

Numbers 5:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the priest shall charge her by an oath, and say unto the woman, If no man have lain with thee, and if thou hast not gone aside to uncleanness with another instead of thy husband, be thou free from this bitter water that causeth the curse:

Analysis

The oath before the Lord establishes the sacred nature of this trial. The priest pronounces a conditional curse—if innocent, no harm; if guilty, the curse will take effect. This demonstrates the principle that God's name must not be taken in vain; oaths before the Lord invoke His direct involvement. The bitter water serves as a visible, testable agent of divine judgment. The Reformed doctrine of God's active providence is evident—He governs even the physical effects of the water according to guilt or innocence.

Historical Context

Oaths in ancient Israel were binding and serious, invoking God as witness and judge. Breaking an oath was not merely lying but committing sacrilege. The bitter water's effects would be supernatural—God promised to make it either harmless or curse-bearing based on the woman's actual guilt.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does the seriousness of oaths before God inform Christian truth-telling today?
2. What does God's willingness to manifest judgment supernaturally teach about His involvement in human affairs?
3. In what ways should the inevitability of divine judgment affect our choices when we think no one is watching?

Interlinear Text

וְהִשָּׁב יַעַ	אֶתְּ הֵ	הַכֹּהֵן	וְאָמַר	אֶל	הָאִשָּׁה
shall charge her by an oath	H853	And the priest	and say	H413	unto the woman
H7650		H3548	H559		H802
אִם	לֹא	שָׁכַב	אִישׁ	אֶתְּ	וְאִם
H518	H3808	have lain	If no man	H854	H518
		H7901	H376		H3808
שָׁב יִתְּ	טִמְאָה	תִּחַת	אִישׁ	אֶתְּ	וְאִם
with thee and if thou hast not gone aside	to uncleanness	H8478	If no man		
H7847	H2932		H376		
הֵנָּק	מִמַּי	הַמָּר יִם	הַמֵּאֲכָר יִם	הָאֵלֶּה:	
be thou free	water	from this bitter	that causeth the curse	H428	
H5352	H4325	H4751	H779		