

## FEBRUARY 22

### Leviticus 13

Now, since I'm not a doctor, I won't be much help on this section, except, possibly, for comic relief.

It appears to me that this law for leprosy really signifies that leprosy was being used by God as a kind of object lesson. I don't think God is devoting two chapters to this because man hadn't developed a cure yet or that this disease was rampant in the society. Why didn't God give them a chapter on cancer or heart disease or VD? I think the reason leprosy is an issue is that God was using it as a way to visually show Israel what being "unclean" meant in His eyes. He was also giving them an image of what the spread of sin looked like, physically, spiritually, or socially. According to the [Bible Knowledge Commentary-OT](#), p. 192, there is no evidence that leprosy was a huge health danger back then, and the descriptions given could cover many diseases or simply leprosy in its very early stages. Equally important, in everything that is said in chapter 13, is the vigilance and early detection of the outbreak.

In all you read here, it seems that Israel was to be set on the lookout for this disease or any outbreak or anything out of the ordinary on man, beast, clothing or building. They were to catch it at its earliest stage. It looks like this was to create an alert society toward personal sin and toward cultural sin. The main person in this was the priest, not the doctor. You didn't need to bring suspected cases of cancer to him (although with the Urim and Thummim that wouldn't have been a bad idea), but in all suspected "outbreaks" he became the examiner. That is significant to God's purpose. As you read this, underline the repeated uses of *the priest shall pronounce him*.

We might be tempted to look at God's warning to Israel, to beware of any "outbreak," as paranoia or incitement to a witch hunt; but I think it was a kind of healthy caution that we dismiss. Even as disciples, we treat sin as a silly, three-letter "boogie man." Sin is the greatest destructive force on the planet. Paul and the Spirit say it is a spiritual force. Sin is not just "missing the mark;" it is a power, pulsing in our souls that grows and creeps and infects. Leprosy is a fantastic picture of it. Without the indwelling Spirit and the cleansing agent of the Word, we would be absolutely "leprous," and all that we touched would be unclean. We can still be that if we decide to ignore God enough. Look at the church in 1 Corinthians.

What is interesting to me, and I'll probably say it tomorrow too, that although there was a provision for being healed from leprosy, until Jesus, no Israelite was ever cleansed. Didn't the lepers come to God for healing? Maybe not. The first time Jesus gets thrown out of Nazareth, He says to the people there, *And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.* (Luke 4:27) And the whole synagogue went crazy. In the entire Old Testament, cleansing from leprosy (and the faith thereof) was only found in Naaman the Syrian, a Gentile, and then, only because he had good servants.

Vs. 1-46 This has to do with an outbreak of leprosy or some kind on a person. Notice that vs. 45-46 are a summary statement.

V. 29 I fully agree with this verse. If a woman has a disease on her beard, there is definitely something wrong.

V. 40 Whatever happened to "The verse of the day?" This custom has fallen on hard times today, whereas in days of yesteryear, many a soul has been helped by the verse of the day appearing on doors or screen savers. Years ago, I swapped out the church secretary's verse for my own (I was a seminary student then, not the pastor.) out of this chapter. I like it better in the RSV, and feel free to use this where appropriate.

*Leviticus 13:40 "If a man's hair has fallen from his head, he is bald but he is clean.*

Vs. 47-59 This is an outbreak of some sort on animal skins or cloth.

Again, in thinking about sin, as disciples, is it possible that the disease can spread to stuff? Can stuff be polluted by our sin and can we be polluted by stuff? I'm obviously using a very broad view of "stuff." Oddly enough in German, "stuff" (Stoffe) means cloth.

### **Mark 6:1-29**

Mark 6:1-6

Vs. 1-6 This was Jesus' second visit to Nazareth. The first visit was at the beginning of His ministry, and now He was the most popular man in Israel. It was a gracious thing for Jesus to return, considering they tried to kill Him the first time. It mentions that His disciples were with Him now, meaning not just the Twelve, but the large group that followed Him. It was like the American Idol winner coming home.

V. 2 These questions seem to imply that they were impressed with Jesus.

V. 3 This shows what they really felt. A carpenter was a lowly blue-collar worker. To name Jesus by His mother was demeaning in that culture. Even if your father was dead, you were still referred to as his son. The people were hardened in unbelief. They knew His family; they knew Him, so, big deal. The word "offense" means "to stumble." Jesus wasn't so special, and now the religious authorities had "explained" Jesus' power.

Vs. 5-6 The fact that Jesus could not heal many doesn't mean that His power didn't work, like He could only get "one bar" of connection to God's power or that He had a slow download speed because of their dense hearts. It means that they didn't bring many sick people to Him to be healed.

Vs. 6-13 Jesus had prepared the Twelve to do this by example. This is a good discipleship principle. Show people how to do things by example, doing it with them. They had seen Jesus enter town after town for the past year, and the Father had always provided. Both Matthew and Luke say that they were not to "acquire" a staff. Apparently they were allowed to take the one they already had.

Vs. 12-13 I'm always amazed at the simple message and the power the Lord gave them. By the way, Jesus also went out preaching, but He wasn't alone. All the other disciples and the women who accompanied them were with Him. In Acts 1:20-23 it mentions two disciples, Joseph and Matthias, who had been with Jesus from the beginning just like the others. These two guys were there but not chosen to be part of the Twelve.

Vs. 14-29 Jesus' popularity was still climbing, and now that the disciples were going out and performing cures and miracles, apparently the talk increased. We covered this in Matthew, so I'll only add a couple of comments.

Vs. 14-16 These "guesses" as to Jesus' identity will be mentioned again when Jesus asks the disciples, and Peter confesses that He is the Christ. Apparently Herod had a guilty conscience.

Vs. 17-29 This is a "flashback" to what happened to result in John's death.

I don't know what lessons you get from this section, but I'm always struck that John's ministry might not have been as long as his imprisonment. It's hard to find dates, but the consensus is that John sat in prison a long time, perhaps a year.

Today, we still look at "success" as a measure of blessing. I think as disciples, faithfulness is our real goal in following Christ in the harvest. Romans 8 assures us that in everything God works for good with those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose. However, we have to trust that God and what He does is good even if we don't understand it. Look at Abe and

Moses. They spent many years trusting God out in the wilderness. John was faithful in his testimony and service. And then he was faithful in prison, fulfilling God's plan for him.

### **Psalm 39**

Vs. 1-3 It appears that David tried to cope with his situation by just keeping his mouth closed, but the situation caused him real questions regarding the justice and purpose in life. It is interesting that this is very much like what happened to Job. Job didn't sin with his mouth, but things did boil within him until he had to express his frustration and desire to understand God's purpose.

Vs. 4-6 How would you title this? What is David's question? It seems, like Job, that David wants to understand God's purpose.

Vs. 7-11 How many men in the Bible have we already read of who had to put their hope in the Lord and had to wait? Waiting in hope and trust is the norm, not the exception.

Vs. 12-13 It is interesting that David cries out like this with such distress and need. It is just as interesting that God brought him to the place where David had to cry out like this, to encourage us to wait on the Lord and cry out like this too.

As disciples, it is in God's plan to bring us to places like this to learn, as David did, that life is short; and when we can't understand God, it is better to be silent publicly in our waiting, and privately, to be crying out knowing that our hope is in Him alone.

### **Proverbs 10:10**

After reading this, I really have a hard time winking at people, except to encourage them. Otherwise, it smacks of deceit and hiding. And the message about babbling seems to be that if you don't have anything to say, don't say it. Fools babble, not the wise.