



*Lessons from the OT*  
*on*  
*Defilement*

*Number six in a series on  
the holiness of Christian fellowship*

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In Lev. 13 and 14 God insisted that the leper had to be put outside the camp of Israel. Was the reason that if the leper had been left in the camp, then after some time all would finally become lepers? No, that is not the reason given. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Command the children of Israel, that they put out of the camp every leper, and every one that hath an issue, and whosoever is defiled by the dead: both male and female shall ye put out, without the camp shall ye put them; that they defile not their camps, in the midst whereof I dwell" (Num. 5:1-3). God is teaching the lesson, by type, that one becomes defiled by evil association and defiles the place where God dwells!

There are some whose judgment we highly regard who do not believe that the typical teaching in Lev. 13 is that of the working of evil in a person called a brother (cp. 1 Cor. 5:11) but rather that it depicts sin working in an unbeliever. I am convinced, however, that the passage it has to do with the professed people of God, though a gospel illustration might be drawn from it. The reasons for believing this are:

1. The persons involved stood in covenant relationship to God under the law. They were (externally) the people of God.
2. The leper had to be put outside the camp or the place where God dwelt would be defiled (Num. 5:1-4).
3. All allow that the house of Lev. 14 typifies an assembly. The cleansing of the house and the cleansing of the individual have in common the use of seven specific items which typify the person and work of Christ (cp. 14:4, 5 with 14:49, 50).
4. Another common thing is that both the house and the leper can be "shut up." In the case of the leper, he is not excluded from the camp while "shut up." This investigation was not for the purpose of determining if he were a believer or not. The examination of the person determined whether he had leprosy or whether he had another form of the working of the flesh.
5. Miriam, who was one of God's saints (cp. Micah 6:4; Ex. 15:20), was one smitten with leprosy (Num. 12:10). This did not typify a sinner needing salvation, but that there was such a working of the flesh that she became leprous.

I trust that as we proceed to examine Lev. 13 and 14 in some detail the reader will be satisfied that these passages deal with the question of defilement of the camp by a certain working of the flesh.

Leprosy in Lev. 13 and 14 typifies the working of evil in several forms and spheres. When this working of evil is found in the body, it typifies moral evil as in 1 Cor. 5. As found in the head or beard, it typifies doctrinal evil as in Gal. or 2 John 9, 10. The working of evil may also manifest itself in personal

associations or activities (the garment) or in the principles of assembly (the house), i. e., the principles which give the house of God its local expression. We shall consider these in detail later.

Not everything that is wrong has the character of leprosy. We notice that a careful distinction was made between leprosy, which typifies an energy of evil manifesting itself in wickedness of such a character that requires exclusion, and what was not leprous in character. This requires priestly discernment. It was not left to the leper's notion about himself whether he should see the priest or not. Lev. 13:2, 9 tells us that "he shall be brought to the priest."

The priesthood typifies communion with God, and approach to God, besides other things. As a result of the priest's position, "the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and at his mouth they seek the law; for he is the messenger of Jehovah of hosts" (Mal. 2:7). Let us never forget that the tribe of Levi became the priestly tribe because of faithfulness to Jehovah in dealing with evil (Deut. 33:8, 9), and thus they were selected to teach Jacob Jehovah's ordinances (v. 10) and draw near (v. 11). Let us duly weigh the grand significance of Deut. 33:8, 9. Thus, there is a warrior aspect to priesthood also, as is especially apparent in the life of Phinehas.

The priest therefore typifies one who, having acted for the holiness of God dwelling in the midst of His people, and having the privilege of standing before God, has the understanding of what is due His glory and presence, along with the discernment necessary to detect what would corrupt the dwelling place of God (1 Cor. 3:17).

It is true that all Christians are priests (1 Pet. 2:9) and have the privilege to function as priests if not disqualified (1 Cor. 5; Gal. 5:9; 2 John 9, 10; Lev. 21:16-24; etc.). But not all are spiritual. Some, as many of the Corinthians, are carnal, i. e., fleshly (1 Cor. 3:1). True priestly action in the Old Testament, then, typifies spiritual action, and thus we say that in its right spiritual sense THE PRIEST TYPIFIES THE SPIRITUAL MAN (cp. 1 Cor. 2:15; Gal. 6:1).

Lev. 13 and 14 show that discernment is needed. How is it that we so often fail to discern what is due to God? We naturally tend to palliate evil and its workings, both in ourselves and in others! ". . . solid food belongs to full-grown men, who, on account of habit, have their senses exercised for distinguishing both good and evil" (Heb. 5:14). "But the spiritual discerns all things ..." (1 Cor. 2:15). See James 1:5. We prefer ease, popularity, a false peace, and pabulum! The priest determined if it was indeed leprosy or some other working of the flesh. The difference between such evil as typified by leprosy and some of these other workings of the flesh is found by comparing 1 Cor. 5 with Gal. 6:1, 2 Thess. 3 and 1 Tim. 5:20, for example. If leprosy was suspected but not yet conclusively determined, the man was shut up, *but not yet shut out*.

## *Leprosy in the Body*

Leprosy in the body (Lev. 13:1-28) typifies moral evil. As we see in 1 Cor. 5, it can assume various characters. (Note that 1 Cor. 5 does not contain a complete list. Murder, for example, is not included.)

First, something appears in the skin, i. e., something is observed as having come to the surface. This is not a mere suspicion, but something observed.

There may issue from a rising (pride), the sore of leprosy. The hair too is turned white (suggesting a decline in spiritual energy). But if the hair is not turned white and the sore does not appear deeper than the skin, then it does not appear to be a deep-seated thing, and his liberty is curtailed for a complete period (v. 4), a period sufficient to allow for a *manifestation* of the true character of what is at work. It is repeated if there is no change (v. 5). Further investigation may happily show that it is becoming pale, i.e., it is diminishing in intensity (suggesting that grace is working in the person) and it has not issued into leprosy; it is a scab, i.e., an old wound not properly healed. Let us beware of nourishing wounds we have received. Let grace speedily heal them.

On the other hand, when the rising (pride; an energy of flesh) and white hair (suggesting spiritual decline) are accompanied by raw flesh in the rising (v. 9-11), it is an old leprosy; i. e., there is a history to this thing and it has issued into leprosy. It is raw flesh!

