

Numbers 5:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And a man lie with her carnally, and it be hid from the eyes of her husband, and be kept close, and she be defiled, and there be no witness against her, neither she be taken with the manner;

Analysis

The scenario of hidden adultery—where a man lies with a woman secretly, unknown to her husband and without witnesses—presents a justice problem. Human courts cannot judge what is hidden. This verse establishes the premise for the bitter water ordeal that follows, demonstrating that God sees what is hidden and will reveal truth. The Reformed doctrine of God's omniscience is foundational here—nothing is hidden from His sight, and He will bring all things to light.

Historical Context

The requirement of two or three witnesses for conviction meant that secret adultery was nearly impossible to prove through normal legal channels. This created potential for either false accusation based on suspicion or unaddressed marital betrayal. The ordeal provided resolution where human testimony failed.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does God's knowledge of hidden sin both comfort the innocent and warn the guilty?
2. What does this provision teach about God's concern for truth in situations where human knowledge is inadequate?
3. In what ways should the certainty of God's omniscience affect our private behavior?

Interlinear Text

וְשָׁכַב	אִישׁ הַ	אִתָּהּ	שְׁכִיבָתָהּ	זָרָע	וְנִעְלָם
lie	And a man		with her carnally		and it be hid
H7901	H376	H854	H7902	H2233	H5956
מֵעֵינָיו	אִישׁ הַ	וְנִסְתָּרָהּ	וְהָיָה	וְנִתְּמָה	אֵלֶּה
from the eyes	And a man	and be kept close		and she be defiled	
H5869	H376	H5641	H1931		H2930
וְעַד	אֵין	כִּי הָיָה	וְהָיָה	לֹא	
and there be no witness					
H5707	H369	H0	H1931	H3808	
נִתְּפָשָׁה:					
against her neither she be taken					
H8610					

Additional Cross-References

Leviticus 18:20 (Parallel theme): Moreover thou shalt not lie carnally with thy neighbour's wife, to defile thyself with her.

Leviticus 20:10 (Parallel theme): And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.

Proverbs 30:20 (Parallel theme): Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness.

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