

## ***Second Baptist Church of Doylestown***

### ***Bible Study Notes***

***4-21-21***

#### ***Leviticus 14***

**Rituals Of The Cleansing of a Leper: The first seven days of the ritual - Verses 1-9**

<sup>1</sup> The LORD said to Moses, <sup>2</sup> "These are the regulations for any diseased person at the time of their ceremonial cleansing, when they are brought to the priest: <sup>3</sup> The priest is to go outside the camp and examine them. If they have been healed of their defiling skin disease, <sup>4</sup> the priest shall order that two live clean birds and some cedar wood, scarlet yarn and hyssop be brought for the person to be cleansed. <sup>5</sup> Then the priest shall order that one of the birds be killed over fresh water in a clay pot. <sup>6</sup> He is then to take the live bird and dip it, together with the cedar wood, the scarlet yarn and the hyssop, into the blood of the bird that was killed over the fresh water. <sup>7</sup> Seven times he shall sprinkle the one to be cleansed of the defiling disease, and then pronounce them clean. After that, he is to release the live bird in the open fields. <sup>8</sup> "The person to be cleansed must wash their clothes, shave off all their hair and bathe with water; then they will be ceremonially clean. After this they may come into the camp, but they must stay outside their tent for seven days. <sup>9</sup> On the seventh day they must shave off all their hair; they must shave their head, their beard, their eyebrows and the rest of their hair. They must wash their clothes and bathe themselves with water, and they will be clean.

**14:1-9** The procedures described here were not curative but ritual. God prescribed no treatment for the cure of "leprosy" here, but He explained how the priests and the Israelites could recognize healed skin so formerly afflicted individuals could resume worship in the community. Anthropologists refer to such rites as "rites of aggregation," ceremonies in which people in abnormal social conditions experience reintegration into ordinary society. Shaving, washing, and offering sacrifices are regular parts of such rites. The ritual involved two acts separated by an interval of seven days.

**14:1-9** The first act took place outside the camp and restored the formerly unclean person to the fellowship of the other Israelites from whom he had experienced separation because of his skin disease. Clean animals, including clean birds, represented Israel. Both of the birds used in this ritual evidently symbolized the Israelite who was about to reenter the covenant community. The bird killed represented the formerly unclean person whose fate was death but for God's mercy. The bird released stood for the same person cleansed, released from the bondage of his disease, endowed with new life, and at liberty to enter the covenant fellowship again. These two birds served a symbolic function similar to that of the two goats on the Day of Atonement.

Cedar wood had antiseptic qualities and was slow to decay, so it represented the continuance of life. The scarlet color of the thread looked like blood and symbolized sacrificial blood. The hyssop represented purification from the corruption of death since the priests used this spongy plant

for purification in Israel's rituals. The blood-water used to sprinkle the individual probably signified life and purification.

### Rituals Of The Cleansing of a Leper: The eighth day of the ritual - Verses 10-20

<sup>10</sup> "On the eighth day they must bring two male lambs and one ewe lamb a year old, each without defect, along with three-tenths of an ephah of the finest flour mixed with olive oil for a grain offering, and one log of oil. <sup>11</sup> The priest who pronounces them clean shall present both the one to be cleansed and their offerings before the LORD at the entrance to the tent of meeting. <sup>12</sup> "Then the priest is to take one of the male lambs and offer it as a guilt offering, along with the log of oil; he shall wave them before the LORD as a wave offering. <sup>13</sup> He is to slaughter the lamb in the sanctuary area where the sin offering<sup>[d]</sup> and the burnt offering are slaughtered. Like the sin offering, the guilt offering belongs to the priest; it is most holy. <sup>14</sup> The priest is to take some of the blood of the guilt offering and put it on the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, on the thumb of their right hand and on the big toe of their right foot. <sup>15</sup> The priest shall then take some of the log of oil, pour it in the palm of his own left hand, <sup>16</sup> dip his right forefinger into the oil in his palm, and with his finger sprinkle some of it before the LORD seven times. <sup>17</sup> The priest is to put some of the oil remaining in his palm on the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, on the thumb of their right hand and on the big toe of their right foot, on top of the blood of the guilt offering. <sup>18</sup> The rest of the oil in his palm the priest shall put on the head of the one to be cleansed and make atonement for them before the LORD. <sup>19</sup> "Then the priest is to sacrifice the sin offering and make atonement for the one to be cleansed from their uncleanness. After that, the priest shall slaughter the burnt offering <sup>20</sup> and offer it on the altar, together with the grain offering, and make atonement for them, and they will be clean.

