

Leviticus Chapter 14

Verses 1-57: The occasion on which a person was cured of his skin disease or leprosy was of considerable significance. It marked his unexpected restoration to fellowship with his family and the community as a whole, and brought him back into a relationship with God's sanctuary.

The reference to "two birds alive and clean" typified the renewed state of cleanness in the healed person. Clean animals were characteristic of the holy Israelites, who were exhorted continually to remain in this condition of body and mind. "One of the birds" [should] "be killed" ... and he "shall let the living bird loose into the open field" is symbolic of the new life for the cleansed leper.

He was to offer three unblemished lambs successively as a guilt offering, a sin offering, and a burnt offering. He now had to renew his relationship with the God of the covenant. The smearing of blood by the priest on the "right ear, thumb", and "great toe" was the same action taken (in Lev. 8:24), for the consecration of Aaron and his sons. The cleansed man should hear God's voice, should perform works of righteousness with his hands, and should walk in God's ways.

The tragedy of leprosy lay not so much in personal sin as in isolation from community life and worship. The real message of the legislation is that any type of uncleanness separates the believer from God. Leprosy is symbolic.

Leviticus 14:1 "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,"

In order to deliver the same to Aaron, who, and the priests his successors, were chiefly to be concerned in the execution of the law given.

"Saying": As follows.

We see here a chain of command in this message being transferred from God, to Moses, to Aaron, to Aaron's sons, and then to the people.

Leviticus 14:2 "This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing: He shall be brought unto the priest:"

"The law of the leper": The sense of this law is a prescription, not for healing from leprosy and other such diseases, but rather for the ceremonial cleansing, which needed to be performed after the person was declared clean.

"Leper ... brought unto the priest": In (Matt. 8:4 and Luke 17:14), Jesus is seen instructing healed lepers to follow God's law and go to the priest for appropriate ceremonies and offerings. In the present dispensation, those healed may go directly to Jesus our High-Priest with thanksgiving (Phil. 4:6).

As we said in a previous lesson, just being accused of leprosy, did not mean you had leprosy. Someone accused of sin is not always sinning either. This has to be judged by the priest, just as someone accused of sin, must be examined by the church. Notice this was the law and not just a request. If this has nothing to do with sin, tell me why he must come to the church? A person who is sick, does not have to sacrifice because they are sick, unless that sickness is spiritual.

Leviticus 14:3 "And the priest shall go forth out of the camp; and the priest shall look, and, behold, [if] the plague of leprosy be healed in the leper;"

“Out of the camp”: The leper was not allowed to return to society immediately. Before the person could enter the camp, some priest skilled in the diagnoses of disease needed to examine him and assist with the ritual of the two birds (verses 4-7).

This inspection is not to be made publicly before the congregation. We could take a lesson from this. Someone who is accused of sin, which should remove them from the body of believers, should not be questioned before all of the congregation. We will see from the following two Scriptures how important it was for any accusation to be backed up by two or three witnesses.

1 Timothy 5:19 "Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses."

Hebrews 10:28 "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:"

These eyewitnesses must bring the matter before the proper authorities, and they would decide the outcome. In verse 3 above, they are found to be clean (innocent). In the case above, they might have been declared unclean at first, but now they are clean. This could be someone innocent, or it could be someone forgiven, which is in essence the same thing.

Verses 4-7: The bundle of cedar and hyssop tied with scarlet included the living bird. It was all dipped 7 times into the blood of the killed bird mixed with water to symbolize purification. The bird was then set free to symbolize the leper's release from quarantine.

Leviticus 14:4 "Then shall the priest command to take for him that is to be cleansed two birds alive [and] clean, and cedar wood, and scarlet, and hyssop:"

These objects provided symbolic cleansing for a person who had been healed of leprosy. “Cedar wood” was a durable and decay-resistant wood. A “scarlet” cord was probably used to tie the hyssop branch to the wood as a symbol of the sacrificial blood that brought victory over sin and death. “Hyssop” was an herb used for flavoring, fragrance and medicinal purposes.

It is very interesting that there is no definition of the word that was translated hyssop which is a wild shrub of uncertain identity whose twigs were used for sprinkling in ancient Jewish rites of purification. We can safely assume that this was a plant with some sort of foliage at the top. It was probably a bushy plant. The following 2 Scriptures will bear this out.