How blessed indeed when the leprosy completely covers the man wherever the priest looks (v. 12, 13). This signifies that all has come out, all is confessed (Psa. 32:5; Psa. 51; Prov. 28:13). He is clean. But a new outbreak may occur and, typically speaking, he again goes on in the sin. It is "raw flesh" and he is unclean (v. 14, 15).

A boil (v. 19) suggests anger in which there is sin. "Be angry and sin not" (Eph. 4:26). The Lord Jesus was angry, but there was no sin. A burning inflammation (v. 24) suggests bitterness (Heb. 12:15).

## *Leprosy in the Head or Beard*

Leprosy in the head or beard (Lev. 13:29-44) typifies doctrinal evil as we find it in Gal. 1; Gal. 5:6; 2 John; etc. The beard reminds us of what is prominent and public. It moves when the mouth speaks. Leprosy in a beard suggests leprosy in what a man teaches. In scripture, a woman is not looked upon as having a public place; she does not have a beard. Leprosy in the head suggests doctrinal evil held, but not necessarily taught. It does not make any difference whether the leprosy is in the head ("held privately," as some say), or in the beard (put forward, as in teaching, for example). It is leprosy in either case and the leper must be put outside the camp or it would become defiled (Num. 5:1-4).

We also know from Rev. 2:14, 15 that persons are not to be permitted to hold evil doctrine and remain in fellowship with the people of God. How subtle the suggestion that one may *hold* evil doctrine if one doesn't teach it! Can a spiritual mind condone such a thought as "leprosy in private"? Can a spiritual mind condone such a thought as "leaven in private"? Is private fornication or covetousness not leaven (1 Cor. 5)? Why then do some Christians think that a man may hold an evil doctrine, concerning the foundations of our most holy faith, as long as he "holds it privately"? Is blasphemy less than covetousness or fornication? Sad to say, in the eyes of some who say that they love our Lord Jesus it is less offensive. The truth is that DOCTRINAL EVIL IS WORSE than the sins of 1 Cor. 5. The reason that Christians sometimes think otherwise is because they have self and reputation before them. They think of the offense with regard to the opinions of "respectable" people. These "respectable" people are usually not too concerned, however, about attacks on Christ and His work on the cross. This sets the standard for many Christians.

Consider the instructive difference between Paul's opening address to the Corinthians (where he pressed the issue of moral evil) and that to the Galatians where he pressed the issue of doctrinal evil. In both cases leaven was in question (1 Cor. 5; Gal. 5:6). Concerning the Corinthians, Paul commended what the grace of God had wrought for them (1 Cor. 1); but he commended nothing in their walk. In Galatians 1 he proceeds to denounce the other gospel, which is not another gospel. He didn't commend anything. "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Psa. 11:3).

Let us learn the correct attitude toward leaven, especially doctrinal leaven, from this. Christians sometimes expect that when a matter of doctrinal evil is taken up in a letter, it will open with sweet expressions. They did not get such an expectation from God nor from the example of the apostle Paul. It is a false expectation which is the fruit of not regarding doctrinal evil with the horror that it deserves from every lover of Christ. The reason that doctrinal evil is worse than moral evil is because it directly attacks God, attacks Christ, and attacks the foundation of our faith, doing so under the cover of having come from God. Those who hold, or teach, such doctrinal evil believe that they obtained it from scripture. Thus they make God the author of the evil! The awfulness of this is typified in the fact that a person with leprosy in the head or beard is said to be "UTTERLY unclean" (Lev. 13:44).

Leprosy in the head is a most serious thing. It poses a special snare for the saints. It does not matter how good a man sounds or how personable he may be, when it is a question of leprosy in the head or beard. It is not a question of long service in Christian work, or mere age, or any of the host of palliating excuses, but of what is due to God. Remember that the names of Hymenaeus and Philetus (whose word will eat as doth a canker, 2 Tim. 2:17) mean "a wedding song" and "beloved" respectively!

Uzziah, the king, went into the temple and burned incense upon the altar of incense. He was rightly withstood by "fourscore priests of the Lord, that were valiant men." He was angry with them and while angry the leprosy rose in his forehead, for his thoughts were evil and resulted in this action of his (2 Chron. 26:16-21). "His heart was lifted up to his destruction." He intruded into what was not his and his position and power did not excuse him from being treated as a leper.

The loss of hair (Lev. 13:39-41) would suggest to us some loss in intelligence of divine things. While it is an unhappy thing, it is not *necessarily* leprous. But a leprosy may break out (Lev. 13:42).

Where are they today? Where are the valiant men around the couch of Solomon, armed because of alarms in the night (S. of S. 3:7-8)? Of those that prefer a false peace to Christ's honor there are plenty.

A professed Christian might do one, or both, of two things (see 2 John):

1. He may **go forward** and not abide in the doctrine of Christ. He thinks he has something more, and better, than what is actually revealed, perhaps thinking that he has scripture for it. His doctrine attacks, either directly or inferentially (cp. 1 Cor. 15), the foundations of the faith once-for-all delivered to the saints. On being examined he maintains it. He is "UTTERLY unclean." An example of such a case is any man who goes forward to hold that Christ could have sinned.
2. Or, he **brings not** the doctrine of Christ. An example of such a case is any man who holds that Christ's Sonship was not eternal, in the Godhead. Being remonstrated with, he maintains it. He is "UTTERLY unclean."

In both cases such an one must be put outside the company of the people of God (Num. 5:1-4,14; 1 Cor. 5; 2 John 9,10). He is to dwell alone!

Another has said:

It is said at times, how evil a thing it is, to refuse anyone who is a saint of God, a place in the assembly of God. But, I ask, are the saints of God to be received in defiance of the command of God? If the Lord of Israel say, that a leprous Israelite is to be put outside the camp, is the congregation of Israel to say, "we will bring him inside, because he is an Israelite and one of us"?

