

An offering (15). Since the sin is not only against the husband or wife, as the case may be, but also against the Lord, an offering is required. Similarly in every aspect of the life of the Christian it is important that he pay attention to the offering which Christ made of Himself on the cross. The atonement is the very foundation of the Christian life and must never be left out of account.

ii. The test of guilt (v.16-31). These verses give detailed instructions for a test which the priest is to perform to determine whether the woman is guilty or not, and thus to put an end to the situation of jealousy and suspicion. This test seems strange to many today. In modern times it is usually found that physical causes have physical results regardless of the moral and spiritual situation back of them. It is not expected that the physical situation of a woman who has been unfaithful in her marital relations will necessarily be different from that of one who has been faithful to her husband.

It is sometimes said that this test was a primitive practice common to Israel's heathen neighbours and of animistic origin. Actually there is no evidence of any such practice among the nations contiguous to Israel. It is true that the idea that divinity would intervene to reveal the guilt or innocence of one accused of a crime is found among many peoples; yet in none of the nations neighbouring to Israel is there evidence of any custom with significant details similar to those of our present section. The nearest analogy would be the Babylonian ordeal described in the Code of Hammurabi, but this is very different from anything contained in the Bible.

It should be noted that it is nowhere stated that this test is intended to be used after the people settle in the Promised Land. Chapter v begins with specific references to the purity of 'the camp' (2-3), and there is no reference to such a practice in later parts of the Bible or in any other writing that has come down to us from the period prior to the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in A.D. 70. A century or more after that event the rabbis engaged in extensive speculations about every feature of