John 19:29 "Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put [it] upon hyssop, and put [it] to his mouth."

Hebrews 9:19 "For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people,"

There are ten more times the hyssop is mentioned and all of them mentioned that the top would have held enough liquid to use it as a spreader. Cedar wood has a very aromatic smell; it also is like an antiseptic. Scarlet is red and symbolizes blood. This piece of scarlet was used to bind the cedar wood and the hyssop together. This is an offering of purification. The two birds will have different fates. One will be killed, and one released.

Leviticus 14:5 "And the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water:"

That is, shall command another priest to kill one of them, or an Israelite, as Aben Ezra. And who also observes, that some say the leper, or the butcher, as the Targum of Jonathan. The killing of this bird, not being a sacrifice, might be done without the camp, as it was, and not at the altar, near to which sacrifices were slain, and where they were offered. And this was to be done;

"In an earthen vessel over running water": This vessel, according to the Jewish traditions, was to be a new one, and a fourth part of a log of running water was to be put into it. And then the bird was to be killed over it, and its blood squeezed into it. And then a hole was dug, and it was buried before the leprous person. And so it should be rendered, "over an earthen vessel", as it is in the Tigurine version, and by Noldius. For how could it be killed in it, especially when water was in it? The killing of this bird may have respect to the sufferings, death, and bloodshed of Christ, which were necessary for the purging and cleansing of leprous sinners. And which were endured in his human nature, comparable to an earthen vessel, as a human body sometimes is (see 2 Cor. 4:7). For he was crucified through weakness, and was put to death in the flesh (2 Cor. 13:4). And the running or living water mixed with blood may denote both the sanctification and justification of Christ's people by the water and blood which sprung from his pierced side. And the continual virtue thereof to take away sin, and be free from it. Or the active and passive obedience of Christ, which both together are the matter of a sinner's justification before God.

Leviticus 14:6 "As for the living bird, he shall take it, and the cedar wood, and the scarlet, and the hyssop, and shall dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird [that was] killed over the running water:"

And dispose of it as after directed; for there was a use for that.

"And the cedar wood, and the scarlet, and the hyssop": Which were all bound up in one bundle, but whether the living bird was joined to them is a question. According to Jarchi they were separate, the bird by itself, and the cedar wood, etc. By themselves; they were neither bound together nor dipped together. And Ben Gersom is very distinct and expressive; we learn from hence, says he, that three were bound up in one bundle, but the living bird was not

comprehended in that bundle. But according to the Misnah they were all joined together, for there it is said, he (the priest), takes the cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop, and rolls them up with the rest of the scarlet thread. And joins to them the extreme parts of the wings and of the tail of the second bird and dips them. And this seems best to agree with the text, as follows.

"And shall dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water": That is, into the blood of it as mixed with the running water in the earthen vessel, which together made a sufficient quantity for all these to be dipped into it. Whether separately, first the living bird, and then the cedar wood, and scarlet, and hyssop, or all together. The bird that was kept alive was a type of Christ, who as a divine Person always alive, and ever will be. He is the living God, and impassable. The dipping of this living bird in the blood of the slain one denotes the union of the two natures in Christ, divine and human, and which union remained at the death of Christ. And also shows that the virtue of Christ's blood arises from his being the living God. The dipping of the cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop, into the same blood, signifies the exercise of the several graces of the Spirit upon Christ, as crucified and slain. And their dealing with his blood for pardon and cleansing, as faith and hope do. And from whence love receives fresh ardor and rigor.

Leviticus 14:7 "And he shall sprinkle upon him that is to be cleansed from the leprosy seven times, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose into the open field."

With the hyssop fastened to the cedar stick, with the scarlet wool or thread bound about it, dipped into the blood and water in the earthen vessel. To which the psalmist alludes (Psalm 51:7). The Egyptians had a great notion of "hyssop", as of a purifying nature, and therefore used to eat it with bread, to take off the strength of that. Upon what part of the leper this sprinkling was made is not said. The Targum of Jonathan says, upon the house of his face, that is, upon the vail that was over his face. But in the Misnah it is said to be on the back of his hand. And so Gersom, though some say it was on his forehead. And sprinkling was typical of Christ's blood of sprinkling, and of the application of it, and of sharing in all the blessings of it. And this was done seven times, to denote the thorough and perfect cleansing of him. And of every part, every faculty of the soul, and every member of the body, and that from all sin, and the frequent application of it. The last mentioned writer says, at every sprinkling there was a dipping. And that the sense is, that he should sprinkle and dip seven times, as Naaman the Syrian leper did in Jordan. But of the washing of the leper mention is afterwards made.

