

Leviticus 11-14 Chapter Study

INTRODUCTION

The theme of Leviticus is *the Holiness of God*.

It's called Leviticus because it's instructions for the *Levites*, the priestly tribe of Israel.

The entire book was dictated to Moses by the Lord while the nation was camped at the foot of Mt. Sinai, after having come out of slavery in Egypt.

While God had made Himself known in a personal way to Abraham, Isaac & Jacob, the original fathers of the people of Israel – some 400 years have passed and the people had largely lost their knowledge of who God was.

The year Israel spent at the foot of Mt. Sinai was a time for them to rediscover Him.

And most important on God's agenda was to let the people know that what He wanted with them was a warm, personal and intimate relationship with them.

The problem is, He is holy, and they were not.

The only way to bridge the gap between them was by sacrifice and by a very careful observance of the rules He gave for them to approach Him by.

These rules, while seemingly tedious to us today as we read them, were meant to impress upon the people that God **IS** Holy, & we do not improvise our own way to Him – we must come by the way He has proscribed.

To approach God on our own initiative and by our own means is dangerous – as the story of Nadab & Abihu from our last study in ch. 10 teach us.

If you were given the task of defusing a nuclear warhead – would you like to go at it armed just with your own ideas & a pocket-knife, or with a set of instructions, the proper tools, and an expert looking over your shoulder telling you exactly what to do?

This is what Leviticus is – a detailed set of instructions & tools & the Expert's directions on how to approach a holy God.

Outline for Leviticus

I. THE OFFERINGS

Chs 1-7

II. CONSECRATION OF THE PRIESTS

Chs 8-10

III. THE CLEAN & THE UNCLEAN

Chs 11-15

A. Clean & Unclean Foods

Ch 11

¹Now the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying to them, ²“Speak to the children of Israel, saying, ‘These are the animals which you may eat among all the animals that are on the earth:

Everything we've looked at in the first 10 chapters has dealt with the ritual element of the priesthood & the worship of the people.

Now God is going to give some practical & dietary regulations; telling the people what kind of animals are approved for eating.

What's interesting about the list of approved & banned foods is that God is actually giving Israel some really excellent guidance on what constitutes a healthy diet.

Many of the animals He prohibits were prone to disease & the cause of ill-

health to people of the ancient world.

It wasn't until the advent of modern nutritional science that the reasons why these foods were prohibited became clear.

Also, because of advances in the technology of food harvesting & preparation, some of the foods that were prohibited to Israel's *ancient* diet because they were dangerous, are no longer dangerous.

I found a book at *Sam's Club* just this week titled, *The Maker's Diet*.

It's a review of what we find here in Leviticus & an excellent treatise on why the diet of the ancient Hebrews was superior in maximizing physical health.

Dr. McMillen wrote a little book some years ago titled, *None of These Diseases* which reviews the medical & nutritional context in which the original dietary laws of Leviticus were given & shows how they reveal a knowledge of biology, nutrition, & medicine that was simply outside the league of man's knowledge at that time.

³Among the animals, whatever divides the hoof, having cloven hooves and chewing the cud—that you may eat. ⁴Nevertheless these you shall not eat among those that chew the cud or those that have cloven hooves: the camel, because it chews the cud but does not have cloven hooves, is unclean to you; ⁵the rock hyrax, because it chews the cud but does not have cloven hooves, is unclean to you; ⁶the hare, because it chews the cud but does not have cloven hooves, is unclean to you; ⁷and the swine, though it divides the hoof, having cloven hooves, yet does not chew the cud, is unclean to you. ⁸Their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcasses you shall not touch. They are unclean to you.

In vs. 3-8, we get the rule regarding *mammals*.

Whatever had a *cloven hoof* and *chewed the cud*.

A *hoof*, means the leg ends in a hard nail as opposed to a paw or clawed foot.

But the hoof had to be cloven, separated into separate nails, not just one, as in the horse.

The *cud* referred to food that had been returned to the mouth from the stomach to chew again.

This happens with a type of animal known as a *ruminant*; an animal that has *more than one stomach*.

They eat grasses or grains, which pass into the *first* stomach where they digest for a time. Then, some time later, they 'urp' them back up and chew on them further.

This 'urped' material is called 'cud.'

