

Leviticus Chapter 13 – John Karmelich

1. The next three chapters deal with the “ugly” parts of our humanity. It also deals with horrible diseases, mold, and about separation from God. It goes downhill from there. ☺
 - a) On a positive note, I call Chapter 13 “God’s protection”. More on that in a moment.
 - b) In the bigger context, this chapter is similar in theme to last week’s lesson. I called that lesson “obedience to God in everyday life”. We’re still in the “everyday life aspect”. The last lesson dealt with food and childbirth. In this lesson, the issue is sickness.
 - c) The particular focus of this lesson is on bad diseases and avoidance of those diseases.
 - d) The main (but not only) disease in focus is leprosy. It is a horrible, slow-killing disease that ultimately leads to death.
 - e) Leprosy is also used in the bible as a word-picture for sin-in-general. We’ll discuss that as we go. Still, I don’t want to ignore the literal interpretation of the verse about leprosy.
2. A common question skeptics ask about God is, “If there is a god, how come He allows all of those horrible diseases to exist? People suffer long and hard over illness. Why would a good-god allow people like to suffer?”
 - a) My standard answer is life is unfair if there is no God and there is no judgment day.
 - b) Adam and Eve “blew it” far more than we realize. Life in paradise only had one key condition: Live by God’s rules. Adam and Eve willfully chose to disobey. God answered Adam and Eve by saying in effect, “Sorry you two, but for now on, you’re going to live in a world with the existence of sin.” Humanity has had to suffer ever since.
 - c) Let me try to re-explain it from God’s perspective. This is God talking to people: Folks, I know what is best for you. The world is now a rotten place because of sin. However, if you follow My rules, I can give you a happy life. I don’t promise all good things all the time, but I do promise happiness (i.e., “joy”) through whatever is happening if you are willing to obey me. Further, you can avoid a lot of the negative things of life if you are willing to follow my rules.”
 - d) What about the person stuck on an island who never heard of God? How is that “fair” when the hurricane strikes that island? It’s “fair” in that the person will live forever and God will judge people fairly based on what they know about Him. Eternity is a lot longer than our time on earth. It would only be unfair of God if He didn’t judge them fairly.
3. This leads back to my title for this lesson: “Protection”.
 - a) Chapter 13 of Leviticus reads like a complex medical instruction guide. It would be like someone saying, “Oh, you have this really bad disease? Are you sure? Here’ read these 59 verses and we’ll find out for sure.” Yes, the 59 verses are complicated and confusing, but if our life was on the line, we would be studying these verses in detail.
 - b) Now back to the main topic Chapter 13. It is mostly about leprosy.
 - i) Leprosy is a horrible disease. It starts as little white blotches (spots) somewhere on the body, usually on the forehead. One’s hair will turn white. Symptoms for this disease include numbness. One cannot feel pain. Often, body parts will die and fall off. It eventually can cover the whole body.
 - ii) The Hebrew word translated “leprosy” is broader in scope than just that dreaded disease. It also refers to other skin diseases, but it is usually as described above.
 - iii) The good news is leprosy is not as common today as it was centuries ago. It is estimated that leprosy has killed more people than the “black plague” of the Middle Ages. It still occurs in some locations of the Middle East, but modern medicine, and quarantines have helped reduce the disease.
 - iv) This chapter also deals with another disease causing issue: mold. For those who don’t know, mold needs to be removed from households as it can cause sickness. This chapter teaches that issue.

- c) Now let's get back to the question of, "Does God care about those who get really sick from disease?" The answer is yes, and the proof is Chapter 13 of Leviticus. If God didn't care, God wouldn't give us over 100 verses in two chapters on this topic! God has saved us "from" this world. God cares about protecting us from the "sinful world". I see Leviticus Chapter 13 as God saying, "I love you so much, I want to protect you from this sinful world. Here, follow these instructions for your own protection."
- 4. Now for the bigger picture: We can easily say, "Ok, I know this is a horrible disease. I know many people have died from leprosy. I don't have leprosy, nor does anyone I know. I have enough to worry about in life. Why should I study this stuff?"
 - a) The underlying picture, besides the fact that God wants to protect us from what causes us harm, is the fact that this is a word-picture of "sin".
 - b) How do you know leprosy is associated with sin? For starters, when a person is cleansed from leprosy, they must make a sin offering. (Ref: Leviticus 14:19).
 - c) Although the bible never says leprosy is a word-picture of sin, there are a few cases where someone in the bible got leprosy right after they committed some rebellious sin:
 - i) Moses' sister Miriam got leprosy when she rebelled against Moses' leadership. Moses pleaded on her behalf to God, and it went away. (Ref.: Numbers 12:10).
