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## A STUDY OF THE WHOLE BIBLE

### THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS

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#### CLEAN AND UNCLEAN BODILY CONDITIONS (12:1–15:33)

##### The Place of the Passage

In this passage, we finish the section of Leviticus dealing with purity laws. The section on ritual purity (11:1–15:33) is distinct from the section of Leviticus dealing with laws about holiness (17:1–20:27). Scholars disagree over the exact difference between these two categories. One possibility—and the view explored in this study guide—is that holiness laws identify sins, like sexual immorality, while purity laws identify life’s brokenness due to human sinfulness. The blood loss experienced during childbirth, for example, is definitely not sinful (thus it is not “unholy”). Nevertheless, blood loss and its attendant pain are a reminder of sin’s curse on an otherwise good aspect of human life. Thus it is called “unclean”. Within this way of understanding Israel’s purity laws as distinct from the holiness laws, the ritual requirements in this section of Leviticus would have reminded Israel that life’s brokenness has no enduring place among a people dwelling in God’s presence. The atonement promises not only forgiveness of sins but the reversal of its curse and its effects as well.

##### The Big Picture

Because God atones for sin and dwells among his people, we are to anticipate the end of sin’s curse on our daily lives and a resurrection from sickness and death.

##### Gospel Glimpses

**RESURRECTION.** This passage is one of the most vivid testimonies of Israel’s faith in resurrection in all of the Old Testament. Sadly, most readers get bogged down in the strangeness of its rituals and miss the beauty of the hope here captured. Each of the conditions in this passage marks the presence of death where there ought to be life. Reproductive organs were created for life. The abnormal and normal loss of life fluids in these centers of life represents the evil brought by sin. Leprosy made especially visible the presence of death and decay in the body and in the extended coverings of life—garments and homes. But each of these leprosy sections closes with rituals of restoration when the presence of death has been reversed. And the centerpiece of the collection is the extensive ritual of restoration for the person healed of leprosy. These must have been extremely joyous occasions. Such public ceremonies of restoration from “living death” ensured that all Israel knew what had taken place and that all the people should see this reversal of death as a lesson about the victory of God’s atonement—resurrection. Today we no longer mark physical healing with ritual markers of resurrection, because we have the ultimate testimony of our resurrection hope to look to—the historical resurrection of Jesus.

## **Whole Bible Connections**

**CEREMONIAL LAWS.** There were many ceremonial laws observed in the Old Testament, but not as many as the growing list of rules of the Pharisees Jesus confronted in the New Testament. The ceremonial laws given by God were designed to help (even to “imprison” and compel) Old Testament believers to view all of life through the grid of God’s promises and to restrain them from the temptations of surrounding nations. However, the onerous complexity that came to characterize the ceremonial law by New Testament times was due to the legalistic tendencies of the Pharisees, who over-interpreted the Mosaic laws and added new commandments and traditions of their own.

## **Theological Soundings**

**SIN’S CURSE.** When a vandal damages someone’s property, the act of vandalism (the crime) is offensive to the victim, as are its effects (the damage to the victim’s property). God is the one offended by sin, in both its commission (actual sin) and its extensive impact that spreads like a cancer through all aspects of his creation (the curse of sin). Levitical holiness and purity laws taught Israel that God’s provision of atonement was powerful enough both to forgive sins and to remove its stains. Purity laws in the Old Testament remind us that not only sin but also the effects of sin (our human brokenness) are offensive to the God who created us for life and wholeness. We rejoice in the ability of his atonement to reverse sin in its totality.

## **Glossary of Terms**

**RESURRECTION.** The impartation of new, eternal life to a dead person at the end of time (or in the case of Jesus, on the third day after his death). This new life is not a mere resuscitation of the body (as in the case of Lazarus; John 11:1–44) but a transformation of the body to an eternal state (I Corinthians 15:35–58). Both the righteous and the wicked will be resurrected, the former to eternal life and the latter to judgment (John 5:29).

**Please answer the following questions:**

**Leviticus Chapter 12**

1. How long was a woman ceremonially unclean after the birth of a son or a daughter? (12:2-5)
2. Besides childbirth, at what other time was a woman ceremonially unclean? (12:2)
3. What was to be done to the male child and when? (12:3)
4. How long did the woman have to wait to be purified after the birth of a son and also the daughter? (12:4-5)
5. What was she forbidden to do until her purification? (12:4)
6. What offering was a woman to bring for her purification? (12:6-8)
7. What would this offering do for her? (12:7-8)

