Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Numbers 19:1-10

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. This week we will read Numbers chapters 19 and 20. Today we will read 19:1-10.

In the rebellion of Korah's faction, 14,700 Israelites died from the plague. The surviving Israelites had to deal with these corpses, and anyone who touched a dead body became unclean. In addition to this, of the more than 600,000 Israelite men who had been counted, all except Joshua and Caleb would die in the wilderness. The new generation of Israelites would also have to deal with large numbers of corpses, and they too would become unclean. It was at this particular time that God revealed the way of purification.

Before we enter into today's passage, we first need to understand this: death is the wages of sin, and the result of sin is death. Sin prevents people from coming before God. Only through offering sacrifices for sin could they be accepted by God again. Death completely separates a person from God. Not only that, death can also be transmitted; anyone who came into contact with a dead person would also become unclean. Therefore, God detests death even more than sin. When believers commit sin, their consciences become uneasy, and therefore they are very sensitive to sin. But when they come into contact with spiritual death, they are often less sensitive. As a result, they can easily be influenced without realizing it and fall into spiritual death themselves.

Dealing with sin requires blood. Blood can remove the barrier caused by sin. Leviticus 16 reveals that once a year, on the Day of Atonement, which was the tenth day of the seventh month of the Jewish calendar, the high priest was first to offer a bull as an atonement for himself. Only then would the high priest be qualified to bear the sins of the people. After that, he was to offer two male goats for the sins of the people. One was to be offered on the altar, and the blood of the sacrifice was to be brought into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled seven times before the mercy

seat. Only in this way could atonement be made for the sins committed by the people. The high priest was to lay his hands on the head of the other male goat, confess the sins committed by the Israelites, and put those sins upon the head of the goat. Then a man was to lead this goat into the wilderness and release it for Azazel. In this way, the sin was removed from the people of Israel.

On the Day of Atonement, both the high priest and the sacrificial animals were types of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ shed His precious blood on the cross and paid the price for our sins, so that our sins could be forgiven. After He died, He was buried and descended into Hades, returning the sins that people had committed to Satan. God therefore no longer remembered people's sins. Three days later, the Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, giving the Holy Spirit so that everyone who believes in Him might receive new life. The regulations concerning the Day of Atonement point completely to Christ. He shed His precious blood and cleansed us from our sins.

The Israelites in the Old Testament had to offer sacrifices every year on the Day of Atonement because the sacrifices themselves could not take away sin; they could only cover sin, and the covering was effective for one year. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ offered Himself once for all and completed redemption. Therefore, believers in the New Testament do not need to offer sacrifices again. They only need to appropriate the precious blood of Jesus Christ and confess their sins, and their sins will be forgiven. 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

If the Israelites became unclean by coming into contact with death, Leviticus 11 tells the Israelites that if they touched the carcass of an animal, they would be unclean until evening. They were to wash their bodies and their clothes, and on the following day they would be clean. But what should they do if they came into contact with a dead person? God had not yet revealed this. After the incident involving Korah's faction, the Israelites had to deal with a large number of corpses, so God revealed how to make water for purification, so that those who had become defiled by contact with a dead body could be cleansed.

Verses 1–2: "And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: 'This is the ordinance of the law which the LORD has commanded, saying: "Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring you a red heifer without blemish, in which there is no defect and on which a yoke has never come."'"

God commanded Moses and Aaron concerning a new ordinance: how an Israelite who had come into contact with a dead body could be cleansed. The answer was to make water for purification. How was it to be made? The first step was to bring a heifer that was without blemish, had never borne a yoke, and was completely red. There are four descriptions here concerning the sacrificial animal, and all four point to Christ.

First, it was to be without blemish. Christ had complete humanity without any blemish. Second, it had never borne a yoke. Christ came to earth in order to accomplish God's plan of redemption. He took nothing from this world and had no entanglement with this world. He had never been used by this world; He had never borne its yoke. Third, it was to be completely red. Red is the color of blood and represents Christ's redemption. Fourth, it was a heifer. On the Day of Atonement, Aaron was to offer a bull as an atonement for himself. The bull was for the sin offering, emphasizing Christ's strength in bearing witness to the truth. The heifer was for the nurturing of life, emphasizing Christ's gentle acceptance and embracing love.

A red heifer is exceedingly rare. According to Jewish tradition, throughout the long history of Israel, there have been only nine red heifers in total. After the time of Christ, no red heifer appeared again. In preparation for rebuilding the Third Temple, the Israelites have been actively breeding red heifers. It is said that they have successfully bred one and that it will be displayed in Shiloh in the near future. To remove sin, we need Christ; to remove the uncleanness from our bodies, we still need Christ.

