

FEBRUARY 23

Leviticus 14

Vs. 1-9 This is the initial public cleansing of the leper to bring him back into the community. The use of the two birds is interesting and might symbolize death and life. It is also interesting that he had to live outside of his tent for a week. That would have been very public. People could have brought over casserole dishes and come and talked with him or her.

The shaving looks like it was everything, from the head to the top of the big toe. The person would have had less hair than a newborn baby.

Vs. 10-32 This is the ceremonial cleansing to be invited back into the worship of Yahweh. Verse 21 repeats everything for the situation of a poor person, yet in both descriptions of cleansing for a leper, at least one lamb had to be offered. This is a very interesting situation in that it is like the ordination of a priest, but even more elaborate in one detail, the "commissioning to service" with oil.

V. 14 There is the same applying of blood to the right ear, right thumb and right big toe, that there was with Aaron and the priests. These two places are the only places in the Bible. So it makes me wonder about the connection. What did a priest and a cleansed leper have in common? The only thing I can come up with is that a leper was "dead" in a figurative sense, being a walking symbol of sin and separation from God. The healing and being made clean would symbolize life from the dead. In the consecration of Aaron, the meaning of the blood seemed to be that all of his life: thoughts, doing and going were to be devoted to God in ministering the blood, or leading people to God for forgiveness and cleansing. My sense is that the leper, now redeemed from death, was to be consecrated to God and was to live his life under the "direction" of that blood, giving testimony to lead others to the forgiveness and cleansing of God.

V. 17 But here the leper is anointed with oil in the same way he was anointed with blood. And then the oil was poured on his head. In a way, it looks to me like a commissioning service to live a life of testimony to the congregation. The oil represents the anointing to a task, but symbolically, oil represents the Holy Spirit. In some sense, it makes me think of the demonic guy with the legion who, having been set free, wanted to follow Jesus. In sending him home, Jesus commissioned him to be a living testimony to the power of God.

As a disciple, it seems to me that we've been lepers. We've been made alive and forgiven and cleansed by the blood. All our thoughts and doing and going should be led by that blood. And we've been anointed by the Spirit, commissioned to the harvest. We live to follow Christ and give testimony and lead others to the forgiveness and cleansing of God, making disciples, who make disciples, who make disciples.

In Mark 1:40-45, Jesus told that leper, the first Israelite leper we ever know of (besides Miriam) to be healed, to go and present himself to the priest. The priest would have had to publicly pronounce this man "clean." That would have been a great public testimony by a priest showing that Jesus had done the work of God. It would have been an amazing public event. The guy did his own thing, disobeyed, and caused problems for Jesus.

Sometimes it is best to obey God in the system, following Christ as He desires.

Vs. 33-57 Now, there is a lot in this section regarding cleansing and sacrifice and houses. I suppose the purpose is to show the people that all growing manifestations of rot and decay, spiritually, physically and culturally, are deadly and unclean. This clearly was an object lesson. When you read this section, pay attention to the beginning verses. They tell you that there must have been a purpose.

Vs. 46-47 Notice that whoever is in the house is ceremonially unclean.

Vs. 48-53 Notice the cleansing ceremony with the birds symbolizing death and life.

I never understood this stuff about leprous material or a leprous house until I lived in Texas during all the black mold stuff in 2001 and we discovered it in our house. We didn't just have black mold, but yellow and red and green. Some of it was actually very pretty stuff...cough, cough, cough.

Mark 6:30-56

Vs. 30-44 It's interesting that Jesus tries to teach the disciples the importance of getting into isolation after a draining time of ministry. It's also interesting that it doesn't work. Instead of being able to relax, they are pursued; and Jesus, moved with compassion, teaches the people. He probably did some healing as well, and the disciples probably helped organize the people into lines. The result was that this was not rest and relaxation for the disciples. It is interesting to think that the disciples got to watch Jesus respond to the Father changing His plans. Jesus was the perfect, flexible Son of God, living only to respond to what the Father was doing. I probably would have gotten mad and blown up trees and thrown mountains into the sea.

