

Exposition of the Book of Leviticus

Sunset Bible Church Adult Sunday School 2021

Week 4: Ordination of the Priests (Leviticus 11-15)

For I am the Lord your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming thing that crawls on the ground. For I am the Lord who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.” – Leviticus 11:44-45

Opening Discussion:

- What did you notice as you read? What questions did you have? How is theology taught through purity laws?
- As best you could understand, what is the reasoning behind the restrictions in the text?
- What is God teaching his people through these laws?
- What do these chapters teach us about God and his character?

Some Helpful Background

- Realms of Creation
- Cleanness and Uncleanness
- This world is not our world

Clean and Unclean Animals (11)

What makes an animal clean or unclean? Six views:¹

- **Symbolic:** There is a spiritual, allegorical truth beneath the restrictions (chewing the cud, represents contemplation, etc.).
- **Ethical:** The sacrifices reduce the animals that can be eaten, thereby reducing the animals killed by the Israelites.
- **Aesthetic:** Clean and unclean is determined by the appearance of the animal. A clean animal is aesthetically pleasing, an unclean animal elicits disgust.
- **Hygienic:** Clean and unclean are chosen because God is protecting people from disease.
- **Morphological:** Unclean animals depart from the norm, are anomalous in some sense. They do not reflect order in creation, so the animals were to be avoided.
- **Theological:** Unclean animals were those who played a role in pagan religions.

Clean and Unclean “Animals on the Earth” (11:1-8; 24-28)

- **Qualifications for “Clean Animals on the Earth”:** Parts the hoof and is cloven-footed (animals with paws specifically banned) and chews the cud.

¹ Mark F. Rooker, *Leviticus: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000). 171-173

- **Animals specifically listed as unclean:**
 - The camel, because it chews the cud but does not part the hoof.
 - The rock badger, because it chews the cud but does not part the hoof.
 - The hare, because it chews the cud but does not part the hoof.
 - The pig, because it parts the hoof and is cloven-footed but does not chew the cud.
 - Other animals that would be disqualified: Cats, dogs, carnivorous animals.
- **Animals that would qualify as clean:** Cows, sheep, goats
- **Prohibitions:** You shall not eat their flesh or touch their carcasses.
- **What happens if they make you unclean:** You are unclean until evening if you touch their carcass and if you carry its carcass, you must wash your clothes and be unclean until evening.

Clean and Unclean Land Animals (11:9-12)

- **Qualifications for Animals of the Waters:** These you may eat, of all that are in the waters. Everything in the waters that has fins and scales, whether in the seas or in the rivers, you may eat.
- **Water Animals that would be unclean:** Lobsters, Shrimp
- **Water Animals that would qualify as clean:** Trout, Tuna, Salmon
- **Prohibitions:** You shall not eat their flesh and will detest their carcasses.

Clean and Unclean Sky Animals (11:13-19)

- **Seeming Qualifications for “Clean Animals of the Sky”:** Birds of prey are forbidden as well as animals (like the bat) that do not fit into the norm.
- **Sky Animals specifically listed as unclean:** Eagles, bearded vulture, black vulture, kites, falcons, ravens, ostriches, the nighthawks, seagulls, hawk, little owl, cormorant, short eared owl, barn owl, tawny owl, carrion vulture, stork, heron, hoopoe, bats.
- **Sky Animals that would qualify as clean:** Chickens, Pheasants, Quail

Clean and Unclean Flying Insects (11:20-23):

- **Qualifications for “Clean Flying Insects”:** Insects that “*go on all fours and have jointed legs above their feet with which to hop on the ground.*”
- **Unclean Flying Insects:** All others
- **Flying Insects that would qualify as clean:** Locusts, bald locusts (katydids), grasshoppers, crickets.

Clean and Unclean “Swarming Animals” (11:29-38, 41-45):

- **Qualifications for “Swarming Animals on the Earth”:** All unclean
- **Disqualifying features listed:** Goes on its belly, goes on all fours, has many feet, swarms on the ground
- **Animals specifically listed as unclean:** Mole, rat, mouse, great lizard, gecko, monitor lizard, lizard, sand lizard, chameleon.
- **Swarming Animals that would qualify as clean:** None

- **Prohibitions:**
 - Shall not be eaten or their carcasses touched.
 - If their carcass falls on an article of clothing, furniture, or utensil of any kind, it must be cleans with water and will be unclean until evening.
 - If one falls into an earthenware vessel, it will be broken and everything in it becomes unclean.
 - If one falls into a spring or a cistern, the water remains clean
 - If one falls on seed grain, it will be clean.
 - But if water is put on the seed and any part of their carcass falls on it, it is unclean (probably because this would indicate it was being prepared for eating).²
- **Rationale for prohibitions:** I am YHWH your God and you are to be holy as I am holy and not defile yourself
- **What happens if they make you unclean:** You are unclean until evening

Discuss: What is the rationale behind clean and unclean meat?

