

Numbers 19:17-22

- A. This entire chapter deals with the preparation and application of a purifying water of separation which was infused with the ashes of a pure red heifer and kept.
1. It was "...a purification for sin" (v. 9).
 2. It particularly cleansed away defilement from contact with dead persons and associated things. c/w **NUM 31:21-23**.
 3. Paul gives the best explanation of this by relating it to the superior cleansing power of Jesus Christ and His blood. **HEB 9:13-14**.
- B. The details present a curious puzzle. Only a *clean person* could purify the unclean but in so doing he was himself defiled and had to wash his clothes even as the cleansed person had to wash his clothes (vs. 19, 21). This may remind us that
1. Christ was made sin for us in order to cleanse us. **2CO 5:21**.
 2. our works of righteousness are so many *filthy rags* (**ISA 64:6**), and all good that we do is attended by sin. **ROM 7:21**.
 3. whereas the defiled person back then could not cleanse himself,
 - a. we may (must) cleanse and purify ourselves by repentance to experience God's recovery. **JAM 4:8-10**.
 - b. we may (must) apply the blood of Christ for cleansing ourselves and be assured that we are not defiled by that but made pure and fit for communion with our God. **1JO 1:7-9**.
 4. Christ's *blood of sprinkling* speaks better things than Abel's blood (**HEB 12:24**) or a red heifer's *sprinkled ashes*.
 5. "...the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God" (**HEB 7:19**).
- C. There is another curiosity. The same water of separation which *cleansed the defiled person defiled the clean person* who touched it: there was risk associated with every effort to cleanse another man.
1. A limited parallel may be drawn between this and the temporal cleansing or forgiveness that depends on teaching or reproofing the errant, per **JAM 5:19-20**.
 2. Reproofing sin and instructing others in righteousness facilitates cleansing by repentance, confession and forgiveness. **JAM 4:8; 2CO 7:1; 1JO 1:9**.
 3. Those who would judge others of breaches of the law are themselves under the scrutiny of that same law. **ROM 2:1; MAT 7:1-5**.
 4. This is a constant burden especially to the minister of Christ who must teach and reprove others to convert them. He is obliged to
 - a. preach *the whole counsel of God*. **ACT 20:27**.
 - b. be impartial in the law. **MAL 2:9; 1TI 5:21**.
 - c. preach and warn others of things in which he himself had or has personal failings lest he incur even more judgment for dereliction of duty. **EZE 3:18 c/w ACT 20:26-27**.
 5. Christ's minister is personally unworthy of the salvation, knowledge and office he has been given and this may be acknowledged. **GEN 32:10 c/w 1CO 15:9**.
 - a. But unworthiness will no more excuse Christ's minister from his duty than Moses' lack of eloquence excused him from his duty. **EXO 4:10-12**.
 - b. Paul said, "...necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel" (**1CO 9:16**).
 6. God puts His ministers under a microscope more than other men. **LUK 12:48; JAM 3:1**.
 - a. They are the ambassadors of Jesus Christ, the King of righteousness. **2CO 5:20**.

- b. Wilful sin in them can give the enemies of Christ occasion to blaspheme. **2SAM 12:14 c/w ROM 2:23-24.**
 - c. Natural man looks upon God, Christ and truth as folly and madness (**ACT 26:24; 1CO 1:18**) so Christ's ministers should be striving for reasonableness and consistency of doctrine so as to not provide the unbelievers with more justification for their unbelief. **2TH 3:1-2; TIT 3:10-11.**
 - d. Poor examples in leadership can corrupt followers and bring judgment on the church. **EXO 32:25.**
7. The best thing for a minister or for any saint trifling with defilements is to examine and cleanse self from things like the *dead body of sin, dead works and dead idols*. **ROM 6:6; HEB 9:14; 2CO 6:16-7:1.**
- a. We ought to pray that God would search us to discover dirt that it may be cleaned away. **PSA 139:23-24.**
 - b. With God's help, we can improve on the "clean man" of **NUM 19:21** who washed himself with elements of this world that were themselves under the bondage of corruption. We have a continual fount of cleansing opened for us in heaven. **ZEC 13:1 c/w 1JO 1:7-9.**