

# A Spiritual Elixir

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## Numbers 5:12-31

**12** Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, If any man's wife go aside, and commit a trespass against him,

**13** 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;

**14** And the spirit of jealousy come upon him, and he be jealous of his wife, and she be defiled: or if the spirit of jealousy come upon him, and he be jealous of his wife, and she be not defiled:

**15** Then shall the man bring his wife unto the priest, and he shall bring her offering for her, the tenth part of an ephah of barley meal; he shall pour no oil upon it, nor put frankincense thereon; for it is an offering of jealousy, an offering of memorial, bringing iniquity to remembrance.

**16** And the priest shall bring her near, and set her before the Lord:

**17** And the priest shall take holy water in an earthen vessel; and of the dust that is in the floor of the tabernacle the priest shall take, and put it into the water:

**18** And the priest shall set the woman before the Lord, and uncover the woman's head, and put the offering of memorial in her hands, which is the jealousy offering: and the priest shall have in his hand the bitter water that causeth the curse:

**19** 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:

**20** But if thou hast gone aside to another instead of thy husband, and if thou be defiled, and some man have lain with thee beside thine husband:

**21** Then the priest shall charge the woman with an oath of cursing, and the priest shall

say unto the woman, The Lord make thee a curse and an oath among thy people, when the Lord doth make thy thigh to rot, and thy belly to swell;

**22** And this water that causeth the curse shall go into thy bowels, to make thy belly to swell, and thy thigh to rot: And the woman shall say, Amen, amen.

**23** And the priest shall write these curses in a book, and he shall blot them out with the bitter water:

**24** And he shall cause the woman to drink the bitter water that causeth the curse: and the water that causeth the curse shall enter into her, and become bitter.

**25** Then the priest shall take the jealousy offering out of the woman's hand, and shall wave the offering before the Lord, and offer it upon the altar:

**26** And the priest shall take an handful of the offering, even the memorial thereof, and burn it upon the altar, and afterward shall cause the woman to drink the water.

**27** And when he hath made her to drink the water, then it shall come to pass, that, if she be defiled, and have done trespass against her husband, that the water that causeth the curse shall enter into her, and become bitter, and her belly shall swell, and her thigh shall rot: and the woman shall be a curse among her people.

**28** And if the woman be not defiled, but be clean; then she shall be free, and shall conceive seed.

**29** This is the law of jealousies, when a wife goeth aside to another instead of her husband, and is defiled;

**30** Or when the spirit of jealousy cometh upon him, and he be jealous over his wife, and shall set the woman before the Lord, and the priest shall execute upon her all this law.

**31** Then shall the man be guiltless from iniquity, and this woman shall bear her iniquity.

## A Spiritual Elixir

Numbers chapter five contains the precept, given of God to Israel, to appease the spirit of jealousy in the heart of a husband, whose wife is suspected of adultery. Be sure you understand. She is not *proven* guilty, but only *suspected* to have been unfaithful (v. 13).

For her to have been *proven* guilty was an *automatic* death sentence. In the Gospel of John, chapter eight, the Pharisees took a woman in the very act of adultery, brought her before the Lord Jesus Christ, and said, "The law says she is to be stoned. What do you say" (John 8:3) Adultery having been *proven*, brought an automatic death sentence.

*Proven* adultery is not the case of which we read in our text above. This woman is only a *suspect*. She has not been taken in the act of adultery, nor has she been accused by an eye witness. There has been no public confession by either of these women, but because of her suspicious conduct, because of accusations, rumors, and innuendo, the gossip spread. At last, it has fallen upon the ears of her loving husband, and a *spirit of jealousy* begins to burn in his heart. Perhaps she has been observed in a compromising situation. Maybe she has been seen alone for a period of time with another man. It could be that she is just a flirt! The text doesn't say.

Whatever the reason may have been, the husband in his *spirit of jealousy*, could not take matters into his own hands risking dishonor to himself, his wife, or his God; something *had* to be done. As a remedy and because of the husband's love for his wife, the Lord gave this

precept to determine and clearly reveal the truth, condemning the guilty, or justifying the innocent. *Then*, and only then could the spirit of jealousy be extinguished in the *loving husband*.