Carcasses (11:39-40): If a clean animal dies, touching its carcass or eating it would make you unclean until evening. If you eat it or carry it, your clothes must also be washed.

Summary: 11:46-47): *“This is the law about beast and bird and every living creature that moves through the waters and every creature that swarms on the ground, to make a distinction between the unclean and the clean and between the living creature that may be eaten and the living creature that may not be eaten.”*

Human Purity Laws

Purification after Pregnancy (12:1-8):

- **Uncleanness for birthing a male child:** A woman who bears a male child is unclean for seven days, until her son is circumcised. For thirty-three days following, she continues in the blood of her purifying and is not to come into the sanctuary or touch anything holy.
- **Uncleanness for birthing a female child:** If a woman gives birth to a female child, she is unclean for fourteen days and will continue in the blood of her purifying for sixty-six days.
- **Sacrifices for childbirth:** After the days of her purifying, the woman who gave birth is to bring a year-old lamb to the entrance of the Tabernacle as a burnt offering and a bird for a sin offering to the priest (note the reversal of the order from sin offerings for sin).³ The priest will offer it to YHWH and make atonement for her and she will be clean from her flow of blood and she will be clean. As is typical with other offerings, the animal offered is dependent on what she can afford.
- **Rational for uncleanness for childbirth:**

² Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979). 180

³ This would seem to indicate that reproduction is not considered sinful, otherwise the sin would have to be atoned for before the offering of a burnt offering. Rooker, *Leviticus*. 184

- Because on the sinfulness of human beings and the proliferation of sinners being brought into the world.
- Contact with blood.
- **Why is the woman unclean longer for a son?**
 - Circumcision of the son “cleanses” the woman.
 - A girl being born will give birth to more humans, thus increasing contact with blood and childbirth.

Leprous Diseases (13-14)

- **What is a leprous disease?** Seemingly, any disease showing itself on the skin that might spread. It is not restricted to “Hansen’s disease” but would include it.
- **When a person has a swelling, eruption, or a spot...** He is brought to the priest to be examined. If the hair in the diseased area has turned white and the disease is deeper than the skin of his body, it is leprous and he is pronounced unclean.
 - If the spot is not deeper than the skin and the hair has not turned white, he is to be shut up for seven days. If the disease has not spread, he is to be shut up another seven days. If he is still clean after the second week, it is an “eruption” and he is to be pronounced clean. The man is to wash his clothes and be clean.
 - But if the eruption spreads after he is pronounced clean, he is to be reexamined and then pronounced unclean.
- **When a person has a white swelling in the skin and raw flesh...** He is examined by the priest and if there is white swelling in the skin that has turned the hair white and there is raw flesh in the swelling, he is unclean (without the earlier quarantining process). But if the leprous disease covers all of his skin, he is pronounced clean of the disease. But if raw flesh appears, he is unclean. If the raw flesh recovers, he is declared clean.
- **When a person has a boil, white swelling, reddish-white spot...** If a man has a boil that heals and in the place of the boil a white swelling or reddish-white spot appears, he is to be examined by the priest. If it is deeper than the skin and the hair has turned white, he is pronounced unclean. But if there is no white hair and it is not deeper than the skin he is shut up for seven days. If it spreads, it is a leprous disease and he is unclean, but if not, it is a scar and he is clean.
- **When a person has a burn, raw flesh, reddish-white or white spot...** If a man has a burn on the skin and the raw flesh becomes a spot (either reddish white or white), he is examined. If, the hair in the spot has turned white and it is deeper than the skin, he is unclean. But if not, he is shut up for seven days and re-examined. If it spreads, it is leprous, but otherwise he is clean (it is a scar from the burn)
- **When a person has a head or beard disease...** If someone has a disease of the head or beard that appears to be deeper than the skin and the hair in it is yellow and thin, he is pronounced unclean. If it is not deeper than the skin with no black hair in it, he is shut up for seven days and reexamined. If it has not spread and there is no yellow hair in it, he will shave all but the itch, and be shut up for another seven days. If it still has not spread, he is shut up for another seven days, and if it still has not spread, he is declared clean after washing his clothes. If it spreads after his cleansing, he is unclean, with or

without yellow hair. If it is unchanged and black hair has grown in it, the itch is healed and he is clean.

