

Numbers 19:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it shall be a perpetual statute unto them, that he that sprinkleth the water of separation shall wash his clothes; and he that toucheth the water of separation shall be unclean until even.

Analysis

The law states: 'he that sprinkleth the water of separation shall wash his clothes; and he that toucheth the water of separation shall be unclean until even.' This paradox - the purifying agent causes uncleanness to those handling it - foreshadows Christ's work. He who knew no sin became sin for us (2 Cor 5:21). The priests preparing purification became defiled, but those purified became clean. This illustrates substitutionary atonement: Christ bore our uncleanness that we might receive His righteousness. The Hebrew 'naga' (touch) indicates even contact with the purifying water brought temporary ceremonial defilement. Yet this defilement purified others - teaching that true cleansing requires a mediator willing to bear pollution.

Historical Context

This law governed those preparing and applying the purification water from red heifer ashes (v.1-10). The paradox demonstrated that ceremonial system couldn't truly cleanse - it merely pointed to the reality, Christ. Those ministering purification became defiled until evening, requiring washing and waiting. This temporary defilement differed from the seven-day defilement it remedied (v.11-12), showing gradations of uncleanness. The system's complexity and paradoxes taught that approaching holy God requires more than ritual - it requires a perfect

sacrifice and mediator. Hebrews 9:13-14 contrasts the red heifer's purification with Christ's blood that truly cleanses conscience.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does this paradox deepen your understanding of Christ bearing your sins to make you clean?
2. Do you appreciate the cost to Christ of becoming your purification, though He was sinless?

Interlinear Text

לְחֹק תִּלְוֶהָ מִן הַ		עוֹלָם			
H1961	H0	statute	And it shall be a perpetual		
		H2708	H5769		
וַיִּמְצֵה הַ		בַּיָּם	הַנֶּחֱדָה הַ	יִכְבֹּשׁ ס	בְּגָדָיו י'
unto them that he that sprinkleth		the water	of separation	shall wash	his clothes
H5137		H4325	H5079	H3526	H899
וְהִנִּיחַ עַ		בַּיָּם	הַנֶּחֱדָה הַ	יִטְמָא א	עַד הָעֶרְבָּ:
and he that toucheth		the water	of separation	shall be unclean	H5704 until even
H5060		H4325	H5079	H2930	H6153

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 10:4 (Parallel theme): For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