 - ii) An Israelite king (Uzziah) got leprosy when he tried to take on the role of the high priest. God separated the roles of kings and priests. (Ref. 2nd Chron. 26:19-21).
 - d) The reason leprosy is commonly associated with sin is based on how leprosy acts:
 - i) Leprosy starts as a small spot and grows. Sin starts as a "little act". All drunks start with one drink. Murderers were once cute innocent babies.
 - ii) People with leprosy become numb in their feelings. People who sin more and more eventually become numb to its pain and its effects.
 - iii) Leprosy spreads on the flesh (skin). The word "flesh" is associated with our human sinful nature.
 - iv) Leprosy grows and grows and eventually kills. Enough said.
 - a) James said, "Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death." (James 1:15 NIV).
 - v) On that somber note, we are now ready to deal with disease recognition. ☺
- 5. Chapter 13, Verse 1: The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, ² "When anyone has a swelling or a rash or a bright spot on his skin that may become an infectious skin disease, he must be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons who is a priest.
 - a) This chapter is addressed to both the civil leader Moses and the high priest Aaron.
 - i) Both the civil leader and the religious leader have to be on the lookout for this.
 - b) Verse 2 says, "(These symptoms) may become an infectious skin disease". In other words, when one has the specific symptoms listed in Verse 2, it is not a guarantee one has say leprosy. The priest's job is to check if the symptoms are leprosy.
 - c) Remember the number of Israelites were probably 2-3 million. There was only one high priest and his two remaining sons. I doubt many people had to deal with this issue, but when one small group of priests has to serve that many millions, it is more of a concern for them than for the mass numbers of Israelites.
 - d) Does that mean Aaron and his sons had to receive medical training? Did people start calling him Dr. Aaron at this point? No. ☺
 - i) The issue is not that Aaron or his sons were to cure the people. The job of the high priest was to protect (there's that word again!) the Israelites. Leprosy can spread through the camp. If a person had this, they had to be quarantined and isolated.
 - e) As I've stated all through the Leviticus lessons so far, all Christians are called to be priests.
 - i) Part of the job of "priests" is to protect the believers. Protection also means to isolate those that are doing harm to others. That includes fellow believers.

6. Verse 3: The priest is to examine the sore on his skin, and if the hair in the sore has turned white and the sore appears to be more than skin deep, it is an infectious skin disease. When the priest examines him, he shall pronounce him ceremonially unclean.
 - a) Now we begin the medical examination. Let's say there is a spot on the skin that is not the same color as the flesh. The spot appears to be more than skin deep. Further, there are white hairs growing from that spot. The priest is to say in effect, "OK, this appears to be leprosy. Let's quarantine you as this is leprosy."
 - b) I can imagine the fear that is going through the person receiving the examination. Not only does this mean isolation for the rest of their life, but also a slow, painful death. As bad as this is, the health of everyone else has to take precedence over the health of the individual. In Chapter 14, we'll deal with remedies. Chapter 13 deals with "recognition".
 - c) The good news is the bible does not record say, this disease as being widespread among the Israelites. There are cases of leprosy existing and I'm sure it did. The point is we never read of a widespread outbreak among Israelites in either secular history or biblical accounts. These quarantine methods made a difference.
 - d) Being "unclean" does not mean the person is going to hell. It does not mean that person can never pray to God. The idea of "unclean" is that they can't be part of worship. In modern terms, they can't go to church. The idea is the congregation getting together must be "clean". It is a synonym of being "whole" or "holy". A holy God demands that all of our lives be dedicated to God. Think of all believers in God being made up as "one unit". When that "unit" gets together, they are all to be "clean".
 - i) By the way, the first recorded miracle Jesus did was cure someone of leprosy. (Ref. Matthew 8:2-3). We'll discuss that more in the next lesson. That ties to the word picture of Jesus making us "whole" and "clean".
 - ii) Meanwhile, let's go back to the doctor's examining room. ☺
7. Verse 4: If the spot on his skin is white but does not appear to be more than skin deep and the hair in it has not turned white, the priest is to put the infected person in isolation for seven days.⁵ On the seventh day the priest is to examine him, and if he sees that the sore is unchanged and has not spread in the skin, he is to keep him in isolation another seven days.
 - a) If the priest is not sure if a white spot is leprosy, the priest is to isolate the person for seven days, and then have examination #2. If the sore spot has not grown, that person is to be isolated for another seven days.
 - b) In other words, the priest is not to "carelessly" call someone a leper. Before isolating that person for their rest of their life, we need to make sure.
