

## Leviticus Chapters 11-12 – John Karmelich

1. We are now beginning a new section of Leviticus. I call it “Obedience to God in Every Day Life.”
  - a) For the most part, we’re done barbecuing animals. To review, Chapters 1-7 focused on we approach God. To have a relationship of God, we have to seek Him in a specific manner. These are described through various sacrifices. They are also designed as word-pictures for the Christian. Jesus fulfilled all of these sacrificial requirements.
  - b) Chapters 8-10 focused on the role of priests. A priest intercedes between the people and God. The New Testament teaches that all Christians are priests in that we are all called to help one another. It is fulfilling Jesus command to love one another. These chapters in particular give us visual concepts of how we to act as priests in helping one another.
  - c) Chapters 11 to 15 can be paraphrased as, “Now I know how to act on Sundays when I go to church, but what about Monday through Saturday?” In other words, what does God expect of you and me in every day life? This question ties to my title for this section.
    - i) The answer to the question is essentially: “Act differently as God desires”. This is the basic idea of “holiness”. It is to change our lifestyle in a way that is pleasing to God. It is more than just avoiding sin. It is about an entire change in the way we live to a way that is pleasing to God. In other words, it is about doing God’s will for our lives on a full time basis.
2. Which leads us to Chapter 11: God is instructing the Israelites to only eat certain types of living creatures as part of their diet. This food-list is the bulk of Chapter 11. In this lesson, we will also tackle Chapter 12, which has only eight verses. I’ll discuss Chapter 12 in a moment.
3. OK, why food? Why should God care what we eat?
  - a) For starters, if God wants to show that He cares about every aspect of our lives, then He would care what we eat.
  - b) Part of it is health concerns. In a desert world without refrigeration, a big part of these rituals helped the Israelites live a healthy lifestyle.
  - c) Another reason is “separation”. If you had to eat a specific diet, you end up eating with others having the same diet. The idea is God “separating” His people from the world around them. This is not about isolation or ignoring non-believers. The idea is if we have to eat a certain way, it is going to encourage us to be around others who also eat the same way. It encourages unity among believers.
  - d) Another reason to focus on food is that it helps us to think about God. If you knew there was a certain list of animals you can eat and certain ones you cannot, you are going to think about God every time you look at the restaurant menu! ☺
  - e) Finally, it is not just the list of animals that is important, but why the animals are forbidden. For example, animals that “chew the cud” and have “divided hooves” are acceptable to eat. In other words, you don’t have to memorize what type of animals to eat, just know that acceptable animals have these features and traits. Those traits such as “the chewing the cud” are designed to teach us things about how God wants us to live. More on that in a moment.
4. Do Christians have to eat this way? Do Christians have to eat kosher? The Jewish diet is called “kosher”. The idea is to only eat the “good” animals listed in this chapter. The term kosher is actually broader than just the animal list. It also includes how food is prepared and combined.
  - a) The short answer is no. The Christian diet is not limited to these animals. Peter learned this lesson in Acts Chapter 10. Also in Acts Chapter 15, there was a big meeting among the church leaders. The debate question of the moment was, “Gee, all of these non-Jewish people are accepting Jesus. Do we make these people conform to all of the Jewish laws?

- i) The answer of the leaders was no. The only requirements were to “abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood.” (Acts 15:20, NIV).
  - b) The idea of Acts 15:20 is that these four things were particularly offensive to a Jewish people. Imagine inviting over a loved one over for dinner who was a strict vegetarian. You may disagree with their diet, but you wouldn’t serve them meat as to not offend them. That is the idea with the council meeting in Acts 15. They asked (not demanded) Gentile Christians to avoid these four things as it offended Jewish Christians.
- 5. Getting back to Leviticus 11, this is a list of living creatures that Israelites can and cannot eat. The Christian does not have to read this chapter and say, “Ok, here is what I can and cannot eat.”
  - a) Here is what is important: Even though Christians are not under these particular laws, the idea of God’s holiness (i.e., living a life different from nonbelievers) does apply to us. God desires we live in obedience and live “differently” from the world around us.
  - b) Does that mean some Old Testament laws apply and some do not? In a short answer, yes. I’m positive “do not steal and do not murder” apply today. We use the New Testament as our guide to what applies to Christians. We as Christians are not bound by every law of the Old Testament, but we are commanded to live a life of obedience to God based on gratitude for our salvation.
  - c) So how do we know which Old Testament laws apply to Christians? The answer is to “Love the Lord God with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength” and then go do whatever you want”. (Based on Deuteronomy 6:5, Matthew 22:37 a quote by Saint Francis Assisi). The idea is if we love God, then we want to please Him. We want to show His love to others around us. We want to change our life in a way that is pleasing to Him.
  - d) What Christians should get out of Chapter 11 are the principals of how to live a life pleasing to God. The reasons these animals are picked show us word-pictures of how to act differently from those who have not committed their life to worshipping God.
  - e) Since we take the time to eat usually three times a day, these word-pictures are a constant reminder to us that “God is there, God wants to have a relationship with us and God wants us to live in a way that is pleasing to Him”.
- 6. Before I tackle the food groups, I need to talk a little about Chapter 12. The topic changes.
  - a) It is about a special set of rituals to be completed by a mother after a baby is born.
  - b) Like the food rituals, these specific ceremonies and rules do not apply to the Christian today. What does apply is what God wants to teach us about childbirth.
  - c) Remember that Chapters 11-15 are all about different aspects of our everyday life and how we are to live differently in order to conform to God’s will.
    - i) Chapter 11 deals with what we eat. Chapter 12 is deals with childbirth. Both are normal aspects of every day life. (Again, this ties to my title for this lesson).
  - d) The basic idea of Chapter 12 is that even though a newborn baby is innocent, they still inherit the “sin gene”. Sin is naturally inherited in all people and is passed on from generation to generation. The rituals for Chapter 12 are mainly for the mom. A newborn baby has no idea of right and wrong. These rituals are designed to remind the parent that this cute, innocent baby is also an “inherit sinner”. More on that as we get there.
- 7. Chapter 11, Verse 1: The LORD said to Moses and Aaron,
  - a) The first thing to notice is that God spoke to both Moses and Aaron on this issue.
  - b) The issue of the moment is what the Israelites are to eat. That is the bulk of this chapter.
  - c) Moses is the civil leader of the Israelites. Aaron is the spiritual leader. The idea is both leaders are to teach these laws as part of the life of the Israelite.
  - d) Remember that the last chapter was focusing on the High Priest offering animals for himself and for the people. God made an appearance to accept the offerings. Soon afterwards, God struck down two of Aaron’s sons for disobedience in the priests’ rituals.

