

NOTES
ON
THE BOOK OF NUMBERS

by

Charles H. MacIntosh

"Things new and old."

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by

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Numbers 5

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 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: both male and female shall ye put out, without the camp shall ye put them; that they defile not their camps, in the midst whereof I dwell. And the children of Israel did so, and put them out without the camp: as the Lord spake unto Moses, so did the children of Israel" (Numbers 5:1-4).

Here we have unfolded to us, in few words, the great foundation principle on which the discipline of the assembly is founded - a principle, we may say, of the very last importance, though, alas! so little understood or attended to. It was the presence of GOD in the midst of His people Israel that demanded holiness on their part. **"That they defile not their camps in the midst of which I dwell."** The place where the Holy one dwells must be holy. This is a plain and a necessary truth.

We have already remarked that redemption was the basis of GOD's dwelling in the midst of His people. But we must remember that discipline was essential to His continuance amongst them. He could not dwell where evil was deliberately and avowedly sanctioned. Blessed be His name, He can and does bear with weakness; but **"He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity."** Evil cannot dwell with Him, nor can He have fellowship with it. It would involve a denial of His very nature; and He cannot deny Himself.

It may, however, be said, in reply, "Does not GOD the Holy Ghost dwell in the individual believer, and yet there is much evil in him?"

True, the Holy Ghost dwells in the believer, on the ground of accomplished redemption. He is there, not as the sanction of what is of nature, But as the seal of what is of CHRIST; and His presence and fellowship are enjoyed just in proportion as the evil in us is habitually judged. Will any one assert that we can realize and delight in the Spirit's indwelling while allowing our indwelling pravity, and indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind? Far away be the impious thought! No; we must judge ourselves, and put away everything inconsistent with the holiness of the One who dwells in us.

Our "**old man**" is not recognized at all. It has no existence before GOD. It has been condemned, utterly, in the Cross of CHRIST. we feel its workings, alas! and have to mourn over them, and judge ourselves on account of them; but GOD sees us in CHRIST - in the Spirit - in the new creation. And, moreover, the Holy Ghost dwells in the body of the believer, on the ground of the Blood of CHRIST; and His indwelling demands the judgment of evil in every shape and form.

So also, in reference to the assembly.

No doubt, there is evil there - evil in each individual member, and therefore evil in the body corporate. But it must be judged; and, if judged, it is not allowed to act, it is rendered null. But to say that an assembly is not to judge evil is nothing more or less than corporate antinomianism. What should we say to a professing Christian who maintained that He was not solemnly responsible to judge evil, in himself and in His ways? we should, with great decision, pronounce him an antinomian. And if it be wrong for a single individual to take such ground, must it not be proportionally wrong for an assembly? We cannot see how this can be called in question.

What would have been the result, had Israel refused to obey the peremptory "**command**" given at the opening of the chapter before us? Supposing they had said, "We are not responsible to judge evil; and we do not feel that it becomes poor, failing, erring mortals such as we to judge anybody. These people with the leprosy, and the issue, and so forth, are as much Israelites as we are, and have as good a right to all the blessings and privileges of the camp as we have; we do not therefore feel it would be right for us to put them out."

Now what, we ask, would have been GOD's rejoinder to such a reply? If the reader will just turn for an instant to Joshua 7, he will find as solemn an answer as could well be given. Let him draw near and carefully inspect that "**great heap of stones**" in the valley of Achor. Let him read the inscription thereon. What is it? "**God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of his: saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are round about him.**" "**Our God is a consuming fire.**" What is the meaning of all this? Let us hear it and consider it!

Lust had conceived in the heart of one member of the congregation, and brought forth sin. What then? Did this involve the whole congregation? Yes, verily, this is the solemn truth, "**Israel** (not merely Achan) **hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their**

enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed thing from among you" (Joshua 7:11, 12).