I keep repeating *loving husband* because a loving husband is the *only* husband that would be jealous. Where there is no love for a beloved bride, there is no jealousy. This was a *loving husband*.

### ***The precept concerns two completely different women.***

The first is an *unfaithful* bride, but one who *pretended* to love her husband. She pretended to be submissive to him, publically singing his praise, and bragging on his name. She would sing "Oh! How I love Jesus," but only in *pretense*. Secretly, she lives a life contrary to her pretense. Secretly she is involved with *another*, but not *openly*. There are no witnesses to her behavior, and she is careful never to be caught in the act. *All* of the gossip and innuendo is true.

The second woman is a *faithful* bride. She is a *loving wife*, falsely charged, and whose reputation must be restored to satisfy her jealous husband. *None* of the gossip and innuendo is true.

### ***An inward work of God proves guilt and innocence.***

Pay careful attention to the text! The precept is written and given to extinguish the spirit of jealousy through an *inward work of God*, which would condemn *or* justify the accused. Specifically, it is to reveal to the husband the *heart* of his beloved wife.

Adultery is not just a breach of the law, it is a sin against love.

In my lifetime, there have been many who were anxious to describe their *Christian experience* to me. Have you ever heard this one? "I was convicted of smoking." That is *not* conviction of sin. Conviction of sin is seeing *yourself* and everything that you *do* is *contrary to* and *against* the love of Christ. Never have I seen a more vivid picture of that fact, than in the precept of this law dealing with the unfaithful bride.

Here we have the compromise of a Holy union that has been sanctified in the eyes of God. What could be more obnoxious to a husband than to have a *pretended* affection from his wife, while her heart burns for another? What could possibly inflame a man more than to picture his beloved bride in the arms of another man? Jealousy is a fire that must be totally extinguished or it will consume the object of its wrath.

### ***A reminder about the Old Testament law and prophets***

Those of you who have studied the scriptures and listened to your pastor's teaching, know that all these precepts picture the work of Christ and that which is done in the hearts of his elect. The book of Numbers is about Israel's journey through the wilderness and God's preparation of them for entering into Canaan. It pictures the spiritual journey of the Christian through this world and into the Heavenly presence of Christ.

The Old Testament priesthood described in the law was not given to be copied and restructured in the New Testament church as it has been by

the Catholic and other so-called "christian" religions. The things of the priesthood and the law were patterns of things in the heavens. Paul said They were shadows of good things to come and figures for the time then present (Hebrews 9:24, 10:1). He tells us in the book of Acts, "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43)

So, my purpose *is not* to introduce a new precept to the church to satisfy jealous husbands! This precept is showing us how Christ, *our jealous husband, reconciles* his beloved bride. Here, my purpose is to show you how and what must take place to bring this reconciliation to pass. I see seven things in this precept that *every believing soul will come to know in the sweet experience of grace.*

### ***1. The accused woman must be brought by her jealous but loving husband to the minister of God.***

The woman in question must be *brought* to the minister of God. The *priest* spoken of in this precept is *not* the *high* priest. This is a *common* priest. The jealous husband must *bring* her to this *common* priest because he has been set apart (sanctified) to minister in the things concerning the tabernacle. Holy things; Spiritual things; Things of God. It is in the same sense that Peter tells us, "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5). It *could* even be said that this priest represents a

*preacher*, to whom the accused wife (bride) is brought by a faithful husband (Christ).

The accused wives are of Israel (v. 12), and therefore God's people. If the husband was jealous, so must have been the priest. Does that seem odd to you? Paul said, "I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present *you as* a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11: 2). It is not unthinkable to assume this priest, who now must examine her, is the same priest before whom she took her vows of marriage.