- i) Imagine the average Israelite now thinking, “Ok, show’s over. ☺ Now what? We saw God come down and accept the offering on our behalf. We know that God struck down two priests for disobedience. Now it’s Monday and I have to go back home with the wife and kids and go back to work. Now what?”
  - a) The answer to that question is Chapters 11-15. These are regulations dealing with the “every day life” of the believer. That is why God spoke to both the religious leader Aaron and the civil leader Moses.
  - b) The first answer to “now what” is about what they eat. This is Chapter 11.
- 8. Verse 2: "Say to the Israelites: `Of all the animals that live on land, these are the ones you may eat.<sup>3</sup> You may eat any animal that has a split hoof completely divided and that chews the cud.
  - a) The next set of verses focus on land animals that the Israelites can eat. After that, we’re going to discuss fish, birds and finally, insects.
  - b) Here is the key to these verses (that means pay attention! ☺). The secret to these verses is not the list of the animals, but why the animals are chosen. That is in Verses 2-3.
    - i) Before I begin discussing the word pictures, I want to express my gratitude to Ray Steadman’s commentary on Leviticus, where a lot of these ideas come from. In the last lesson on Leviticus is a complete biography of all my sources for these lessons.
  - c) The animals that can be eating are the ones that have a divided hoof and chew the cud.
    - i) In other words, if an animals has only one of these two things, no good. It must be born with a divided hoof and eat in a way that chews the cud.
    - ii) The good news of this chapter is that you don’t have to memorize the types of animals that fit these categories, just learn the categories.
  - d) Let’s start with “chew the cud”. What does that mean?
    - i) I’ll give you a clue. The Hebrew word for “chew the cud” is the same word that is translated “meditated” in other places in the bible.
    - ii) Visualize a cow chewing its food. They spend a lot of time chewing on food before letting it go in the stomach. That means they “chew the cud”.
      - a) Ever heard the expression, “Let me chew on that for awhile?” A similar one is, “Let me digest that thought and I’ll get back to you”.
    - iii) The reason God allows “chewing the cud” animals is He is trying to teach us the principal of “thinking about something”. The word “meditate” means to stop and think about something. Instead of just reading something, you stop and think about what it means and what are the implications. That is “mediation”.
    - iv) For the Christian, the obvious example is the Word of God itself. It is not just a matter of reading it; it is a matter of “digesting” it. God wants us to “chew the cud” of the Word of God and consider what the word means.
    - v) One can also apply this to our daily life. When we are about to do something significant, we can ask, “What are the implications? What will this do? Is this action pleasing to God? We are “chewing the cud” of that action.
    - vi) If you think I’m out in left field on this one, ask yourself, “Why didn’t God just list the good and bad animals? Instead, God mentions “chewing the cud”. The reason is God wants to give us word-pictures of “good things” to remember.
  - e) Now let’s discuss “divided hooves”. Most land animals have hooves, not feet.
    - i) Some land animals have “solid” hoofs. Their footprint is a circle or a rectangle. The idea is that the hoof print is a continuous circle or rectangle with no division.
    - ii) For example, a horse has a round hoof with no cuts or divisions. Therefore, a horse is a forbidden animal to eat. A camel has a solid hoof. Dogs and cats have paws, but they have no points of separation (“divisions”) and cannot be eaten.
    - iii) The text is saying the only animals that can be eaten are those that have hoof and specifically those that have divided hoofs.
      - a) For example, a cow and a goat have divided hoofs. They can be eaten.

- iv) Now onto the word picture: Let's start with a New Testament text: "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2:15 NKJV)
  - a) This letter is from Paul to Timothy. One of the quotes in this letter is to "rightly divide" God's word. That means to learn to correctly understand and apply God's word. It is about reading the bible in context.
  - b) For example, after Judas betrays Jesus, he commits suicide. (Acts 1:18). Does that mean if we sin badly we should kill ourselves? Of course not! That would be an example of reading a text out of context. It is an example of not correctly "dividing the word of truth". False teachers of the bible usually take text out of context of the surrounding verses.