This is peculiarly solemn and searching. It, most assuredly, utters a loud voice in our ears, and conveys a holy lesson to our hearts. There were, so far as the narrative informs us, many hundreds of thousands throughout the camp of Israel as ignorant, as Joshua himself seems to have been, of the fact of Achan's sin and yet the word was, "**Israel hath sinned - transgressed - taken the accursed thing - stolen and dissembled.**" How was this? The assembly was one. GOD's presence in the midst of the congregation constituted it one, so one, that the sin of each was the sin of all. "**A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.**"

Human reason may demur to this, as it is sure to demur to everything that lies beyond its narrow range. But GOD says it, and this is enough for the believing mind. It doth not become us to ask, "Why? how? or wherefore?" The testimony of GOD settles everything, and we have only to believe and obey. It is enough for us to know that the fact of GOD's presence demands holiness, purity, and the judgment of evil. Let us remember this.

It is not upon the principle so justly repudiated by every lowly mind, "**Stand by thyself, I am holier than thou.**" No, no; it is entirely on the ground of what GOD is - "**Be ye holy, for I am holy.**"

GOD could not give the sanction of His holy presence to unjudged wickedness. What! Give a victory at Ai with an Achan in the camp? Impossible! a victory, under such circumstances, would have been a dishonour to GOD, and the very worst thing that could have happened to Israel. It could not be. Israel must be chastised. They must be humbled and broken. They must be brought down to the valley of Achor - the place of trouble, for there alone can "**a door of hope**" be opened when evil has come in.

Let not the reader misunderstand this great practical principle. It has, we fear, been greatly misunderstood by many of GOD's people. Many there are who seem to think that it can never be right for those who are saved by grace, and who are themselves signal monuments of mercy, to exercise discipline in any form, or on any ground whatsoever. To such persons, Matthew 7:1 seems to condemn utterly the thought of our undertaking to judge. Are we not, say they, expressly told by our Lord, not to judge? are not these His own veritable words, "**Judge not, that ye be not judged?**" No doubt. But what do these words mean? Do they mean that we are not to judge the doctrine and manner of life of such as present themselves for Christian fellowship? Do they lend any support to the idea that, no matter what a man holds, or what he teaches, or what he does, we are to receive him all the same? Can this be the force and meaning of our Lord's Words? Who could, for one moment, cede anything so monstrous as this? Does not our Lord, in this very same chapter, tell us to "**beware of false prophets?**" But how can we beware of any one, if we are not to judge? If judgment is not to be exercised in any case, why tell us to beware?

Christian reader, the truth is as simple as possible.

GOD's assembly is responsible to judge the doctrine and morals of all who claim entrance at the door. We are not to judge motives, but we are to judge ways. We are directly taught by the

inspired apostle, in I Corinthians 5, that we are bound to judge all who take the ground of being inside the assembly. **"For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? Do not ye judge them that within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person"** (Verses 12, 13).

This is most distinct. We are not to judge those "**without**" but we are to judge those "**within**."

That is, those who take the ground of being Christians - of being members of GOD's assembly - all such come within the range of judgment. The very moment a man enters the assembly, he takes His place in that sphere where discipline is exercised upon everything contrary to the holiness of the One who dwells there.

And let not the reader suppose, for a moment, that the unity of the body is touched when the discipline of the house is maintained. This would be a very serious mistake indeed; and yet alas! it is a very common one. We frequently hear it said of those who rightly seek to maintain the discipline of the house of GOD, that they are rending the body of CHRIST. There could hardly be a greater mistake. The fact is, the former is our bounden duty; the latter, an utter impossibility? The discipline of GOD's house must be carried out; but the unity of CHRIST's body can never be dissolved.

Again, we sometimes hear persons speak of cutting off the limbs of the body of CHRIST.

This also is a mistake. Not a single limb of the body of CHRIST can ever be disturbed. Each member has been incorporated into its place by the Holy Ghost, in pursuance of the eternal purpose of GOD, and on the ground of the accomplished atonement of CHRIST; nor can any power of men or devils ever sever a single limb from the body. All are indissolubly joined together in a perfect unity, and maintained therein by divine power.

The unity of the Church of GOD may be compared to a chain stretching across a river; you see it at either side, but it dips in the middle, and if you were to judge by the sight of your eyes, you might suppose that the chain had given way at the center. So is it with the Church of GOD; it was seen to be one at the beginning; it will be seen to be one by and by; and it is, in GOD's sight, one now, though the unity be not visible to mortal eyes.

