

**April 16**

**Scriptures:** Read Leviticus 13

**Key Verse:** “He shall be unclean. All the days he has the sore he shall be unclean... he shall dwell alone; his habitation shall be outside the camp.” (Leviticus 13:46)

## **Overview**

Once again, the Lord spoke with Moses and Aaron concerning important health matters. These regulations in chapter 13 were designed to protect the people and control the spread of one of the most terrible and dreaded diseases, leprosy. It is not certain whether most terrible and dreaded diseases, leprosy. It is not certain whether the Israelites at that time knew if it was contagious or not (however God did), for it seems that the disease is referred to as making one ceremonially unclean. Lepers were separated from the camp so that others might not come into contact with them, thus becoming ceremonially unclean themselves and therefore unable to participate in community life or go to the Tabernacle for worship.

It appears that various other diseases, as well as the leprosy we know of today, are discussed here, but all are put under the general name “leprosy”, even mildew in garments or leather (13:47). Great care was taken to distinguish if the affliction was only the appearance of leprosy, or actually entailed the individual’s total separation, or, in the case of material, being burned (13:52). Upon close examination by a priest, the one in question was either 1) isolated for a period of seven days (13:26, 50; signifying a complete period of time for observation); 2) separated totally if the diagnosis was positive (13:46), or 3) if negative, returned to normal life and activities, including Tabernacle worship.

The Israelites had such a strong belief in the sovereignty of God that someone having leprosy or another infirmity was considered under the judgment of God because of sin. In the Bible, there are several instances of this happening as a direct result of sin (with Miriam, Num.12:10; Gehazi, 2 Kings 5:25-27; and Uzziah, 2 Chron. 26:18-21). In fact, this idea was evident even in the New Testament. We see Jesus being questioned concerning the blind man, “who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “neither... but that the works of God should be revealed in him” (John 9:2, 3). Probably this was a totally new way for the Jews to view an affliction. Jesus certainly taught new things and brought much change.

If one was found to have a real case of leprosy, drastic measures were immediately taken to separate him from society. Firstly, his clothes were to be torn, his hair unkempt, and a covering was to be put over his upper lip; all were signs of mourning (cf. Ezek. 24:17, 22). It was as if he had died, and he was to call out, “unclean, unclean”, if anyone came into his path. The disease may have been considered incurable, since there is nothing said about the means of healing it, but there was provision for a purification ritual when one was found to be clean (ch.14). This would imply that being cleansed was thought to be an act of divine intervention. Jesus, the greatest example of divine intervention, is said to have cleansed lepers, not cure them.

Leprosy could be considered a type or picture of sin in many ways: (1) it starts from the inside and only later appears outwardly; (2) it is a filthy, loathsome disease; (3) it is difficult to cure; (4)

it begins small and seemingly insignificant, but eventually leads to death. Leprosy of the soul should be more dreaded than the actual disease, for it ultimately leads to eternal death and suffering. It defiles the heart and conscience, which only Jesus Christ can cleanse by the power of His grace. The Israelite priest could only convict the leper, but Christ, whose holy priesthood greatly transcends this, can cleanse and cure the leper, be it a physical or spiritual healing. We read of a leper cure who approached Jesus to worship Him. He said, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." Then Jesus did what no one else would do, He reached out and touched the man, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed" (Matt. 8:2, 3). In the same manner, Jesus is willing today to touch and cleanse from sin anyone who might come to Him. If God's mercy had not been extended through Jesus Christ, then we all would be unclean and unworthy of communion with Him. The Law only shows us our disease, but the Gospel of Jesus Christ shows us our hope and help in Him.

### **Prayer**

Lord Jesus, You once cleansed ten lepers and told them to show themselves to the priest, and only one returned to give You thanks after healing was evident. Thank You Jesus for Your deliverance from the leprosy of sin in our lives. Thank You! (Luke 17:12-19)