**14:10-20** The second act of cleansing took place before the altar of burnt offerings and restored the former leper to fellowship with the sanctuary and God. First the leper was to offer a trespass offering (Leviticus 14:12). This offering compensated God for all the sacrifices, tithes, and firstfruits that the afflicted person could not present during his uncleanness.

"The LORD provided the way for someone restored to health to enter full participation in the covenant community through the ritual of sacrificial atonement...."Christians do not have such a ritual, but they can learn something from the principle. Any time they are healed and restored to full participation in life and worship, it is appropriate to offer the sacrifice of praise, even a thank offering (Hebrews 13:15). They should at least acknowledge that it is God who has given them life and they will not now die (Psalm 118:17), that they have been restored to life for the purpose of serving and praising God (Isaiah 38:9-20), that their restoration from sickness is a foretaste of how in some glorious future day they will be set free like a bird from all physical diseases and distress when the curse is lifted, and that all this was made possible through the shed blood of Christ."

### Cleansing for a Poor Person after a Skin Disease - Verses 21-32

<sup>21</sup> "If, however, they are poor and cannot afford these, they must take one male lamb as a guilt offering to be waved to make atonement for them, together with a tenth of an ephah of the finest flour mixed with olive oil for a grain offering, a log of oil, <sup>22</sup> and two doves or two young pigeons, such as they can afford, one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. <sup>23</sup> "On the eighth day they must bring them for their cleansing to the priest at the entrance to the tent of meeting, before the LORD. <sup>24</sup> The priest is to take the lamb for the guilt offering, together with the log of oil, and wave them before the LORD as a wave offering. <sup>25</sup> He shall slaughter the lamb for the guilt offering and take some of its blood and put it on the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, on the thumb of their right hand and on the big toe of their right foot. <sup>26</sup> The priest is to pour some of the oil into the palm of his own left hand, <sup>27</sup> and with his right forefinger sprinkle some of the oil from his palm seven times before the LORD. <sup>28</sup> Some of the oil in his palm he is to put on the same places he put the blood of the guilt offering—on the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, on the thumb of their right hand and on the big toe of their right foot. <sup>29</sup> The rest of the oil in his palm the priest shall put on the head of the one to be cleansed, to make atonement for them before the LORD. <sup>30</sup> Then he shall sacrifice the doves or the young pigeons, such as the person can afford, <sup>31</sup> one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering, together with the grain offering. In this way the priest will make atonement before the LORD on behalf of the one to be cleansed." <sup>32</sup> These are the regulations for anyone who has a defiling skin disease and who cannot afford the regular offerings for their cleansing.

**14:32** The former part of the chapter contains an account of the laws, rites, and ceremonies of a leper who was able to bear the expenses of them. This latter part respects such laws, rites, and ceremonies, that belonged to him.

"Whose hand is not able to get that which pertained to his cleansing": As the three lambs and three tenth deals of fine flour, and therefore one lamb, and one tenth deal of fine flour. And two turtles or two young pigeons, were admitted of in the room of them, in consideration of his poverty. The Jewish canons respecting the cases of a poor and rich leper are these: if a poor leper offers the sacrifice of a rich man, it is very well. But if a rich leper offers the sacrifice of a poor one, it is not sufficient. If a poor leper offers his sacrifice and he becomes rich, or if when rich, and he afterwards becomes poor, all goes after the sin offering. That is, as they explain it, if a man when he offers his sin offering is poor, and so his offering is of a turtle or pigeon, though he should become rich he must finish the offering of the poor, by bringing for a burnt offering one of the fowls. And so if he was rich, and offered the sin offering out of the lambs, though he should become poor, he must offer the burnt offering of the same. But the trespass offering is generally pitched upon as the rule in which the poor and the rich were equal...all goes after the trespass offering. As if at the time of slaying the trespass offering he is rich, he must finish the offering of a rich man, but if poor he must finish the offering of a poor man. It may be observed that a great deal of notice is taken of a leper, and strict inquiry made into the nature of leprosy, and the various signs of it given. And a great deal to do about the cleansing and expiation of him. All which shows what notice God takes of leprous sinners, and what a diligent scrutiny should be made into the evil nature of sin, and what a provision God has made for the cleansing and atonement of sinners by the blood and sacrifice of his Son. Which is here typified by all sorts of offerings, the sin offering, the trespass offering, the burnt offering, and the meat offering.