It is of the very last moment that the Christian reader should be thoroughly clear on this great Church question. The enemy has sought, by every means in his power, to cast dust into the eyes of GOD's dear people, in order that they might not see the truth in this matter. We have, on the one side, the boasted unity of Roman Catholicism; and, on the other hand, the deplorable divisions of Protestantism. Rome points, with an air of triumph, to the numerous sects of Protestants; and Protestants likewise point to the numerous errors, corruptions, and abuses of Romanism. Thus the earnest seeker after truth hardly knows where to turn or what to think; while, on the other hand, the careless, the indifferent, the self-indulgent, and the world-loving are only too ready to draw a plea, from all that they see around them, for flinging aside all serious thought and concern about divine things; and even if, like Pilate, they sometimes flippantly ask the question, "**What is truth?**" they, like him, turn on their heel without waiting for an answer.

Now, we are firmly persuaded that the true secret of the whole matter - the grand solution of the

difficulty - the real relief for the hearts of GOD's beloved saints, will be found in the truth of the indivisible unity of the church of GOD, the body of CHRIST, on the earth. This truth is not merely to be held as a doctrine, but to be confessed, maintained, and carried out, at all cost to ourselves. It is a great formative truth for the soul, and contains in it the only answer to Rome's boasted unity on the one hand, and to Protestant divisions on the other. It will enable us to testify to Protestantism that we have found unity, and to Roman Catholicism that we have found the unity of the Spirit.

It may, however, be argued, in reply, that it is the veriest Utopianism to seek to carry out such an idea, in the present condition of things. Everything is in such ruin and confusion that we are just like a number of children who have lost their way in a wood, and are trying to make the best of their way home, some in large parties, some in groups of two or three, and some all alone.

Now this may seem very plausible; and we do not doubt, in the least, but that it would carry immense weight with a large number of the Lord's people, at the present moment. But, in the judgment of faith, such a mode of putting the matter possesses no weight whatever. And for this simple reason, that the one all important question for faith is this, namely, "Is the unity of the Church a human theory or a divine reality?" A divine reality, most surely, as it is written, "**There is one body, and one Spirit**" (Ephesians 4:4). If we deny that there is "**one body**," we may, with equal force, deny that there is "**one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all**," inasmuch as all lie side by side, on the page of inspiration, and if we disturb one, we disturb all.

Nor are we confined to one solitary passage of Scripture on this subject; though had we but one, it were amply sufficient. But we have more than one.

Hearken to the following: "**The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the Blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, being many, are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread**" (I Corinthians 10:16, 17). Read also I Corinthians 12:12-27, where this whole subject is unfolded and applied.

In a word, then, the Word of GOD doth, most clearly and fully, establish the truth of the indissoluble unity of the body of CHRIST; and, moreover, it establishes, as clearly and as fully, the truth of the discipline of GOD's house. But, be it observed, the proper carrying out of the latter will never interfere with the former. The two things are perfectly compatible.

Are we to suppose that when the apostle commanded the church of Corinth to put away from amongst them "**that wicked person**," the unity of the body was touched? Surely not. And yet was not that man a member of the body of CHRIST? Truly so, for we find him restored in the second Epistle. The discipline of the house of GOD had done its work with a member of the body of CHRIST, and the erring one was brought back. Such was the object of the church's act.

All this may help to clear the mind of the reader as to the deeply interesting subject of reception at the Lord's table and exclusion from it.

There seems to be a considerable amount of confusion in the minds of many Christians as to these things. Some there are who seem to think that provided a person be a Christian, he should,

on no account, be refused a place at the Lord's table. The case in I Corinthians 5 is quite sufficient to settle this question. Evidently that man was not put away on the ground of his not being a Christian. He was, as we know, spite of his failure and sin, a child of GOD; and yet was the assembly at Corinth commanded to put him away; and had they not done so, they would have brought down the judgment of GOD upon the whole assembly. GOD's presence is in the Assembly, and therefore evil must be judged.

Thus, whether we look at the fifth chapter of Numbers or at the fifth chapter of I Corinthians, we learn the same solemn truth, namely, that **"Holiness becometh God's house for ever."** And farther we learn that it is with GOD's own people that discipline must be maintained, and not with those outside. For what do we read in the opening lines of Numbers 5:1. Were the children of Israel commanded to put out of the camp every one that was not an Israelite, every one that was not circumcised, every one who could not trace his pedigree, in an unbroken line, up to Abraham? Were these the ground of exclusion from the camp? Not at all. Who then were to be put out - **"Every leper"** - that is, every one in whom sin is allowed to work. **"Every one that hath an issue"** - that is, every one from whom a defiling influence is emanating: and, **"whosoever is defiled by the dead."** These were the persons that were to be separated from the camp in the wilderness, and their antitypes are to be separated from the assembly now.

