

LEVITICUS 13:1- 59

- Chapters 12 – 15 are bookended with reproduction:
 - Reproduction (12)
 - Sin (13)
 - Salvation (14:1-32)
 - Sanctification (14:33-55)
 - Reproduction (15)
 - **Possibly** related to the idea that women are “saved” through childbearing. 1 Timothy 2:15 says, “*Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control.*”
 - Saved through fulfilling their ultimate calling of being fruitful and multiplying, adding to God’s Kingdom? (See attached translator notes.)
- **OUTLINE** – Chapter 13 (Sin)
 - Symptoms: v. 1-46
 - Swelling / Rash v. 1-8
 - Swelling / Whiteness / Raw Flesh v. 9-17
 - Boils v. 18-23
 - Burns v.24-28
 - Scaly Leprosy v. 29-37
 - Bright Spots and Baldness v. 38-44
 - Regulations v. 45-46
 - Garments Affected: v. 47-59
- **Sickness = Sin in Scripture**
 - Sickness and disease are often used as metaphors for sin in Scripture. Sin is the disease of the soul.
 - Is. 1:5-6
 - Jer. 30:12-15
 - Mark 2:17 “*When Jesus heard it, He said to them, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.*’”
- **Leprosy**
 - Leprosy today is called Hansen’s Disease, though it seems as though they are different in a lot of ways: 95% of the population is naturally immune, it is fully curable, and it is not highly contagious.
 - Google says: “Hansen’s Disease is a chronic infectious disease caused by slow-growing bacteria called *Mycobacterium leprae* or *Mycobacterium lepromatosis*. It primarily affects the skin, peripheral nerves, upper respiratory tract, and eyes.”
 - Leprosy: Hebrew *tsara’at* (tsaw-rah'-ath) = skin disease or mold in buildings or clothes.
 - “Leprosy has long been thought to be the disease referred in the Bible as *tzaraat*, which referred to a variety of inflammatory granulomas with pigmentary disturbances or only to a spiritual concept of moral and ritual cleanliness. *Tzaraat* (the disease or diseases) have no relationship to leprosy as it was known in the Middle Ages or today (ie, to Mycobacterial leprosy or Hansen’s disease); however, a few may have been originally leprosy. Although the real nature of *tzaraat* remains unknown, the differential diagnosis might include the following: Psoriasis, seborrheic dermatitis, favus, dermatophyte infections, nummular dermatitis, atopic dermatitis, pityriasis rosea, crusted scabies, syphilis, impetigo, sycosis barbae, alopecia areata, furuncles, scabies, neurodermatitis, scarlet fever, lupus erythematosus, lichen sclerosus et atrophicus, folliculitis decalvans, morphea, sarcoidosis, and lichen planopilaris. Leprosy became interchangeable with the biblical leprosy due to two inaccurate translations: The Hebrew *tzaraat* was first translated into Greek as leprosy in the sixth century, and later, the word leprosy was translated into Arabic as *lepra* in the ninth century.” ~ “Leprosy in the Bible”, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.clindermatol.2015.10.003>.

SCRIPTURE

- Symptom: Swelling / Rash

13:1-8 *The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “When anyone has a swelling or a rash or a shiny spot on their skin that may be a defiling skin disease, they must be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons who is a priest. The priest is to examine the sore on the skin, and if the hair in the sore has turned white and the sore appears to be more than skin deep, it is a defiling skin disease. When the priest examines that person, he shall pronounce them ceremonially unclean. If the shiny spot on the 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 isolate the affected person for seven days. On the seventh day the priest is to examine them, and if he sees that the sore is unchanged and has not spread in the skin, he is to isolate them for another seven days. On the seventh day the priest is to examine them again, and if the sore has faded and has not spread in the skin, the priest shall pronounce them clean; it is only a rash. They must wash their clothes, and they will be clean. But if the rash does spread in their skin after they have shown themselves to the priest to be pronounced clean, they must appear before the priest again. The priest is to examine that person, and if the rash has spread in the skin, he shall pronounce them unclean; it is a defiling skin disease.*

- The afflicted had to be examined by a priest because not everything that looked like leprosy actually was leprosy (severe eczema for example), and it would be cruel to isolate someone when it wasn't leprosy.
- Leprosy was fungal, and it affected not only people but clothing and houses, and it could even destroy crops (mildew- Amos 4:9).

