

Message Five

**The Water for Impurity**

Scripture Reading: Num. 19

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

**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.

**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.

**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.
- 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.

**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.

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.

**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.