8. Verse 6: On the seventh day the priest is to examine him again, and if the sore has faded and has not spread in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him clean; it is only a rash. The man must wash his clothes, and he will be clean.⁷ But if the rash does spread in his skin after he has shown himself to the priest to be pronounced clean, he must appear before the priest again.⁸ The priest is to examine him, and if the rash has spread in the skin, he shall pronounce him unclean; it is an infectious disease.
 - a) We're still on the subject of examining a person with a skin disease. They have now been quarantined for 14 days. At this point, if the rash has not grown in size, the sick person must wash and be pronounced "clean". That is, he or she does not have leprosy. If it has spread, then it would be considered leprosy.
 - b) This is a good time to take our first "breather" and think about the big picture:
 - i) Unless you are a doctor or are fascinated by medical details, a lot of this chapter is going to get tedious. We've got 53 more verses to cover in Chapter 13!
 - a) If you can handle Leviticus 13, the rest of the bible is child's play. ☺
 - ii) If it is your job to examine people, this stuff is important. For the rest of us, it is important to see the big-pictures of God's protection and the comparison to "sin".

- iii) The details on leprosy recognition are given as God wants those in charge to care for those under them. Caring for them means watching out for things that do them harm. We don't want to send a person into isolation if not necessary. Therefore, detailed instructions are given to make sure this leprosy really exists.
 - c) Meanwhile, let's go take another look at that rash. ☺
- 9. Verse 9: "When anyone has an infectious skin disease, he must be brought to the priest.¹⁰ The priest is to examine him, and if there is a white swelling in the skin that has turned the hair white and if there is raw flesh in the swelling,¹¹ it is a chronic skin disease and the priest shall pronounce him unclean. He is not to put him in isolation, because he is already unclean.
 - a) Verse 9 says in effect, "If the disease is some sort of chronic (i.e., old) skin disease, the person is "unclean", but at the same time, they don't have to live in isolation.
 - b) If they are "unclean", they cannot say, go to the tabernacle to make animal sacrifices. Remember my discussion about the "whole" congregation being "clean" when they get together. At the same time, this person is not "clean"; they still are not contagious.
- 10. Verse 12: "If the disease breaks out all over his skin and, so far as the priest can see, it covers all the skin of the infected person from head to foot,¹³ the priest is to examine him, and if the disease has covered his whole body, he shall pronounce that person clean. Since it has all turned white, he is clean.
 - a) If the person is "so diseased" that they are now covered from head to toe with this disease, they are to be pronounced "clean". Ok Dr. John, what's going on? ☺
 - i) The person is "clean" because they are now no longer contagious. The disease has spread as far as it can go.
 - b) There is a word-picture here and it has to do with sin. When we get to the point where we are "completely covered" in sin, we have nowhere to go but up. For people dealing with addictions, this is called "rock bottom". It is when a person has hit a point so low, they now have to get help or die. It is a reminder that God allows sin to enter our lives, as God wants us to stay close to Him for protection. Often, we have to hit rock bottom before we turn from that sin.
 - c) We think of something "white" as being clean (say of stains). This has nothing to do with skin color. It is about "purity". The word-picture is about the skin turning completely white and being "clean".
- 11. Verse 14: But whenever raw flesh appears on him, he will be unclean.¹⁵ When the priest sees the raw flesh, he shall pronounce him unclean. The raw flesh is unclean; he has an infectious disease.¹⁶ Should the raw flesh change and turn white, he must go to the priest.¹⁷ The priest is to examine him, and if the sores have turned white, the priest shall pronounce the infected person clean; then he will be clean.
 - a) We are still talking about a person who is now "white" from head to toe. All of a sudden, raw (infected) flesh appears again. The idea is that the person is still "unclean" if raw flesh appears on him.
 - b) First, let's talk about this on a medical basis: The idea is to protect as many people as possible. The reference to "raw flesh" is that this person still has contagious sores and has to be isolated, again, for the protection of everyone else.
 - c) As a word-picture of "sin", one can see the parallels. If the "all white" person is breaking out in disease (sin) again, that person needs to be isolated from the congregation.
 - d) OK, time for "Breather #2": ☺ Let's sneak in a New Testament comparison.
 - i) Jesus taught his disciples how to deal with sin in the church. Jesus gave a four-step procedure: Step 1 was to confront the "sinner" directly. If they don't repent, Step 2 is to repeat the process with a witness so that way it is not your word against theirs. Step 3 (if they don't repent) is to tell the church. Finally, if they still don't repent, Step 4 is to kick the person out of the church. (See Matt. 18:15-18).