### *Leprosy in a Garment*

Leprosy in a garment (Lev. 13:47-59) typically speaks of the working of evil in our outward reputation. For example, we may think of our occupation in the

eyes of the world around us. Perhaps one falsifies records to avoid paying taxes, or deliberately omits recording income. Another may cheat his customers, or steal from his employer, etc. It might be that funds committed to us for some purpose are stolen. Perhaps the application of the Word of God to what has the appearance of leprosy (Lev. 13:54, 55) does not help: then fire, i.e., judgment, is applied to it and the cause of the situation is judged and abandoned. Or, the Word of God may show that a part can be torn from it (Lev. 13:56). But if the application of the Word of God produces good results, it shall be applied again (Lev. 13:58). There must be thorough exercise.

"Thou hast a few names in Sardis which have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with me in white, because they are worthy" (Rev. 3:4).

". . . hating even the garment spotted by the flesh" (Jude 23).

### **LEPROSY IN THE HOUSE**

The case of leprosy in a house is found in Lev. 14; verse 34 notes that this may happen amidst the blessings of Canaan. The priest is made aware of the fact that something seems improper within the house. He is someone in the place of nearness to God and so, as we have seen, is one who is able to discern what is suitable to God. The owner of the house (God, according to the New Testament antitype) suggests this to the priest (the spiritual man, as we have seen). It should not be necessary to say that the priest need not be an occupant of the house. If the plague shows itself to be leprous in nature, the affected stones are to be removed (v. 40) and the house scraped. Let us consider these things in more detail.

What is the house? The house typifies the place of fellowship and it typifies, too, the order becoming to Him whose house it is. What are the stones and plaster? Lev. 14:40 notes the removal of the leprous stones and v. 42 notes the replacement of these stones with other stones. If a stone represented a person, this would indicate the replacement of one person by another person. This is not how assembly discipline is carried out. The stones suggest that which gives form and substance to the house. In Lev. 14:33-48 we have a picture of evil insinuating itself amongst God's people, into the assembly, the local expression of the House of God (1 Tim. 3:15). There are principles given in the scriptures which give form to this House. Our gathering together ought to display locally what the House of God is. But if we want to express what the House of God is when we come together, we must abide by those principles which give that House its true character. Thus, the stones suggest the principles that we hold. The principles give character and form to the practical expression of the House of God. The plaster speaks of the manner in which these principles are held in their proper place.

It may be, and indeed has happened, that the plague of leprosy has broken forth upon the principles of association and fellowship of the people of God.

There is but one remedy. The leavenous principles (leprous stones) must be removed and the right principles (clean stones) be set in their place, and they must be freshly plastered (v. 42), (that is, they must be held properly in place by the saints). There would be, or should be, much exercise in the House and on the part of the priest as evidenced by scraping the house "within round about." This scraping denotes deep, heartfelt self-judgment concerning the condition, and concerning the way that principles and truths were held so as to have allowed leprosy to occur. It denotes a humbling and soul-searching that leprosy had infected the principles of Christian fellowship, that the holiness of Christian fellowship was being undermined. The whole house was scraped and this indicates a corporate self-judgment. No one is excused by God from this humbling and self-judgment. Where leprosy is concerned, God wants all to take sides with Christ against themselves and see themselves with His judgment. If the plague breaks out again after all this effort to remove the leprosy, the house must be demolished. It is not fit for occupancy. Such an assembly no longer has its house character. It is disowned as an expression of the House of God.

Is it not a leprous principle to maintain that a man is not defiled by evil associations? This idea says that I may associate with one who holds "destructive heresies" and not be defiled, i. e., made dirty, unclean. In fact, 2 John 9, 10 says that if one gives such a person greetings he is A PARTAKER OF HIS WICKED WORKS! Someone remarked that to be a partaker of the works of a thief is to partake of his thieving. Is that so difficult to understand? And does not the denial that evil associations leaven a person partake of the nature of what it allows? <sup>2</sup> The idea that fellowship with evil does not leaven a person, and make a man a partaker of the wicked works, not only opens the door to contract evil fellowship, it is an evil teaching in itself. I will give several examples from scripture concerning evil associations, without implying that these are all the cases.

1. The person who gives greeting, and/or invites into the house, one who goes forward and abides not in the doctrine of Christ, or who brings not the doctrine of Christ, is a partaker of his wicked works (2 John 9, 10).
2. An assembly that refuses to purge leaven, i. e., put away a WICKED PERSON, is a leavened lump (1 Cor. 5).
3. The Spirit directs all Christians *not to eat with* such a WICKED PERSON (1 Cor. 5). This means at *your* table, or at others' houses, etc.

Violation of these scripture directions results in an evil fellowship in God's sight. Yet, violation of these scripture directions is committed by some as an

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2. 1 Cor. 8:10, 11 warns against causing a brother to perish. Now, no Christian can perish, but the TENDENCY of the act of the careless was in this direction and scripture "CHARACTERIZES AN ACT ACCORDING TO ITS TENDENCY."

avowed principle of association among Christians. There is an idea abroad that one may associate himself with that which is really leprous in character, such as what is found in 1 Cor. 5 and 2 John 10, and not be defiled, leavened, and a partaker of the WICKED WORKS. We are not speaking of working along side of such an one in the shop or in school as duty requires. This is a question of false sympathy and fellowship with such, whether in a social way in Christian fellowship or service or in the breaking of bread. The persistence in maintaining such a wicked principle, after efforts to replace it with what we have received from the beginning, renders such a house unfit for occupancy. It must be torn down, that is, disowned. A leprous house is a source of defilement (Lev. 14:46,47). Connection with leprosy defiles. There was one law for leprosy (Lev. 14:54-57). How solemn these considerations are! May God grant us to see things as He does. If our eye is single, our whole body is full of light.

### *The Cleansing of Leprosy*

The striking similarity, in the seven items used, between the cleansing of the leper and the cleansing of the leprous house shows the oneness of the law for leprosy (Lev. 14:54-57). Before the leper could be restored to the privileges and enjoyment of the fellowship in the camp of Israel it was necessary that both healing and cleansing take place. Healing could be accomplished only by God. After the leper was healed by God, it was necessary that there be an outward cleansing in order to be fit for the fellowship of God's people and to come in and out in the camp of Israel. We learn about the details of this cleansing in Lev. 14. Cleansing has in view the restoration to communion. The apostle puts this principle to use in 2 Cor. 2:10 and it is the principle of John 20:23. There are **four stages** in the cleansing which follows the healing. These are:

1. The application of the two birds, the cedar wood, scarlet, hyssop, an earthen vessel, and running water.
2. Seven days outside his tent.
3. Removal of all hair on the seventh day.
4. Restoration to his tent and communion; sacrifices and application of blood and oil.

