

FEBRUARY 21

Leviticus 11-12

In these following chapters it would be a good idea to keep the key verses of this section in mind as you read. It will help you understand the point of what God is doing here. These verses are very famous, and even Peter quotes them in 1 Peter 1:6. The verses I'm referring to are 11:44-45. This idea of being holy because God is holy will be repeated four more times in Leviticus and then only in 1 Peter. The rules that follow will be for ceremonial cleanness before God. The regulations will be symbols of separation (holiness) to the service of God. God is building this symbolism into very common, visible things in their lives. They would be reminded every day that they were to live differently for God, and the people around Israel would notice that these people were different. The point for Israel to remember was that they were redeemed to be a witness for the world.

Also, look for repetition of words. There are some obvious ones, like *detestable* and *unclean*. Underline or highlight these. It not only sharpens your skills in Bible study, but it keeps your mind active and makes the reading less tedious.

Leviticus 11

Vs. 1-8 These were land animals. The only animal that would affect any of us would be the pig.

Vs. 9-12 It looks to me like catfish and lobster, shrimp, and crab were out, too.

Vs. 13-23 I don't see any great culinary losses here among the winged things.

Vs. 24-28 If they touched anything that was dead, they would be ceremonially unclean. Usually taking a bath and waiting until evening made everything right.

Vs. 29-38 This would have been a reason to invest in pest control, or at least to keep a very clean house. I wonder if "water" in vs. 34 and 38 means something other than water?

Vs. 41-43 What is interesting in this part is the mention of the defiling of the person. This seems to cross the line from object lesson to some things that God definitely says should be avoided that were never intended for people to eat.

Vs. 44-47 You don't find anything said in terms of "health" considerations. A lot of people try to explain all of this saying that if they had eaten pork back then, they would have died because it was so diseased. Of course, everyone else ate it and they survived.

I wonder, as disciples, if we are so jaded by our culture, that we lose the distinction between "holy and unholy" and "clean and unclean." We don't like to look different from those around us anymore than the Israelites did. The Corinthians (who, by the way, were Jews and not Greeks) became overly engaged in their culture after they threw off Judaism for Christianity, and Paul had to go after them for their immorality and idolatry. In Romans, the message of chapters 14-15 seems to be that if God touches us and says something is not for us personally, then we need to heed what He says. We just shouldn't make it a rule for everyone else. It seems to me that we have let the pendulum swing too far to the side of liberty and we've forgotten why we're here on this planet of death. A disciple is called to the side of Christ to work with Him in the harvest. We are called apart to Him. And Israel was also called apart to be the Nation of God, a light in the world.

So, here is the great object lesson in all of this. Each time the people ate, it reminded them that they were God's special possession on the earth and that they had a mission, carrying forth the promise given to Abraham, which was an extension of the promise to Adam and Eve. Did that motivate them, or did they just gripe because they couldn't eat bacon?

Leviticus 12

Vs. 1-5 So, we know that there is nothing wrong with having kids; in fact, it is a command given both to Adam & Eve and to Noah & Co.

Most of this, I think, has to do with God making a point of how Israel is different. You'll notice that blood is mentioned. It is not that childbirth or menstruation were bad or dirty, but that blood was to be seen as precious, since the "life is in the blood." Later, we'll hear that men were strongly forbidden to have sex with their wives during menstruation. I think this is God making a point for Israel, that doesn't apply to us unless God makes it a point for you personally. God was placing something in their everyday lives that drew their attention to their special status as His people.

That a woman was *unclean* longer for a female baby than for a male baby doesn't seem to have any special reason other than that God is making a point. God doesn't value men higher than women. In my opinion, it was because the Savior of mankind, promised to Adam and Eve, would be a male child. Interestingly, after Jesus, the law ended and so did the basis for this law.

Vs. 6-8 There are two offerings mentioned in v. 8. The *burnt offering* signified devotion to God, and the sin offering signified cleansing and forgiveness. If you want to read what happened on the day of Mary's purification, read Luke 2:22-38. I'm sure God had that day in mind when He gave Israel this symbol. Jesus, the Son of God, was actually part of the festivities.

Again, in childbirth, God is giving Israel an object lesson pointing to the need for devotion and forgiveness, and the difference between the holy and the common, the clean and unclean. Their thoughts would always be directed to God, and the eyes of the nations would look at them and say, "Whoa, dude!"

Mark 5:21-43

Since we discussed this story in Matthew, my comments will be brief.

But do you notice something "coincidental" in this reading? This is why I love The One Year Bible. Sometimes the combinations of reading seem random and disconnected, and then one day you go, "How did that work out that these Scripture portions fit together?"

Vs. 21-34 In Leviticus 12:4, a woman after childbirth (or any woman who discharged blood) was unclean and shouldn't be touched and was not to touch anyone, or anything else. This woman touched Jesus and they all knew it. I wonder if part of her fear and desire to hide was her guilt in having made Jesus unclean by touching Him.

So, does the ruler of the synagogue still want the "unclean" rabbi to touch his daughter?

Vs. 35-43 In the delay, they all discover that the girl has died. It is interesting to me that Jesus seems to be responding to these events as the Father is revealing them to Him. He didn't know about the woman and responded to the situation. Suddenly there is this unexpected turn of events. Now knowing that the father will lose hope, He emotionally rallies everyone to move forward to the glory the Father wants to reveal. As mentioned in Matthew, it seems to me that Jesus is moving very quickly to try not to draw attention to what He is about to do.

V. 41 Notice that Jesus took her (the corpse) by the hand, something no rabbi would have done. It would have made Him unclean. One observation here is that the woman had her flow of blood for twelve years and the little girl was twelve years old. That may not be important but it is interesting.

If Jesus heals you, you're clean. What an amazing truth we take into this dark harvest. His amazing treasure is in those of us who were once separated from God by our "uncleanness," who now, through His touch, have become disciples separated unto God, following our Lord in the harvest to make disciples, who make disciples. What amazing mercy and tenderness by the Son of God.

Psalm 38

Do any of these verses speak to you? I'm really feeling vs. 6-10 and vs. 21-22.

It would be interesting to know when David wrote this psalm. There are some clues in this regarding the circumstances. Apparently David had done something wrong, and at the same time he had enemies on his heels. It's enough to be in danger, but also to have the guilt of having done something that has damaged your relationship with God, well, that's really bad. If this is David's earlier days, I would guess it is when David just started running, and the result of his lying resulted in the deaths of the priests and their families at the hand of Saul. That would have brought David a lot of guilt. And then, Saul and all the leaders of Israel were after David to kill him.

Vs. 1-10 I'm amazed at the poetry and accuracy of this. This is how we feel before God when our own sin and guilt overwhelm us.

Vs. 11-12 I don't know the historical situation, but I'll bet that the way Saul and his men explained the massacre at Nod was that it was somehow David's fault or his doing.

Vs. 13-14 This sounds like brokenness.

Vs. 15-22 Notice how David alternates between asking God's forgiveness and asking for His help.

As disciples we still slip and fall. Our sin is still very powerful. Yet, it seems like the Lord is saying in this psalm that we are to use this as the model of crying out to Him and seeking forgiveness and restoration. He forgave and restored David and He is encouraging us to come to Him the same way.

Proverbs 10:8-9

Notice that v. 8 is public and v. 9 is private. The wicked man is dishonest with others and dishonest with himself. The person following the Lord listens in public and speaks with wisdom. Privately, he is humbly examining his attitudes, actions and motives.