- f) Now let's get back to "divided hoofs": An acceptable animal to eat is one that divides the hoofs and chews the cud. An animal has to have both to be eaten as food.
  - i) "Chewing the cud" is a word picture of properly "digesting" Gods' word.
  - ii) "Divided hoofs" is the idea of rightly dividing God's word. It is about having proper discernment about what we read.
  - iii) This also applies to our "daily life" as Christians. (Hey, isn't that the title of this lesson? ☺) As we go through our lives, we have to consider every aspect and what is pleasing to God. We have to "chew the cud" (i.e., "think about it") in our lives and wonder if it is pleasing to God. We have to carefully choose we go in life. (Now consider that a "hoof" is a foot!) We have to have good discernment in our "walk" with God and correctly divide (i.e., discern) what we should do.
- g) Hopefully, now, you understand what God is doing with these food groups:
  - i) It is not just about what animals are good and bad, it is the word-pictures behind why they are good and bad! While Christians don't have to follow these dietary procedures, we do have to follow the idea of "chewing the cud" and discerning what is God's will for our life at any given moment.
  - ii) Yes, there are other benefits as well. The animals picked by God had fewer parasites and the Jewish people lived healthier lives because of it. If God cares for us, He cares for our health as well. Also, eating a specific diet motivates us to also eat with others of the same diet. It is a call to "unity" among believers.
  - iii) My point here is I want you to understand there is more than one reason for this specific diet. I believe the most important reason is the word-pictures as to why these animals were chosen. That is what the text emphasizes.

9. Verse 4: " `There are some that only chew the cud or only have a split hoof, but you must not eat them. The camel, though it chews the cud, does not have a split hoof; it is ceremonially unclean for you. <sup>5</sup> The coney, though it chews the cud, does not have a split hoof; it is unclean for you. <sup>6</sup> The rabbit, though it chews the cud, does not have a split hoof; it is unclean for you. <sup>7</sup> And the pig, though it has a split hoof completely divided, does not chew the cud; it is unclean for you. <sup>8</sup> You must not eat their meat or touch their carcasses; they are unclean for you.

- a) What we have in Verses 4-8 are "details and examples".
  - i) God lists the camel as an example of a forbidden animal. The camel was a common animal in that desert climate and was picked first. The camel does chew its food but its hoof is not split, so it is forbidden.
  - ii) The next animal specified is a coney (type of a hare) and a rabbit. These are two more animals that chew their food but do not have split hooves. Finally, the pig is mentioned. If you wonder why religious Jews, never eat pork, here is why.
  - iii) For what it is worth, Hebrew scholars debate over the words "coney" and "rabbit" and whether or not they are the correct translation. It may be other types of animals. I don't believe the specific animal is as important as the principal of chewing the cud and split hooves. That is what the text is emphasizing.

- b) Notice in the Verse 8 that the restriction is more than eating this animal. It is also forbidden to touch the dead carcasses.
- i) In other words, if you see a dead camel or a dead pig on the road, it is forbidden to touch it with your hands. Today, in our understanding of germs and parasites, it is easy for us to comprehend. Remember that “germs” weren’t discovered until the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. God preserved the health of the Israelites even though they didn’t understand the principals of hygiene.
  - ii) Let’s get back to the word picture of “digesting” God’s word and correctly discerning what it says. A parallel idea is about avoiding what is bad. If we do these things in order to please God, it also means, “avoiding the opposite”. A word-picture might be a person who doesn’t care about doing God’s will for their lives. The idea is not to touch them. The idea is not about helping the unbeliever, but not to live like them. The word picture is not to “touch” what is sinful as we go through our daily lives. (There’s that term again! ☺)
10. Verse 9: `Of all the creatures living in the water of the seas and the streams, you may eat any that have fins and scales. <sup>10</sup> But all creatures in the seas or streams that do not have fins and scales--whether among all the swarming things or among all the other living creatures in the water--you are to detest. <sup>11</sup> And since you are to detest them, you must not eat their meat and you must detest their carcasses. <sup>12</sup> Anything living in the water that does not have fins and scales is to be detestable to you.
- a) OK, we now switch creatures: We are no longer discussing land animals that are acceptable to eat. We are now discussing what types of sea animals are acceptable to eat.
  - b) The types of fish that can be eaten are the ones that have fins and scales.
  - c) Notice that no specific examples of fish are given. It is up to the Israelite to look at the creatures living in the sea and check if they have fins and scales.
  - d) First, let’s talk about fins: Only sea creatures with fins can be eaten.
    - i) Examples of sea creatures without fins would include lobsters, crabs, and starfish.
    - ii) Fins on a fish guide the animals through the water.
    - iii) Now let’s go back to the land animal examples: Chewing the cud and divided hoofs are about “digesting and correctly dividing (discerning) the truths of life and what is pleasing to God.
    - iv) A similar principal applies to fish. The ones with fins can easily “guide” where they go in life. These fish have the correct “tools” (i.e., fins) to go through life in order to discern what is right from wrong.
  - e) Next, let’s talk about scales: Only sea creatures with scales can be eaten.
    - i) An example of a sea creature with fins but no scales would be sharks and dolphins. They have smooth skins with no “scalely” outside protection.
    - ii) Scales are a type of covering that protects fish. The key word is “protection”.
    - iii) With land animals, the picture of “divided hoof” is to correctly discern what is God’s truth. With “scales”, the idea is to carry “protection” as we go through life.
  - f) Remember the idea here is teach us how we live as we go through our daily lives. God wants us to “move” through life fairly easily. For a sea creature, those with fins, move much more easily than those that don’t. At the same time, God wants us to have protection from the things that can harm us.
    - i) This is not about having strong legs and coat of armor. ☺ It is about going through life in way that is pleasing to God, and at the same time, asking for God’s protection as we go through our lives. God does not want us to be lazy. He wants to go out and live a life pleasing to Him. God provides us with the power to move through life (our fins, so to speak) and at the same time, provides us with our protection. Thus, the word picture of a “good fish” has fins and scales.