- **When a person has white spots on body...** When someone has white spots on the body, he is to be examined and if they are dull white, he is clean.
- **When a person loses of hair...** If a man loses his hair from his head (or forehead), he is bald – he is clean. But if there is a diseased area on the baldness that has turned reddish white, he is unclean.
- **Response to Leprous Disease:** A leprous person will wear torn clothing, let his hair be disheveled and cover, his lip, and cry out, “Unclean, unclean!” He is unclean as long as he has the disease and he will live outside the camp.
- **When a person has leprous disease on his clothing:** If a garment of wool or linen (or anything else made of skin) has red or green in the garment, it is to be examined by the priest. The garment is to be shut up for seven days. If it spreads, it is burned. If it hasn’t spread, it is to be washed and shut up another seven days. If the appearance has not changed after washing, it is burned. But if the diseased area has faded, it is torn out of the garment. If the disease reappears, the garment is to be burned. If the disease departs after washing, it is to be washed a second time and be clean.
- **Discussion:** Rationale for clean and unclean?

Cleansing Leprosy (14:1-32)

- **Examination by the Priest:** When a leprous person is cleansed, he is to go to the priest. He is to take two live birds, cedarwood, scarlet yarn, and hyssop. He will kill one of the birds in an earthenware vessel over fresh water. He then takes the live bird, cedarwood, and hyssop, and dips them in the blood of the bird that was killed. The blood is sprinkled seven times on the cleansed person and the live bird is released. The cleansed man is to wash his clothes, shave his hair, and bathe and be clean. He can come back into the camp, but must live outside his tent for seven days. Then he is to shave all of his hair (including his eyebrows and beard), wash his clothes and bathe again, and then he is clean.
- **Sacrifice for Cleansing:** On the eighth day, he is to take two male lambs without blemish, and a grain offering of three tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil and a log of oil. One lamb is offered as a guilt offering with the log of oil and waved before YHWH. The lamb in the sanctuary belongs to the priest. The blood of the guilt offering is put on the right ear, thumb, and big toe. The oil is poured into the left hand of the priest and then sprinkled with his right hand before YHWH. Some of the oil is then put on the right ear, thumb, and big toe of the person being cleansed and on top of the guilt offering. Then the priest makes atonement for him. Afterward, they offer the other lamb as a burnt offering and the grain as a grain offering.
- **Accommodation for the Poor:** As in other circumstances, there is accommodation for the poor who cannot afford so much (pigeons or turtledoves can be substituted).
- **Discussion:** Rationale for cleansing

Disease in the House (14:33-53): When there is a leprous disease in the house, the priest examines it. The house is to be emptied before the priest comes. If the disease is greenish or

has reddish spots and is deeper than the surface then the house is shut up for seven days. If the disease has spread, the stones with the disease are thrown outside of the city and the inside of the house is scraped all around. The stones are to be replaced and the plaster is to be replaced. If the disease breaks out again the house is broken down and the rubble is carried outside of the city. Whoever entered the house while it was unclean is unclean until evening and they will wash their clothes. If the disease has not spread, the sacrifice of the birds (as before) is performed and the house is cleansed.

Summary of Laws on Leprous Disease (14:54-57): *This is the law for any case of leprous disease: for an itch, for leprous disease in a garment or in a house, and for a swelling or an eruption or a spot, to show when it is unclean and when it is clean. This is the law for leprous disease.*

Bodily Discharges (15)

- **Discharges that render a man unclean:** When a man has a discharge from his body or his body is blocked up, this is uncleanness. Every bed that he has sat on is unclean and whoever touches the bed or sits on it is unclean until evening and he is to wash his clothes. If the one with a discharge spits on someone who is clean, that person must wash his clothes. Any saddle ridden by the unclean person is unclean. Anyone who touches or carries anything that was under the person is unclean until evening and must bathe himself and wash his clothes. The same process is repeated for someone who touches the person. An earthenware vessel touched by one with a discharge is broken.
- **Cleansed of a Discharge:** After seven days, he is cleansed. He will take two turtledoves to YHWH and offer them, one for a sin offering and one for a burnt offering.
- **Emission of Semen:** If a man has an emission of semen, he is unclean until evening. His clothing must be washed. If he lies with a woman and has an emission of semen, both of them will wash and be unclean until evening.
- **Discharges that Render a Woman Unclean:** When a woman has a discharge of blood, she is unclean for seven days (the same rules about touching things apply as above). If a man lies with her, he is unclean for seven days and the same rules apply to him. If she has a discharge of blood that is not menstruation, she is unclean all the days of her discharge. If she is cleansed of her discharge, she waits seven days and is clean. She is to bring two birds to the priest. One is offered as a sin offering and one as a burnt offering and the priest makes atonement for her.
- **Discussion:** Rationale for rules on Discharges

Summary of Laws on Discharges: *“Thus you shall keep the people of Israel separate from their uncleanness, lest they die in their uncleanness by defiling my tabernacle that is in their midst. This is the law for him who has a discharge and for him who has an emission of semen, becoming unclean thereby; also for her who is unwell with her menstrual impurity, that is, for anyone, male or female, who has a discharge, and for the man who lies with a woman who is unclean.”*

Final Discussion, if time permits: What does God expect from us? What relationship do we, as Christians today, have to these laws?

Reading Leviticus Together: Leviticus 16