Because leprosy typifies the most wicked workings of the flesh, healing is required. This was not the case with defilement from running issues and defilement by the dead. Only God could heal leprosy (Num. 12:13-15; 2 Kings 5:7; Matt. 8:3). The leper could not come into the camp as soon as he was healed; there needed to be the cleansing as well. Let us remember this principle when it comes to the public restoration of one who has dishonored God either in doctrine or conduct. Though true repentance may have been

wrought in the soul through a work of God (healing of the leprosy by God), there must be the outward cleansing answering to the four stages mentioned above.

**The first stage** in cleansing is recorded in Lev. 14:4-8. We note here that the leper was brought to the priest (Lev. 14:2). Note that there was action in seeking restoration as well as the action of the priest to go outside the camp to where the leper was in order to examine him. The priest, the spiritual man, went to the leper to see if he was healed. Typically, the man had judged himself. In spirit he had passed through Psalm 51, but he was not yet purified. In this step there are seven things noted, all of which speak of Christ's person and work: two birds, cedar wood, scarlet, hyssop, an earthen vessel, and running water. The first step in cleansing is a fresh sense of what these things mean; and without this, the leper is not ready to take his place in the camp again. The two birds, which belong to the heavens, so to speak, denote Christ having come down to die and Christ ascending again, with the mark of death upon Him. How will we be bowed before Him when for the first time we see those nailprints and the mark of the spear in His side! The one bird was killed over an earthen vessel, which denotes that He became a man (cp. 2 Cor. 4:7) in order to die. The running water typifies the Holy Spirit. Christ offered Himself without spot to God, by the Holy Spirit (Heb. 9:14). The living bird represents Christ in resurrection and this bird, with the cedar, the scarlet and the hyssop, was dipped in the first bird's blood. When we think of the cedar, we think of the excellent bearing, the moral elevation, and the incorruptibility of our Beloved (S. of S. 5:15). This is the one Who went down into death for God's glory and His people's blessing. This is my Beloved and this is my Friend!

And there is the scarlet, a color prominent in the tabernacle. It is the color of the robe put upon Him as recorded in Matthew, which gospel especially emphasizes His kingship. This is the King, the seed of David (Rom. 1:3; 2 Tim. 2:8), the fulfiller of promise, the Lord's anointed. As to the hyssop, He is the lowly One also (Matt. 11:28-30; cp. Psa. 51:7; Ex. 12:22). All of this He was, for God's glory. All was dipped in the blood over running water.

There is a perfect measure of the application of the blood of Christ as seen in the sprinkling seven times, applied to the healed man (14:7). He has a fresh sense of the preciousness and value of this.

Following this, **the second stage** involves that which is even more outward. "And he that is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes and shave off all his hair and wash himself in water that he may be clean: and after that he shall come into the camp and shall tarry abroad out of his tent seven days" (Lev. 14:8). The washing of his clothes and the shaving of his hair typifies the judgment of all that to which his defilement as a leper was attached. All of this has in view his being morally suitable for the camp. The body here (which is referred to in v. 8, as compared to the beard and hair of the head in v. 9) would

suggest that which is private and not apparent to the eyes of those around us. The garment on the other hand would suggest that which is seen by those who observe us. Both our secret ways and our public ways are to be judged and the Word of God applied. When our ways (either secret or public) have dishonored God so as to render us unsuitable for fellowship among God's people (as was the leper), then whatever inward work of restoration is accomplished in the soul by God has its counterpart in a judging and changing of our ways (either secret or public). Is this too much to be looked for when one seeks to be restored to the fellowship of God's people? It is what God looks for, and we dare not lower the standard.

Having entered the camp following the shaving of his body hair and the washing of his garment and person (v. 8), a deeper sense of where he had been (compare Phil. 3:3) results in further self-judgment. The seven days have, more or less, to do with what man can see, though not exclusively so. It takes time also for the results of this self-judgment to have their intended effect.

This brings us to **the third stage**. On the seventh day (v. 9) the hair of his head is shaved; that is, his thoughts are judged. The hair of his beard is shaved; i. e., his speech is judged. The hair of his eyebrows is shaved; i. e., his discernment is judged. Can any credence be given to a claim of inward restoration by one who has been "put away" when there is no change of thought about himself and there is no change in his speech? If he continues to try to justify himself and excuse himself, etc. there is little reason to feel that a true work of repentance has been wrought inwardly by God. Thus his discernment, his thoughts and his speech manifest the character of the inward work.

Finally, we come to **the fourth stage**, which is described in v. 10. The eighth day speaks of the resurrection sphere and our place in Christ. The offerings denote the grand foundation laid to bring us into this sphere. On the eighth day we have the offerings presented to God.

There are the lambs -- the Lamb of God; the three tenth-deals of fine flour -- Christ manifested as having been here perfectly for God; one log of oil, the twelfth part of an hin -- a reference to the Holy Spirit carrying out the governmental/disciplinary work with the soul.

The trespass offering is in view of the violation of relationship with God. Psa. 32:1 and Rom. 4:6, 7 are enjoyed. But the trespass offering was waved as a wave offering before being killed, with the oil, denoting the devotion of Christ, in the power of the Spirit, which shows His suitability to be that offering. There is a measure of appreciation of Christ according to this thought of His suitability. The priest enjoys it also (14:13).

The blood of the trespass offering is put on the ear (obedience), the thumb (service) and the great toe (walk). The rite denotes renewed energy in these things as set apart by the blood.

The priest puts some of the oil in his *left* hand, for this work is done with love and in felt weakness. The oil sprinkled before God shows that the work of cleansing is completed before Him in the power of the Spirit. The rest of the oil is put on the same three parts of the body as the blood was put on, signifying the energizing of the Spirit in obedience, service and walk.

There results too, by the action of the Spirit, enlargement of thought, suggested by the oil poured on the head.

The atonement of v. 18 refers to the trespass offering. Sin, too, is judged, v. 19; and acceptance is seen in the burnt offering. The meal offering is connected with this burnt offering. And he shall be clean (v. 20). He thus also enjoys his tent (cp. v. 9). He returns to his pilgrim character among his brethren.

