

Numbers 31:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

Abide without the camp seven days: whosoever hath killed...or touched any slain, purify both yourselves and your captives—the Hebrew *chanah* (abide/camp) outside required ritual separation because corpse contact caused uncleanness (Numbers 19:11-22). The *chatta't* (purification/sin) ritual on the third and seventh days used water mixed with ashes from the red heifer, symbolizing cleansing from death's defilement.

This law taught profound theology:

1. Even righteous warfare against God's enemies involved contact with death, requiring purification
2. Taking human life, though divinely commanded, necessitated spiritual cleansing
3. The warriors' temporary exclusion reminded Israel that death is abnormal, an enemy introduced by sin (1 Corinthians 15:26).

Christ's resurrection overcame death permanently, making believers eternally clean (Hebrews 9:13-14). Yet even Christians should maintain sober awareness that death's presence—even defeated—requires Christ's cleansing.

Historical Context

The seven-day purification with third and seventh day cleansing rituals was established earlier in Numbers 19, involving water mixed with red heifer ashes. This ceremony restored ritual purity so warriors could rejoin camp fellowship and participate in worship. The inclusion of captives in purification shows God's law extended to all under Israel's care—even former enemies received covenant privileges through ceremonial integration. The practice maintained Israel's distinctive holiness while preventing warriors from becoming casual about death through military service.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. Do you maintain appropriate spiritual sensitivity even when engaging in activities God commands, or does 'righteous' activity make you presume on His holiness?
2. How does Christ's permanent cleansing from death's defilement free you from ritual burdens while increasing reverence for His sacrifice?

Interlinear Text

כָּל	וְבִיּוֹם	שִׁבְעַת	לַמַּחֲנֶה	הַמַּחֲנֶה	וְיָ	וְאֵת	מִן
H3605	day	seven	the camp	without	And do ye abide	H859	
	H3117	H7651	H4264	H2351	H2583		
בְּחַלְלָה	נִגַּע	וְכָל	לְכָל	אִישׁ	הָרֹג		
H2491	and whosoever hath touched	H3605	any person	whosoever hath killed			
	H5060		H5315	H2026			
אֵת	הַשְּׁבִיעִי	וְבִיּוֹם	הַשְּׁלִישִׁי	וְבִיּוֹם	תִּתְחַטֵּא		
H859	and on the seventh	day	on the third	day	purify		
	H7637	H3117	H7992	H3117	H2398		
					וְשִׁבִּיכֶם:		
					both yourselves and your captives		
					H7628		

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 5:2 (Parallel theme): Command the children of Israel, that they put out of the camp every leper, and every one that hath an issue, and whosoever is defiled by the dead: