

Healing the Lepers

Lesson * 11: (Lv. 13-14; Mt. 8:2-4; Mk. 1:40-42; Lk. 5:12-13; Mk. 2: DA 262-271)

Introductory Matters

As we begin this lesson it would be well to remember that the miracles of Jesus were frequently acted parables. This can be seen, for example, in the cursing of the fig tree, the feeding of the five thousand, the miraculous fishing expedition, the healing of the blind man, the healing of the paralytic, the calming of the storm, etc. Each of the miracles of Jesus taught a deep spiritual truth. When Jesus cleansed lepers, He not only relieved their physical suffering; He also sought to teach truths about the consequences of sin and how it could be cleansed.

A word about leprosy. The microbe which causes leprosy was discovered by Hansen in 1871. With the advent of antibiotics, leprosy has lost its terror because it can be cured by multi-drug therapy in 6-12 months. But in Biblical times it was an incurable degenerative disease which filled peoples' hearts with horror.

Leprosy in Ancient Israel

1. When Miriam was afflicted with leprosy, Moses pleaded with God: "Let her not be as one _____, of whom the flesh is half _____ when he cometh out of his mother's womb." (Numbers 12:12)

Note: In Biblical times leprosy was a contagious, mutilating, desensitizing and incurable disease. It is a slowly degenerative disease which affects the skin and the nerves. In advanced stages it caused the leper to totally lose feeling in the limbs and the face. It is reported that fingers and noses simply fell off the hands and faces of lepers. Ellen White well remarks:

"Of all diseases known in the East the leprosy was most dreaded. Its incurable and contagious character, and its horrible effect upon its victims, filled the bravest with fear." (The Desire of Ages, p. 262)

2. What relation could a leper sustain with society? "All the days wherein the _____ shall be in him he shall be _____, he is unclean: he shall dwell _____, without the _____ shall his habitation be." (Leviticus 13:46)

Note: In Israel, the leper was separated from both God and man. He had no access to the city and he was barred from the sanctuary. If perchance he was cleansed, the priest had to come **outside** the encampment to pronounce him clean. There was actually a hill outside Jerusalem called *Garab* where lepers congregated (Jeremiah 31:40). The word *Garab* "hill of scrapping". The name is significant because the very same root word is used for Job when he scrapped his boils with a potsherd." (Job 2:8) Significantly, Job became an exile both from God and man!

3. What other laws applied to the leper? “And the leper in whom the plague is, his _____ shall be rent, and his _____ bare, and he shall put a covering over his upper lip, and shall cry, _____, unclean.” (Leviticus 13:45)

Note: Rabbinical law and practice adds information to the way in which lepers were perceived and treated. According to the rabbis, if a leper entered a house, it became defiled from the floor to the beams and everything in it became unclean. People were ordered to come no closer than six feet to a leper if there was no wind and at least one hundred feet if the wind was blowing in the direction of the person who was well. Most people fled in horror when they heard that a leper was near!

4. Were the leper’s garments also defiled by his leprosy? “If the plague be spread in the _____, either in the warp, or in the woof, or in a skin, or in any work that is made of skin; the plague is a fretting leprosy; it is _____.” (Leviticus 13:51)
5. What was the worst type of leprosy which could be contracted? “Then the priest shall look upon it [the leprosy] and, behold, if the rising of the sore be white reddish in his bald head or in his bald _____, as the leprosy appeareth in the skin of the flesh; He is a _____ man, he is unclean: the priest shall pronounce him _____ unclean; his plague is in his _____.” (Leviticus 13:43-44)
6. What was the only way in which leprosy could he cleansed? “And it came to pass, when the king of Israel had read the letter, that he rent his clothes, and said, ‘Am I _____, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to _____ a man of his leprosy?’”(II Kings 5:7).

Note: This exclamation of the king of Israel indicates that he believed that only God could cleanse a leper. That is to say, leprosy could only be healed by a direct miraculous intervention of God. There is no case in the Bible of a leper being healed by natural means. All healings were miraculous as can be seen in the cases of Naaman, Moses, Miriam and those whom Jesus healed.