"And shall pronounce him clean": From his leprosy, and so fit for civil and religious conversation, to come into the camp or city, and into the tabernacle.

"And shall let the living bird loose into the open field": As a token of the freedom of the leper, and that he was at liberty to go where he pleased. The Misnic doctors say, when he came to let go the living bird, he did not turn its face neither to the sea, nor to the city, nor to the wilderness, as it is said. "But he shall let go the living bird out of the city into the open field" (as in Leviticus 14:53). The Targum of Jonathan here adds, if the man should be prepared to be smitten with the leprosy again, the live bird may return to his house the same day, and be fit to be eaten. But the slain bird he shall bury in the sight of the leper. Some say, if the bird returned ever so many

times, it was to be let go again. This may be a figure of the resurrection of Christ from the dead, and of his justification upon it, as the head and representative of his people. And of their free and full discharge from guilt, condemnation, and death, through him. And of his and their being received up into heaven, and whither their hearts should be directed, in affection and thankfulness for their great deliverance and salvation (see 1 Tim. 3:16).

One bird is killed, and the blood allowed to drain into the water. Then the living bird, and the mop made with the scarlet thread wrapping around the hyssop and the cedar wood, shall be dipped in the blood and water and sprinkled on the person being cleansed. This is done 7 times to make it spiritually complete. Then the bird which remains alive is released (set free), like the scapegoat in a previous lesson. Not water alone, but by water and blood, he is set free.

1 John 5:6 "This is he that came by water and blood, [even] Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth."

1 John 5:8 "And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one."

The fact that the water is running water in the verses above, lets us know that this is the living water. When Jesus was crucified on the cross for you and me, He shed His blood and they pierced his side that the water might flow from His body. We are set free by the water and the blood. We had been dead to sin, before the Lord Jesus restored us to the living. These two birds symbolize death and life. This leper was as good as dead, before he was set free.

Leviticus 14:8 "And he that is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, and shave off all his hair, and wash himself in water, that he may be clean: and after that he shall come into the camp, and shall tarry abroad out of his tent seven days."

“Out of his tent”: The movement was progressive until finally he could enter and dwell in his own tent, giving dramatic indication of the importance of thorough cleansing for fellowship with God’s people. This was a powerful lesson from God on the holiness He desired for those who lived among His people. This has not changed (see 2 Cor. 7:1).

This seven day waiting period is very similar to the 7 days the priest and his sons waited at the tabernacle door. Sinners cry out to Jesus, wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. Our garments must be washed in the blood of the Lamb (Jesus Christ). His washing in water symbolizes water baptism. Hair symbolizes power. This could possibly be the fact that we have no power to save ourselves. It is only by the grace of God that we are saved.

Leviticus 14:9 "But it shall be on the seventh day, that he shall shave all his hair off his head and his beard and his eyebrows, even all his hair he shall shave off: and he shall wash his clothes, also he shall wash his flesh in water, and he shall be clean."

After he was first brought to the priest, and cleansed by the two birds, taken and used for him as directed, and he had been shaved and washed.

"That he shall shave all his hair": A second time, whatsoever was grown in those seven days.

"All off his head, and his beard, and his eyebrows": Even all his hair he shall shave off. Not only the hair of the parts mentioned, but all other, the hair of his feet also. As Aben Ezra notes, who observes, that some say, the hair of his arms, and thighs, and breast. And so according to the Misnah, this was a second shaving. For it is said, "in the seventh day he shaves a second time, according to the first shaving."

"He shall wash his clothes, also he shall wash his flesh in water, and he shall be clean": This was also repeated on the seventh, both the washing of his clothes, and the dipping of him in water. After which he was accounted clean, and was neither defiled nor defiling, and might go into his own tent or house. And into the tabernacle, and offer his offerings, and partake of the privileges of it, at least some of them, even the same day. According to the tradition he may eat of the tithes. And after sunset he may eat of the heave offerings, and when he has brought his atonement he may eat of the holy things.