There *is* a Godly jealousy in the hearts of those who minister the gospel for those *begotten* under his ministry to be presented to their faithful husband as pure and chaste virgins. Paul said, "I have *begotten* you through the gospel" (1 Corinthians 4:15), and later added, "I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity (*union* or *oneness*) that is in Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3). Christ and his bride are *one*. As a bride and her husband have entered into a holy union, so has Christ and his church.

But His (Christ's) bride is *questionable* at best. Isn't she? Because of the presence of her nature of sin, she is always under *suspicion* and her husband will not tolerate adultery. Physical adultery typifies the spiritual adultery of men and women being lead astray under the influence and damning effects of false religion.

Physical adultery also represents a heart for this world. In the scriptures, all such attractions to the world are referred to as adultery – spiritual adultery, and Christ will not

share the love of his bride with another. Her reputation is such that she must (v. 15) be brought to the priest to settle this issue.

Many think they can settle the issue themselves. Most believe that a reformation of life will straighten things out with God, but it *won't!* Others think that a confession or profession of faith will do it. Those are *our* thoughts, and *our* thoughts are *not* God's thoughts (Isaiah 55:8). "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Corinthians 1:21), and she *shall* (v. 15) be brought by her jealous husband to be dealt with by the Lord, through the preaching of the gospel. Only *there* can the hearts of men and women be exposed.

Do you know why most people will not come to hear the gospel? Scripture tells us they will not come to the light because their deeds are evil (John 3:19). When one comes to the light, it exposes the filth. In their rebellion they are left to believe the "way which seemeth right unto a man," but "the end thereof *are* the ways of death" (Proverbs 4:12, 16:25).

## ***2. The jealous but loving husband must provide the offering required (v. 15).***

By God's command, the jealous husband must not only bring his wife, but *he must provide the offering required of her*. She is to bring one tenth part of an Ephah, which is an Omer of barley, but she has *nothing to bring* but guilt, shame, and a questionable reputation. The loving husband must provide the omer of barley *for her*.

This is a token of the love of Christ. This is the first fruits of her husband's love. He takes it for her. He puts it in *her* hands (v. 18). When Ruth returned with Naomi and was told by her to go out and glean in the fields, she returned with an omer of barley. Boaz spotted her in his field, called his men over, and said, "Don't bother that one." To make sure she is successful he further directed them to, "let fall also *some* of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave *them*, that she may glean *them*, and rebuke her not. (Ruth 2:16). They were a token of his love.

She returned to Naomi with an omer of barley without realizing what she had. She had only gleaned what was there. She was but an ignorant gentile. When Naomi saw what she had gleaned, she asked, "Where have you been gleaning!?" Ruth said, "In Boaz's field." "Ohh!!! I know *who* he is!"

There is another place we read of an omer of barley. It is in the book of Hosea. Picture that harlot bride spoken of there, who despised her husband's love, chased after her lovers, and is now ruined. Not even her lovers want her anymore. Now, she is on the auction block, and Hosea, the man of God, goes down and buys his bride for an omer of barley. He is a jealous husband, but he *loves* his bride and he will have her, if he can. Yes, I said, "If he can"? Does that rub you the wrong way? Does that go contrary to sovereign grace? I don't think so. He will reconcile her *if he can* do it without compromising his own person and the righteous integrity of God.

Notice, the offering is *not* to be *anointed* (v. 15). It is not to be *doctored up*. It is not to have any

frankincense, nor oil on it. This offering is not like the offering that went into the Holy of Holies. This is a *jealously* offering. This is about a *memorial* of sin and a *memorial* of inequity. This is about *exposing* the bride's *heart*. This is a ceremony in which the loving husband's bride would be condemned or justified. If I understand the wave offering, it is concerning the first fruits, and even if in *her* hands, it is a token of *his* first fruits.

### ***3. The suspected wife must be brought before the Lord (v. 16).***

Why must the bride be brought before the Lord? Couldn't they easily choose a counsel or a jury to rule on the husband's suspicions? No. There are no witnesses! There is no evidence! There is only suspicion.