In this lesson, we have been looking at the leprosy of an individual. This leprosy was of a spiritual nature, in that the person had been separated from God and was not allowed to fellowship with the congregation, until the leprosy (sin), was cleansed from the individual.

### **Cleansing From Defiling Molds - Verses 33-57**

<sup>33</sup> The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, <sup>34</sup> "When you enter the land of Canaan, which I am giving you as your possession, and I put a spreading mold in a house in that land, <sup>35</sup> the owner of the house must go and tell the priest, 'I have seen something that looks like a defiling mold in my house.' <sup>36</sup> The priest is to order the house to be emptied before he goes in to examine the mold, so that nothing in the house will be pronounced unclean. After this the priest is to go in and inspect the house. <sup>37</sup> He is to examine the mold on the walls, and if it has greenish or reddish depressions that appear to be deeper than the surface of the wall, <sup>38</sup> the priest shall go out the doorway of the house and close it up for seven days. <sup>39</sup> On the seventh day the priest shall return to inspect the house. If the mold has spread on the walls, <sup>40</sup> he is to order that the contaminated stones be torn out and thrown into an unclean place outside the town. <sup>41</sup> He must have all the inside walls of the house scraped and the material that is scraped off dumped into an unclean place outside the town. <sup>42</sup> Then they are to take other stones to replace these and take new clay and plaster the house. <sup>43</sup> "If the defiling mold reappears in the house after the stones have been torn out and the house scraped and plastered, <sup>44</sup> the priest is to go and examine it and, if the mold has spread in the house, it is a persistent defiling mold; the house is unclean. <sup>45</sup> It must be torn down—its stones, timbers and all the plaster—and taken out of the town to an unclean place. <sup>46</sup> "Anyone who goes into the house while it is closed up will be unclean till evening. <sup>47</sup> Anyone who sleeps or eats in the house must wash their clothes. <sup>48</sup> "But if the priest comes to examine it and the mold has not spread after the house has been plastered, he shall pronounce the house clean, because the defiling mold is gone. <sup>49</sup> To purify the house he is to take two birds and some cedar wood, scarlet yarn and hyssop. <sup>50</sup> He shall kill one of the birds over fresh water in a clay pot. <sup>51</sup> Then he is to take the cedar wood, the hyssop, the scarlet yarn and the live bird, dip them into the blood of the dead bird and the fresh water, and sprinkle the house seven times. <sup>52</sup> He shall purify the house with the bird's blood, the fresh water, the live bird, the cedar wood, the hyssop and the scarlet yarn. <sup>53</sup> Then he is to release the live bird in the open fields outside the town. In this way he will make atonement for the house, and it will be clean." <sup>54</sup> These are the regulations for any defiling skin disease, for a sore, <sup>55</sup> for defiling molds in fabric or in a house, <sup>56</sup> and for a swelling, a rash or a shiny spot, <sup>57</sup> to determine when something is clean or unclean. These are the regulations for defiling skin diseases and defiling molds.

**14:34-35** Mildews or molds would make clothing or a house either unsound or a health risk for anyone associated with it. These specific cleansing procedures designated for affected clothing and buildings were fully required by the law (14:44-57). Why was mold or mildew so dangerous? Such fungi could spread rapidly and promote disease. It was therefore important to check its spread as soon as possible. In extreme cases, if a fungus had done enough damage, the clothing was burned or the house destroyed.

**14:54-57** God told the Israelites how to diagnose defiling skin diseases and mold so they could avoid them or treat them. These laws were given for the people's health and protection. They helped the Israelites avoid diseases that were serious threats in that time and place. Although they wouldn't have understood the medical reasons for some of these laws, their obedience to them made them healthier. Many of God's laws must have seemed strange to the Israelites. His laws, however, helped them avoid not only physical contamination, but also moral and spiritual infection.

The Word of God still provides a pattern for physically, spiritually, and morally healthy living. We may not always understand the wisdom of God's laws, but if we obey them, we will thrive. Does this mean we are to follow the Old Testament health and dietary restrictions? In general, the basic principles of health and cleanliness are still healthful practices, but it would be legalistic, if not wrong, to adhere to each specific restriction today. Some of these regulations were intended to mark the Israelites as different from the wicked people around them. Others were given to prevent God's people from becoming involved in pagan religious practices, one of the most serious problems of the day. Still others related to quarantines in a culture where exact medical diagnosis was impossible. Today, for example, physicians can diagnose the different forms of leprosy, and they know which ones are contagious.