This has to be total, surrender to God.

Verses 10-20: As part of the leper's ceremonial cleansing ritual, trespass or guilt (5:14 – 6:7), sin (4:1 – 5:13), burnt (1:3-17), and grain (2:1-16) offerings were to be made.

Leviticus 14:10 "And on the eighth day he shall take two he lambs without blemish, and one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish, and three tenth deals of fine flour [for] a meat offering, mingled with oil, and one log of oil."

"On the "eighth day" after his birth, every Hebrew male was circumcised. Here, that day represents the leper's rebirth into the covenant community of faith. Because sickness and death are a result of man's sin, a sacrifice is the means for the cleansed leper to enter into full fellowship in the community.

"One log of oil": Less than one pint.

Eight of course means new beginnings. This man is beginning his life again. It appears the man had to bring the same offerings he would have brought for a sin. This makes me believe that leprosy symbolized sin. This is not just an illness, but is sin of some sort.

Leviticus 14:11 "And the priest that maketh [him] clean shall present the man that is to be made clean, and those things, before the LORD, [at] the door of the tabernacle of the congregation:"

By the above rites and ceremonies, and the after sacrifices offered.

"Shall present the man that is to be made clean, and those things before the Lord": The two male lambs, and the ewe lamb. And it seems also the meat offerings, and the log of oil. But these Ben

Gersom excepts, and when the leper, with these, is said to be set or presented before the Lord. This must not be understood of his being introduced, into the tabernacle, had of his being placed in the court itself. For as yet, as Jarchi says, he was "Mechoser Cippurim", one that needed expiation, and therefore, till that was done, could not be admitted. But he was set;

"At the door of the tabernacle of the congregation": At the eastern gate, which afterwards, when the temple was built, was called the gate of Nicanor. And lay between the court of the women and the court of the Israelites. Thus, everyone that has received favors from the Lord, by restoration of health, or by deliverance from dangers, or be it in whatsoever way it will, should present himself and his sacrifice of praise unto him. And his case should be presented in a public manner before the congregation of the saints by the minister of it, in token of gratitude and thankfulness for mercies received.

We discussed the symbolisms of this offering in a previous lesson, so we will not get into it here. We will just say that the leper had been unable to come close to God. Now he will be restored. You remember, in the other offerings, that this type of offering was always made at the door of the tabernacle, at the bronze altar. The priest made the offering for the person, after the person had placed his hands on the animal's head for the animal to become the substitute for his sin. Remember one more time, that the meat offering was made up of elements that make bread. Jesus is the Bread of life.

Leviticus 14:12 "And the priest shall take one he lamb, and offer him for a trespass offering, and the log of oil, and wave them [for] a wave offering before the LORD:"

One of the male lambs brought by the leper for his offering.

"And offer him for a trespass offering": For though the leprosy itself was a disorder or disease, and not sinful, yet the cause of it was sin. A trespass against God, and therefore a trespass offering must be offered. Which was typical of Christ, whose soul was made a trespass offering (Isa. 53:10); where the same word is used as here.

"And the log of oil" (see notes on Lev. 14:10).

"And wave them for a wave offering before the Lord": Heaving of them up and down, moving of them to and fro towards the several parts of the world, east, west, north, and south. Even both the log of oil, and the male lamb for the trespass offering, and that alive, as Jarchi observes, and so says Maimonides (see notes on 7:30-32).

Leviticus 14:13 "And he shall slay the lamb in the place where he shall kill the sin offering and the burnt offering, in the holy place: for as the sin offering [is] the priest's, [so is] the trespass offering: it [is] most holy:"

The priest, or the butcher, as the Targum of Jonathan. The slaughterer, the priest appointed for that service. At which time both the hands of the leper were laid upon it, as says the Misnah. For though the leper might not go into the court as yet, the sacrifice was brought to the door of the tabernacle for him to put his hands on it. So Maimonides relates; the trespass offering of the

leper is brought to the door, and he puts both his hands into the court, and lays them on it, and they immediately slay it.

"In the place where he shall kill the sin offering in the holy place": In the court of the tabernacle, on the north side of the altar, as Jarchi observes (see Lev. 1:11).

"For as the sin offering is the priest's, so is the trespass offering": And to be eaten by him and his sons in the holy place, and by none but them (see Lev. 6:26).