V. 35 According to John, this was in March, just before the Passover, and these crowds were probably on their way to Jerusalem. The disciples recognized the problem. It was late and would get dark quickly, and there were lots of people in the middle of nowhere. (There is actually a small city in Texas called "in the middle of nowhere," *Midlothian*, Texas, which now has a Wal-Mart and no longer lives up to its name.)

V. 37 When I think of the disciples here, it is really the same scenario as the first days of the Exodus. How is God going to feed all these people in the middle of nowhere? Imagine the disciples coming off of this spiritual victory. Now, instead of resting, they were serving even though they were tired; and then, after hours of serving and hearing Jesus teach they are very, very tired. Then Jesus says, *You give them something to eat*. What is interesting is that there is a story in the OT of God doing something like this with Elisha the prophet, so with both the manna in the wilderness and with the prophet Elisha, there was a precedent for feeding crowds.

So, what lesson do you think the disciples learned from this event? We talked about some of this in Matthew.

Vs. 45-52 Elsewhere we learn that Jesus sent the disciples away as a decoy. The people knew Jesus was still up on the mountain, and so they waited for Him in order to take Him captive and make Him king.

The disciples still haven't rested. Jesus tells them to get into the boat and they just do it, now fighting the wind.

The thing I get from all of this is that there are times God pushes us, in our following, to exhaustion, to teach us in that tiredness to exercise our faith. It is easy to follow, and it's easy to have faith, and it's easy to be joyful when you are well rested. You test the real depth of learning or training under duress, and sometimes it takes a long time to get us to that teachable moment.

So how do you explain the last part of this? They were terrified and astounded...because they did not understand about the loaves. What didn't they understand there, that led them to be terrified here?

I think it has to be some connection they missed regarding Jesus and who He was. And in that connection, something they missed with regard to the manna. God is preparing them to understand who Jesus is. Immediately after this boat ride, we have John 6:24-71. Jesus' words in John 6 tie this all together. Peter's words in John 6:68-69 show you that they finally understood about the loaves. Jesus was the bread that came down from heaven.

Vs. 53-56 It is amazing to think that many of these people who are pursuing Him will turn from Jesus when He gets to Capernaum. I guess the question is, "Do you want Him, or do you want what He can give you?" It's not the same thing.

Psalm 40:1-10

Again, this is a psalm that my heart latches onto. These are only the first ten verses, but what great verses. Laura and I have memorized these, and they are comforting and challenging. They are exactly what I think a leper was supposed to do after he was cleansed.

This psalm is "after the fact," in that David had already received the deliverance he cried out for. I like the crying out and waiting. You have to notice the frequency of these words in The Psalms and get the idea that this is what God wants us to do. We might be tempted to say, "But things aren't that bad." Maybe we don't feel it, but in reality, things are always worse than they seem, considering that our planet is on course for a bad day.

Vs. 1-3 Notice that the *new song* didn't come until after the deliverance. We don't have to feel guilty about not having the new song, if we are still waiting for the Lord. He will give it when it is time.

Vs. 4-5 This is a part of that new song.

Vs. 6-8 These verses are quoted regarding Jesus in Hebrews 10:5. The word "ear" is taken together with "body" in Hebrews 10 to mean both a body and the understanding of what to do with that body. It's interesting that we're reading so much about *sacrifice and offering* in Exodus and Leviticus, and here it says the opposite. Verses 7 and 8 are the answer, and this was probably the answer back when Leviticus was penned.

Vs. 9-10 These verses show precisely why God allows us to get into bad scrapes, so He can deliver us, and so we can give genuine, heartfelt praise and testimony to God. We're back to the cleansed leper again.

Proverbs 10:11-12

You can really see the design of these verses, *the mouth of the righteous being a fountain of life* that issues from a heart of love that covers sins. *The mouth of the wicked conceals violence*, motivated by a heart of hate that *stirs up strife*.

Do you recognize the second half of v. 12? You hear it all the time, and it's quoted in James 5:20 and in 1 Peter 4:8. Maybe the way it is used here helps us understand what it means in the NT.