How sad if our flesh interferes with such a blessed work of God by bringing in sentimentality and fleshly sympathy! Unjudged flesh, spared flesh in ourselves, would interfere with the work of discipline concerning the flesh in others.

### *The House Cleansed*

In the cleansing of the house (Lev. 14:48-53), only the first seven items that were used in the cleansing of the leper are mentioned (Lev. 14:51,4-5). An additional statement is added, however. It is said that the house is *cleansed* by the running water, the living bird, the cedar wood, the hyssop and the scarlet, as well as by the blood (v. 52). This indicates that these items speak of the person and work of Christ, the running water being the action of the Holy Spirit, of course. Since leprosy in a person is not in view here, we do not have the stages for cleansing which were noted above as applicable to a person. Leprosy in the house, as we have already noted, is evil in the principles of fellowship, such as toleration of known evil, or denial that evil associations defile and leaven one. It is necessary to see that positive removal of the false principle(s), scraping, i. e., corporate self-judgment, and the application of the seven things noted above, is God's way of restoration. Nothing less will do.

## *Chapter 7.2*

### *Phinehas: or, the Execution of Priestly Judgment*

*Then stood up Phinehas and executed judgment (Psa. 106:30).  
And took a javelin in his hand ... and thrust them both through (Num. 25:8).*

#### *Introduction*

It is a striking fact that not much has been written about Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, by those who write about Bible characters. He does not seem appreciated. Yet, there is so much profit to be gleaned concerning the mind of God in the several scripture notices of this extraordinary man of God.

In general we find his name connected with what was due to God, whether in direct judgment, or giving character, to judgment, or asking guidance if judgment should be executed, or inquiring into whether the appearance of evil was really evil, or being in charge of those who watched the threshold of the tent of meeting.

Phinehas was the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, and so he was of the priestly line of the Levites. Why did the Levites become the priestly class? There must be a moral reason and we need to learn that there are causes for all things. Read Deut.33:8-11 and then let us very briefly consider the meaning of this remarkable passage.

Verse 8 says, Thy 'perfections' and thy 'lights' are for thy godly ones. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him" (Psa. 25:14). The knowledge of the mind of God is for thy godly ones. Why? Because they were proved. They stood amidst the evil. Verse 9 shows that they were not biased to relations (Ex. 32:26) and were free from natural influences.

Verse 10 shows that the teaching priesthood (cp. 2 Chron. 15:3) was theirs. The prophet's ministry recalls to faithful walk and warns when ruin comes in.

The teaching priest instructs in the mind of God to lead on to the knowledge and worship of the Holy One. Such a position properly follows the proving amidst evil and the acquiring of the secret of the Lord. And this instruction precedes, and causes, the placing of the incense (Christ in all the glories and perfections of His own person), and the whole burnt offering (Christ in all His God-glorifying work), upon the altar.

Verse 11 follows worship. Service must properly follow from, and be formed by, worship. "Bless, Lord, what he has and the work of his hands. Let him have victory over the enemy."

Phinehas was of the tribe of Levi and a priest besides.

The name Phinehas means "mouth of brass". Copper in scripture (brass) is a well recognized symbol of judgment. Normally we think of intercession and worship in connection with priesthood, but in Phinehas especially we learn what the execution of judgment is and God's requirement for it. Phinehas was a **warrior priest**. This aspect of priesthood is often ill understood or shunned.

#### ISRAEL'S CONDITION

Balaam had failed to curse Israel and then the crafty enemy used seduction and corruption (Num. 31:16; Psa. 106:28; 1 Cor. 10:22; Rev. 2:12). The anger of Jehovah was kindled and He demanded the hanging of the chiefs of the people *immediately* (Num. 25:3), and then all those who had engaged in the evil were to be slain (vs. 5).

#### ENTER ZIMRI AND COZBI

*Zimri, a prince of Simeon (vs. 14), brought a Midianite woman, Cozbi, daughter of a tribal head (vs. 15), into the very camp of Israel when Israel was weeping before the entrance of the tent of meeting, and he did so in the sight of Moses and the people (vs. 6). Besides this almost unbelievably insensitive act, he had the audacity to go into the tent with the woman (v. 7). He was an important man, and when an important man is engaged in evil, our bias comes out. If it were some lesser person, many more would judge the evil. We are inclined to be respecters of persons. God is not.*

#### PHINEHAS ROSE UP FROM AMONG HIS BRETHREN

*Zimri came into the camp and went to the tent. Phinehas rose up from among his brethren and followed Zimri and Cozbi and thrust them through with the javelin. Notice that there was no long exercise about this case on the part of Phinehas. There was no long waiting on Jehovah. We need to adjust our ideas about how to deal with evil to incorporate this remarkable case, especially as God has so explicitly sanctioned the action and stated its great value in His eyes, along with noting that Phinehas received a covenant of the priesthood as a result.*

*Let us test our thoughts by scripture. Would we dare to say that Phinehas acted in an independent manner, meaning a criticism by this statement? No, we would not do so. But are we guilty of using just such a criticism as a tool against someone because we, for some reason, don't like what he did in a stand against evil, or we have some theories about how things should be done? The special danger of our day is the pressing of a false 'love' at the expense of truth and holiness. Not legality, but easy-going looseness and indifference is the general characteristic of the professed people of God.*

*Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, rose up from among his brethren. He did not consult with them! Whatever gave anyone the idea that one MUST ALWAYS consult with his brethren with regard to a PUBLIC stand against evil? <sup>3</sup> Certainly the action of Phinehas was public. We have a constant tendency to toleration of evil in practice and IN MIND and so we must always be on guard concerning our thoughts. The case of Phinehas, fully sanctioned by God, must be one of those passages that form our thoughts. It ought to have a large place in view of the special sanction by God and the consequences of the action that will be felt in the millennium, as we shall see later.*