Examples of mammals that have both a divided hoof & chew the cud are cattle, deer, goats, & sheep.

The camel, the hyrax (like a large squirrel) & the hare, all chew the cud but aren't hoofed – they have *paws*. They were unclean.

The swine or pig has a divided hoof, but doesn't chew the cud.

The pig is singled out here in vs. 7 & 8 because pork was a commonly used food

source in the ancient world & God wanted to make sure His people did not join in.

Pigs are scavengers, and all scavenging animals are forbidden to the Jewish diet because they tend to be plagued with disease.

The pig in particular carried 2 insidious parasites, 1 which caused trichinosis, and the other, a tapeworm that can grow to a whopping 10 feet long!

Now we get the rules for the *water animals* –

9These you may eat of all that *are* in the water: whatever in the water has fins and scales, whether in the seas or in the rivers—that you may eat. **10**But all in the seas or in the rivers that do not have fins and scales, all that move in the water or any living thing which *is* in the water, they *are* an abomination to you. **11**They shall be an abomination to you; you shall not eat their flesh, but you shall regard their carcasses as an abomination. **12**Whatever in the water does not have fins or scales—that *shall be* an abomination to you.

Any water going creature that had both fins & scales was considered clean and acceptable for eating.

This would include almost all fish.

The only fish excepted would be catfish, sharks, and of course, all shellfish like clams, crabs, oysters, & lobster.

This may seem like a great loss to those of us who enjoy lobster & crab, but shellfish are scavengers and there are times of the year when they are *filled* with disease causing agents.

The ancient Jewish diet contained a lot of fresh & salted fish.

It's been only recently modern science has discovered the incredible health benefits from *fish oil*, & that *protein* from fish is of the highest quality.

Now we turn to the birds.

13And these you shall regard as an abomination among the birds; they shall not be eaten, they *are* an abomination: the eagle, the vulture, the buzzard, **14**the kite, and the falcon after its kind; **15**every raven after its kind, **16**the ostrich, the short-eared owl, the sea gull, and the hawk after its kind; **17**the little owl, the fisher owl, and the screech owl; **18**the white owl, the jackdaw, and the carrion vulture; **19**the stork, the heron after its kind, the hoopoe, and the bat.

Instead of getting a list of approved birds, we get a list of just those which are prohibited as unclean.

These are all predators or scavengers. Even the predatory birds are not opposed to lighting on a carcass and taking some bites of rotting meat.

But there is probably another and *even more* important reason why God told them not to eat of the predatory birds like the eagle, hawk, owl, and falcon.

These birds were absolutely crucial to limiting the population of the varmints that would tend to devastate their crops.

They also do not tend to produce very dense populations. They are territorial and rather rare compared to other animals. So it was crucial their

populations be left alone so as to provide a natural pest-control influence.

Now we turn to the insects -

20 All flying insects that creep on *all fours* shall be an abomination to you. **21** Yet these you may eat of every flying insect that creeps on *all fours*: those which have jointed legs above their feet with which to leap on the earth. **22** These you may eat: the locust after its kind, the destroying locust after its kind, the cricket after its kind, and the grasshopper after its kind. **23** But all *other* flying insects which have four feet shall be an abomination to you.

Don't get tripped up by the mention of insects and "four feet" here.

Certainly Moses knew that insects have 6, not 4 legs!

The phrases, "that creep on fours" & "four feet" were simply *idioms* that meant 'to go about on the earth on legs.'

The point was that all insects were unclean except those flying insects with jointed legs, like the locust; these could be consumed.

And again, the reason is because the diet of these animals were fresh vegetation.

Other insects such as ants & flies often have a diet off of dead and rotting things.

Now God gives strict instructions about avoiding contact with dead bodies of unclean animals.

24 By these you shall become unclean; whoever touches the carcass of any of them shall be unclean until evening; **25** whoever carries part of the carcass of any of them shall wash his clothes and be unclean until evening: **26** The carcass of any animal which divides the foot, but is not cloven-hoofed or does not chew the cud, is unclean to you. Everyone who touches it shall be unclean. **27** And whatever goes on its paws, among all kinds of animals that go on *all fours*, those are unclean to you. Whoever touches any such carcass shall be unclean until evening. **28** Whoever carries *any such* carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until evening. It is unclean to you.