Why bring her before God? Because he is the *only one that can manifest the hearts of men*. Sometimes we are guilty of thinking we can go visit our cousin, open our Bible, and *convince* him of the truth. Have you ever wanted to grab a person by the neck, unscrew their head and dump the Gospel in, screaming, "Why can't you see this!!!"

*Only God can make it known.* Man looks on the outward part, and that is as far as he can see. But God looks on the *heart*. Only He is able to manifest the truth where and by whom he purposes to do it. God *always* attends the means he has ordained.

I recently preached a message on the necessity of Gospel preaching. Later, a man came to me and said, "I want to show you something." He proceeded to open his Bible to the

book of Acts, and said, "The Lord smote Paul down from a big white stallion with a bright light, threw him into the mud, and revealed himself to him. There was no preaching involved!" I said, "Well, why don't you go get on a big white horse and ride it around Arkansas until God smites you down with a bright light, if that is what you believe? But if I were you, I would read where Paul instructs us concerning the necessity of preaching and preachers (Romans 10:14). *That* is where I would get my doctrine." God *always* attends the means he has *ordained* and His means are always effectual. *You* might say, "Well, *I* preached and nothing happened." I say, "Well, you didn't preach." Preaching is *always* effectual. It will be a savor of life unto life *or* death unto death (2 Corinthians 2:16). When the jealous husband brought the accused bride to the priest, it was *effectual*. Don't ever forget that.

#### **4. A strange and wonderful concoction; a holy elixir (v. 17).**

The Lord God of Israel here commands a potion to be mixed - a *holy* elixir. An exact prescription for this strange and wonderful concoction is given to the priest, and it is to be placed in an earthen vessel. His command is to "take holy water in an earthen vessel" (Vs. 17). Holy water dipped from the laver (I suspect that is what he meant) is taken and placed in a clay pot. The priest is then to go into the holy place and sweep dust from the floor, mixing it in the holy water contained in the pot. What a strange concoction!

To me, the water from the laver is a picture of the sanctifying presence

of the Holy Spirit and the washing of water by His word (Ephesians 5:26).

The dust swept from the floor of the holy place is *holy dust*, or a *holy death*. Dust is a symbol of death, *or even* a symbol of creation. View it as either or both. It may be both. But the fact that it came from the holy place might direct our minds to a few considerations of it.

Put the water and the dust together and you have *the gospel of Christ* as it is preached in the power of God's Holy Spirit. Paul describes it as God's "treasure in an earthen vessel" (2 Corinthians 4:7). What will justify or condemn this suspected woman is *the gospel* taken *within* the accused (v. 27).

Why doesn't the natural man understand? It is because *this potion is not practical*. The natural man reasons, "This doesn't make sense." Natural man will not receive the spiritual things of God because they are not practical (1 Corinthians 2:14). There is *nothing* in this cup to cause the woman's thigh to rot, or her belly to swell. It is just *dirty water*. In and of itself, the elixir is nothing practical. It is spiritual, and there is nothing to *produce reason*, or *explanation* of what would take place in the hearts of those who drank it.

More than likely, when the priest brought it to the unfaithful bride, it appeared foolishness to her (1 Corinthians 2:14). She could have reasoned within herself, "There is nothing in that potion to expose me. I'll drink that. No problem." It seemed only to be another foolish ploy to get her to confess what she was sure that no one else knew. "It's just water and dust in a clay pot; nothing to fear; nothing to bring about a curse!" But,

this was a *spiritual* elixir, a sanctified potion which *God himself would make effectual*.

Now hear what I am about to say! The business of the preacher is to *mix* the potion (v. 17). By God's instruction he received the prescription and mixed the potion, placing it into the hands of the accused and charged her to drink it. Everything else is up to God. That is as far as he could go.

### **5. The priest is charged with making clear both the curse and the consequences (vv. 21-23).**

The priest receives a holy charge to make clear both the curse and the consequences of her actions. They are to be written in a book (Vs. 23). He is not only to declare the curse of God against such a crime, but make her acknowledge it as it was written in the Holy Book. The only way possible for this holy curse to be blotted out is for her to drink this bitter medicine and wait on God to reveal the end. All she can do is drink, and wait.