#### HOW OLD WAS PHINEHAS WHEN HE EXECUTED JUDGMENT?

*All of the Israelites who were over 20 years of age when Israel was brought out of Egypt died before entering the land of Canaan (Num. 14:29; 32:11), including Moses. Eleazar, the father of Phinehas, helped Joshua divide the land (Josh. 14:1; 19:51; cp. Num. 27:21), so that we know that he was under 20 years of age when he came out of Egypt. In the second month of the second year after coming out of Egypt (i. e., the 14th month after coming out of Egypt) he was consecrated to the priesthood (compare Num. 1:1 and Num. 3:4). The age for entering the priesthood is not expressly mentioned, but we see from these scriptures that Eleazar could not have been more than just 21, but likely 20, when he was consecrated, and 19 when he left Egypt. Levites had to be 25 years old (Num. 8:24) or 30 (Num. 4:3, 23, 30, 35, 47) depending on the nature of their work. This illustrates that we ought to know something of priesthood before we take up a line of service to the Lord.*

*These facts let us fix upon the upper age limit of Phinehas when he executed judgment (Num. 25; Psa. 106:30). Since his father was under 20 when he*

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3. The reader who desires to maintain separation from evil to the Lord may notice that whenever trouble arises, if a person acts as Phinehas he is accused of independency, and if he acts with some of his brethren he is accused of party-making!



came out of Egypt and Phinehas killed Zimri and Cozbi just before the end of the 40 years in the wilderness, he would have been under 45 and probably was a fair amount younger than that.

Of course, we want to think of the spiritual equivalency of these ages. And we ought not to think that because a man reaches 80 that he is qualified for anything spiritually merely on that account, though qualified by age for respect. A man might be a Christian for 50 years and be a babe in God's family. It reminds me of the story of a man at a job interview, who stated that he had 25 years experience. The interviewer pointed out to him that he had one year of experience repeated 25 times!

### 1 CHRON. 9:20: RULER OVER THE DOORKEEPERS

Perhaps in tracing the history of Phinehas it will be well to call attention to the fact that Phinehas was the ruler over the keepers of the threshold of the tent of meeting; and "Jehovah was with him" (1 Chron. 9:20). This was a trust involving solemn responsibility and discernment. He was a vigilant man regarding evil and thus well qualified to see that defilement was kept out.

### NUMBERS 31

The "mouth of brass," Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, is set at the head, it would appear, of a thousand of every tribe, to execute judgment on Midian (meaning "strife"). Every tribe must contribute its contingent. There must be neither indifference nor neutrality.

The priestly office and moral qualification of Phinehas were meant to give **character** to this judgment. The sin in Num. 25:1, 2 was no light thing in the eyes of God. He had ordered judgment against the guilty (Num. 25:3-5), and Phinehas' act saved Israel from the consumption by Jehovah (Num. 25:11). Now there was going to be judgment on the instrument of the evil, Midian, and this judgment was "Jehovah's vengeance" (Num. 31:3). The man who was (and was characterized by) "jealous with my jealousy" and "jealous for his God" (Num. 25:11-13) is called upon to give character to the execution of judgment upon the instruments of evil. He was a warrior priest and the execution of vengeance against the instruments of evil was characterized as priestly work. Do we understand this? It was to be done with discernment; it was to be done according to the sanctuary where the God of Israel dwelt!

The instruments of the sanctuary and the alarm trumpets were in the hand of the priest, Phinehas. It was a question of what was due to God. The fact that Midian was related to Israel no more sets aside the judgment than the idea that Levi must not act when relatives were involved. Levi DID rightly act.

And certainly if it is pleasing to God to execute judgment on relations when they attack God's glory, it is certainly right to admonish relations to act for God's glory when such an attack is before them!

All must be done in a priestly way, and we have now seen these things in connection with a priestly way of judging evil:

1. Levi did not let relations and natural influence cloud his judgment.
2. Phinehas discerned what was needed and acted with the jealousy of God, acceptably, without first consulting his brethren.
3. The instruments of the sanctuary and the alarm trumpet attend the execution of "Jehovah's vengeance."

In the execution of "Jehovah's vengeance" the flesh is ever ready to soften the blow and mitigate the seriousness of the evil. This is seen in Num. 31:15-16. We do not suppose Phinehas, was a party to this. It is inconsistent with all that we know of him. We feel fully persuaded that he vigorously sounded the alarm-trumpet and carried the instruments of the sanctuary, but his brethren did not rise to this. Often consciences cannot be aroused to fully meet evil with priestly judgment. This will call forth the rebuke of Moses (Num. 13: 14). It is an affront to Christ when we do not rise to priestly judgment! We so often have persons in admiration. We are partial and indifferent and plead a false "grace" and "love."

The killing of the males of Midian represents the judgment executed on what is active and objective. The sparing of the females represents that Israel had not rightly judged what is subjective -- their own state. Moses (Christ) demands that this be done, but in any case the active evil must be judged.

This whole matter of Midian had to do with Israel's state. It was not a war in Canaan, a war to possess the inheritance. It does not typify proper Christian experience, but the experience of Christians in a low state because they are in a low state. Thank God if He raises up priestly judgment in the midst of His people in such a state. It is of His mercy that we are not consumed. But when that low state is judged (Num. 31:17) as well as the active evil (Num. 31:8), and when the fire of judgment and the water of separation (Num. 31:23) are applied to all, God will grant a blessing to both those who carried out the judgment and those who, though not so active, yet were in fellowship with it (Num. 31:27).

(The following extract is entirely by H. Rossier)

Joshua's exhortation (22:5) again points clearly to the danger of a lowered Christianity. The real backbone of all the conduct of the Christian was lacking. Obedience to known commands, and brotherly love, are not sufficient to keep us for any length of time. Conduct, obedience, devotedness and service should flow from love, and unless it be in exercise our activity soon comes to an end. A child can make a hoop bowl with the first stroke of its stick, but it soon stops if the impetus be removed.