Hebrews 9:13–14 says, "For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" The blood

of goats and bulls refers to the sacrifices offered on the Day of Atonement, which were used to remove people's sins; the ashes of a heifer refer to the making of water for purification, through which people could be cleansed. Both of these ordinances point to Jesus. Through the redemption of Jesus Christ, not only can our sins be removed, but our consciences can also be cleansed.

Verse 3: "You shall give it to Eleazar the priest, that he may take it outside the camp, and it shall be slaughtered before him."

Eleazar was the son of Aaron. The high priest Aaron could not become defiled; he had to remain in the tabernacle and carry out his priestly service. Therefore, the slaughtering of the sacrificial animal was entrusted to his son Eleazar. This also points to the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was sent by God the Father to come to earth to redeem humanity from sin and remove uncleanness.

Eleazar was to take the red heifer outside the camp, and the heifer was to be slaughtered before him. Jesus Christ was likewise crucified outside the city of Jerusalem, at Golgotha. The tabernacle was God's dwelling place, and the camp was the place where the clean Israelites lived. The red heifer, which represents Christ, bore human sin and thereby became unclean; therefore, it had to be taken outside the camp and slaughtered there. Jesus Christ, the holy Son of Man, bore the sins of humanity and became defiled, to the point that even God the Father hid His face from Him. Jesus was crucified on Mount Golgotha outside the city of Jerusalem, and while He was on the cross He cried out with a loud voice, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" God forsook Jesus and hid His face from Him.

Verse 4: "Then Eleazar the priest shall take some of its blood with his finger, and sprinkle some of its blood seven times directly in front of the tabernacle of meeting."

Eleazar the priest stood outside the camp, dipped his finger into the blood of the red heifer, and sprinkled the blood seven times toward the front of the tabernacle. Blood was for atonement, and sprinkling it seven times speaks of the completeness

of atonement. The red heifer was used to make water for purification. Through the priest sprinkling the blood, it was shown that this uncleanness came from sin. The matter of sin had already been forgiven through the sacrifice of the Day of Atonement, and the sevenfold sprinkling of blood points to this connection.

We know that on the Day of Atonement, the sacrificial animal was offered on the altar, and its blood was brought into the Holy of Holies. The high priest sprinkled the blood seven times on the mercy seat, and the remaining blood was poured out beside the horns of the altar. The blood of the red heifer was different. The priest dipped his finger in the blood and sprinkled it seven times toward the tabernacle outside the camp, while all the remaining blood was left within the body of the red heifer.

Verse 5: "Then the heifer shall be burned in his sight: its hide, its flesh, its blood, and its offal shall be burned."

The entire red heifer—including its hide, flesh, blood, and even its offal—was to be completely burned outside the camp, so that the entire heifer was reduced to ashes. If we look at the sacrifices on the Day of Atonement, whether the bull or the male goat, the high priest was to burn the fat and the internal organs on the altar. The blood of the sacrifice was brought into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled seven times toward the mercy seat, and the remaining blood was poured out beside the altar. This blood made atonement for the people, while the rest of the sacrificial animal was also burned outside the camp.

Verse 6: "And the priest shall take cedar wood and hyssop and scarlet, and cast them into the midst of the fire burning the heifer."

First Kings 4:33 records Solomon's wisdom, and concerning plants, the Scripture says, "He spoke of trees, from the cedar tree of Lebanon even to the hyssop that springs out of the wall." The cedar tree is tall and straight, noble and elegant; hyssop grows on walls, ordinary and humble; and the scarlet thread represents blood and

redemption. These three things were to be thrown into the fire in which the red heifer was being burned and reduced to ashes together with the heifer.

In relation to Christ, the cedar wood represents Christ's strong and upright humanity; the hyssop represents Christ's willingness to humble Himself and become a lowly man in order to bear human sin; and the scarlet thread represents the precious blood shed by Christ. The red heifer also represents Christ. Christ came into the world as a man, coming from the throne in heaven into the midst of humanity. He possessed perfect humanity, yet He willingly humbled Himself, poured out His life to bear human sin, and was forsaken by God, being completely burned outside the camp. He received the full judgment, and ultimately became ashes. Ashes can no longer burn; ashes speak of judgment having been completed. These ashes were to become the material used to make water for purification.

For us, whether we are noble like the cedar or humble like the hyssop, after receiving the redemption of Jesus Christ, the water for purification made from the ashes of the red heifer can remove our uncleanness and restore us to purity.