God is protecting His people from the contamination of infectious and contagious diseases, even though in that age, they had no idea such things existed!

The medical science of that time was incredibly superstitious.

For instance, the Egyptians were recognized as the most advanced civilization of that age. ^[1]

Their medical texts were the standard by which all else was judged.

Here's what the *Papyrus Ebers*, written about 1552 BC, the same time as Moses, said . . .

☛ prevent the hair from turning gray, anoint it with the blood of a black calf which has been boiled in oil, or the fat of a rattlesnake.

☛ When hair falls out, apply a mixture of six fats, namely those of the horse, the hippopotamus, the crocodile, the cat, the snake, & the ibex.

☛ strengthen hair, anoint with the tooth of a donkey crushed in honey.

An extra-special hair dressing for the Egyptian Queen consisted of equal parts of a heel of an Abyssinian greyhound, date blossoms, & asses' hoofs, boiled in oil.

To save victims bitten by poisonous snakes, physicians of that day gave them "magic water" to drink—water that had been poured over a special idol.

To embedded splinters they applied worms' blood & asses' dung. Since dung is loaded with tetanus spores, it is little wonder that lockjaw took a heavy toll in splinter cases.

Several hundred remedies for diseases are advised in the *Papyrus Ebers*.

The drugs include "lizards' blood, swines' teeth, putrid meat, stinking fat, moisture from pigs' ears, milk goose grease, asses' hoofs, animal fats from various sources, excrete from animals, including human beings, donkeys, antelopes, dogs, cats, and, even flies."^[2]

In light of the contemporary medical wisdom, which as a prince of Egypt who'd been schooled in all their arts Moses would have been well versed in, what we find here flies in the face of conventional wisdom.

This is clear evidence that what we find here is nothing less than the inspired Word of the Spirit as God Spoke to Moses.

29 These also shall be unclean to you among the creeping things that creep on the earth: the mole, the mouse, and the large lizard after its kind; **30** the gecko, the monitor lizard, the sand reptile, the sand lizard, and the chameleon. **31** These are unclean to you among all that creep. Whoever touches them when they are dead shall be unclean until evening. **32** Anything on which any of them falls, when they are dead shall be unclean, whether it is any item of wood or clothing or skin or sack, whatever item it is, in which any work is done, it must be put in water. And it shall be unclean until evening; then it shall be clean.

33 Any earthen vessel into which any of them falls you shall break; and whatever is in it shall be unclean: **34** in such a vessel, any edible food upon which water falls becomes unclean, and any drink that may be drunk from it becomes unclean. **35** And everything on which a part of any such carcass falls shall be unclean; whether it is an oven or cooking stove, it shall be broken down; for they are unclean, and shall be unclean to you. **36** Nevertheless a spring or a cistern, in which there is plenty of water, shall be clean, but whatever touches any such carcass becomes unclean. **37** And if a part of any such carcass falls on any planting seed which is to be sown, it remains clean. **38** But if water is put on the seed, and if a part of any such carcass falls on it, it becomes unclean to you.

This is more imminently practical guidance on how to avoid infections diseases.

Disease grows rapidly in decaying flesh, and who know why some creature died?!

So when the carcass of a dead animal touched something, the defilement could

spread.

God made it clear here that such contact with a dead body was prohibited because of the danger of contamination.

The way to cleanse the defilement was by running water, and then leaving the item to sit and air dry in the sun, where the oxygen and sunlight act as natural disinfectants.

The emphasis on **running** water is crucial too. Running water tends to be pure while standing water can quickly become the source of contamination.

Porous vessels had to be discarded if contaminated, while closed-cell vessels could merely be washed and let dry to be made clean.

39 And if any animal which you may eat dies, he who touches its carcass shall be unclean until evening. **40** He who eats of its carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until evening. He also who carries its carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until evening.

This refers to those clean animals who die of their own accord, they are not butchered for food but simply die from old age.

41 And every creeping thing that creeps on the earth shall be an abomination. It shall not be eaten. **42** Whatever crawls on its belly, whatever goes on all fours, or whatever has many feet among all creeping things that creep on the earth—these you shall not eat, for they are an abomination. **43** You shall not make yourselves abominable with any creeping thing that creeps; nor shall you make yourselves unclean with them, lest you be defiled by them. **44** For I am the LORD your God. You shall therefore consecrate yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I am holy. Neither shall you defile yourselves with any creeping thing that creeps on the earth. **45** For I am the LORD who brings you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.