- g) In the previous bible paragraph, it was forbidden to touch the dead animal that does not fit the description of chewing the cud and split hooves. In this bible paragraph, it is not only “detestable” to eat the bad sea creatures, but also to touch their carcasses.
- i) I guess that would inhibit scuba diving for religious Jews. ☺
- ii) The principal is the same as the previous paragraph. We are not to live like the people who don’t care for God. It is not about avoiding reaching out to them, but just to avoid living like them. The word picture is to avoid what is “detestable”.
11. Verse 13: " `These are the birds you are to detest and not eat because they are detestable: the eagle, the vulture, the black vulture, <sup>14</sup> the red kite, any kind of black kite, <sup>15</sup> any kind of raven, <sup>16</sup> the horned owl, the screech owl, the gull, any kind of hawk, <sup>17</sup> the little owl, the cormorant, the great owl, <sup>18</sup> the white owl, the desert owl, the osprey, <sup>19</sup> the stork, any kind of heron, the hoopoe and the bat.
- a) We now leave the sea and go up in the air. The focus is on birds one cannot eat.
- i) What is implied, but not stated is in effect, “If a bird is not on this list, it’s ok to eat that bird”. For example, turkeys, chickens and quails are not on this list and would be an acceptable food to eat.
- b) What is unique about this paragraph is there is no “why” given. It is just a list of birds that are forbidden to eat. Like the land animals, scholars debate over the exact type of bird being listed with some of these words.
- c) Let’s talk about what all of these birds have in common: They are all either predators (i.e., eat meat) or these birds eat “road kill”. When we think of vultures, we think of birds that eat anything dead. Eagles, hawks and owls are meat-eating birds.
- d) Let’s start with the health implications: If these animals eat dead things, they pick up the germs and parasites. For health reasons alone, they should be avoided. Remember this was written a few thousand years prior to the modern methods of refrigeration, and cleansing of food for consumption. The history of the Israelites is full of stories how they were spared from plagues due to their food preparation and eating patterns.
- e) Now let’s talk about the word-pictures. The first one is “life”. One of the patterns through all of Leviticus is the respect for all life. Here, God is forbidding eating of animals that don’t have any respect for life. They kill other animals or eat dead animals.
- i) All the animals listed either kill other animals or eat dead animals.
- f) Notice there is nothing positive listed in this bible text. There is no list of acceptable birds. It is as if God is saying, “These birds are so disgusting to me (in terms of word pictures), I’m only going to mention these bad birds by name, and stop there”.
- g) If you study birds all through the bible, there is an interesting word-picture that implies “birds are bad”. God is not condemning birds, it is just that birds are often used in negative connotations through the bible. For example, Jesus told a parable where the birds of the air have a demonic representation (Compare Luke 8:5 with 8:12).
- i) For the moment, keep this in mind. I’ll come back to this thought shortly.
12. Verse 20: " `All flying insects that walk on all fours are to be detestable to you. <sup>21</sup> There are, however, some winged creatures that walk on all fours that you may eat: those that have jointed legs for hopping on the ground. <sup>22</sup> Of these you may eat any kind of locust, katydid, cricket or grasshopper. <sup>23</sup> But all other winged creatures that have four legs you are to detest.
- a) Let me paraphrase these verses: Don’t eat any bugs except the kind that can hop. The good ones are the locusts, crickets and grasshoppers. Again, scholars debate the English translation of these insects, but essentially, it’s the one’s that can hop (or leap).
- b) There are a couple of neat little New Testament tidbits that tie to these verses:
- i) John the Baptist diet included locusts (See Matthew 3:4.) That was kosher.
- ii) Jesus said the Pharisee’s “strained at gnat but swallowed a camel”. (See Matthew 23:34) Neither gnats nor camels are kosher. Jesus’ point is not about their diet, but that they were so obsessed with the little things, they missed the big picture.

