

Numbers 19:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He shall purify himself with it on the third day, and on the seventh day he shall be clean: but if he purify not himself the third day, then the seventh day he shall not be clean.

Analysis

He shall purify himself with it on the third day, and on the seventh day he shall be clean—The purification ritual required sprinkling with water mixed with ashes of the red heifer (described in vv. 1-10) on both the third and seventh days. The verb "purify" (chata, κύν) is the same word meaning "to sin" but in its Piel form means "to purify from sin" or "to de-sin." This demonstrates that ritual defilement symbolized sin's contaminating power.

The specific timing—third and seventh days—points to completeness (seven) and resurrection symbolism (third day). Hebrews 9:13-14 explicitly connects this ritual to Christ's blood purifying our consciences from dead works. Christ rose on the third day and offers complete purification (seventh day perfection). The warning "if he purify not himself the third day, then the seventh day he shall not be clean" shows that neglecting prescribed means forfeits cleansing—there's no alternative path. This anticipates the exclusivity of Christ's atonement for cleansing from sin.

Historical Context

The red heifer ritual was unique in Israel's sacrificial system—the heifer was burned completely outside the camp (v. 3), and its ashes were mixed with water for purification. This provision addressed the constant reality of death in a community of 2-3 million people. Without this ritual, corpse contamination would have rendered most Israelites perpetually unfit for worship. The ashes of one heifer

could serve for years. Rabbinic tradition records only nine red heifers in Israel's entire history from Moses to the Second Temple's destruction.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 – Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does the third-day and seventh-day pattern point to Christ's resurrection and complete cleansing?
2. What does the requirement for two applications teach about progressive sanctification versus instant perfection?
3. In what ways does defilement through death symbolize sin's pervasive contaminating effects?

Interlinear Text

H1931 **He shall purify** H0 **day** **himself with it on the third** **day**

השביעי ומשפט א לא אם יטבר:

and on the seventh he shall be clean H518 H3808 **He shall purify** day

יטהר ל א השביע ובי ום השלישי

himself with it on the third day and on the seventh H3808 he shall be clean
H3808 H3807 H3807 H3801

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 31:19 (Parallel theme): And do ye abide without the camp seven days: whosoever hath killed any person, and whosoever hath touched any slain, purify both yourselves and your captives on the third day, and on the seventh day.

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org