

In The Wilderness

Numbers 5:1-31

- The children of Israel are on their way to the promise land, it is approximately an eleven day Journey and the people are excited to go having already spent a year at Mt. Sinai receiving Divine instructions from the Lord through Moses. Its at this place where Israel was properly introduced to the Lord and where God gave them the Ten Commandments, but its also the place where God showed them that their hearts was filled with disobedience > **Ex 32:6**- for as Moses came down from Mt. Sinai with Gods Commandments the people had already rose up to play!

V1-31

- **V1-4** in the previous four chapters God **organized** the people by tribes-responsibilities, now He is **purifying** the people starting with those who are ceremonial unclean. Three types of people had to be separated from the others > **1st** the Leper, **2nd** those who had a discharge natural or unnatural, **3rd** those who touched a dead body, all three of these constituted uncleanness.
- What's interesting is all three of these things could happen to anyone who loved the Lord, then why the separation? Because inside the camp dwelt the Tabernacle and therefore all who were in the camp had to be pure and holy in His sight > **Lev 11:44-45**, God also said this in the NT **1Pet 1:15**, the difference is in the OT Israel had to be clean both ceremonially and spiritually, but in the NT because of Jesus fulfilling all the Laws requirements we only have to be clean spiritually.
- Something else to pay attention to as well is that all three of these things are reminders of the effects of sin, as they pointed to decay, and dead flesh, things we inherited from Adam. for the leper his condition was incurable a slow death, for ladies a natural monthly discharge nothing you can do, and if its a wound left untreated it could easily be infected and spread to the rest of the body, a corpse looks harmless but if you don't bury it disease, stench, and defilement.
- **V5-7** here is something beautiful God commands Moses to tell the children of Israel that when a person wrongs another that they are to confess it and then make restitution for it, giving them one fifth of what he has defrauded. Notice God says when they sinned in this manner that it wasn't just against the individual but also against the Lord, this shows that God is a God who desires reconciliation, whether someone is unclean, or dishonest, restitution can be made, the initial separation doesn't have to last forever, if that person is willing to humble themselves.
- **V8** God even tells them how to make amends if the person who was wrong has died before restitution could take place, it doesn't let the offending person off, they still have a responsibility to the family and to the Lord. **V9-10** every offering brought to the Tabernacle except those specifically given to God alone the Priest had the right to partake of it also. This helped in the support and taking care of the Priest who's sole responsibility was to care for the things of God.

- **V11-14** One of the major cornerstones for every society is faithfulness in marriage, for as goes the home so goes the nation. As we will see adultery not only defiled the people involved, but also the entire land itself, and it was a sin so detestable to God that if proved guilty it carried the death sentence. Can you imagine if that was the case today, it would be no more talk of over population because at least a third of society would lose their lives because of unfaithfulness.
- So Adultery wasn't just seen as a personal problem between a man and his wife, but also a community problem to be resolved by God and Priest. **Deut 22:22-24** says both the adulterer and the adulteress would be stoned to death if caught in the act, here this shows what to do if you haven't caught anyone in the act but you suspect them.
- **V15-21** so a test was given, first the man would bring his wife to the priest, and one tenth of barley meal, then the Priest would take holy water place it in an earthen vessel, take some dust off the floor of the Tabernacle where the Spirit of God dwelled and put it in the water. Then the Priest would stand the woman before the Lord, uncover her head, and put the offering for remembering in her hand, which is the grain offering of jealousy, I love how they called this the offering of remembering because as this was going on it would certainly jog your memory.
- **V22-31** then he places an oath over her saying if no man has committed adultery with you and you haven't gone astray while under your husband's authority may you be free of this curse, but if you have gone astray while under his authority and have defiled yourself, and some man has committed adultery with may this water cause your belly to swell and your thigh rot, and she drinks the water, and they would wait to see the results.
- If she started to have physical problems, or miscarry if she was already pregnant, or became barren then she was guilty, if nothing happened, she remained healthy, no miscarriages, became fruitful in bearing children then she was innocent. You may ask how can anyone trust such a process, of course she would get sick she's drinking dust off the floor in her water right? Wrong! Israel in this process had to trust God, everything about this involved either the Lord, the Priest, or the Tabernacle and its offerings, therefore the results are up to God and not man.
- In these next chapters we see clearly that God is Holy, and if Israel was going to dwell near and with Him, then they would also need to be holy, that meant ceremonially, relationally, inwardly, and outwardly. For God wanted a clean people and He wasn't just talking about personal hygiene, more importantly spiritual hygiene, the one in which in the **NT** that God said our lives would present a sweet smelling aroma for all to smell > **2 Cor 2:15-16**.
- It was Ghandi who was asked by a missionary what he thought was the biggest obstacle to Christian missions in India, and Ghandi said "**Christians**". We may not like his answer but we do have to face the fact that too often God's people get in the way of God's work, and we'll see that time and time again in the book of Numbers. Where Israel is going to repeatedly disobey God and suffer for it, even though God has told them exactly what to do in order to please Him.