- c) Now the question of the moment: Why are most bugs forbidden food and why are hopping (or leaping) bugs acceptable? Who would want to eat these anyway? ☺
    - i) Let's start with the Garden of Eden story. When Satan was cursed after the fruit incident, he was cursed to "crawl on his belly". (Genesis 3:14) This is why Satan is often artistically associated with the snake. The idea is also that the "earth" represents the "home" of non-believers, as the "home" of believers is in heaven.
    - ii) So here are all of these creatures that walk close to the ground. It should remind the bible-knowing person of the Garden of Eden story. When we think of creatures staying "close to the earth", we think of those whose "home" is earth as opposed to those who's "home" is in heaven.
  - d) As far as the "good bugs", The NIV translates the key jumping word "hop". I like the word "leap" better, which is used in the King James Version.
    - i) When we think of leaping off the ground, we think of jumping for a brief moment up into the sky. Here are these "earth dwellers" making a momentary jump from the earthly word up to the "heavens". One can see how that is a positive picture of focusing, even for a moment on toward God.
  - e) Now for my favorite part of this lesson. (Pay attention! ☺) Let's tie the word-pictures together of all these living creatures:
    - i) We started with land animals: It is only those that chew the cud (a word picture of digesting the Word of God) and divide the hoof (a word picture of correctly discerning God's word and God's desires for our lives.) These word pictures can also be used to symbolize our walk with God as we "think about" what we do.
      - a) Think of these pictures as "preparation for life". As we discern what we should do, we properly prepare for the decisions we make in life.
    - ii) Next came sea animals: It is only those with fins and scales. "After" we digest and discern God's word (and will for our life), we go out through life. We are guided by God (think of fins) and God provides our protection (think of scales).
      - a) The word picture here is about actually "going through" life.
    - iii) Next comes the bad birds: We have to be careful of those who can do us harm. We have to avoid those birds that focus on death. This is about avoiding those (i.e., not joining in) with those people are who displeasing to God.
      - a) Remember how Jesus used "birds as bad" in a parable? That's the same idea. We have to "look up and around" for those things can do us harm.
    - iv) Finally, we have the good insects. It is those that "leap" up toward the heaven.
      - a) If we prepare, walk through life properly and watch out for danger, we can make that "leap" up toward the heavens where God is located.
    - v) All these acceptable-food lessons form a pattern of living a life pleasing to God. Yes, these food groups still serve the purpose of the Israelites living a healthy life and separating themselves for the purpose of serving God. Also, when these lessons are combined, they show a wonderful word-picture of how to please God as we go through our lives.
13. Verse 24: " `You will make yourselves unclean by these; whoever touches their carcasses will be unclean till evening.<sup>25</sup> Whoever picks up one of their carcasses must wash his clothes, and he will be unclean till evening.
- a) Verses 24-45 are further commentary on the dietary laws. These verses are mostly about the penalties for violations and how to remedy the situation when one messes up.
  - b) To summarize one cannot touch a dead animal carcass of one of these unclean animals.
  - c) Notice the penalty for this violation: One is "unclean" until the evening.
    - i) Notice this is a not a death penalty violation. The Old Testament has different levels of punishments for different sins. This goes back to my argument from earlier lessons that not all sins have the same weight with God.

- ii) To be “unclean” means an Israelite cannot go worship at the tabernacle for a specified time period. The person is quarantined until they are “clean” again.
  - iii) Remember that a big part of these rituals were to deal with health issues. Today, we know all about germs and parasites. They didn’t. These laws about cleansing and quarantining are standard procedure today! This was not known roughly 3,500 years ago when this was written!
14. Verse 26: " `Every animal that has a split hoof not completely divided or that does not chew the cud is unclean for you; whoever touches the carcass of any of them will be unclean. <sup>27</sup> Of all the animals that walk on all fours, those that walk on their paws are unclean for you; whoever touches their carcasses will be unclean till evening. <sup>28</sup> Anyone who picks up their carcasses must wash his clothes, and he will be unclean till evening. They are unclean for you.
- a) The key word in this paragraph is “clean”. It is used a bunch of times. In essence, a “clean” animal, fish, or insect is one that is approved on the list.
  - b) The only new regulation is an expansion of an old regulation. Verse 27 says, no animals with paws will be eaten. That would include dogs, cats, lions, etc. The “old regulation”, stated earlier in the chapter is that the only animal that can be eaten must have split hoofs. Since animals with paws don’t have split hoofs, they’re off the grocery list. ☺
  - c) The paragraph then goes on to say that one cannot touch any unclean animal. Further, even a clean animal that is found dead cannot be touched. Again, there are health benefits to all of this, but the main idea being emphasized is word-pictures designed to teach us how to live a life pleasing to God.
  - d) Again, notice the punishment for touching a dead “bad” animal is only isolation until evening. In Jewish culture, a new day begins at dusk. The idea is tomorrow is a new day. If an Israelite accidentally touched a dead animal, they have to go home, isolate themselves and tomorrow is a new day when they are allowed back in the society.
  - e) Does that mean Christians should not touch dead animals or these forbidden animals? No. Remember the blood of Jesus covers all of our sins. For health reasons it would be good to avoid these dead carcasses stuff or wash thoroughly afterwards.
15. Verse 29: " `Of the animals that move about on the ground, these are unclean for you: the weasel, the rat, any kind of great lizard, <sup>30</sup> the gecko, the monitor lizard, the wall lizard, the skink and the chameleon. <sup>31</sup> Of all those that move along the ground, these are unclean for you. Whoever touches them when they are dead will be unclean till evening.
- a) Here we get examples of unclean animals. Earlier, I talked about the Garden of Eden story. The devil was cursed and had to “crawl on his belly” as part of the curse. Notice all the animals that slither and walk close the ground are forbidden. Also recall, that “bad sea creatures” includes the ones that don’t have fins, i.e., they crawl close the ground.
    - i) Here in these verses, we have examples of animals that walk close to the ground.
      - a) Notice what Jesus said when he condemned some Pharisee’s: “You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins.” (John 8:23-84, NIV)
    - ii) The idea is something “close to the ground” represents something of “this world”. That is a negative word picture as Jesus implied and the Pharisee’s understood.
    - iii) Our home is in heaven. We have been separated from this world and chosen to be part of God’s world. Those who are not saved are called “earth dwellers”. That negative picture is recalled when we see animals that crawl close to the earth.
  - b) It’s not just that Israelites are to avoid eating these animals, but they are to avoid touching these animals when they are dead. Yes, this is a health issue, but it is also a word-picture to not associate with the “dead things of this world”.
    - i) Again, the punishment for this sin is not severe, just some isolation time. It gives one time to think about what they did and the symbolism behind this action.



