

Numbers 19:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But the man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation, because he hath defiled the sanctuary of the LORD: the water of separation hath not been sprinkled upon him; he is unclean.

Analysis

This verse pronounces judgment on willful uncleanness: the defiled person who refuses purification 'shall be cut off from among the congregation.' The Hebrew emphasizes deliberate refusal - knowing the remedy yet rejecting it. This foreshadows the unforgivable sin: not that any sin is too great for God's grace, but that persistent rejection of the Holy Spirit's conviction removes one from the means of grace (Heb 6:4-6, 10:26-29). The pollution affects the entire sanctuary because God dwells among His people, and unholiness cannot coexist with His presence.

Historical Context

This law maintained Israel's corporate holiness during the wilderness journey. Unlike accidental uncleanness (which the purification ritual addressed), deliberate persistence in impurity showed contempt for the covenant. The community's survival depended on maintaining God's presence among them, making this excommunication necessary for the congregation's protection.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. Are there areas where you're knowingly avoiding God's cleansing, preferring the comfort of familiar sin?
2. How does understanding that your sin affects the entire body of Christ motivate you toward holiness?

Interlinear Text

וְאִישׁ	אֲשֶׁר	טָמֵא	וְלֹא	יִתְחַטֵּא	
But the man	H834	because he hath defiled	H3808	and shall not purify	
H376		H2930		H2398	
וְנִכְרְתָהּ	הַנֶּפֶשׁ	הִיא	מִתּוֹךְ	הַקְּהִלָּה	כִּי
shall be cut off	himself that soul	H1931	from among	the congregation	H3588
H3772	H5315		H8432	H6951	
אֶת	מִקְדָּשׁ	יְהוָה	טָמֵא	מֵי	נִדְּחָה
H853	the sanctuary	of the LORD	because he hath defiled	the water	of separation
	H4720	H3068	H2930	H4325	H5079
לֹא	זָבַח	עָלָיו	טָמֵא	הוּא	
H3808	hath not been sprinkled	H5921	upon him he is unclean	H1931	
	H2236		H2931		

Additional Cross-References

Mark 16:16 (Parallel theme): He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

Genesis 17:14 (Parallel theme): And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.

Numbers 19:13 (Temple): Whosoever toucheth the dead body of any man that is dead, and purifieth not himself, defileth the tabernacle of the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from Israel: because the water of separation was not sprinkled upon him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness is yet upon him.

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