This puts the ban on all other animals that are not specifically given as clean in the preceding instructions.

Though all of this has to do with dietary issues, God links their observance in these things to their relationship to Him as a holy God.

Because He is holy, **THEY** must be holy!

God does not seek to curb their diet of *pleasurable* things with these rules; rather He desires to maximize their health & enhance their lives.

The rules of holiness are not meant to burden us and squash pleasure out of our lives but to safeguard the greatest pleasure of all – to live in close relationship with the Author of Life and so enjoy the richest possible existence.

If people obeyed God's law – think about the benefits!

☛ they didn't steal, *virtually no crime*.

☛ they followed the dietary laws, they'd enjoy *great health*.

☛ they observed the other cleanliness regulations, there'd be *very little disease*.

☛ they reserved sex for marriage, *no venereal disease*.

46‘This is the law of the animals and the birds and every living creature that moves in the waters, and of every creature that creeps on the earth, **47**to distinguish between the unclean and the clean, and between the animal that may be eaten and the animal that may not be eaten.’”

Are we under an obligation to observe a kosher diet as we see spelled out here today?

This question was settled for us by the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15.

A debate was raging on how much of the law Gentiles Christians had to obey. The Apostles determined that obeying the ritual aspects of the Mosaic law, including the rules of diet, was *not* required.

The Apostle Paul later made it clear in 1 Timothy 4 that we have liberty to eat whatever we want to:

Now the Spirit expressly says that in the latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrine of demons . . . commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. (1 Tim. 4:1, 3-5)

In 1 Corinthians 6:12, Paul says this important word about such things as diet—**All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.**

Paul’s point here is crucial and one we’d all be well served to give attention to. While all things are lawful – we must not allow ourselves to become dominated by any food, idea, hobby, passion, thought, activity, ambition, desire, or drive, other than Jesus Christ.

In recently ran across some newly discovered ancient manuscripts on parenting.

B. Purification after Childbirth

Ch 12

1Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, **2**“Speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘If a woman has conceived, and borne a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days; as in the days of her customary impurity she shall be unclean.

Meaning her monthly cycle, which we’ll read about in ch. 15.

3And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.

4She shall then continue in the blood of *her* purification thirty-three days. She shall not touch any hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary until the days of her purification are fulfilled.

After giving birth to a son, a woman was considered ceremonially unclean for a total of 40 days.

The circumcision of the baby boy was to take place on the 8th day.

Which is again another interesting piece of info since we now know that is when the immune system & the clotting agent *prothrombin* would be at their maximum in the newborn.

5But if she bears a female child, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her customary impurity, and she shall continue in the blood of *her* purification sixty-six days.

When a girl was born, the period of seclusion the mother & daughter were to experience was double that for a boy – 80 days! (66 + 14)

During this time of ritual uncleanness after birth, the mother & child would be secluded by themselves & attended to by other women.

They were exempt from work and allowed to recuperate from the birth and nurture the newborn.

Rather than seeing the extended time of seclusion in the birth of a daughter as some kind of *punishment* or *put-down*, it was a boon & benefit to the mother & her newborn.

The presence of women was incredibly important in the prosperity & survival of the nation.

The first weeks of life were the most precarious in the ancient world.

Spending more time with the newborn girl would ensure a much higher rate of survival for them.

6When the days of her purification are fulfilled, whether for a son or a daughter, she shall bring to the priest a lamb of the first year as a burnt offering, and a young pigeon or a turtledove as a sin offering, to the door of the tabernacle of meeting. **7**Then he shall offer it before the LORD, and make atonement for her. And she shall be clean from the flow of her blood. This *is* the law for her who has borne a male or a female.

8And if she is not able to bring a lamb, then she may bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons—one as a burnt offering and the other as a sin offering. So the priest shall make atonement for her, and she will be clean.”

Mary brought a pair of birds, showing the impoverished economic state of Jesus' parents.

C. The Diagnosis of Leprosy

Ch 13

This chapter deals with the diagnosis of leprosy, a dread disease in the ancient world.