And why, we may ask, was this separation demanded? Was it to uphold the reputation or respectability of the people? Nothing of the sort. What then? **"That they defile not their camps in the midst whereof I dwell."**

And so is it now. We do not judge and put away bad doctrine, in order to maintain our orthodoxy; neither do we judge and put away moral evil, in order to maintain our reputation and respectability. The only ground of judgment and putting away is this, **"Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever."**

GOD dwells in the midst of His people.

- **"Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I."**

- **"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"** (I Corinthians 3:16). And again,

- **"Now therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit"** (Ephesians 2:19-22).

But it may be that the reader feels disposed to put some such question as the following, "How is it possible to find a pure, a Perfect church? Is there not, will there not - must there not be some evil in every assembly, in spite of the most intense pastoral vigilance and corporate faithfulness? How then can this high standard of purity be maintained?"

No doubt there is evil in the assembly, inasmuch as there is indwelling sin in each member of the assembly. But it must not be allowed; it must not be sanctioned; it must be judged and kept under. It is not the presence of judged evil that defiles, But the allowance and sanction of evil. It

is with the Church, in its corporate character, as with the members in their individual character. **"If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged"** (I Corinthians 11:31).

Hence, therefore, no amount of evil should lead a man to separate from the Church of GOD; but if an assembly denies its solemn responsibility to judge evil, both in doctrine and morals, it is no longer on the ground of the Church Of GOD at all, and it becomes your bounden duty to separate from it. So long as an assembly is on the ground of the Church of GOD, however feeble it be, and few in number, to separate from it is schism. But if an assembly be not on GOD's ground - and most certainly it is not, if it denies its duty to judge evil - then it is schism to continue in association with it.

But will not this tend to multiply and perpetuate divisions? Most assuredly not. It may tend to break up mere human associations; but this is not schism, but the very reverse, inasmuch as all such associations, however large, powerful, and apparently useful, are positively antagonistic to the unity of the body of CHRIST, the Church of GOD.

It cannot fail to strike the thoughtful reader that the Spirit of GOD is awakening attention, on all hands, to the great question of the Church. Men are beginning to see that there is very much more in this subject than the mere notion of an individual mind, or the dogma of a party. The question, "What is the Church?" is forcing itself upon many hearts and demanding an answer. And what a mercy to have an answer to give! an answer as clear, as distinct, and as authoritative as the voice of GOD, the voice of Holy Scripture, can give. Is it not an unspeakable privilege, when assailed on all sides, by the claims of churches, "High Church," "Low Church," "Broad Church," "State Church," "Free Church," to be able to fall back upon the one true Church of the living GOD, the body of CHRIST? We most assuredly esteem it as such; and we are firmly persuaded that here alone is the divine solution of the difficulties of thousands of the people of GOD.

But where is this Church to be found? Is it not a hopeless undertaking to set out to look for it amid the ruin and confusion which surround us? No, blessed be GOD! for, albeit we may not see all the members of the Church gathered together, yet it is our privilege and holy duty to know and occupy the ground of the Church of GOD, and no other. And how is this ground to be discerned? We believe that the first step towards discerning the true ground of the Church of GOD is, to stand apart from everything that is contrary thereto. We need not expect to discover what is true while our minds are beclouded by what is false. The divine order is, **"Cease to do evil; learn to do well."** GOD does not give us light for two steps at a time. Hence, the moment we discover that we are on wrong ground, it is our duty to abandon it, and wait on GOD for further light, which He will, most surely give.

But we must proceed with our chapter.

"The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel; when a man or woman shall commit any sin that men commit, to do a trespass against the Lord, and that person be guilty; then they shall confess their sin which they have done; and he shall recompense his trespass with the principal thereof, and add unto it the fifth part thereof, and give it unto him against whom he hath trespassed. But if the man have no kinsman to recompense the trespass unto, let the trespass be recompensed unto the Lord, even to the

priest; beside the ram of the atonement, whereby an atonement shall be made for him."