16. Verse 32: When one of them dies and falls on something, that article, whatever its use, will be unclean, whether it is made of wood, cloth, hide or sackcloth. Put it in water; it will be unclean till evening, and then it will be clean.<sup>33</sup> If one of them falls into a clay pot, everything in it will be unclean, and you must break the pot.<sup>34</sup> Any food that could be eaten but has water on it from such a pot is unclean, and any liquid that could be drunk from it is unclean.<sup>35</sup> Anything that one of their carcasses falls on becomes unclean; an oven or cooking pot must be broken up. They are unclean, and you are to regard them as unclean.
- a) Let me start with a common health issue. When somebody has the flu, it is best to keep that person quarantined so nobody else gets sick. A person without the flu can get sick by getting the germs of the person with the flu. The reverse is never true: A sick person cannot get better by being “exposed” to a healthy person.
    - i) That illustration is what is being applied here. The Israelites of 3,500 years ago had no idea about germs and being quarantined. All they knew was that God said, “isolate that person” when “x” happens, and they did it.
  - b) Now onto the text itself: Notice the word “one” in Verse 32. That “one” refers to the animals that walk or slither close to the ground. If it dies, it is “contagious”. The items that it touches must be either washed or destroyed. If it crawls into a clay pot (think of a lizard getting in the house) and dies, one has to destroy the clay pot.
  - c) Again, the word picture has to do with avoiding things “of this world”. If such a creature dies, it is to be avoided. Part of this is that God cares about the health of those He loves and wants us to live a happy and healthy life. Another part is the word-pictures designed to remind us that we are not “part of this world”.
17. Verse 36: A spring, however, or a cistern for collecting water remains clean, but anyone who touches one of these carcasses is unclean.<sup>37</sup> If a carcass falls on any seeds that are to be planted, they remain clean.
- a) In these verses, God puts reasonable limits on how to handle “unclean” animals and their carcasses. God is saying in effect, “If the dead bad-animals fall into a spring of water, the spring is still good. If the dead thing falls into a cistern (a well), the well is still good. If the dead things fall on seeds, the seeds can still be planted.
  - b) Water in these verses is the “cure-all” for cleansing the dead animals. The idea is that water cleanses what causes them to be unhealthy.
  - c) Paul says about the church, “to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word” (Ephesians 5:26 NIV). You can see the connection here.
18. Verse 38: But if water has been put on the seed and a carcass falls on it, it is unclean for you.
- a) If one plants seeds, waters them, and then a dead animal carcass falls on the young plant, it is no longer acceptable to eat. Again, this is about health risk. It is also about the “contaminated” affecting the uncontaminated.
  - b) In an indirect way, these verses are condoning eating fruits and vegetables. It is teaching how a seed can get contaminated. The verse is implying that if the seeds don’t make contact with these animals, they are acceptable. Such seeds produce fruits and vegetables.
  - c) Getting back to my Ephesians reference If something is “washed by the word”, and then “sin happens”, the sin has to be dealt with. One can sort of see that word-picture being played out here in Verse 38.
19. Verse 39: “If an animal that you are allowed to eat dies, anyone who touches the carcass will be unclean till evening.<sup>40</sup> Anyone who eats some of the carcass must wash his clothes, and he will be unclean till evening. Anyone who picks up the carcass must wash his clothes, and he will be unclean till evening.
- a) One can only eat “good” animals if they are killed. No “road kill” is permitted.
  - b) The penalty for eating “road kill” is to wash the clothes and be isolated till evening. We can see the health benefits: By washing the clothes, one can eliminate any parasites or germs. By isolating that person, others can see if they get sick from eating of that carcass.

20. Verse 41: " `Every creature that moves about on the ground is detestable; it is not to be eaten. <sup>42</sup> You are not to eat any creature that moves about on the ground, whether it moves on its belly or walks on all fours or on many feet; it is detestable. <sup>43</sup> Do not defile yourselves by any of these creatures. Do not make yourselves unclean by means of them or be made unclean by them.
- a) These verses are a summary statement of the last few paragraphs. The idea is God reminding the people that what "moves on the ground" is not to be eaten.
  - b) Notice these verses apply to some land animals, some sea animals and most bugs.
  - c) It is another reminder that we are not part of this world. The animals "close" to the ground (i.e., "this world") are to remind us that we are not part of this world.
21. Verse 44: I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy. Do not make yourselves unclean by any creature that moves about on the ground. <sup>45</sup> I am the LORD who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy. <sup>46</sup> " `These are the regulations concerning animals, birds, every living thing that moves in the water and every creature that moves about on the ground. <sup>47</sup> You must distinguish between the unclean and the clean, between living creatures that may be eaten and those that may not be eaten.' "
- a) These verses are the answer to the "why" question of this chapter. The question is, "Why do the Israelites have to only eat certain animals and only eat ones that they kill?"
    - i) The answer is Verses 44-45. "Be holy because I (God) am holy".
  - b) In Verse 45 God reminds them that He (not Moses) is the one that brought the Israelites out of Egypt. He is the one that rescued the Israelites from the bondage of slavery. The word-picture for the Christian is that God rescued us from the "bondage" of sin from this world to be with Him forever. In exchange for God saving us, God demands obedience. Through gratitude, we are to live a life that is pleasing to God.
  - c) This gets back to the idea of living "differently". If we lived just like all non-believers in God, then there is nothing that distinguishes our behavior. People would think, "What is so special about being a Christian? They are just like everyone else."
    - i) Yes, we are saved by grace. Yes, we still sin and mess up. That should not stop us from having a higher standard, a goal for us to live by.
    - ii) Does that mean we have to obey all of these Old Testament laws? No. It means we show our gratitude to God for our salvation for the cross. It means we love one another as Jesus commanded (not suggested!). That loving action should lead to a life of obedience. This is the idea of "holiness". It is about living differently in a way that is pleasing to God.
22. OK, time to move on to Chapter 12: Chapter 12 is only eight verses. It is too short to take on in a lesson by itself, so I'm going to squeeze it in here, near the end of this lesson.
- a) The specific topic changes completely. It is about dealing with childbirth.
  - b) The big-picture idea does not change at all: It is about dealing with "clean and unclean" issues in every day life. Chapter 11 is about food, which we deal with daily. Chapter 12 is about childbirth, which is another common occurrence in every day life.
23. Chapter 12, Verse 1: The LORD said to Moses, <sup>2</sup> "Say to the Israelites: `A woman who becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son will be ceremonially unclean for seven days, just as she is unclean during her monthly period. <sup>3</sup> On the eighth day the boy is to be circumcised. <sup>4</sup> Then the woman must wait thirty-three days to be purified from her bleeding. She must not touch anything sacred or go to the sanctuary until the days of her purification are over.
- a) Verse 1 says, "The Lord said to Moses". In Chapter 11, Verse 1, the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron. Moses is the civil leader. Aaron was the spiritual leader.
    - i) When it came to the food laws, this is an issue for both leaders. The spiritual leader had to know the "clean" animals that could be sacrificed. The civil leader had to know which "clean" animals people could eat as part of their daily life.
    - ii) We are now dealing with moms after childbirth. They have to be quarantined and not go to the tabernacle. Therefore, this issue is given to the "civil" leader Moses.