- ii) These word-pictures in Leviticus have some parallels to the “Matthew 18 model” of dealing with sin. The priests are examining people, in some cases over and over again to make sure “everyone else” is safe. The sin must be isolated so that it doesn’t grow within the congregation.
- 12. Verse 18: "When someone has a boil on his skin and it heals,¹⁹ and in the place where the boil was, a white swelling or reddish-white spot appears, he must present himself to the priest.²⁰ The priest is to examine it, and if it appears to be more than skin deep and the hair in it has turned white, the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It is an infectious skin disease that has broken out where the boil was.²¹ But if, when the priest examines it, there is no white hair in it and it is not more than skin deep and has faded, then the priest is to put him in isolation for seven days.²² If it is spreading in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is infectious.²³ But if the spot is unchanged and has not spread, it is only a scar from the boil, and the priest shall pronounce him clean.
- a) Verses 18 through 31 are about signs that can lead to leprosy. In this paragraph, we have one of those signs: boils. Here we deal with a boil on the skin that has healed.
 - i) To summarize, the priest examines the “reddish-white spot” where the boil was. If it is more than skin deep, it is “unclean” and leprous. If the priest is not sure, the person is to be isolated for seven days to check again.
 - ii) The idea here is to check for false alarms before declaring a person leprous.
 - b) Imagine an always-worried, overly dramatic negative-person thinking, “Oh no! I had a small boil on my head! Now there is a spot! It’s leprosy! I just know its leprosy! I have to go see the priest to make sure, but I just know it’s there!”
 - i) This paragraph is for that person. Yes sometimes it will be leprosy. I’m speculating that most of the time, it is just a scar residue from a boil. A point here is that the priests are to discern the difference between something “serious” and something not so serious.
 - ii) The same applies to the “priests” of our time. Some issues are small and can be handled. Some issues are big enough that a person has to be isolated for a time.
 - c) I’ll be honest here, six days or six months from now, unless you are a doctor or nurse that deals with leprosy on a regular basis, you’ll going to forget many of these details.
 - i) What is important for the average Christian to see is how God cares for those that are hurting. They are isolated for the sake of themselves and the sake of others. This chapter rebukes the idea that God “doesn’t care” about diseases. Further, they give word-pictures of how “priests” are to recognize and isolate sin.
 - d) OK, we’re about half way through Chapter 13. Let’s take a deep breath and press on. ☺
- 13. Verse 24: "When someone has a burn on his skin and a reddish-white or white spot appears in the raw flesh of the burn,²⁵ the priest is to examine the spot, and if the hair in it has turned white, and it appears to be more than skin deep, it is an infectious disease that has broken out in the burn. The priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is an infectious skin disease.²⁶ But if the priest examines it and there is no white hair in the spot and if it is not more than skin deep and has faded, then the priest is to put him in isolation for seven days.²⁷ On the seventh day the priest is to examine him, and if it is spreading in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is an infectious skin disease.²⁸ If, however, the spot is unchanged and has not spread in the skin but has faded, it is a swelling from the burn, and the priest shall pronounce him clean; it is only a scar from the burn.
- a) These verses repeat the idea as the previous paragraph with one key difference: Instead of “boils that could turn into leprosy”, we now have “burns that could be leprosy”.
 - i) This paragraph repeats many of the same concepts of the previous paragraph except with the word “burn” instead of the word “boil”.

- ii) The basic idea is if the reddish-white spot is more than skin deep, then it is bad news. If it not more than skin deep, or if the priest is not sure, the person goes into isolation for seven days and then the spot is examined again.
 - b) One would wonder, "Why is all of this necessary? Couldn't God save a lot of ink and just say, "If someone has a boil or a burn". Why repeat much of the same procedures?
 - i) For starters, spend some time thinking about how serious this disease is. Stop and think how deadly this is and the fear someone has. Imagine someone who accidentally burned themselves thinking, "Oh no, I now have leprosy!" God is going out of His way to show just what is and is-not leprosy. It is God's way of protecting us with all of these medical examination verses.
 - c) Do you ever wonder what the high priest did between barbequing animal sacrifices? ☺ Now you know. They were busy studying disease issues.
 - i) Think about this from the perspective of the average Israelite. They knew that the priest was "on the job" protecting them from harmful diseases. The role of the priest was to intercede for the people to God. Another role of the priest is to protect the people from harm. It is a "good shepherd" image here.
14. Verse 29: "If a man or woman has a sore on the head or on the chin,³⁰ the priest is to examine the sore, and if it appears to be more than skin deep and the hair in it is yellow and thin, the priest shall pronounce that person unclean; it is an itch, an infectious disease of the head or chin.³¹ But if, when the priest examines this kind of sore, it does not seem to be more than skin deep and there is no black hair in it, then the priest is to put the infected person in isolation for seven days.