We're not going to read every verse but will summarize instead.

1And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: **2**“When a man has on the skin of his body a swelling, a scab, or a bright spot, and it becomes on the skin of his body *like* a leprous sore, then he shall be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons the priests. **3**The priest shall examine the sore on the skin of the body; and if the hair on the sore has turned white, and the sore appears *to be* deeper than the skin of his body, it *is* a leprous sore. Then the priest shall examine him, and pronounce him unclean. **4**But if the bright spot *is* white on the skin of his body, and does not appear *to be* deeper than the skin, and its hair has not turned white, then the priest shall isolate the one

who has the sore seven days. ⁵And the priest shall examine him on the seventh day; and indeed *if* the sore appears to be as it was, *and* the sore has not spread on the skin, then the priest shall isolate him another seven days. ⁶Then the priest shall examine him again on the seventh day; and indeed *if* the sore has faded, *and* the sore has not spread on the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him clean; it *is only* a scab, and he shall wash his clothes and be clean. ⁷But if the scab should at all spread over the skin, after he has been seen by the priest for his cleansing, he shall be seen by the priest again. ⁸And *if* the priest sees that the scab has indeed spread on the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It *is* leprosy.

When leprosy first appears it's just a few small, red spots.

Before long, they get bigger & turn white, with a shiny or scaly surface.

Soon the spots spread over the entire body & hair begins to fall out - first from the head, then even from the eyebrows.

As things get worse, finger & toe nails become loose, start to rot & eventually fall off.

The joints of the fingers & toes rot & start to fall off, piece by piece.

The gums shrink until they can't hold the teeth any longer.

It keeps eating away at the face until the nose, the roof of the mouth, & even the eyes rot.

Leprosy is a slow, wasting disease.

The only consolation is that as it rots the skin, it also kills the nerves so that the victim has very little sensation of the loss of skin or limbs.

In fact, this helps contribute to the problem, for with the loss of touch and the ability to feel hot or cold, victims of leprosy end up putting their limbs in danger without knowing it.

Leprosy is transmitted following close personal contact and has a long incubation period of from 1 to 30 years. ^[3]

In vs. 9-44, God dictates to Moses many more specific cases of sores and lesions which might be leprosy.

He gives him tests to apply to determine if a sore is leprosy or not.

After all this diagnosis for leprosy, we get how those with the disease were to be treated.

⁴⁵“Now the leper on whom the sore *is*, his clothes shall be torn and his head bare; and he shall cover his mustache, and cry, ‘Unclean! Unclean!’ ⁴⁶He shall be unclean. All the days he has the sore he shall be unclean. He *is* unclean, and he shall dwell alone; his dwelling *shall be outside the camp.*”

Note this, it's crucial! The leper was to be *isolated* from others.

In vs. 1-8, when people with sores came to the priest, if he couldn't tell definitively if it was leprosy, he was to isolate the patient for a total of 14 days to see how the sore would develop.

The ancient Hebrews were the *only people* to isolate the infectious sick!

And they did so because God told them too.

There were other skin sores that weren't leprosy, but many of them were *also* due to infectious illness, like smallpox, measles, and various fevers.

This isolation while the diagnosis was being conducted would remove them from the general population so they couldn't infect others.

Lepers lived in little enclaves outside the general population and depended on the generosity of others for their food and clothing.

If for some reason they did have to come near the camp of Israel, they had to cover their mouths and shout out that they were unclean to warn off anyone who might approach.

During the Dark Ages, the most serious medical condition Europe dealt with was leprosy.

As urban centers grew, so did the disease.

The doctors of the day attributed leprosy to "eating hot foods, pepper, garlic, and the meat of diseased hogs."^[4]

Others said it was the conjunction of malign planets that produced leprosy.

Of course, all of their prescriptions to cure it were fruitless, & often inflicted more harm than good.

It wasn't until certain members of the Church stepped in & began applying the ancient Hebrew remedy of *isolation* that leprosy began to diminish.

Using v. 46 as their basis, they began placing lepers in isolated colonies.

In the matter of just 1 generation, the disease was virtually eradicated in Europe!