- b) Onto the text itself: When a woman gives birth to a boy, the mother is “unclean” for seven days. On day 8, the boy is to be circumcised. The woman then goes back home and essentially stays “unclean” (i.e., isolated) for another 33 days (40 days total). After 40 days the woman is now “clean” and can go back in public. Anyone who has ever been around a new baby knows a mom is too busy and tired to leave the house anyway. ☺
- c) Ok, what’s the point? Is it a “sin” to bring a baby in the world? No.
- i) The first point to remember is that all people are born “sinners”. We all inherit this sin disease. It is a genetic defect that is passed on from generation to generation. Ask any parent if they had to teach their children how to lie and steal. My point is “sin” comes with the baby.
  - ii) I should also add that I do believe babies that die go to heaven. There is Scripture to support that. There is an age of accountability to God.
  - iii) This isolation period is a reminder to the parent, “Hey mom, you gave birth to a “sinner”. That kid has to be taught right from wrong. It won’t come naturally. If anything, the natural tendency is to do wrong.”
- d) There is another point being taught here: Blood. When a new baby is born, there is some blood discharge from the womb. This can continue for a few weeks. God is teaching all through the bible that “blood” represents life. That was well emphasized in Leviticus in the early chapters. Here is a “bloody mother” from the newborn baby. That “blood” cannot be a part of the Israelites life as that discharged blood is “wasted” from life.
- e) During this 40-day isolation period, there is a “time out” to get the boy circumcised.
- i) Verse 3 specifies that the boy must be circumcised on the 8<sup>th</sup> day. If you recall from earlier lessons, the “8<sup>th</sup> day” represents a new beginning. Just as seven days are a complete week cycle, the 8<sup>th</sup> day is a new beginning. To circumcise a baby on the 8<sup>th</sup> day represents their “new beginning” in their life with God.
  - ii) Interestingly enough, there are good health reasons to wait until Day 8 to do this as opposed to earlier dates. Studies have also shown some reduced cancer risks by circumcising boys. Christian babies are not required to be circumcised. (See 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 7:9) I still personally recommend it for health reasons.
  - iii) This also shows a principal of “higher law”. That means that some biblical laws have more weight than others do. One law is about isolating a baby boy for 40 days. There is an exception on day 8 for circumcision. One laws “outweighs” the other and it is ok to not-isolate this child for the medical procedure on Day 8.
24. Verse 5: If she gives birth to a daughter, for two weeks the woman will be unclean, as during her period. Then she must wait sixty-six days to be purified from her bleeding.
- a) In Verse 5, we are now discussing the procedure for a baby girl as opposed to a baby boy.
  - b) The main difference is the time in the penalty box is doubled. ☺ There is an 80-day period where the baby girl and her mother must be isolated.
  - c) For two weeks, she is “unclean”. In practicality, it means she can’t go out in public. Then there is another 66 days (80 days total) where she is “unclean”. I suspect that means she can’t go to synagogue or go offer animal sacrifices at the tabernacle until this 80-day period is over. Personally, I think most women would love the bed rest for this length of time, especially with a newborn! This also puts the burden on the husband and older siblings to take care of her, as they should!
  - d) OK, the big theological question of the moment? Why does a girl have a double penalty?
    - i) Why does having a baby girl require twice as long to be “clean” as a baby boy? Is this some sort of chauvinistic thing? ☺ Personally, if I was a woman, and a baby girl came out, part of me is thinking, “All right! Bed rest for twice as long!” ☺