- a) OK, here we go again: This time we have a sore on the head or chin. The first sign of true leprosy was usually on the forehead. That is why this paragraph is included.
 - b) Again, the issue is "skin deep". If the sore is only on the surface, it is not leprosy. The danger is if it is more than skin deep. That is why "white hairs" are a bad sign. The internal infection is affecting the hair as it grows out.
 - c) OK, time for Breather #3: ☺ Let's tackle the issue of "skin deep".
 - i) The word-picture here is that sin begins in the "inside" and then spreads to the outside. We don't sin, unless we first commit that in our heart. In other words, we mentally think the sinful thought, and then act upon it. The "outside" begins to show what has already occurred on the "inside". A murder begins with the desire to kill someone. A theft begins with the desire to steal with is not ours. My point is that sin is like leprosy in that it starts in the inside and then manifests itself on the "outside flesh".
 - ii) As priests, one has to look for various signs that sin has occurred. The text so far has given us several ways and several places where leprosy can break out. In every case, the priest is to examine to see if the issue is more than "skin deep".
 - iii) Does this mean Christians have to go around being the sin police? No. ☺ The evidence of sin in a congregation usually comes out all by itself. Jesus used an illustration that you can tell what kind of a tree a tree-is by its fruit. (See Matthew 7:17-19). It's hard to tell a lemon tree from an orange tree until the fruit appears. The same with judging people. Once we see their actions, it becomes evident what is on the inside. Yes, we as Christian "priests" are to judge behavior, but like the details of Leviticus, we are to do it carefully and cautiously.
 - iv) On a practical level how do we "examine others" for sin?
 - a) For starters, rumors and accusations don't count. Church gossip is often spread by the phrase, "Let me tell you who we have to go pray for today".
 - b) Remember the "Matthew 18 model" for dealing with sin. When you become aware of a person dealing with an issue, you confront the person, not go tell the pastor or priest. After that comes steps two through four.

15. Verse 32: On the seventh day the priest is to examine the sore, and if the itch has not spread and there is no yellow hair in it and it does not appear to be more than skin deep, ³³ he must be shaved except for the diseased area, and the priest is to keep him in isolation another seven days. ³⁴ On the seventh day the priest is to examine the itch, and if it has not spread in the skin and appears to be no more than skin deep, the priest shall pronounce him clean. He must wash his clothes, and he will be clean. ³⁵ But if the itch does spread in the skin after he is pronounced clean, ³⁶ the priest is to examine him, and if the itch has spread in the skin, the priest does not need to look for yellow hair; the person is unclean. ³⁷ If, however, in his judgment it is unchanged and black hair has grown in it, the itch is healed. He is clean, and the priest shall pronounce him clean.
- a) In this paragraph, we're still dealing with possible leprosy on the forehead. In summary, the person is to shave their head except around the bad spot. (You don't want to cut open the bad spot.) The person is isolated for seven days to see if the disease spreads. Because the disease usually spreads on the forehead, the person is clean-shaven to check for other spots. After seven days comes "Examination #2" to check again.
 - b) Let's tie this to a related issue: What do you do with a Christian who has sinned?
 - i) Let's say it is something "serious". Let's say it is a pastoral leader who committed adultery or stole money from the church. Let's say that person is sorry and wants back in the church. Remember the "Matthew 18" model deals with someone who refuses to repent (i.e., admit the sin was wrong). What do you do with a person who admits they were wrong? Do you simply "forgive them and move on?"
 - ii) Most churches have some sort of "trial period" with that person who wants back in the church after committing some sort of "significant" sin. Such people are often demoted for a time to a lesser role so they can get counseling and deal with those issues. If they have been "clean" for a good while, they may be ready to go back to their original position.
 - a) This does tie to Leviticus 13. The idea of the "seven-day isolation period" is a good model that Christians use to "isolate" a sin issue. Grant it, a person usually needs more than seven days to deal with a problem. That's not the issue. The point is the bible lays out a model for "testing" to help a person deal with restoration.
 - c) OK, we're about two-thirds done. What do you say we examine more skin diseases? ☺
16. Verse 38: "When a man or woman has white spots on the skin, ³⁹ the priest is to examine them, and if the spots are dull white, it is a harmless rash that has broken out on the skin; that person is clean.
- a) Verse 38 is another false-alarm verse. It is about "white spots". This is a rash and not leprosy. Again, we read of God "going out of His way" to teach us the difference between what is truly harmful and what is slightly irritating. ☺
 - b) Getting back to our word-pictures of sin, I have made the argument through Leviticus that not all sins have the same weight to God. All sins make us imperfect and all sins have to be dealt with. That does not mean all sins are equally grievous from God's perspective. Even Jesus used the term "greater sin" one time (John 19:11). One cannot be guilty of a "greater sin" if all sins have equal weight.