- Symptom: Swelling/Whiteness/Raw Flesh

13:9-17 *“When the leprous sore is on a person, then he shall be brought to the priest. And the priest shall examine him; and indeed if the swelling on the skin is white, and it has turned the hair white*, and there is a spot of raw flesh in the swelling, it is an old leprosy on the skin of his body. The priest shall pronounce him unclean, and shall not isolate him, for he is unclean. And if leprosy breaks out all over the skin, and the leprosy covers all the skin of the one who has the sore, from his head to his foot, wherever the priest looks, then the priest shall consider; and indeed if the leprosy has covered all his body, he shall pronounce him clean who has the sore. It has all turned white. He is clean. But when raw flesh appears on him, he shall be unclean. And the priest shall examine the raw flesh and pronounce him to be unclean; for the raw flesh is unclean. It is leprosy. Or if the raw flesh changes and turns white again, he shall come to the priest. And the priest shall examine him; and indeed if the sore has turned white, then the priest shall pronounce him clean who has the sore. He is clean.”*

*Hair turning white or yellow was a symptom of the cells dying and that the infection had made its way below the skin.

- Symptom: Boils

13:18-23 *“If the body develops a boil in the skin, and it is healed, and in the place of the boil there comes a white swelling or a bright spot, reddish-white, then it shall be shown to the priest; and if, when the priest sees it, it indeed appears deeper than the skin, and its hair has turned white, the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It is a leprous sore which has broken out of the boil. But if the priest examines it, and indeed there are no white hairs in it, and it is not deeper than the skin, but has faded, then the priest shall isolate him seven days; and if it should at all spread over the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It is a leprous sore. But if the bright spot stays in one place, and has not spread, it is the scar of the boil; and the priest shall pronounce him clean.”*

- Symptom: Burns

13:24-28 *“Or if the body receives a burn on its skin by fire, and the raw flesh of the burn becomes a bright spot, reddish-white or white, then the priest shall examine it; and indeed if the hair of the bright spot has turned white, and it appears deeper than the skin, it is leprosy broken out in the burn. Therefore the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It is a leprous sore. But if the priest examines it, and indeed there are no white hairs in the bright spot, and it is not deeper than the skin, but has faded, then the priest shall isolate him seven days. And the priest shall examine him on the seventh day. If it has at all spread over the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It is a leprous sore. But if the bright spot stays in one place, and has not spread on the skin, but has faded, it is a swelling from the burn. The priest shall pronounce him clean, for it is the scar from the burn.”*

- Symptom: Scaly Leprosy

13:29-37 *“If a man or woman has a sore on the head or the beard, then the priest shall examine the sore; and indeed if it appears deeper than the skin, and there is in it thin yellow hair, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It is a scaly leprosy of the head or beard. But if the priest examines the scaly sore, and indeed it does not appear deeper than the skin, and there is no black hair in it, then the priest shall isolate the one who has the scale seven days. And on the seventh day the priest shall examine the sore; and indeed if the scale has not spread, and there is no yellow hair in it, and the scale does not appear deeper than the skin, he shall shave himself, but the scale he shall not shave. And the priest shall isolate the one who has the scale another seven days. On the seventh day the priest shall examine the scale; and indeed if the scale has not spread over the skin, and does not appear deeper than the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him clean. He shall wash his clothes and be clean. But if the scale should at all spread over the skin after his cleansing, then the priest shall examine him; and indeed if the scale has spread over the skin, the priest need not seek for yellow hair. He is unclean. But if the scale appears to be at a standstill, and there is black hair grown up in it, the scale has healed. He is clean, and the priest shall pronounce him clean.”*

- Symptom: Bright Spots & Baldness

13:38-44 *“If a man or a woman has bright spots on the skin of the body, specifically white bright spots, then the priest shall look; and indeed if the bright spots on the skin of the body are dull white, it is a white spot that grows on the skin. He is clean. As for the man whose hair has fallen from his head, he is bald, but he is clean. He whose hair has fallen from his forehead, he is bald on the forehead, but he is clean. And if there is on the bald head or bald forehead a reddish-white sore, it is leprosy breaking out on his bald head or his bald forehead. Then the priest shall examine it; and indeed if the swelling of the sore is reddish-white on his bald head or on his bald forehead, as the appearance of leprosy on the skin of the body, he is a leprous man. He is unclean. The priest shall surely pronounce him unclean; his sore is on his head.”*

- Regulations

13:45-46 “Now the leper on whom the sore is, his clothes shall be torn and his head bare; and he shall cover his mustache, and cry, ‘Unclean! Unclean!’ He shall be unclean. All the days he has the sore he shall be unclean. He is unclean, and he shall dwell alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp.”

- There was a cultural stigma around leprosy, even through Jesus’ day.