The doctrine of the trespass offering has been considered in our "*Notes on Leviticus*," chapter 5; and to that we must refer our reader, as we do not mean to occupy his time or our own in going into any points which have been already considered. We shall merely notice here the very important questions of confession and restitution. Not only is it true that both GOD and man are gainers by the Great Trespass Offering presented on the Cross at Calvary; but we also learn, from the foregoing quotation, that GOD looked for confession and restitution, when any trespass had been committed. The sincerity of the former would be evidenced by the latter.

It was not sufficient for a Jew, who had trespassed against his brother, to go and say, "I am sorry," He had to restore the thing wherein he had trespassed and add a fifth thereto. Now, although we are not under the law, yet may we gather much instruction from its institutions; although we are not under the schoolmaster, we may learn some good lessons from him. If, then, we have trespassed against any one, it is not enough that we confess our sin to GOD and to our brother, we must make restitution; we are called upon to give practical proof of the fact that we have judged ourselves on account of that thing in which we have trespassed.

We question if this is felt as it ought to be. We fear there is a light, flippant, easy-going style in reference to sin and failure, which must be very grievous indeed to the Spirit of GOD. We rest content with the mere lip confession, without the deep, heartfelt sense of the evil of sin in GOD's sight. The thing itself is not judged in its moral roots, and, as a consequence of this trifling with sin, the heart becomes hard, and the conscience loses its tenderness. This is very serious.

We know of few things more precious than a tender conscience.

We do not mean a scrupulous conscience, which is governed by its own crotchets; or a morbid conscience, which is governed by its own fears. Both these are most troublesome guests for any one to entertain. But we mean a tender conscience, which is governed, in all things, by the Word of GOD, and which refers, at all times, to His authority.

This sound description of conscience we consider an inestimable treasure. It regulates everything, takes cognizance of the very smallest matter connected with our daily walk and habits - our mode of dress - our houses - our furniture - our table - our entire deportment, spirit, and style - our mode of conducting our business, or, if it be our lot to serve others, the mode in which we discharge the service, whatever it be. In short, everything falls under the healthful moral influence of a tender conscience. "**Herein**," says the blessed apostle, "**do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and men**" (Acts 24:16).

This is what we may well covet. There is something morally beautiful and attractive in this exercise of the greatest and most gifted servant of CHRIST. He, with all his splendid gifts, with all his marvellous powers, with all his profound insight into the ways and counsels of GOD, with all he had to speak of and glory in, with all the wonderful revelations made to him in the third heavens; in a word, he, the most honoured of apostles and privileged of saints, gave holy diligence to keep always a conscience void of offence both toward GOD and man; and if, in an unguarded moment, he uttered a hasty word, as he did to Ananias the high priest, he was ready, the very next moment, to confess and make restitution, so that the hasty utterance, "**God shall**

smite thee, thou whited wall" was withdrawn, and GOD's Word given instead - **"Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people."**

Nor we do not believe that Paul could have retired to rest, that night, with a conscience void of offence, if he had not withdrawn his words.

There must be confession, when we do or say what is wrong; and if there be not the confession, our communion will assuredly be interrupted. Communion, with unconfessed sin upon the conscience, is a moral impossibility. We may talk of it; but it is all the merest delusion. We must keep a clean conscience if we would walk with GOD. There is nothing more to be dreaded than moral insensibility a slovenly conscience, an obtuse moral sense that can allow all sorts of things to pass unjudged; that can commit sin, pass on, and coolly say, "What evil have I done?"

Reader, let us, with holy vigilance, watch against all this. Let us seek to cultivate a tender conscience. It will demand from us what it demanded from Paul, namely, **"exercise."** But it is blessed exercise, and it will yield most precious fruits. Do not suppose that there is anything that savours of the legal in this exercise; nay, it is most thoroughly Christian; indeed we look upon those noble words of Paul as the very embodiment, in a condensed form, of the whole of a Christian's practice. **"To have always a conscience void of offence toward God and men"** comprehends everything.

But alas! how little do we habitually ponder the claims of GOD, or the claims of our fellow-man! How little is our conscience up to the mark! Claims of all sorts are neglected, yet we feel it not.

