

NUMBERS: MOVING FORWARD AS GOD'S PEOPLE

Part II: God's Sanctifying His People, Numbers 5:1-10:10

A. Personal Separation From Sin (Numbers 5:1-31)

I. Introduction

- A. "The principal lesson of Numbers is that God's people must walk by faith, trusting His promises, if they are to move forward" (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, "Introduction to the Book of Numbers: Theme," p. 206), so avoiding spiritual stagnation and moving forward makes Numbers a timeless book for all God's people!
- B. We thus view Numbers 5:1-31 on personal separation from sin for God's people to move forward:

II. Personal Separation From Sin, Numbers 5:1-31.

- A. God called Israel to practice personal separation from one's own sins, Numbers 5:1-4:
 - 1. In the dispensation of the Law, one's "spiritual holiness was linked to and symbolized by physical, bodily holiness" as one's health reflected his relationship with God, cf. Deut. 28:15-22; B. K. C., O. T., p. 221.
 - 2. When God then had Moses tell Israel's people to quarantine every leper, everyone with a bodily discharge or everyone who had touched a dead body, it implied separation from individual sinfulness or from the effects of sin and reminded the people of their need for personal holiness before the Lord, Numbers 5:1-4.
- B. God called Israel to practice personal separation from sins against other people in general, Numbers 5:5-10:
 - 1. Since God created man in His own image (Genesis 1:27), a sin against another human being was essentially a sin against God in whose image that person was created.
 - 2. Thus, if anyone sinned against God in wronging another person, he was to confess it and make restitution to the person wronged, adding a fifth of the value of the wrong to the recompense, Numbers 5:5-7.
 - 3. However, if the wronged party was no longer living and had no close relative to whom restitution could be made, the recompense was to be given to the Lord along with a guilt offering of a ram, Numbers 5:8 (Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 221). The priest would act as the Lord's recipient just like all the sacred contributions the people would bring to the Lord would belong to the priest, Numbers 5:9-10.
- C. God called Israel to practice personal separation especially from sins against one's spouse, Numbers 5:11-31:
 - 1. When God created the institution of human marriage, He took a rib from the man Adam and from that rib He created his spouse Eve and brought her to him, Genesis 2:20-23.
 - 2. For this reason, one was considered to be "one flesh" with his or her spouse in God's eyes (Genesis 2:24b) so that this couple was to be inseparable, intimate partners with each other, cf. Matthew 19:3-6.
 - 3. Due to the great value that God Himself put on the marriage union, if a man ever doubted his wife's sexual fidelity to him, the Lord ordered that a very strict test occur in which He Himself would either condemn or vindicate his wife of such a sin to ensure that the highest trust in marriage be sustained, Numbers 5:11-31:
 - a. If for any reason a husband came to suspect that his wife had committed adultery (Numbers 5:11-14), he was to take his wife to the priest at the tabernacle along with an offering of a tenth of an ephah of barley flour on her behalf, Numbers 5:15a NIV.
 - b. A series of rituals would then occur where the priest would make the woman drink of the holy water mixed with dust from the floor of the tabernacle court. He would also write in a scroll some curses for the woman and wash the ink of the scroll off into the water. He would make the woman drink of the water so that if drinking it caused her womb to miscarry and her abdomen to swell, God would indicate that she had committed adultery where if she was innocent, nothing bad would follow, Numbers 5:15b-28 NIV.
 - c. The husband would be innocent of any wrongdoing, but the test would indicate God's clear judgment as to whether the woman had been involved in adultery or whether she was innocent, Numbers 5:29-31 NIV.
 - d. In this way, trust in marriage would be preserved for the welfare of all human institutions in Israel!
 - 4. [There was no test for the husband's sexual fidelity to his wife possibly because Israel was a patristic society, but we know from Exodus 20:14 and Deuteronomy 22:22 that adultery was sin for both a man and a woman, that if either one was guilty of that sin, that person was to be executed!]

Lesson: *For Israel to move forward to the Promised Land, God required personal separation from one's own sins and personal separation from the sins of wronging others with a special emphasis on separation from the sins of wronging one's spouse. Israel's individuals needed to be just as holy as did the nation as a whole.*

Application: *May we be holy in our personal lives, in relating to other people and in relating to our spouses.*