming in the likeness of men, so that He might be near to man and become man's Savior—Num. 19:6; 1 Kings 4:33; Phil. 2:7.
- C. On the one hand, the Lord has the highest standard of humanity, as typified by cedar wood; on the other hand, He was willing to become lowly so that He might be available to us, as typified by hyssop.

Day 4

- D. **Scarlet**, a dark red color, implies much in typology—Num. 19:6:
 1. The color scarlet signifies the shedding of blood, referring to the redeeming work of the cross—Heb. 9:12, 14, 22; 1 Pet. 1:18-19.
 2. In Leviticus 14:4 scarlet signifies that the Lord lowered Himself to become a man that He might do the will of God and shed His blood for our redemption.
 3. Scarlet signifies the blood of Christ shed for our redemption in its highest significance—Num. 19:6.
- E. The high and dignified Christ and the lowly and humbled Christ in His redemption were elements for the composition of the water for impurity—v. 6.

A. Its Composition

1. A Red Heifer

“This is the statute of the law which Jehovah has commanded, saying, Tell the children of Israel to bring you a red heifer without defect, in which is no blemish and upon which a yoke has never come. And you shall give it to Eleazar the priest, and someone shall bring it outside the camp and slaughter it in his presence” (vv. 2-3). This heifer, the principal component of the water for impurity, signifies Christ for our redemption. The color red signifies the likeness of the flesh of sin, which is for the bearing of man's sin outwardly. When Christ was incarnated, He became in the likeness of the flesh of sin (Rom. 8:3). Furthermore, the heifer was without defect. This signifies that the redeeming Christ was without sin. Although Christ was in the likeness of the flesh of sin, there was no sin within Him. He did not have the sinful nature, and He did not know sin (2 Cor. 5:21). The heifer also had no blemish. This indicates that Christ was perfect. Furthermore, the heifer had never come under a yoke. This signifies that Christ was not used by anyone, especially by or for God's enemy, Satan. Eventually, Christ accomplished God's redemption by being crucified outside the camp on Calvary (Heb. 13:12-13), a small mount outside the city of Jerusalem.

2. Cedar Wood, Hyssop, and Scarlet

“The priest shall take cedar wood and hyssop and scarlet strands, and cast them into the midst of the burning of the heifer” (Num. 19:6). Cedar wood signifies Christ in His dignified humanity, hyssop signifies Christ in His humbled humanity, and scarlet signifies redemption in its highest significance. This indicates that the high and dignified Christ and the lowly and humbled Christ in His redemption were elements for the composition of the water for impurity.

3. The Living Water for Purification

“A man who is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer and place them outside the camp in a clean place, and it shall be kept for the assembly of the children of Israel as water for impurity; it is a sin offering” (v. 9). The burning of the heifer with the other elements produced ashes, which signify Christ reduced to nothing. These ashes were kept for the water for impurity; it was a purification of sin, or a sin offering. Verse 17 says, *“For the unclean they shall take of the ashes of the burning of the sin offering, and running water shall be added to them in a vessel.”* The running water, that is, the living water, put in the vessel, signifies the Holy Spirit in the resurrection of Christ. Hence, in the water for impurity, there is the efficacy of Christ's redemption with the washing power of the Spirit of His resurrection. (Truth Lessons, Level 3, Vol. 2, Chapter 11, Section 2)

V. The ashes of the heifer were gathered up and placed outside the camp in a clean place to be kept for the assembly of the children of Israel as water for impurity—v. 9:

- A. Ashes signify the result of Christ's death:
 - 1. In the Bible ashes signify something in its final form—Lev. 6:10.
 - 2. To be reduced to ashes is to be reduced to nothing.
 - 3. In Numbers 19:9 ashes signify Christ reduced to nothing—Mark 9:12.
- B. After the cedar, the hyssop, and the scarlet strands were burned with the heifer, the ashes were gathered up and kept in a clean place; this is what makes the red heifer unique.
- C. The eternal efficacy of Christ's redemption can be seen in the type of the ashes of the red heifer that was slaughtered and burned—Num. 19:9; Heb. 9:12.
- D. These ashes were kept for the water for impurity; it was a purification of sin, or a sin offering—Num. 19:2, 4, 6, 9, 11-12:
 - 1. If an Israelite touched something unclean and became unclean before God, a clean person could mix the water for impurity with the ashes and sprinkle it on the unclean person; this would remove the person's uncleanness—vv. 11-12.
 - 2. The ashes were used to remove uncleanness; they were prepared for the future and would be used when uncleanness was detected at a later time.

Day 5 & Day 6

- E. One aspect of the work of the Lord Jesus is like that of the ashes of the red heifer—vv. 2, 9:
 - 1. The ashes of the red heifer signify the eternal and unchanging efficacy of the Lord's redemption—v. 9:
 - a. The ashes of the red heifer signify the Lord's redemption, which He has accomplished for us—Rom. 3:24; Eph. 1:7.
 - b. His redemption is forever unchanging and incorruptible—Heb. 9:12.
 - 2. Whenever an Israelite touched something unclean, he needed only to have the ashes of the red heifer mixed with the water for impurity and to have it sprinkled on his body—Num. 19:11-12.
 - 3. The Lord's redemption has accomplished everything; He made provision for all our future uncleanness and future sins:
 - a. The ashes are specifically for the future.
 - b. The ashes of the red heifer tell us that the past work of the cross is applicable for our use today.
 - c. The red heifer has been burned once for all, and its ashes are enough to cover our entire life.
 - d. We thank the Lord that His redemption is sufficient for our whole life.

B. Its Usage

1. To Be Sprinkled upon Unclean Persons

The water for impurity was to be sprinkled upon unclean persons: those who touched a dead body, who came into a tent or were in a tent in which a man died, who touched one who had been slain with a sword, a dead body, a human bone, or a grave (vv. 11-14, 16-20). Death comes out of sin, and sin is the root of death (Rom. 5:12). From the sin of rebellion, death was prevailing among the children of Israel. Thus, there was a need for the water for impurity. Only the working of Christ's redemption, through His dignified and humbled humanity and with His death and the Spirit of His resurrection, could heal and cleanse the situation of God's people, a situation full of death.

2. To Be Sprinkled upon the Tent in Which a Man Dies and upon the Open Vessels and Furnishings in It

The water for impurity was also sprinkled upon the tent in which a man died and upon all the open vessels and furnishings in the tent for their cleansing (Num. 19:15, 18). Because of the universal rebellion among God's people, death overshadowed the entire people of God so that the tents and every vessel in the tents were contaminated. No matter where someone went or what he touched, he was unclean. By sprinkling the water for impurity, the entire situation of the children of Israel was cleansed from the effect of death because of their sin of rebellion. It is the same with us today. Only the efficacy of redemption, accomplished through the death of Christ, and the washing power of the Spirit, accomplished through Christ's resurrection, can annul the effect and impurity of death brought in by our committing of sins. (Truth Lessons, Level 3, Vol. 2, Chapter 11, Section 4)

VI. Numbers 19:17 speaks of the burning of the red heifer and the running water that was added to the ashes in a vessel:

- A. The running (literally, living) water in Numbers 19:17 signifies the Holy Spirit in the resurrection of Christ—John 7:37-39.
- B. In the water for impurity, there is the efficacy of Christ's redemption with the washing power of the Spirit of His resurrection.

VII. Because death was prevailing among the children of Israel, there was the need for the water for impurity, and whenever we are defiled by death, we need Christ as the reality of the red heifer for the water for impurity—Num. 16:49; 19:2, 9:

- A. In Numbers 19 the water for impurity cleansed away and annulled the effect of death that came from the great rebellion in chapter 16.
- B. The water for impurity, to which the ashes were added, typifies the efficacy of Christ's redemption, which continually cleanses us by the living water of life in order to restore our fellowship with God—1 John 1:7.
- C. Only the working of Christ's redemption, through His dignified and humbled humanity, with His death and the Spirit of His resurrection, could heal and cleanse the situation from the uncleanness of death—Num. 19:6, 9, 17.