7. What evidence do we have of the link between leprosy and sin? When Miriam committed the sin of murmuring against the leadership of Moses, she “And the anger of the _____ was kindled against them [Aaron and Miriam]; and he departed. And the cloud _____ from off the tabernacle; and, behold, Miriam became _____, white as snow: and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and, behold, she was _____.” (Numbers 12:9-10)

Note: The rabbis called leprosy “the finger of God” or “the stroke of God”. In the Old Testament, leprosy is repeatedly called the **plague** of leprosy (it is so called 59 times in Leviticus 13-14). The word “plague” in Hebrew means “stroke” or “to smite” and is used to describe a physical blow or punishment which an overlord meets out on a subject.

The Cleansing Ritual

1. When a person developed the symptoms of leprosy what was he to do? “When a man shall have in the skin of his flesh a rising, a scab, or a bright spot, and it be in the skin of his flesh like the _____ of leprosy, then he shall be brought unto Aaron the _____, or unto one of his sons the _____.” (Leviticus 13:2)

Note: The priest’s role was to **diagnose** the disease and **pronounce** the person unclean.

2. When a person was healed from leprosy by a miracle of God, what role did the priest play? “and he [the priest] shall _____ him _____.” (Leviticus 14:7)

Note: The priest not only **examined** the leper diagnosing the disease and pronouncing the sentence of doom. He also examined the leper after his miraculous healing and pronounced him clean!

3. What two animals did the priest use in the cleansing ceremony? “Then shall the priest command to take _____ him that is _____ be cleansed two _____ alive and clean.” (Leviticus 14:4)

4. What was to be included with the two birds? “Then shall the priest command to take for him that is to be cleansed two birds alive and clean, and _____ wood, and _____ and _____.” (Leviticus 14:4)

5. What was to be done with the first bird? “And the priest shall command that one of the birds be _____ in an _____ vessel over running _____.” (Leviticus 14:5)

6. What was to be done with the second bird? “As for the _____ bird, he shall take it, and the cedar wood, and the scarlet, and the hyssop, and shall _____ them and the living bird in the _____ of the bird that was killed over the running water: and he shall sprinkle upon him that is _____ be cleansed from the leprosy _____ times, and shall _____ him clean and shall let the living bird _____ in the open field.”

Note: The seven times the blood was sprinkled brings to mind the seven times that Naaman submerged himself in the river Jordan to be cleansed from his leprosy.

Christ Heals the Leper

1. How does Luke 5:12-13 describe the leper who approached Jesus for healing? “And it came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold a man _____ of leprosy: who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.” (Lk. 5:12) Mark 1:41 explains that Jesus was moved with _____ for the leper.

Note: Ellen White vividly describes the spectacle: “He is a **loathsome spectacle**. The disease has made **frightful inroads**, and his **decaying body** is **horrible to look upon**. At sight of him the people fall back in terror. They crowd upon one another in their eagerness to escape from contact with him. Some try to prevent him from approaching Jesus, but in vain. He neither sees nor hears them. Their expressions of loathing are lost upon him. He sees only the Son of God. He hears only the voice that speaks life to the dying. Pressing to Jesus, he casts himself at His feet with the cry, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." (The Desire of Ages, p. 263).

Ellen White also describes the steps the man took in seeking out Jesus. The man **felt his need**, **believed** that Jesus could heal him, **came** to Jesus and **pleaded** for His healing touch.

2. How did Jesus break the conventions of his day with respect to the leper? “And Jesus put forth his _____ and _____ him.” (Mt. 8:3)

Note: There is no indication in the law of Moses that the priest actually touched the leper. Jesus could have merely **pronounced** the leper clean. But Jesus actually **touched** him. I guess we could say that Jesus gave him the personal touch! What Jesus did was unthinkable in the mind of the crowd. Whoever touched a leper was also considered unclean.

3. **Thought Question:** Jesus once said: “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” (John 14:8). In the light of this statement, what lesson do you think Jesus trying to teach the crowd when He touched the leper and cleansed him? (**Hint:** The people considered leprosy the curse of God) _____

4. For what purpose did Jesus cleanse the leper? “The work of Christ in cleansing the leper from his terrible disease is an _____ of His work in cleansing the _____ from sin.” (DA 266)

5. How does Ellen White describe the healing of the leper? “Immediately a _____ passed over the leper. His flesh became _____, the nerves _____, the muscles _____. The rough, scaly surface peculiar to leprosy _____, and a soft glow, like that upon the skin of a healthy _____, took its place.” (DA 264)

Note: Ellen White’s comment reminds us of the healing of Naaman. We are told in II Kings that after Naaman submerged himself in the Jordan river seven times “his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a **little** child, and he was clean.” (II Kings 5:14)