"It is most holy": Which is the reason why none else might eat of it. Typical of Christ the most Holy, whose flesh is only eaten by true believers in him, made priests unto God by him.

Remember that the waving of the offering was offering first to God. The meat of these animals were properly prepared for the priest. We remember the blood, fat, and inward parts belonged to the LORD. The priest would be worthy to do this, because he had offered for himself earlier. Read the earlier lessons on this book to get the details on these offerings. One more thing we must never forget; Jesus is the Lamb.

Leviticus 14:14 "And the priest shall take [some] of the blood of the trespass offering, and the priest shall put [it] upon the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot:"

According to the Misnah, two priests received the blood of it, one in a vessel and the other in his hand. He that received it in a vessel went and sprinkled it upon the wall of the altar (or top, as Maimonides). And he that received it in his hand went to the leper, and the leper having dipped himself in the chamber of the lepers, went and stood in the gate of Nicanor.

"And the priest shall put it upon the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot": As was done at the consecration of the high priest (see notes on Exodus 29:20; Lev. 8:24). Now as the leper stood at the door of the tabernacle without the court, he was obliged to put in his head, his right hand, and his right foot, in order to have the blood put on them by the priest, who was in the court. And these were put in either separately one after another, or together. The tradition runs thus, he (the leper), thrust in his head, and (the priest) put (the blood) upon the tip of his ear. His hand, and he put it upon the thumb of his hand. His foot, and he put it upon the great toe of his foot. And the application of the blood to these parts showed that the leper had now a right to hear the word of God, to partake of all privileges, to touch anything without defiling it, and to go into any house or company where he thought fit. He was now at full liberty.

More evangelically these things may signify the sanctification and cleansing of those parts, and of the whole man by the blood of Christ. And particularly may signify, that as the ear is unclean, uncircumcised, and unsanctified in a leprous sinner and even there are hearing sins in the best of men, the ear is sanctified, and hearing sins removed by the blood of Christ. And as the right hand, being the instrument of action, may denote the evil works of men, and even since the most righteous performances of the best of men are attended with sin, the blood of Christ, which cleanses from all sin, had need to be put upon them. And whereas the conversation of them,

which the foot may be an emblem of, is sinful and vain, it is by the blood of Christ that they are redeemed from it. And the influence of that blood sprinkled on the conscience will oblige and constrain men to live and walk soberly, righteously, and godly.

I will just say again here, that the blood on the right ear symbolizes the cleansing of his hearing. The blood on the thumb of his right hand symbolizes that all of his work must be clean. The blood on his big toe of his right foot symbolizes that his walk must be clean. In the next lesson, we will see why we need the Holy Spirit so much in our lives.

Leviticus Chapter 14 Questions

1. What was the chain of command shown in 14:1?
2. In verse 2, we read this is what law?
3. Who must the leper be brought to for inspection?
4. Someone, accused of sin today, must be brought before whom?
5. When must sickness be sacrificed for?
6. Should the examination be public or private?
7. An accusation must be by how many witnesses?
8. Where do we find the Scripture that covers accusing an elder?
9. What happened to those who despised Moses' law under three witnesses?
10. The person to be cleansed had to bring two _____ alive, and _____ wood, and _____, and _____.
11. What was hyssop?
12. Name 2 other Scriptures where hyssop is mentioned?
13. What are two interesting things about cedarwood?
14. What does the scarlet symbolize?
15. What type of an offering is this?
16. Where will the bird be killed?
17. How many times shall he sprinkle upon him?
18. What shall be done with the live bird?

19. How was the mop made?
20. What does this bird being released remind us of?
21. We are set free by the _____ and the _____.
22. What do these two birds symbolize?
23. What does verse 8 tell us that the one being cleansed must do?
24. How long must he tarry outside his tent?
25. What time is this 7 days similar to in the temple?
26. What does his washing in water symbolize?
27. What does hair symbolize in the Bible?
28. What does all this shaving and washing show?
29. On the eighth day, what is he to offer?
30. Leprosy symbolizes _____.
31. Why did the person making the offering put his hands on the animal's head?
32. Who does the meat and bread of these offerings belong to?
33. Where, on the person offering, does the priest put the blood?
34. What do these symbolize?