But this is not all. When, instead of living by faith, the Christian allows in any measure the principles of the world to govern his conduct, his position necessarily becomes a very complicated one, whereas nothing is more simple than the path of faith. Compare Abraham and Lot; how simple and even the life of the first; how full of inextricable complications that of the second. What a succession too of adventures the tormented existence of Jacob presents to us, in contrast with the simple life of God of Isaac his father. In like manner the two and a half tribes found themselves obliged to build sheepfolds for their cattle, and fenced cities for the protection of their families, to abandon their wives and children during many a long year, depriving them too of the blessing of witnessing the marvels displayed by Jehovah in favor of His people. And now, when the warrant goes forth for them to return to their homes, a fresh complication presents itself. The Jordan separates them from the rest of the tribes, and they are uneasy, fearing lest the link of communion between them and their brethren should not be firm enough to resist the force of the river. Their position exposes them to a division, and they see with disquietude that a moment may come when they will be treated as strangers by their brethren. The danger of their situation obliges them, so to speak, to set up a testimony by which they publicly proclaim that they serve Jehovah, just as on a previous occasion (chap. 1:16-18) their doubtful position had compelled them to make a loud profession. So they build a great altar to see to in the borders of Jordan within the limits of their territory. *Their own wisdom* leads them to set up this *testimony*. I might venture to call it a *confession of faith*, a thing in itself perhaps perfectly correct, as was the altar of Ed, and against which for the moment nothing could be said, but which had the appearance, nevertheless, of another gathering-point. This altar, intended as it was in their minds to unite the separated parts of Israel, might be created in opposition to that of the tabernacle of Shiloh. Their confession of faith might become a new center, and thus by discrediting it, replace the only true center of unity, Christ. This act, the result of a good intention, savored of MAN. Their contrivance for maintaining the unity gave them the appearance of denying it, and hence arose a new complication. They expose themselves to being misunderstood, to raising the other tribes against them, and to being exterminated.

Dear readers, this is but the history of Christendom from the first, only it

has sunk much lower than the two and a half tribes. It has collected for itself a vast number of confessions of faith more or less correct, but which are not Christ; and then awaking to the fact that the unity is well nigh disappearing, these confessions are made more and more elastic, until in place of the sought-for unity, open infidelity itself is introduced into the midst of the profession of Christianity.

But behind this altar of Ed, which a spirit of worldliness had necessitated, might lie a still graver source of evil. The very fact of its erection might open the door to *independence*. This was what the children of Israel dreaded, and we see them taking it exceedingly to heart. Independence is on the verge of creeping in, their oneness is threatened, and Phinehas, a pattern of zeal for Christ, is chosen to go with the princes and take note of what is transpiring by Jordan and deal with the two and a half tribes.

He brings before them three cases, closely connected, in which all Israel are responsible.

The first (v. 20) after the crossing of Jordan is the sin of *Achan*. He lusted after the things of the world, took of that which God had cursed, introduced it into the midst of the congregation of Israel, totally ignoring the *holiness* of God -- and what was the result? Divine judgment fell on all the people. Achan's sin was the lust of the world, the introduction of the accursed thing into the congregation. In the iniquity of *Peor* (v. 17) we find a still worse thing, although, alas! in spiritual matters the hearts of the Lord's people are so little concerned at it. It was characterized by corrupt alliance with the religious world, that is to say, the idolatrous world of those days, and the introduction of this worldly religion into the very midst of the congregation of Israel, again to the utter disregard of divine *holiness*.

Dear reader, is it otherwise with the church? Are not Achan and Peor the two principles of its existence today? Moreover, the Satanic artifice at Peor is still more terrible than the accursed thing at Achan. For Balaam, seeing that his efforts to separate Jehovah from His people failed, set another scheme on foot and attempted, this time successfully, to alienate the people and separate them from Jehovah. When it was a question of God's affection for His people, Balaam was forced to declare that Jehovah had not seen perverseness in Israel; when the faithfulness of the latter was tested Satan succeeds only too well in separating them from God: and thus "the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel."

The believer's second snare lies then in the thought that the worship of God can be associated with the religion of the world. It was on this occasion that the zeal of Phinehas first shewed itself; he took to heart the dishonor done to Jehovah and purified the congregation from this defilement.

And now, in the matter of the altar of Ed, this same zeal incited him to stand in the breach. The "senses exercised by reason of use to discern both good

and evil" cause him to discern the danger. He feels that this second principle, *independence*, would be the ruin of the testimony; that the setting up of another altar is nothing less than the sin of rebellion against Jehovah and against the congregation of Israel (vs.19). The holy zeal of Phinehas meets the danger, which in principle indeed existed, but the intentions of heart were right, and the evil was stayed.

In Christianity, however, the remedy has not been so successful. Evil has made steady progress, and what do we see today? Independence, the very principle of sin, the natural tendency of our hearts, publicly placarded as a virtue, nay, a duty. Forgetful of the fact that there is but one altar, one table, new ones are established every day on this principle, in rebellion against the Lord, as Phinehas said (vs.16), and in blind contempt, not merely of the unity of the people of God, but of the only center of unity, the Lord Jesus Himself.

May God keep us, dear readers, from these three principles which bring down His judgment on His house: worldliness, alliance with the religious world, and independence, the most subtle and dangerous of all, because being the principle of sin it lies at the root of all else.

Let us remember the character of Christ as brought out in the epistle to Philadelphia. He is the "Holy and the true," and this church is commended for the maintenance of this holy name, and for dependence on the word. Let us cherish nothing, individually or collectively, in our hearts, our thoughts, our conduct or our walk, which is not in harmony with these characters of Christ; and may we be found walking in holiness and dependence, without which there is no communion with Him.

*Meditations on the Book of Joshua*, pp. 132-137.

## Chapter 7.3

### *Defilement and Undermining*

#### *Judges 17-21: God Hates Neutrality*

**Curse Meroz . . . For they came not to the help of Jehovah (Judg. 5:23).**

**Who is there . . . that came not up with the congregation to Jehovah? . . . He shall certainly be put to death (Judg. 21:5).**

#### **THE ROOT OF THE TROUBLE**

*Jud. 17-21 does not follow chapter 16 in chronological order. These chapters are a moral appendix to the book of Judges that show us the reason for the condition of things found in Israel during the time of the Judges. Idolatry is at the root (17:1-5), coupled with leaving Bethlehem-Judah (meaning "house of bread and praise") to go to mount Ephraim (meaning "fruitfulness"). Typically, this is putting service before worship. Ephraim typifies service carried out in the energy of the flesh. He became "a cake not turned" -- half baked and onesided! The Levite (a servant -- a gift, typically) becomes the priest (one who draws near to God). When a gift does this it results in clerisy because he gets between persons and God. This Levite received "a call" to a larger sphere of service also (18:19-20)! Interesting as the many lessons in these chapters are, we must confine ourselves to the matter of unholiness.*

#### **WAS THERE FAULT ON BOTH SIDES?**

*The infamy of ch. 19 roused Israel as one man (ch. 20). The judgment of evil was a correct thought, is always correct, and is required by God. But something else is needed and it is most important. We must deeply realize what WE are in ourselves. Israel was twice beaten before this was learned. Israel was on the correct side of this matter. It will come to no good to be always talking of fault*

on both sides with the (perhaps unrealized) wicked object of undermining the judgment of evil. That is usually what is at the root even if we don't realize it. There was fault on Israel's part and God took care of it. There was **wickedness** on the part of Benjamin that had to be purged!