Some medical historians refer to this as the "first instance of the *methodical eradication* of disease."^[5]

47"Also, if a garment has a leprous plague in it, *whether it is* a woolen garment or a linen garment, **48***whether it is* in the warp or woof of linen or wool, *whether in* leather or in anything made of leather, **49***and if the plague is greenish or reddish in the garment or in the leather, whether in the warp or in the woof, or in anything made of leather, it is a leprous plague and shall be shown to the priest.* **50***The priest shall examine the plague and isolate **that which has** the plague seven days.* **51***And he shall examine the plague on the seventh day. If the plague has spread in the garment, either in the warp or in the woof, in the leather *or* in anything made of leather, the plague *is* an active leprosy. **It is unclean.*** **52***He shall therefore burn that garment in which is the plague, whether warp or woof, in wool or in linen, or anything of leather, for it *is* an active leprosy; **the garment shall be burned in the fire.***

Today, leprosy is known as *Hansen's Disease* & identifies a specific ailment caused by *Mycobacterium leprae*.

In the ancient world, the word 'leprosy' covered a wide range of conditions, including in the case of clothing or buildings, *mold*, which is what's being referred to here.

There are some forms of mold, like *Stachybotrys* that are very dangerous & can inflict serious respiratory, skin, & even brain problems. That mold & fungi are meant is made clear by the use of the word '*plague*' in these verses.

53“But if the priest examines *it*, and indeed the plague has not spread in the garment, either in the warp or in the woof, or in anything made of leather, **54**then the priest shall command that they wash *the thing* in which *is* the plague; and he shall isolate it another seven days.

55Then the priest shall examine the plague after it has been washed; and indeed *if* the plague has not changed its color, though the plague has not spread, it *is* unclean, and you shall burn it in the fire; it continues eating away, *whether* the damage *is* outside or inside. **56**If the priest examines *it*, and indeed the plague has faded after washing it, then he shall tear it out of the garment, whether out of the warp or out of the woof, or out of the leather. **57**But if it appears again in the garment, either in the warp or in the woof, or in anything made of leather, it *is* a spreading *plague*; you shall burn with fire that in which is the plague. **58**And if you wash the garment, either warp or woof, or whatever is made of leather, if the plague has disappeared from it, then it shall be washed a second time, and shall be clean.

59“This *is* the law of the leprous plague in a garment of wool or linen, either in the warp or woof, or in anything made of leather, to pronounce it clean or to pronounce it unclean.”

D. The Cleansing of Leprosy

Ch 14

Leprosy was a disease which was considered incurable outside of a miraculous healing by God.

While such healings were inordinately rare, they did occur as we will see with Moses' own sister Miriam.

God goes on now to give a highly detailed and rather strange ritual that was to be made at the *cleansing* of a leper.

If a priest did the diagnosis which proclaimed someone a leper, then a priest would be needed to also give the release from the state of leprosy upon the victim's healing.

If a bona-fide healing had taken place, then the priest was to make a very specific offering.

Before we take a look at this ritual, it's important to see how leprosy stands as a symbol of sin in the Bible & why God spends so much time diagnosing & dealing with it here in Scripture.

Leprosy is *like* sin in so many ways; it begins as something small and seemingly harmless and is painless in its first stages.

It has a slow growth cycle and may even go into remission for a time, but it always returns.

Leprosy numbs the senses, just as sin numbs the moral sense and eventually even numbs the physical senses.

This is why sin, like leprosy, is *progressive* – to get the same level of pleasure, you need to up the dose.

Sin operates by the law of diminishing returns.

Leprosy & sin both cause decay & deformity; one of the body, the other of the soul.

It's interesting that the Jewish rabbis called leprosy the "living death."

In Ephesians 2, Paul says that before we come to faith in Jesus we are dead in our sins.

God's remedy for dealing with lepers was *isolation*.

The essence of holiness is *separation* from sin.

One of the most effective ways to avoid sin is to stay away from those moral & spiritual influences that might contaminate us.

¹Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²"This shall be the law of the leper for the day of his cleansing: He shall be brought to the priest. ³And the priest shall go out of the camp, and the priest shall examine *him*; and indeed, *if* the leprosy is healed in the leper, ⁴then the priest shall command to take for him who is to be cleansed two living *and* clean birds, cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop. ⁵And the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water. ⁶As for the living bird, he shall take it, the cedar wood and the scarlet and the hyssop, and dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird *that was killed over the running water*. ⁷And he shall sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be cleansed from the leprosy, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose in the open field.