17. Verse 40: "When a man has lost his hair and is bald, he is clean.
- a) For those of you with receding foreheads or bald heads, memorize this verse! ☺
 - b) The point of this verse is that having a bald head does not mean one is having early signs of leprosy. Remember that leprosy is a feared and dreaded disease. One can see how one can get paranoid when related symptoms occurred. God is going out of His way to show how certain symptoms do not necessarily lead to leprosy.

18. Verse 41: If he has lost his hair from the front of his scalp and has a bald forehead, he is clean. ⁴² But if he has a reddish-white sore on his bald head or forehead, it is an infectious disease breaking out on his head or forehead. ⁴³ The priest is to examine him, and if the swollen sore on his head or forehead is reddish-white like an infectious skin disease, ⁴⁴ the man is diseased and is unclean. The priest shall pronounce him unclean because of the sore on his head.
- a) To summarize these verses, the only danger of the receding hair line is if there is a reddish-white sore(s) on the head. If that's the case, the person has to be examined. Only in that case is a person "unclean" and could have leprosy.
19. Verse 45: "The person with such an infectious disease must wear torn clothes, let his hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of his face and cry out, 'Unclean! Unclean!' ⁴⁶ As long as he has the infection he remains unclean. He must live alone; he must live outside the camp.
- a) Now comes two verses that deal with how the leper is to live. From Verses 1 through 44, all we have dealt with so far is how to identify leprosy.
- b) Now in Verses 45-46, we deal lives the leper themselves.
- c) First, the leper is required to "look different":
- i) They are required to wear torn clothes.
- ii) They are required to have unkempt (messy) hair.
- iii) For most teenage boys, this comes natural, but I digress again. ☺
- iv) The point is they have to look different so others will recognize them.
- v) The person must also cover the lower part of their face (i.e., chin and beard).
- vi) Finally, that person has to cry out "Unclean! Unclean!" wherever they go.
- d) If it's not bad enough the person has this disease, imagine the fact that they have to walk around yelling this out wherever they go. The ancient Jewish commentators had a full set of further regulations on how much they should yell and how often.
- e) The obvious issue is that the sick person has to protect the community. They have to do this ritual in order to help not spread the disease.
- f) I wonder what's the penalty for disobedience? I could see a leper saying, "Wait a minute, I'm already a leper, why should I bother yelling "unclean"? How much worse can it get?"
- i) The answer is a lot worse. A leper can definitely go to heaven. Leprosy is not a salvation issue, but about protecting the "congregation" as a whole.
- ii) I would suspect the penalty for disobedience at that point might be some sort of "jail" or death sentence. It is not stated.
- g) Now let's move on to the word-picture:
- i) Do Christians who sin today and refuse to change tear their clothes and yell "unclean and unclean"? No. It would be pretty loud and messy at a church meeting if we were all honest about this issue.
- ii) Even if a person does have a contagious disease, they should quarantine themselves as to help others. That is not the issue here.
- iii) The only New Testament equivalent has to do with the confession of our sins. Confession means we admit we are wrong and we desire to change for the better. It is not about being perfect, just a desire to truly change.
- a) If and only if we confess our sins, then we are "clean".
- b) That is the idea of 1st John 1:9.
- iv) The word picture is not so much for the sinner, as it is for the "congregation".
- a) It is about avoiding sin "like the plague" so to speak. It means to not join in upon that particular sin or risk becoming "unclean" ourselves.
- b) The word-picture is that when we come together as a "church"; that is, as a group of believers, God desires that we be ceremonially "clean". This is why many Christian denominations begin their church service with a time of confession. That's a good biblical model for "cleansing" the congregation prior to worship.

20. Verse 47: "If any clothing is contaminated with mildew--any woolen or linen clothing,"
- We actually switch topics a bit here in Verse 47. We are no longer talking about leprosy. The new topic is new mildew, i.e., "mold" found in clothing.
 - Some translations still use the word "leprosy" in this section. Remember the Hebrew word for leprosy is wider in scope than what we think of as leprosy. I believe mold or mildew is a correct translation for this section of Leviticus.
 - The other change of focus in this section is from the "inside" to the "outside".
 - Remember that the real concern with leprosy was that it was more than skin deep. For example, if white hairs were growing, it is a sign that the leprosy disease is on the inside. The hairs growing from the inside to the outside were a leprosy sign.
