

Message Five

The Cleansing of Leprosy

Scripture Reading: Lev. 13—14

I. Leprosy signifies the serious sin issuing from within man, such as willful sin, presumptuous sin, and opposing God with determination—Lev. 13:

- A. As seen in the cases of Miriam (Num. 12:1-10), Gehazi (2 Kings 5:20-27), and Uzziah (2 Chron. 26:16-21), leprosy issues from rebellion against God's authority, against God's deputy authority, against God's regulation, and against God's economy.
- B. In the biblical sense, sin is rebellion; thus, leprosy signifies sin—1 John 3:4.
- C. The first case of sin in the Bible was Satan's rebellion against God; hence, sin as rebellion was invented, inaugurated, by the rebellious archangel Lucifer—Ezek. 28:13-18; Isa. 14:12-15.
- D. Eventually, this sin, this leprosy, entered into mankind through Adam, and having entered into man, it issues from within man as many kinds of sins, that is, many manifestations of rebellion—Rom. 5:12, 19a; 7:20.
- E. Hence, a leper represents the fallen descendants of Adam, all of whom are lepers; as signs of leprosy, a swelling, eruption, or a bright spot on the skin of one's flesh signifies man's outward expressions in unruliness, in friction with others, and in pride and self-exaltation—Lev. 13:2.
- F. The condition in Leviticus 13:24-25 signifies that a saved person's acting by the flesh, that is, his losing his temper, his justifying himself, and his not being willing to forgive others, is a sign of spiritual leprosy.

II. The cleansing of the leper in Leviticus 14 portrays the rich, complete, and extensive salvation God has prepared and accomplished for us in Christ; in this salvation Christ is the all-inclusive One who has passed through a number of processes and is everything we need for our cleansing:

- A. "The priest shall command that two living clean birds and cedar wood and scarlet strands and hyssop be taken for the one who is to be cleansed. And the priest shall command that one of the birds be slaughtered in an earthen vessel over running water. As for the living bird, he shall take it and the cedar wood and the scarlet strands and the hyssop, and shall

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dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was slaughtered over the running water. And he shall sprinkle it on the one who is to be cleansed from the leprosy seven times and shall pronounce him clean. Then he shall let the living bird go into the open field”—vv. 4-7:

1. The two living clean birds are types of Christ, who is clean, without any defilement, and full of the life that is able to fly above the earth; the birds here signify that Christ came from the heavens and that He belongs to the heavens and transcends the earth.
2. The bird that was killed signifies the crucified Christ, who died for us that our filthiness might be taken away—1 Pet. 2:24.
3. The second bird, which was let go into the open field, signifies the resurrected Christ, who rose from the dead for us that we might be delivered from our weakness by the power, strength, and energy of His resurrection life—the divine, eternal, uncreated life of God—Rom. 8:2.
4. Cedar wood (cf. 1 Kings 4:33) signifies the honorable and uplifted humanity of Jesus, which enables Him to be our Savior; hyssop, being one of the smallest plants, signifies that the Lord Jesus was willing to become lowly in His “becoming in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:7) that He might be near to man and become man’s Savior (cf. Matt. 8:2-3); scarlet, a dark red color, signifies the shedding of blood and also implies kingship (27:28-29).
5. All of this signifies that in order to cleanse us from our leprosy, the Lord lowered Himself to become a man of high standard but of low status that He might do the will of God and shed His blood on the cross for our redemption, thereby being glorified in His resurrection and becoming the honorable and high King—Phil. 2:5-11.
6. The one who had been healed from leprosy (Lev. 14:3) still needed to seek to be cleansed before God, signifying that the one who is sick of the sin of leprosy, although he has been healed by the divine life within, still needs to have his shortcomings and defilement dealt with before God that he might be cleansed; our seeking to be cleansed is our cooperation with God’s grace and love.