Okay, this is just plain strange. What is going on here? Why this bizarre ritual?

Well as you might well guess, it all points to the work of Jesus Christ.

Consider the 6 items to be used in this ritual --

Birds - speak of "heavenly" beings.

Cedar wood - speaks of the cross; many think the cross of Jesus was cedar.

Hyssop – Jesus was offered a drink from a sponge lifted up on a hyssop branch

Scarlet – red cloth, but notice, the word cloth is not mentioned here, because the color, not the substance is what's important; it speaks of the blood of Christ.

An earthen vessel – into which one of the heavenly birds is placed, then killed, picturing the God-man incarnation of Christ, all over

Running water – which speaks of the Word of God, specifically, the prophetic word which foretold Christ's incarnation so that He could die.

The blood of the 1st bird is applied to the 2nd bird, wood, hyssop & scarlet.

This blood is then dropped 7 times on the cleansed leper and the live bird is set free in an open field.

All of this is highly symbolic of the salvation of Christ, accomplished on the cross and applied by faith to the sinner, who is a spiritual leper.

The blood is dropped 7 times, 7 being the number of completion, and looking forward to Jesus' final victorious shout – "Tetelestai! It Is FINISHED!"

The bird is set loose still covered with the blood because that is what salvation

does for us, it brings us back to life and sets us free from sin's penalty and power.

A 2nd bird is used because we too are *spiritual* beings, meant to inhabit the realms of heaven.

As I mentioned, the healing of lepers was inordinately rare in Israel. It was one of the diseases God seems to for the most part leave untouched.

The 2 exceptions were Miriam, who was miraculously smitten & healed of leprosy & the Syrian general Naaman.

Other than that, we don't have much of a record of healing of leprosy in the OT.

Jesus even makes mentions of this Luke 4:27 when He said -

And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian."

Yet over & over in the Gospels we find Jesus healing lepers and doing the unthinkable, **TOUCHING** them!

Listen to one story from Luke 17:11-14

11 Now it happened as He went to Jerusalem that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. 12 Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off.

13 And they lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" 14 So when He saw them, He said to them, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed.

Okay, imagine you're a priest at the time of Jesus, working in the temple, & all of a sudden one day a woman shows up claiming she'd been a leper but is now healed. She wants to get your priestly release and asks you to perform the cleansing ritual! [Elaborate]

Now, what's crazy is that *dozens* come over the next couple years!

You would think this would prove to & convince the priests as to the Reality of Jesus' claim to be the Messiah!

8 He who is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, shave off all his hair, and wash himself in water, that he may be clean. After that he shall come into the camp, and shall stay outside his tent seven days.

9 But on the seventh day he shall shave all the hair off his head and his beard and his eyebrows—all his hair he shall shave off. He shall wash his clothes and wash his body in water, and he shall be clean.

The cleansed leper is like one who has come to life after being dead and the ritual of washing by water and shaving all hair is a picture of birth.

Of course, with the hindsight of the Cross and baptism, we can easily see it as a picture of being *born again*!

Note that when the leper is cleansed, the goal is to see him/her included in the camp, the community of God's covenant people.

For far too long we've made Church membership too optional for those who say they are followers of Christ. [Elaborate]

The NT letters make it clear that to be a Christian and to be a follower of Jesus

Christ means to be a living vital part of His Body, the Church.
In fact, the word “church = ekklesia” means *a called-out assembly of citizens*.
So important & central is being a member of the Body of Christ to what it
means to be a follower of Jesus in the NT that one of the early church
fathers said, “He who does not have the Church as his mother does not
have God as his father.” [Augustine; oo, I hate quoting this nut!]