Leviticus 14:1–9 speaks about the regulations for the cleansing of a person with leprosy. We see that the priest also used cedar wood, hyssop, and scarlet, dipping them into a vessel containing living water and the blood of a bird, and sprinkling the person seeking cleansing seven times. Then the person would be clean. Therefore, cedar wood, hyssop, and scarlet were also means through which a person could be cleansed.

Verses 7–8: "Then the priest shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and afterward he may come into the camp; the priest shall be unclean until evening. And he who burns it shall wash his clothes in water and bathe in water, and shall be unclean until evening."

Here we see a paradox: God revealed the method for making water for purification. Yet in the process of making it, the priest who supervised the preparation became unclean, and the person who helped the priest burn the heifer also became unclean.

They were both to remain unclean until evening. They had to bathe in water and wash their clothes, and only on the following day would they become clean.

The Israelites' day began in the evening, and only those who were clean could enter the camp. What is particularly significant is that the water of purification had to be made through a process in which those participating in its preparation became unclean. This speaks of the red heifer that bore the sins of others having to undergo complete burning and complete judgment. The ashes that remained were the testimony of this process, and everyone who participated in the process became unclean.

Verse 9: "Then a man who is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and store them outside the camp in a clean place; and they shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for the water of purification; it is for purifying from sin."

Another clean person was to gather the ashes of the red heifer. The nature of these ashes was considered unclean. Therefore, they could not be brought back into the camp but had to be stored outside the camp in a clean place. Most commentators believe that this was the place outside the camp where ashes were deposited. After sacrifices were offered, the ashes from the altar were collected and taken outside the camp, and the ashes of the red heifer were stored there.

The ashes testified to a process of complete judgment. In these ashes there was not only the red heifer that bore the sins of others, but also the cedar wood, hyssop, and scarlet that made cleansing possible. The ashes were also the result of judgment. They could no longer be changed; the work had been completed. Ashes also do not decay and will not change; they are completely reliable. From these ashes, water for purification could be made to remove from the congregation of Israel the uncleanness caused by contact with death and restore them to cleanliness. The ashes of one red heifer could be stored for decades, even hundreds of years. Whenever they were needed, the ashes could be used to prepare water for purification, so that the Israelites could once again be cleansed.

The Israelites' sacrifice on the Day of Atonement was for the removal of the sins they had already committed. Therefore, they had to offer sacrifices every year. However, the water for purification was made from the ashes of the red heifer. Once an Israelite became defiled by contact with death, the water for purification could be used immediately to remove the uncleanness and restore that person to cleanliness.

The sacrifice on the Day of Atonement was for the sins they had committed during the previous year, so that their sins could be forgiven; the water for purification was for the uncleanness they might encounter in the future. Once they became unclean, they had to be separated from the congregation of Israel. Therefore, the water for purification could be used at any time to remove their uncleanness and restore them to cleanliness. Both were for dealing with sin: one was for atonement, while the other was for removing the uncleanness brought about by death.

In the New Testament, the author of Hebrews tells us very clearly in Hebrews 9:12–14, "Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

Jesus Christ offered Himself to God once for all through the eternal Spirit. In this way, He can remove our dead works and bring forgiveness of our sins. Jesus Christ is also like the ashes of the red heifer, able to cleanse our consciences.

Verse 10: "And the one who gathers the ashes of the heifer shall wash his clothes and be unclean until evening. It shall be a statute forever for the children of Israel and for the stranger who dwells among them."

The person who gathered the ashes of the red heifer would also be unclean until evening. He had to wash his body and his clothes with water in order to become

clean. This was to be a statute forever for the Israelites and for the strangers who dwelt among them.

When an Israelite came into contact with a dead person, he had to use the water of purification in order to become clean. In its New Testament application, this is no longer about coming into contact with a physically dead person, but about coming into contact with spiritual death. If a person comes into contact with spiritual death and does not deal with it, that person becomes defiled by the uncleanness of spiritual death. His conscience becomes unclean, and he can also cause others to become unclean. He does not need to crucify Christ again. He only needs to appropriate the effectiveness of Christ's redemption, be united with Christ in His death, and then be united with Christ in His resurrection. In other words, he needs to experience the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit, receiving the effectiveness of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Then that person can once again be cleansed.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You! Through today's passage, we recognize that You not only shed Your precious blood on the cross and completed the redemptive death for us; when we become defiled by death and our consciences become unclean, Your redemption also includes the ashes of the red heifer, which have the eternal power to cleanse. Thank You that You not only shed Your precious blood to cleanse us from our sins, but also became that water of purification that can cleanse our consciences. Thank You that Your salvation is so complete. Help us to remove the uncleanness from our lives, so that we may continually live in fellowship with You. We pray in the holy name of our Lord Jesus Christ.