 - Now we are dealing with "outside" covering which is clothing. When we get to Chapter 14, this topic will continue a little and cover mildew in the house.
 - Why is this a health issue? For those who are not familiar with mold or mildew, this is a living organism. If clothes get soaking wet and are not dried properly, it can grow on one's clothing. Leaving wet clothes (or say carpeting) in such an environment will cause mold to grow. This becomes a health risk. One can get very sick today from mildew. Just so you know, drying clothes in a dryer or hanging clothes to dry in dry-weather usually, but not always, eliminates mildew after a good washing.
 - OK, this is a bible study, not a hygiene study, so I'll get back to work. ☺
 - The average Israelite of that day had no knowledge that mold or mildew can cause health risks. This is another example of God showing care about the people that are "his". It is another example of God's protection.
 - What about the word picture? How does this apply to our lives today, other than properly drying our clothes? ☺ Think of clothes as one's "covering". It refers to one's appearance and how one presents themselves. The word-picture is still about sin, but instead of the picture of sin that "begins" on the inside, there are also sins that "cover" us.
21. Verse 48: any woven or knitted material of linen or wool, any leather or anything made of leather--⁴⁹ and if the contamination in the clothing, or leather, or woven or knitted material, or any leather article, is greenish or reddish, it is a spreading mildew and must be shown to the priest.
- To paraphrase these verses, "I as God don't care if your clothes are top-notch designer clothing or if they were purchased at a rummage sale. If they have mold, it is an issue. I don't care how good or how cheap is the material. If it has mold, it has to be removed."
 - If you read the King James translation, there are two strange words to our vocabulary. It mentions "warp or woof". As best it can be translated, it refers to the stitching techniques. The NIV translation ignores those Hebrew words. The idea is still to say, "I don't care how the garment is stitched together, the issue is the mold."
 - The text then goes on to say, if there is a greenish or reddish spot, it is mildew and it must go to the priest.
 - So now we know the high priest is not only "chef" for the animal sacrifices, a "doctor" for leprosy checks, he is also a "clothing health inspector". The idea is the priest is to care about the health of the congregation. That means inspecting things that could do harm.
 - Does this word-picture tie to sin? Does this mean we can't wear garments with green and red spots to church? ☺
 - The only prohibition I would add today is to not have mildew on your clothing as to contaminate others. I suppose it's "legal" to come to church that way, but if you care about other people, why would you want to contaminate them? Now that I think about it, these verses are a good argument to stay away from church when you are sick or your children are sick (contagious).
 - Let me go on and add more text, and then we'll come back to this.

22. Verse 50: The priest is to examine the mildew and isolate the affected article for seven days.⁵¹ On the seventh day he is to examine it, and if the mildew has spread in the clothing, or the woven or knitted material, or the leather, whatever its use, it is a destructive mildew; the article is unclean.⁵² He must burn up the clothing, or the woven or knitted material of wool or linen, or any leather article that has the contamination in it, because the mildew is destructive; the article must be burned up.
- a) We now have a pattern here similar to that of dealing with leprosy. First, the priest is to examine to see if the red or greenish spot is mildew. The garment is then isolated for seven days. After seven days, the garment is checked again to see if it grew. Again, mold is a living organism. If it is mold, it will spread. If it was just a red or greenish spot, maybe somebody spilled ketchup or guacamole on their jacket. ☺
 - b) Finally, if the stain is determined to be mildew, it must be burnt up. Again the text emphasizes the fact that the type of material does not matter, it must be burnt up.
 - c) OK, back to word-pictures: I've beaten to death the idea that leprosy is a word-picture of sin. What about mold (mildew)? Is that a word picture of sin too? It is, in that it is a "contaminating bad substance" that must be removed.
 - i) Clothing is an illustration of what "covers" us as opposed to leprosy is a word-picture of what starts in the inside. It is like the expression, "clothing makes the man". Suppose someone around you is involved in a sin. You "join in". That could be an example of a word-picture of getting one's "clothes dirty" in sin. I think of the sin of spreading rumors. (See James 3:5-6). If we join in that process, we are "getting our clothes dirty" with sin.
 - ii) Even if you think this word-picture is a stretch of the imagination, remember what is important is God is concerned about the health of His people and God wants to protect His people from what can do harm. That may be the most important and "correct" idea coming across in these verses.
23. Verse 53: "But if, when the priest examines it, the mildew has not spread in the clothing, or the woven or knitted material, or the leather article,⁵⁴ he shall order that the contaminated article be washed. Then he is to isolate it for another seven days.⁵⁵ After the affected article has been washed, the priest is to examine it, and if the mildew has not changed its appearance, even though it has not spread, it is unclean. Burn it with fire, whether the mildew has affected one side or the other.