- ii) Scholars are divided as to the reason for this. My favorite answer is it has to do with compassion for the mom and her daughter. Men have a higher standard in that society. The dad may want to try again immediately to have a boy. This double rest period is a “more grace” period for a mother to bond with her baby.
    - a) Another common theory has to do that since the mom is responsible for “bringing in another sinner” in the world, the penalty time is doubled. I’m not sure I buy that theory, but it out there. ☺
  - iii) Remember this 80-day period is for the mom. The baby has no idea what is going on. It is a time for the mom to reflect that they have brought a baby and a “new sinner” in the world. This child has to be taught right from wrong.
  - e) The main issue, judging from the text is still about blood discharge. The text is implying the main reason for isolation is so no discharged blood is part of the Israelite culture. It is another reminder of God saying to take blood (a word-picture of "life") seriously. It is not to be messed with or treated lightly.
25. Verse 6: " `When the days of her purification for a son or daughter are over, she is to bring to the priest at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting a year-old lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or a dove for a sin offering. <sup>7</sup> He shall offer them before the LORD to make atonement for her, and then she will be ceremonially clean from her flow of blood.
- a) Well, we can’t get through a Leviticus lesson without at least one animal being offered on the barbeque pit, and here we are again. ☺
  - b) To summarize the text, after the 40-day “boy” period or after the 80-day “girl” period, the mom is to go to the tabernacle, and offer a sacrifice for sin and one for a burnt offering.
  - c) The idea of the sin offering is not that the mom sinned by having a baby. The idea is that a new “sinner” is now in this world. The sin offering is to remind mom of this fact.
  - d) In a way, this is similar to the ritual a lot of Christian parents do when they baptize children in some Christian denominations. The babies have no idea what is happening to them. That ceremony is no guarantee of how the child will turn out in life. The ritual is for the parents to remind them that they are “raising a sinner” and has to be taught about God and His ways of right from wrong.
  - e) The second part of the mom’s offering is a burnt offering (Verse 6). To remind us again, a burnt offering is about a commitment. The whole animal is burnt on the fire pit to remind us that we are completely dedicated to serving God.
    - i) In many Protestant churches, babies are “dedicated” to God. The idea is a vow is made (or implied) by the parents to raise their children for God. The key part is the parents are making a commitment. It is similar to this burnt offering as performed by the “mom” after the isolation period is over.
    - f) Notice the text says she will be clean from “her flow of blood”. I want to overemphasize the fact that the “blood” is what is being ritually “cleaned”. It is the woman’s flow of blood that is the “sin” being dealt with. The text is emphasizing the fact that the “discharge of blood” is what is being atoned for in these sacrifices.
26. Verse 7 (cont.) " `These are the regulations for the woman who gives birth to a boy or a girl. <sup>8</sup> If she cannot afford a lamb, she is to bring two doves or two young pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering. In this way the priest will make atonement for her, and she will be clean.' "
- a) The last few verses of Chapter 11 were summary statements of the whole chapter. These last few verses of Chapter 12 are the summary statements of Chapter 12. It is God’s way of saying, “And that is all I have to say on this matter.”
  - b) If you recall from the early chapters of Leviticus, the offerings were made based on financial status. To paraphrase from those lessons, “Bring a bull. If you can’t afford a bull, I’ll take a lamb. If you can’t afford a lamb, bring a bird. At the same time, don’t be cheap and do bring what you can afford”.

- i) Verse 8 has the same concept. If the woman can't afford a lamb, she is to bring two doves or pigeons. One for the sin offering and one for the burnt offering.
  - ii) On a side note, Mary, the mother of Jesus brought two birds for her offering when Jesus was born. (Ref.: Luke 2:22-24). Mary had "sinned" by having a baby boy and had to perform these sin and burnt offering. I bring this up as there is a false concept among some Roman Catholic believers that Mary was "without sin". In Luke's Gospel, she had to perform a sin offering for herself for Jesus' birth.
  - c) The main idea being taught here is about how to be "clean" before God. When one has a baby, there is a blood discharge. Blood represents "life" to God and God doesn't want us to forget that in our everyday life.
27. One last thing: Many lessons ago I stated that a purpose of Leviticus is to teach Christians how to act as "priests" this world. A priest is one who intercedes on someone else's behalf to God. In practical terms, that is more than prayer, it is about helping people draw closer to God.
- a) As to these laws, we are to "live" the principals without actually changing our diet. Out of gratitude for our salvation, God demands we live in obedience to "His Will". Doing God's will can be summarized as "Love God as much as possible, study His word, pray for guidance" and then go live one's life. If it is our desire to please God in all that we do, and we ask His help to do so, we just "want" to live in obedience. The key is not "have to", but "want to". It is a life based on gratitude.
  - b) We think of priests as interceding for others. A big point of these chapters is that we can't help others unless we first help ourselves. We are to live a life that is pleasing to God in all that we do. It doesn't mean we are perfect. It means we set a standard for ourselves that says in effect, "Through God's power, I am going to live a life that is pleasing to God. I desire to do His will throughout the day. That includes my daily "regular" life as much as my religious life. That is the "whole" idea of "holy".
  - c) As we work on ourselves, it is then our job as priests to instruct others and lead-by-example on how Christians should behave. Part of our job as priests is to encourage others to live "holy" lives as well as ourselves.
28. Let's pray: Father, It is our desire to live holy lives for You. In gratitude for our salvation, we desire to live a life that is pleasing to You in all that we do. Work through us, protect us and guide us as we go through our lives. Help us to remember that we are "special". You love us, You care for us. That includes our health and how we live. The whole idea is to glorify You in all that we do. That is what "holy" means. The purpose of Christian living is to glorify God in all that we do. Help us to do just that. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.