

## **Second Baptist Church of Doylestown**

### **Bible Study Notes**

**9-1-21**

### **Numbers 5**

#### **Separation From The Effects Of Sin - Verses 1-4**

**<sup>1</sup> The LORD said to Moses, <sup>2</sup> "Command the Israelites to send away from the camp anyone who has a defiling skin disease or a discharge of any kind, or who is ceremonially unclean because of a dead body. <sup>3</sup> Send away male and female alike; send them outside the camp so they will not defile their camp, where I dwell among them." <sup>4</sup> The Israelites did so; they sent them outside the camp. They did just as the LORD had instructed Moses.**

**5:1-2** Command the children of Israel that they put out of the camp: As Israel prepared to march to the Promised Land, the leper (Leviticus 13), those with a discharge (Leviticus 15), and any priest who would touch a dead body, except that of a close relative (Leviticus 21:1) were commanded to be put out of the camp of Israel until ceremonially clean. Now God said that Israel must do what He had previously commanded. "Probably this ordinance gave the first idea of a hospital, where all those who are afflicted with contagious disorders are put into particular wards, under medical treatment."

**5:3-4** You shall put out both male and female: Neither male nor female was to be excluded from this command. Neither perceived sympathy nor perceived superiority could spare someone the consequences of sin's ravages.

In the midst of which I dwell: The great reason for this commanded separation is because God lives in the camp of Israel, so sin and its effects must be separated from. God is concerned with far more than our individual acts of sin; He demands our sin nature be addressed. Only in Jesus can our sin nature - the old man - be crucified, and the nature of Jesus - the new man - be granted to us as new creations. God can't abide with the old man, but can with the new man.

#### **Restitution for Wrongs - Verses 5-10**

**<sup>5</sup> The LORD said to Moses, <sup>6</sup> "Say to the Israelites: 'Any man or woman who wrongs another in any way and so is unfaithful to the LORD is guilty <sup>7</sup> and must confess the sin they have committed. They must make full restitution for the wrong they have done, add a fifth of the value to it and give it all to the person they have wronged. <sup>8</sup> But if that person has no close relative to whom restitution can be made for the wrong, the restitution belongs to the LORD and must be given to the priest, along with the ram with which atonement is made for the wrongdoer. <sup>9</sup> All the sacred contributions the Israelites bring to a priest will belong to him. <sup>10</sup> Sacred things belong to their owners, but what they give to the priest will belong to the priest.'"**

**5:5-8** God included restitution, a unique concept for that day, as part of his law for Israel. When someone was robbed, the guilty person was required to restore the loss to the victim and pay an

additional interest penalty. When we have wronged others, we ought to do more than apologize. We should look for ways to set matters right and, if possible, leave the victim even better off than when we harmed him or her. When we have been wronged, we should still seek restoration rather than striking out in revenge.

**5:9-10** Every offering of all the holy things of the children of Israel, which they bring to the priest, shall be his: Certain offerings (such as the peace offering of Leviticus 3) were intended to have a portion of the offering (like a good piece of meat) returned, so they and their family could have a fellowship meal with the LORD.

And every man's holy things shall be his: This command reminds of the absolute right the offerer had to share in such offerings; it is essentially a way to preserve an open door for fellowship with the LORD - the priest couldn't take the offerer's portion away, a king couldn't tax it away. God therefore reminds Israel of the purpose of this separation - fellowship with God. This, ultimately, is the reason to pursue purity: Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God (Matthew 5:8).

### **The Test for an Unfaithful Wife - Verses 11-15**

<sup>11</sup> Then the LORD said to Moses, <sup>12</sup> "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'If a man's wife goes astray and is unfaithful to him <sup>13</sup> so that another man has sexual relations with her, and this is hidden from her husband and her impurity is undetected (since there is no witness against her and she has not been caught in the act), <sup>14</sup> and if feelings of jealousy come over her husband and he suspects his wife and she is impure—or if he is jealous and suspects her even though she is not impure— <sup>15</sup> then he is to take his wife to the priest. He must also take an offering of a tenth of an ephah of barley flour on her behalf. He must not pour olive oil on it or put incense on it, because it is a grain offering for jealousy, a reminder-offering to draw attention to wrongdoing.

**5:11-14** If any man's wife goes astray and behaves unfaithfully toward him: This unique passage deals with the problem of a spirit of jealousy in a marriage. Obviously, unfounded jealousy has spoiled many a marriage, and justified jealousy has forced attention on confronting the sin of adultery - in this passage, God gives Israel a way to deal with it.

**5:15** If the spirit of jealousy comes upon him and he becomes jealous of his wife: Sometimes jealousy in a marriage is revealed to be completely justified; other times it is found to be completely false. Either way, God knows it means something must be dealt with, and here He gives Israel a way to do it.