10“And on the eighth day he shall take two male lambs without blemish, one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish, three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering, and one log of oil. **11**Then the priest who makes *him* clean shall present the man who is to be made clean, and those things, before the LORD, at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. **12**And the priest shall take one male lamb and offer it as a trespass offering, and the log of oil, and wave them as a wave offering before the LORD. **13**Then he shall kill the lamb in the place where he kills the sin offering and the burnt offering, in a holy place; for as the sin offering *is* the priest’s, so *is* the trespass offering. It *is* most holy. **14**The priest shall take *some* of the blood of the trespass offering, and the priest shall put *it* on the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot. **15**And the priest shall take *some* of the log of oil, and pour *it* into the palm of his own left hand. **16**Then the priest shall dip his right finger in the oil that *is* in his left hand, and shall sprinkle some of the oil with his finger seven times before the LORD. **17**And of the rest of the oil in his hand, the priest shall put *some* on the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot, on the blood of the trespass offering. **18**The rest of the oil that *is* in the priest’s hand he shall put on the head of him who is to be cleansed. So the priest shall make atonement for him before the LORD. **19**“Then the priest shall offer the sin offering, and make atonement for him who is to be cleansed from his uncleanness. Afterward he shall kill the burnt offering. **20**And the priest shall offer the burnt offering and the grain offering on the altar. So the priest shall make atonement for him, and he shall be clean.

What’s remarkable about this ritual is that the only other persons we see anointed by the blood and oil in this way are the priests themselves.

Their ear, thumb and toe was similarly anointed.

All of this ritual is meant to look forward to the work that Jesus would accomplish in saving & cleansing us from the living death of sin.

That salvation brings all of us into the place of spiritual priesthood as Peter makes so clear in his letters.

In vs. 21-32, God tells Moses that if the leper cannot afford 3 sheep, then on 1 sheep and some birds will suffice.

33And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: **34**“When you

have come into the land of Canaan, which I give you as a possession, and I put the leprous plague in a house in the land of your possession, ³⁵and he who owns the house comes and tells the priest, saying, 'It seems to me that *there is* some plague in the house,' ³⁶then the priest shall command that they empty the house, before the priest goes *into it* to examine the plague, that all that *is* in the house may not be made unclean; and afterward the priest shall go in to examine the house. ³⁷And he shall examine the plague; and indeed *if* the plague *is* on the walls of the house with ingrained streaks, greenish or reddish, which appear to be deep in the wall, ³⁸then the priest shall go out of the house, to the door of the house, and shut up the house seven days. ³⁹And the priest shall come again on the seventh day and look; and indeed *if* the plague has spread on the walls of the house, ⁴⁰then the priest shall command that they take away the stones in which *is* the plague, and they shall cast them into an unclean place outside the city. ⁴¹And he shall cause the house to be scraped inside, all around, and the dust that they scrape off they shall pour out in an unclean place outside the city. ⁴²Then they shall take other stones and put *them* in the place of *those* stones, and he shall take other mortar and plaster the house.

As before, this is dealing with *mold*, a problem which until only recently was considered nothing more than a nuisance, but which is now being understood as a major medical concern.

Mold remediation is becoming big business & some insurance companies are now writing mold policies.

Interesting that we find a grave concern over mold in this text, which is 3500 years old! So much for modern man's *only lately gained sophistication!*

43“Now if the plague comes back and breaks out in the house, after he has taken away the stones, after he has scraped the house, and after it is plastered, ⁴⁴then the priest shall come and look; and indeed *if* the plague has spread in the house, it *is* an active leprosy in the house. It *is* unclean. ⁴⁵And he shall break down the house, its stones, its timber, and all the plaster of the house, and he shall carry *them* outside the city to an unclean place. ⁴⁶Moreover he who goes into the house at all while it is shut up shall be unclean until evening. ⁴⁷And he who lies down in the house shall wash his clothes, and he who eats in the house shall wash his clothes.

48“But if the priest comes in and examines *it*, and indeed the plague has not spread in the house after the house was plastered, then the priest shall pronounce the house clean, because the plague is healed.

Vs. 49-53 say that once the house was pronounced clean, then the priest was to offer the same 2 bird ritual as for the healed leper.

54“This *is* the law for any leprous sore and scale, ⁵⁵for the leprosy of

a garment and of a house, ⁵⁶for a swelling and a scab and a bright spot, ⁵⁷to teach when *it is* unclean and when *it is* clean. This *is* the law of leprosy.”

[1] McMillen, S.I. Dr. *None of These Diseases*. Pg. 9

[2] ibid

[3] **Microsoft® Encarta® Reference Library 2004. © 1993-2003 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.**

[4] Ibid pg. 11

[5] Rosen, George *History of Public Health* pg. 62-63