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7. The earthen vessel signifies the humanity of Jesus (cf. 2 Cor. 4:7), and the living water signifies the living and eternal Spirit of God (John 7:37-39; Rev. 22:1); the bird being killed in an earthen vessel over living water signifies that through His death in His humanity the Lord Jesus offered Himself to God through the eternal and living Spirit who was within Him (Heb. 9:14).
 8. The things recorded in Leviticus 14:6-7 signify that the Lord's perfect redemption not only causes man to be cleansed objectively in his position but also causes man to experience subjectively, in the Holy Spirit, the Lord's suffering in the shedding of His blood in His honorable, uplifted, and yet lowly humanity and to experience His death, resurrection, ascension, and glorification (Eph. 2:5-6; Phil. 3:10, 21; Col. 3:1-4); these things are all implied in the significances of the two birds, the cedar wood, the hyssop, and the scarlet strands.
 9. The sprinkling of the blood of the slain bird on the leper who was to be cleansed signifies that the blood shed by Christ was sprinkled on us, the sinners (1 Pet. 1:2), and this sprinkling connects us to Christ, the Redeemer; the sprinkling of the blood seven times signifies the completeness of the cleansing of the Lord's blood (1 John 1:7, 9).
 10. Christ's ascension is signified by the living bird soaring in the air; letting the living bird go into the open field signifies that the living Christ causes the cleansed sinner to experience not only Christ's death and resurrection but also His ascension—2 Cor. 5:14-15; Eph. 2:5-6; Col. 3:1-4.
- B. The shaving of the hair of the leper for his cleansing signifies dealing with the difficulties of the self, which is the enemy of the Body; the razor signifies the cross—Lev. 14:9:
1. The hair of the head signifies the glory of man; everyone has his boasts in certain areas; some boast of their ancestry, some of their education, some of their virtues, some of their zeal in their love for the Lord; almost everyone can find an area in which to boast, to glorify himself, and to make a display before man.

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2. The beard signifies the honor of man; people esteem themselves honorable with regard to their position, their family background, or even their spirituality; they always have a superior feeling that they are above others.
 3. The eyebrows signify the beauty of man; we have naturally good and strong points, which did not issue from the experience of God's salvation but from natural birth.
 4. The hair of the whole body signifies the natural strength of man; we are full of natural strength, natural methods and opinions, thinking that we can do this or that for the Lord and that we are capable of doing all things.
 5. When all the aspects of the self are dealt with through the "razor" of the cross, and when we have nothing and are nothing, we shall be clean—cf. Phil. 3:7-11.
 6. We should utterly reject the self by doing everything through the cross and by the Spirit to dispense Christ into one another for the sake of the Body of Christ.
- C. The leper's shaving of his entire body, washing his clothes, and bathing his flesh a second time after waiting and watching seven days (Lev. 14:9) signifies that a sinner who is to be cleansed needs to bear the responsibility for dealing with every part of his natural life and daily walk; this shows that if we deal with our sin and our sinful self seriously, in a definite, thorough, and absolute way, we shall be clean.

III. In Leviticus 14:33-57, the house typifies the church as our real home, and the leprosy in the house signifies the sins and evils in the church; the priest signifies the Lord or His deputy authority, and the examining of the house is not for condemnation but is a grace for healing—1 Cor. 1:11:

- A. The removing of the infected stones after seven days (Lev. 14:40) signifies that after the observation of a complete period of time, if the problem of the church is still spreading, the believer or believers involved in the problem should be removed from the fellowship of the church and be considered unclean, like the outsiders; this is done to stop the spread of the disease and to eliminate the disease (Rom. 16:17; Titus 3:10).
- B. Putting other stones in the place of the removed stones (Lev. 14:42a) signifies using other believers (1 Pet. 2:5) to fill in the

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gap; the replastering of the house with other plaster (Lev. 14:42b) signifies the renewing of the church with new experiences of the Lord's gracious works; this is needed for a new start in the church life.

- C. The breaking down of the house after the infection of leprosy returns (v. 45) signifies that if the situation of the church reaches the point where it cannot be cured, healed, that church should be terminated (cf. Rev. 2:5).
- D. If no sin is spreading after the renewing of the church with the new experiences of the Lord's gracious works, the church is clean and has no problem; the whole church needs to be cleansed with the eternally efficacious blood of Christ and His eternal and living Spirit so that the church is fully clean to be the mutual dwelling of God and man—Lev. 14:48-53; Heb. 9:14; 10:22; 1 John 1:9; Titus 3:5; John 14:2, 23.