- Dr. Armauer Hansen

- In the 17 and 1800’s, Norway had a leprosy epidemic. They did not follow the Biblical laws of quarantine, and therefore, it spread like wildfire. In 1873, a doctor named Armauer Hansen looked at the leprosy bacteria with a microscope and realized it was an infection that could be passed from person to person. Norway adopted the Norwegian Leprosy Act, which strictly enforced Biblical precautions. Their leprosy count dropped from almost 3000 to less than 100 to eventually none. ~ *None of these Diseases*, Ch. 2.

- *Mycobacterium leprae* actually attacks the nervous system, not the skin directly.

- “The leprosy bacillus destroys nerve endings that carry pain signals; therefore patients with advanced leprosy experience a total loss of physical pain. When these people cannot sense touch or pain, they tend to injure themselves or be unaware of injury caused by an outside agent... Like leprosy, sin starts out small but can then spread, leading to other sins and causing great damage to our relationship with God and others. Studying leprosy helps us see why pain is a valuable “gift,” a survival mechanism to warn us of danger in this cursed world. Without pain and suffering, we might be like lepers, unable to recognize that something is terribly wrong and that we need the healing touch of God. As Dr. Brand said, “I cannot think of a greater gift that I could give my leprosy patients than pain.” Let us not be too quick to remove pain in our lives (whether physical, emotional, social, or spiritual pain). It may be God’s megaphone to get our attention that something is seriously wrong and that we should flee to the One who created us.” ~ *The Genesis of Germs*, Answers in Genesis

- Why is leprosy a metaphor for sin?

- Leprosy is like sin because it eats away at a person a little bit at a time, and they don’t realize it at first. As it gets worse and worse, you become disfigured (nothing like the person you were before), and the numbness makes you blind (literally and figuratively) to the destruction it is wreaking on your body.
- You stop feeling pain (remorse and conviction) as one of the effects of the disease and unless you seek help, it will eventually render you incapacitated and beyond cure.
- Eph. 4:19 – “*who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to [sin].*”
- There is a cure, but the afflicted must seek it out.

- Garments Affected: v. 47-59 (Mold)

“Also, if a garment has a leprous plague in it, whether it is a woolen garment or a linen garment, whether it is in the warp or woof of linen or wool, whether in leather or in anything made of leather, and if the plague is greenish or reddish in the garment or in the leather, whether in the warp or in the woof, or in anything made of leather, it is a leprous plague and shall be shown to the priest. The priest shall examine the plague and isolate that which has the plague seven days. And he shall examine the plague on the seventh day. If the plague has spread in the garment, either in the warp or in the woof, in the leather or in anything made of leather, the plague is an active leprosy. It is unclean. He shall therefore burn that garment in which is the plague, whether warp or woof, in wool or in linen, or anything of leather, for it is an active leprosy; the garment shall be burned in the fire. But if the priest examines it, and indeed the plague has not spread in the garment, either in the warp or in the woof, or in anything made of leather, then the priest shall command that they wash the thing in which is the plague; and he shall isolate it another seven days. Then the priest shall examine the plague after it has been washed; and indeed if the plague has not changed its color, though the plague has not spread, it is unclean, and you shall burn it in the fire; it continues eating away, whether the damage is outside or inside. If the priest examines it, and indeed the plague has faded after washing it, then he shall tear it out of the garment, whether out of the warp or out of the woof, or out of the leather. But if it appears again in the garment, either in the warp or in the woof, or in anything made of leather, it is a spreading plague; you shall burn with fire that in which is the plague. And if you wash the garment, either warp or woof, or whatever is made of leather, if the plague has disappeared from it, then it shall be washed a second time, and shall be clean. This is the law of the leprous plague in a garment of wool or linen, either in the warp or woof, or in anything made of leather, to pronounce it clean or to pronounce it unclean.”

- The Garment’s Material Didn’t Matter

- Notice it didn’t matter the quality of the garment or what it was made of, if infected, it was all as filthy rags and needed to be burned.
- All “garments” are equal in God’s eyes, our righteousness is like filthy rags because we have been infected with sin.
- Isaiah 64:6 – “*But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags;*”
- Must be washed – Ps. 51:7 – “*Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.*”

DISCUSSION

1. Why are sickness and disease often used as a metaphor for sin in the Bible?

2. Compare Biblical Leprosy to Hansen's Disease:

- What are some similarities?

- What are some differences?

3. Why did someone with leprosy have to undergo strict examination by the priest?

4. What four things could the bacteria associated with leprosy destroy?

5. Compare how Jesus handled those afflicted with leprosy to how the Pharisees did.

6. Why is leprosy a metaphor for sin?