

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

וְאֵשׁ	אֲשֶׁר	טָמֵא	אַל	תְּמִימָן
But the man	H834	because he hath defiled	H3808	and shall not purify
	H376		H2930	H2398
שׁוֹלֵךְ	צָרֵר	מֵת	לְפָנֶיךָ	כִּי
shall be cut off	himself that soul	from among	the congregation	H3588
H3772	H5315	H1931	H8432	H6951
אַתָּה	מִקְדָּשׁ	יְהִי הָ	טָמֵא	מִ' הַ
H853	the sanctuary	of the LORD	because he hath defiled	the water of separation
H4720	H3068	H2930	H4325	H5079
לֹא	זָבֵד	עַל יְ	טָמֵא	הַוָּא:
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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