### **The Test for an Unfaithful Wife - Verses 16-22**

<sup>16</sup> "The priest shall bring her and have her stand before the LORD. <sup>17</sup> Then he shall take some holy water in a clay jar and put some dust from the tabernacle floor into the water. <sup>18</sup> After the priest has had the woman stand before the LORD, he shall loosen her hair and place in her hands the reminder-offering, the grain offering for jealousy, while he himself holds the bitter water that brings a curse. <sup>19</sup> Then the priest shall put the woman

under oath and say to her, "If no other man has had sexual relations with you and you have not gone astray and become impure while married to your husband, may this bitter water that brings a curse not harm you. <sup>20</sup> But if you have gone astray while married to your husband and you have made yourself impure by having sexual relations with a man other than your husband"— <sup>21</sup> here the priest is to put the woman under this curse—"may the LORD cause you to become a curse among your people when he makes your womb miscarry and your abdomen swell. <sup>22</sup> May this water that brings a curse enter your body so that your abdomen swells or your womb miscarries." "Then the woman is to say, "Amen. So be it."

**5:16-18** Take some of the dust that is on the floor of the tabernacle and put it into the water: This water was made bitter from the dust that is on the floor of the tabernacle; and while the woman held the grain offering in her hand (a reminder of fellowship with God), the priest pronounced an oath over the woman.

**5:19** The priest shall put her under oath, and say to the woman: In his oath, the priest would solemnly announce that if the woman was innocent of the accusation of adultery, she would be free from this bitter water that brings a curse. But if she was in fact guilty of adultery, she would be under the curse. The effect of the curse was to make your thigh (here, a euphemism for the womb) rot and your belly swell.

**5:22** After the priest said this, the woman had to respond: Amen, so be it. She had to agree that if she was innocent, she deserved vindication; but if guilty, she deserved the punishment of the curse. She was not allowed the option of saying, "well, I did it, but it was really all right in the sight of God. After all, we loved each other, or my husband neglected me, and ..." At the very least, this ceremony demanded that sin be called sin - guilty or innocent!

**5:16-22** This test for adultery served to remove a jealous husband's suspicion. Trust between husband and wife had to be completely eroded for a man to bring his wife to the priest for this type of test. Today priests and pastors help restore marriages by counseling couples who have lost faith in each other. Men and women should strengthen the bond of trust in marriage. Flirtatious and intimate communication with someone you're not married to can build suspicion and weaken trust. Guard your heart and guard your marriage in order to maintain trust and strengthen your bond with your spouse.

### **The Ceremony Of The Offering - Verses 23-28**

<sup>23</sup> "The priest is to write these curses on a scroll and then wash them off into the bitter water. <sup>24</sup> He shall make the woman drink the bitter water that brings a curse, and this water that brings a curse and causes bitter suffering will enter her. <sup>25</sup> The priest is to take from her hands the grain offering for jealousy, wave it before the LORD and bring it to the altar. <sup>26</sup> The priest is then to take a handful of the grain offering as a memorial offering and burn it on the altar; after that, he is to have the woman drink the water. <sup>27</sup> If she has made herself impure and been unfaithful to her husband, this will be the result: When she is made to drink the water that brings a curse and causes bitter suffering, it will enter her, her abdomen will swell and her womb will miscarry, and she will become a curse. <sup>28</sup> If,

however, the woman has not made herself impure, but is clean, she will be cleared of guilt and will be able to have children.

**5:23** The priest shall write these curses in a book, and he shall scrape them off into the bitter water: After reading the curse, and hearing the woman's agreement, the priest would write the oath on a scroll - and scrape the dried ink into the bitter water.

Think of what made the water bitter: Both the "holy dust" of the tabernacle floor, and the oath containing a curse to the sinner! The combination of seeing the holiness of God and the penalty to sinners truly is bitter!

**5:25-28** The priest shall take the grain offering: After this, the priest would offer the grain offering - a picture of fellowship and thanks to God - and the accused woman would drink the bitter water.

The water that brings a curse will enter her and become bitter: Over time, the judgment of God would be evident. If she came down with some time of internal disease, especially affecting her womb, it would be seen as evidence of her guilt. But if she was free from disease, and continued to bear children, it would be seen as vindication.

**5:25-28** This ceremony only dealt with an adulterous wife and not a husband because for the most part, the Mosaic Law was "case law" - not meant to anticipate every potential situation, but to give examples that will set precedence for other cases. It is likely that the same ceremony would be practiced if a wife became suspicious of a husband's adultery.

Surely, both the holiness of God and the perfection of His word testifies against us. We should be forced to drink a bitter cup that would destroy us. But Jesus drank it for us.

### **Conclusion - Verses 29-31**

**29** **“This, then, is the law of jealousy when a woman goes astray and makes herself impure while married to her husband, <sup>30</sup> or when feelings of jealousy come over a man because he suspects his wife. The priest is to have her stand before the LORD and is to apply this entire law to her. <sup>31</sup> The husband will be innocent of any wrongdoing, but the woman will bear the consequences of her sin.”**

**5:29-31** This was a ceremony meant to resolve things. Either the husband was right or wrong in his jealousy; if his wife had in fact been adulterous, he was right - if not, wrong. The issue had to be settled, and this was God's way to do it.

The last two matters of purity - in regard to restitution and resolving jealousy - look to make Israel a pure, Promised Land people in their personal relationships. You can't be a Promised Land person if your relationships with others stink! You must make restitution and get things resolved.