- a) The treatment for mildew has not changed much in the 3,500 years since this was written. First the garment is washed. If the mildew is still there, it has to be removed. Since they didn't have modern sanitizing garbage dumps back then, the garment had to be burned.
 - b) One has to remember garments are harder to come by in those days. Everything had to be hand-sewn. There were no shopping malls while they wandered in the desert. A piece of clothing that developed mold was the destruction of a lot of hard work.
24. Verse 56: If, when the priest examines it, the mildew has faded after the article has been washed, he is to tear the contaminated part out of the clothing, or the leather, or the woven or knitted material.⁵⁷ But if it reappears in the clothing, or in the woven or knitted material, or in the leather article, it is spreading, and whatever has the mildew must be burned with fire.⁵⁸ The clothing, or the woven or knitted material, or any leather article that has been washed and is rid of the mildew, must be washed again, and it will be clean."
- a) The other supplement to this section is that if the mold can be isolated to part of a garment, it can be ripped off and removed. If the mold reappears later on the torn garment, the priest says essentially, "burn it up".
 - b) Notice the high priest is the "referee" in disputes. I can just see a husband and wife couple saying, "Honey, that coat of yours stinks, I bet it has mildew. The husband says, "This one is just fine". The wife then says, "Let's let the high priest decide on this one". I think this is way of helping guys get rid of old clothing they refuse to part with." ☺

- c) Again, the job of the priest is to “protect” the people.
25. Verse 59: These are the regulations concerning contamination by mildew in woolen or linen clothing, woven or knitted material, or any leather article, for pronouncing them clean or unclean.
- a) We now, thankfully, end this section on mildew. ☺ Leviticus often has this “closing statement” similar to Verse 59. It is as if God is saying, “That ends my discussion of mold and that’s all I have to say on this matter”.
26. Congratulations, we have now made it through 56 verses on leprosy and mildew. Let’s stand back and look at the big picture:
- a) Chapters 11 through 15 deal with “obedience to God in everyday life”. Chapter 11 focused on food. Chapter 12 on childbirth. Chapters 13-15 deal with disease.
- b) Chapter 13 is about the “recognition” of disease. How one deals with disease is the topic of the next lesson.
- c) The idea is when the entire Israelite “congregation” get together to worship God, they must be “whole”. That is a synonym for “holy”. The idea is to be complete, as in completely dedicate themselves to God. Every aspect of one’s life must be done “God’s way”. It doesn’t mean we ignore the mundane aspects of life. It means that everything we do, be it work, sleep, eat, dress, etc. must be done in a way that is pleasing to God.
- i) Can a person who has leprosy still pray to God? Of course. Can a person with mildew on their jacket still go to heaven? ☺ Of course. These are not salvation issues. These are issues dealing with the “whole” community coming as a “single unified unit” to God. What is unclean must be separated.
- ii) It would be like a sick person staying home from church on Sunday. Is that person still a good Christian despite the fact they missed church when they are sick? Of course. It is a loving act to avoid spreading one’s germs to others.
- iii) These rules show God’s protection. They show that God cares about people and cares about their health. It is about separating the diseased so others won’t get it. God still loves the one that is “sick”. Chapter 14 deals with restoration of those that have leprosy or have mildew in their lives. Even though the word “love” is not used in this chapter, the idea that God goes to great details to protect our health is a sign that God does love us and cares for our lives on earth.
27. Originally, I was going to do Chapter 13 and 14 as one lesson. Chapter 14 has another 56 verses on this topic. I figured the 59 verses on disease are enough for anyone to handle for one week. ☺
- a) If you survived this lesson, the next one will be easier. After running one marathon, we’re in better shape to run the next one! Chapters 14 and 15 have to do with “restoration” from a disease. Note that “restoration” and “cured” are two separate topics. More on that in the next lesson.
28. Let’s wrap this up with a quote from Jesus: “I (Jesus) give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand.” (John 10:28-29 NIV)
- a) Jesus says that His followers are both in His hands and God the Father’s hands. That’s pretty good hands to be inside. ☺ This lesson deals with God wanting to protect His people. If you want to talk about “protection”, I can’t think of two better “hands” to surround us with His protection.
29. Let’s pray: Father, Thank you for providing us with protection. We live in a world full of sinful people, ourselves included. That causes harm to us and harm to others. We ask your protection as we go through our day. We thank you for these reminders of Your protection. As priests, help us to take steps to protect others. Give us discernment as priests how to properly deal with sinful people and separate the sins from the people themselves. Help us to protect those around us as part of Your command to love one another. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.