Numbers 19:4 tells us what happens after the heifer is slaughtered. "And Eleazar the priest shall take some of her blood with his finger, and shall sprinkle some of her blood toward the front of the tent of meeting seven times." The priest did not do many things. He only sprinkled some blood before God in the tabernacle. This shows us that the death of the Lord Jesus has satisfied the requirements of God. The blood was not sprinkled on the children of Israel. It was sprinkled directly before the tent of meeting. The tabernacle is the place where God met with the Israelites. It is a type of the fellowship between God and man. Where God's tabernacle is, there God is also. Christ is the tabernacle; He is God living among men. He is full of God's grace and truth. He tabernacled among us (John 1:14). This is the fellowship. How can we have fellowship? There must be the blood, that is, sin must be judged. If there is no blood, man cannot come to God.

There are only two ways for man to come to God. Either he comes without sin, or he comes with the blood. If you are without sin, you can come to God in bold strides, and He can do nothing to you. But if you have sin, there must be the shedding of the blood (Heb. 9:22), because God must judge sin. If sin is not judged, man cannot have fellowship with God. God cannot overlook man's sins. God cannot let man's sins go by. If man has sin, he must come to God with the blood. God is a judging God. Without passing through judgment, sin cannot be removed. Judgment demands the blood. Therefore, there must be the shedding of the blood before fellowship can be recovered. The blood was sprinkled seven times. Seven signifies perfection. The death of the Lord Jesus has satisfied God; His blood is sufficient to wash away our sins. Here all the problems are completely solved. God's righteous requirements are met. God said that the work is done. This is the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross. It has been done once and is forever finished. There is no need for another red heifer to die. It is good enough for one red heifer to die. In the first part of this offering we see that the sprinkling of the blood signifies that the problem of the sinner is solved. This part of the offering is the same as all the other offerings in the Old Testament. They are all just the Passover lamb.

Now we have to consider the second part of the offering, which shows us what is to be done for the sins of the believers. Numbers 19:5 says, "And the heifer shall be burned in his sight." This is most unique, for the heifer was not simply burned, but "her skin, her flesh, and her blood, with her dung, shall be burned; and the priest shall take cedar wood and hyssop and scarlet, and cast them into the midst of the burning of the heifer." God judged sin. After a little of the blood was sprinkled, the rest of the blood was poured into the fire. Then the whole heifer was also cast into the fire. The priest burned the whole heifer—skin, flesh, blood, dung, and all. In addition, cedar wood, hyssop, and scarlet were all cast into the midst of the burning. In verse 9 we are told what happened after the heifer was burned: "A man who is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and place them outside the camp in a clean place; and they shall be kept for the assembly of the sons of Israel for the water for impurity; it is a purification of sin." After the heifer was slaughtered, the blood was applied. But after the heifer was burned and became ashes, the ashes were to be applied.

What are ashes? Ashes are the final state of everything in the world. I am not referring to the facts of chemistry, but to our everyday experience. Ashes are the last state of all things. If a table undergoes corruption again and again, its last state will be ashes. Hence, ashes represent the final state. When something has reached its very end, and cannot be changed to something else anymore, it is ashes.

Everything of the heifer is burned. Note particularly the blood. In these ashes are the skin, the flesh, and the blood. This means that in these ashes are the redemption of Christ and the eternal efficacy of His redemption. Christ is eternally efficacious before God. He has become the ashes. The shedding of His blood is eternally efficacious. Even the blood has become ashes. The work of redemption is finished. The red heifer portrays the Lord's redemptive work, and this work has now become ashes.

(Collected Works of Watchman Nee, The (Set 2) Vol. 29: The Gospel of God (2), Chapter 11, Section 6)