6. Why did Jesus grant the leper’s request immediately? “When we pray for _____ blessings, the answer to our prayer may be _____, or God may give us something other than we ask, but not so when we ask for deliverance from _____.” (DA 266)

7. What did the leper do after he was healed by Jesus? “ But so much the more went there a _____ abroad of Him: and great _____ came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their _____.” (Lk. 5:15)

Note: Even though Jesus forbade the leper from telling others about his healing, the leper proclaimed it “from the rooftops”. Ellen White states: “It would indeed have been impossible to conceal it, but the leper published the matter abroad.” (DA 265)

A Picture of the Human Race

1. The whole world is “ _____ in trespasses and sins.” (Eph. 2:1).

Note: As leprosy was a polluting, infectious, intrusive and humanly incurable disease, sin has permeated the human race. Notice that in this text the apostle Paul speaks of those who are physically alive but spiritually dead at the same time. As leprosy causes one to lose the physical sense of touch, Satan intended that sinners should lose the sensibility of God’s touch.

2. To how many has Adam transmitted the leprosy of sin? “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon _____ men, for that _____ have sinned” (Rom. 5:12)

Note: So to speak the whole world has become a gigantic leprosarium. The world has is quarantined in the midst of the universe of God. Its only hope is in a divine miracle of healing.

3. How is the condition of humanity described in Isaiah 1:5-6? “The whole head is _____, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but _____, and bruises, and _____ sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with _____.”

4. What is represented by the defiled garments of the leper? “But we are all as an _____ thing, and all our _____ are as filthy _____.” (Isaiah 64:6)

5. What is represented by the priest in the healing of the leper? _____ (Heb. 4:14)

6. Who is the great detector of sin? “For the Word of God [Jesus]. . . . is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the _____; neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his _____: but all things are naked and opened unto the _____ of him with whom we have to do.” (Heb. 4:12-13; see also, Revelation 1:14)

7. **Thought Question:** Who do you think is represented by the first bird which was killed in the cleansing ceremony? _____.

8. What is represented by the living, flowing water? “Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this _____ shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the

- water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water _____ up into everlasting life.” (Jn. 4:13-14; 7:37-39)
9. What is represented by the earthen vessel? The apostle Paul spoke of the glory of the gospel in our frail humanity as God’s glory in earthen _____.” (II Corinthians 4:7)
 10. What is represented by the cedar wood, the scarlet and the hyssop? (The answer to this question is found in Isaiah 1:18; Psalm 51:7. Notice the emphasis on the color red).
 11. What is represented by the dipping of the second bird in the blood of the first bird? “These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have _____ their robes, and made them _____ in the _____ of the lamb. . . . the blood of Jesus Christ his son, _____ us from all sin.” (Rev. 7:14; I Jn. 1:7)
 12. **Thought Question:** Why do you think the blood of the dead bird was sprinkled on the leper **seven times**? _____
 13. What is represented by the bird which was allowed to go free in the open field? “If the Son therefore shall make you _____, ye shall be free _____.” (John 8:36)
 14. Naaman and the leper whom Jesus healed had the skin of a little child. What happens when we have received Jesus as our Savior? “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a _____ creature: _____ things are passed away; behold, all things are become _____.” (II Cor. 5:17)
 14. What will we do when we have been cleansed from the power of Satan? “Go home to thy _____, and tell them how _____ things the Lord hath done _____ thee, and hath had compassion on thee.” (Mk. 5:19)
 15. According to the Mosaic law, anyone who touched a leper was himself made unclean. Why wasn’t Jesus made unclean when He touched the leper? “But in laying His hand upon the leper, Jesus received no _____. His touch imparted life-giving power. The leprosy was cleansed. . . . Jesus, coming to dwell in humanity, receives no _____. His presence has _____ virtue for the sinner.” (DA 266)

Note: The Jewish convert to Christianity, Alfred Edersheim in his monumental work, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah quotes some ancient rabbis as calling the future Messiah “the leprous one.” This is probably because we are told that Jesus bore “took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.” (Mt. 8:17). It is remarkable that the Hebrew word which is translated “plague” 59 times in Leviticus 13-14 is the same word which is translated “stricken” and “smitten” in Isaiah 53:4, 8. In fact, Jerome’s Latin Vulgate translates Isaiah 53:4: “We thought him to be a leper smitten by God.” In other words, Jesus took our leprosy upon himself though He had no leprosy of His own!