The priest having declared both the *curse* and the *way of justification*, she is to say in a loud voice "Amen." No. That is not what verse twenty-two says. It says "*Amen, Amen*" (v. 22). "Amen!" if He justifies and returns me to the arms of my loving husband, and "Amen!" if He doesn't. This resignation is no less true of the beloved spouse of God who must be given this instruction by God's preacher and then placing themselves at the mercy of God.

### **6. This precept concerns two women? or one? (v. 22)**

This precept is concerning two women - one guilty and the other *totally* innocent. Can you fathom, in your own experience of grace, that both these women are one and the same? This thought is what opened this passage to me. *It is the same woman!*

This spiritual elixir both *condemns and justifies*. By the Gospel she is placed before God, and finds herself taking sides with Him in her own condemnation. Isn't that something!? David said, "Against thee and thee only have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight" (Psalm 51:4). Why in the world would David say such a thing? - "that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest and clear when thou judgest." Job said, "if I justify myself my own mouth condemns me."

The accused bride finds herself in the same position. She couldn't justify herself. Her own mouth would condemn her. The only thing that this woman was *required* to say was "amen." In my own experience, I remember listening to the gospel, and as the Holy Spirit convicted me of sin, saying "amen." True grace shuts a man up to God. It is all in His hands. It is "Amen" if he condemns and "Amen" if he justifies. The accused must drink and wait on God to determine the end.

What happens to a man or woman who *hears* the gospel? They will be "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, as God has set him forth as a propitiation through faith in his blood" (Romans 3:25). He justly justifies her to declare his righteousness in her justification.

That is the spiritual application of this precept, else God will give her

over to a strong delusion because she received not the love of the truth that she might be saved (2 Thessalonians 2:11). *Then* she will begin to rot from the inside out.

But, believers are *both* condemned and justified. Let us be reminded, this is speaking of Israel in their walk through the wilderness to Canaan. This is teaching us about worship. All of this precept was carried out inside the courtyard of the tabernacle. Believers are both condemned *and* justified. He who convinces of righteousness and satisfies judgment, first convinces of sin. If ever God convinces you of sin he will be the *only* one who can ever convince you of righteousness, and judgment *satisfied*.

All of the preachers on earth are not going to give you any peace until you hear from God. Hannah said, "the Lord *killeth* and *maketh alive*." I think she understood this precept, don't you? "He bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up" (1 Samuel 2:6-7). "He will keep the feet of his saints and the wicked shall be silent in darkness" (1 Samuel 2:9). All of the gossip, innuendo, murmurings and false charges – when God justifies his bride they will sit in darkness without a word.

### ***7. This precept and ceremony is repetitive (vv. 29-30).***

In the life and experience of a believer, this ceremony will be experienced again and again. As the accuser of the brethren attempts to defame the bride of Christ, she finds herself constantly being brought to drink his gospel, being *condemned and justified* every time she is brought. Every time she is

brought, again and again, over and over, she finds herself returned to the arms of her loving husband. Every time I hear the gospel – *Every time!* – I find myself guilty before God. What I would do, I do not. What I would not do, is exactly what I do (Romans 7:15). I find myself with Paul despising myself, and crying "Oh wretched man that I am who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through the Lord Jesus Christ. So then with the mind (the mind of Christ) I myself serve the law of God; (perfectly and uninterrupted and without compromise) But with the flesh the law of sin" (Romans 7:24-25). That man (or woman) who can walk after the spirit with the mind of Christ is free from condemnation, "for the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made him free" (Romans 8:2).

The bride is now returned to her husband – *Free!* Not "just as though she has never sinned," but "she has *never* sinned." She was returned *innocent*. Seeing his innocent bride justified by God, the husband's jealousy is extinguished, and he takes her back into his arms.

Not only that!! It says she conceived and had seed!

Amen.