## **Leviticus Chapters 13**

1. What kind of skin disorder required one to come to the priest? (13:2)
2. What determined if it was an infectious skin disease? (13:3)
3. If it was infectious what was he pronounced? (13:3)
4. If the spot does not meet the infectious qualifications what happens to the person? (13:4)
5. If it has not spread in 7 days, what does the priest do? (13:5)
6. When could he be pronounced clean? What was the man to do? (13:6)
7. What if the rash reappears? (13:7)
8. Describe a chronic skin disease. (13:10)
9. Was he to be put in isolation and why? (13:11)
10. If it covers the person from head to foot covering his whole body he would be pronounced what? (13:13)

11. What might appear where a boil had been? (13:19)
  
12. How long would the man be kept in isolation to determine if the sore was a disease or a scar? (13:21)
  
13. Where else might a reddish white or white spot appear? (13:24)
  
14. Describe an infectious disease of the head or chin. (13:30)
  
15. On the 7th day of isolation what was done to the head or chin? (13:33)
  
16. How did a harmless rash appear? (13:39)
  
17. Does the loss of hair on the head make one unclean? What? (13:40)
  
18. When was he unclean? (13:42)
  
19. What was the infected man to wear? What was his hair to be? (13:45)
  
20. What was he to cover and do? Where was he to live? (13:46)
  
21. In what type materials might mildew be found? (13:47-48)

22. Describe a spreading mildew. (13:49)

23. What would the priest do with the garment? (13:50)

24. How was it determined if it was a destructive mildew? (13:50)

25. What was to be done with the garment declared unclean because of a destructive mildew?  
(13:52)

26. What was to be done if the mildew had not spread after 7 days? (13:54)

27. If washing did not change the appearance of the mildew what was to be done? (13:55)

28. If the mildew had faded in washing what was to be done? (13:56)

29. What was to be done if it reappeared? (13:57)

30. What did the second washing do for the article? (13:58)

## **Leviticus Chapter 14**

1. Where is the man to be examined to see if he is clean and by whom? (14:3)
2. If the person is healed what was he to bring? (14:4)
3. Where was one of the birds killed? (14:5)
4. What was to be dipped in the blood? (14:6)
5. What was done to the one to be cleansed and to the live bird? (14:7)
6. What was the one to be cleansed required doing? Now he could come into the camp, but where must he stay and how long? (14:8)
7. What must he do on the 7th day to finish his cleansing? (14:9)
8. What offering was he to bring on the 8th day? (14:10-11)
9. What was one lamb offered for? What was this offering plus the log of oil? (14:12)
10. Where was some of the blood put? (14:14)

11. What did the priest do with the oil? (14:15-18)
12. What were the other animals used for? (14:19)
13. What could the poor man bring? What was each used for? (14:21-22)
14. Where besides articles of cloth and leather might mildew appear? (14:34)
15. Who was the house owner to tell about the mildew? (14:35)
16. What would the priest order to be done before going into the house to examine it?
17. Why was it emptied? (14:36)
18. What would the mildew look like? (14:37)
19. What would the priest do to the house? (14:38)
20. If after 7 days the mildew had spread what was to be done? (14:40-42)
21. If after the re—modeling is done the mildew spreads, what is to be done? (14:45)



22. What happened if anyone entered or ate or slept in the house while it was closed up? (14:46)

23. When was a house, pronounced clean? (14:48)

24. What things were used for the purification of the house? (14:49)

25. Compare the purification of the house with the purification of an unclean person. (14:40-53)

### **Leviticus Chapter 15**

1. What types of bodily discharges were unclean? (15:2-3)

2. What and who can the man with a discharge make unclean? (15:4-12)

3. How long would they be unclean? (15:10)

4. What was a person to do that had come into contact with the man or any articles he had touched laid or sat upon? (15:11)

5. After a man is cleansed of his discharge, how long must he wait for ceremonial cleansing? (15:13)

6. What is he to bring to the priest for his cleansing? (15:14)
7. What offerings were made for him? (15:15)
8. An emission of semen makes a man unclean until He must \_\_\_\_\_ his whole body. (15:16)
9. What besides a man's body is made unclean by an emission of semen? (15:17)
10. If a man and woman lie together and there is an emission of semen what must be done? (15:18)
11. How long does the impurity of a woman last during her monthly period? (15:19)
12. What and who can she make unclean during this time? How long are these things or people unclean? (15:19-23)
13. How can she make a man unclean for 7 days? (15:24)
14. If the woman has a flow of blood longer than 7 days, how long is she unclean? (15:25)
15. How long must a woman wait after her cleansing to be ceremonially clean? (15:28)

16. Compare her offering for cleansing with that of a man. (Leviticus 15:14-15, 29-30)

17. Why were the Israelites to be separated from things that made them, unclean? (15:31)