There is no brokenness and contrition before the Lord. We commit trespass in a thousand things, yet there is no confession or restitution. Things are allowed to pass that ought to be judged, confessed, and put away. There is sin in our holy things; there is lightness and indifference of spirit in the assembly and at the Lord's table; we rob GOD, in various ways; we think our own thoughts, speak our own words, do our own pleasure; and what is all this but robbing GOD, seeing that we are not our own but bought with a price?

Now, we cannot but think that all this must sadly hinder our spiritual growth. It grieves the Spirit of GOD and hinders His gracious ministry of CHRIST to our souls whereby alone we grow up into Him. We know, from various parts of GOD's Word, how much He prizes a tender spirit, a contrite heart. **"To this man will I look, even to him that is of a contrite spirit and trembles at my word."** With such an one GOD can dwell; but with hardness and insensibility, coldness and indifference, He can have no fellowship. Oh! then let us exercise ourselves to have always a pure and uncondemning conscience, both as to GOD and as to our fellow-man.

The third and last section of our chapter, which we need not quote at length, teaches us a deeply solemn lesson, whether we view it from a dispensational or a moral point of view.

It contains the record of the great ordinance designed for the trial of jealousy. Its place here is remarkable.

- in the first section, we have the corporate judgment of evil:
- in the second, we have individual self-judgment, confession, and restitution: and

- in the third, we learn that GOD cannot endure even the mere suspicion of evil.

Now, we fully believe that this very impressive ordinance has a dispensational bearing upon the relationship between the Lord and Israel. The prophets dwell largely upon Israel's conduct as a wife, and upon the Lord's jealousy, on that score. We do not attempt to quote the passages, but the reader will find them throughout the pages of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Israel could not abide the searching trial of the bitter water. Her unfaithfulness has been made manifest. She has broken her vows. She has gone aside from her Husband, the Holy One of Israel, whose burning jealousy has been poured forth upon the Faithless nation. He is a jealous GOD, and cannot bear the thought that the heart that He claims as His own should be given to another.

Thus we see that this ordinance for the trial of jealousy bears very distinctly upon it the impress of the divine character. In it He most fully enters into the thoughts and feelings of an injured husband, or of one who even suspected an injury. The bare suspicion is perfectly intolerable, and where it takes possession of the heart, the matter must be sifted to the very bottom. The suspected one must undergo a process of such a searching nature that only the faithful one can endure.

If there was a trace of guilt, the bitter water could search down into the very depths of the soul, and bring it full out. There was no escape for the guilty one; and, we may say, that the very fact of there being no possible escape for the guilty, only made the vindication of the innocent more triumphant. The self-same process that declared the guilt of the guilty, made manifest the innocence of the faithful.

To one who is thoroughly conscious of integrity, the more searching the investigation the more welcome it is. If there were a possibility of a guilty one escaping, through any defect in the mode of trial, it would only make against the innocent. But the process was divine, and therefore perfect; and hence, when the suspected wife had gone through it in safety, her fidelity was perfectly manifested, and full confidence restored.

What a mercy, then, to have had such a perfect mode of settling all suspected cases! Suspicion is the death blow to all loving intimacy, and GOD would not have it in the midst of His congregation. He would not only have His people collectively to judge evil, and individually to judge themselves; But where there was even the suspicion of evil, and no evidence forthcoming, He Himself devised a method of trial which perfectly brought the truth to light. The guilty one had to drink death, and found it to be judgment. *

* The "**dust**" lifted from the floor of the tabernacle may be viewed as the figure of death. "**Thou hast brought me into the dust of death.**" The "**water**" prefigures the word, which, being brought to bear upon the conscience, by the power of the Holy Ghost, makes everything manifest. If there has been any unfaithfulness to CHRIST, the true husband of His people, it must be thoroughly judged. This holds good with regard to the nation of Israel, to the Church of GOD, and to the individual believer. If the heart be not true to CHRIST, it will not be able to stand the searching power of the Word. But if there be truth in the inward parts, the more one is searched and tried, the better. How blessed it is when we can truly say,

“Search me, O God, and know my Heart: try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139:23, 24).

The faithful one drank death, and found it victory.

~ end of chapter 5 ~

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