*Let us beware of dishonoring Him, and of that which is as bad if not worse -- assuming a neutral attitude. Judging the wrong ways of many who are contending for the right, instead of identifying ourselves with those on the Lord's side.*<sup>4</sup>

Israel was twice defeated. It resulted in weeping and fasting. More than this, burnt offerings and peace-offerings were offered (20:26). This signifies, in type, that we must abhor self and thoroughly learn that we are nothing. We are accepted in Christ and He is our peace. It is thorough self-judgment. Self-judgment is ever the way of blessing and practical sanctification. Let us take thorough cognizance of this mode of God's dealing with us. God works blessing through repentance and self-judgment. Coupled with this, there is a fresh sense of all the value of Christ to God and the seeing Him as our acceptance and peace.

#### **PHINEHAS AND THE EVERLASTING COVENANT**

And then Phinehas, that man of blessed memory, comes before the ark (20:21). As our minds turn to think of him and his stand for Jehovah's glory, we must digress to point out the grand millennial results of Phinehas' faithfulness. Remember the brazenness of Zimri, prince of Simeon (Num. 25:6-15), who brought Cozbi, daughter of a tribal head of Midian into the camp? And when Israel's face belonged in the dust (Num. 25:1-5) is when Phinehas judged it, in the sight of Moses and the people. Here was a man, Zimri, with brazenness, if there ever was one. But was nothing to be done because Israel was in a low state? Nothing of the kind! There was a man of God, a true priest of God, a warrior priest, who knew what to do. He pursued them and smote them with his javelin (Num. 25:7-8). Dare you say he was hard and relentless? Num. 25:10-14 reads:

*And Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, in that he was jealous with my jealousy among them, so that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy. Therefore say, Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace! And he shall have it, and his seed after him, the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was jealous for his God,*

*and made atonement for the children of Israel. And the name of the man of Israel that was slain, who was slain with the Midianitish woman, was Zimri, the son of Salu, the prince of a father's house of the Simeonites.*

Many years later Abiathar, progeny of Eli, progeny of Ithamar the uncle of Phinehas and brother of Eleazar, was thrust from the priesthood under Solomon. Zadok, progeny of Phinehas, was the priest under Solomon, who typifies the millennial reign of Christ as Prince of peace. Then in Ezek. 40-48, which describes the millennial temple and order of service, we learn that the sons of Zadok will have the priesthood. This answers to Num. 25:13. All is made good by, and in, Christ, and thus the covenant of the priesthood will be made good to Phinehas. Phinehas will be among those who live and reign with Christ 1000 years (Rev. 20:4,5). On earth his offspring will serve in the temple in Jerusalem.

Well, Phinehas' action prevented the consumption of Israel by a holy God (Num. 25:11). The presence of Cozbi with Zimri affected Israel in the eyes of God. It is a fact, and we cannot change it. It is best, and the only right way, to acknowledge the truth with a happy heart of obedience.

The position of those judged did not blunt the judgment of the javelin. Persons do not like such talk; they get frightened. They have names for it. But God has recorded these things for our learning (1 Cor. 10:11, 12) and our place is to bow to the truth instead of resisting it under false pleas of (perverted) love and grace. The station of Zimri, prince of Simeon, only made the act more heinous. The act of Phinehas saved Israel from judgment. Oh that we would learn the means to blessing! Self-judgment, confession, repentance and judgment of evil are those things through which God blesses us. And instead of criticizing what spiritually answers to Phinehas, let us recognize that it avoids even more chastening!

#### **SELF-JUDGMENT**

In Judges 20, to return; how blessed that such a man comes before the Lord at this point! What point? The time of self-judgment; the time of learning our own depravity and the mighty worth of Christ before God. Would it have been better to have a man who is full of the peace-at-any-price spirit take up the matter? No, just such an one as Phinehas is needed (James 3:17). Has he no heart? God knows, even if we do not. He says, "Shall I yet again go out to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother?" One has noticed how often those who speak much of love when judgment is needed, when they are crossed or offended, have great difficulty forgiving. This is not strange -- because self is really at the bottom of that false kind of "love." Do we not understand?

4. The Present Testimony 2:31.

*Sparing self in oneself easily leads to sparing self in others when not personally offended. It is a subtle form of making provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof (Rom. 13:14). It is merely acting from self. No wonder such are easily offended and find it difficult to forgive or put away a grudge. At any rate, Phinehas does not so speak to Benjamin, but to Jehovah. And now Jehovah acts through Israel's self-judgment and they purge out the defiling evil. And, finally, blessing results for Benjamin (Jud. 21).*

### NEUTRALITY JUDGED

*Let us notice one more matter before closing. In Judg. 21:4 we find Israel still in a state of self-judgment. And now the **neutrals** must be judged. Is Israel hard and relentless? Oh, our wretched, deceiving, incurable hearts to think such a thought! **GOD HATES NEUTRALITY; and in Judges 21 it is judged as in Judges 5:23 it is cursed!** Let us beware of that false "love and grace" which is a subtle form of palliation of evil and neutrality!*

*Another has said:*

*Will you then allow me yet to ask you another question? Why do I find you habitually assembling with that certain company of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, and not with certain others in your locality, who are (as you believe) equally the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, as you are? And this is the kind of answer I have received from some: "Oh, I believe from my little knowledge of scripture that those with whom I meet are more correct and according to its teaching than those others you name, and you know that if we have not all the spirituality and energy of the church in her early days, nor all her divinely taught doctrines and practice, at least we have a measure of them, and we must get the nearest we can to the perfection of scripture; that is why I meet with them, and hold what I do." I detect in this reply the refusal of neutrality as a principle -- a refusal actuated by divine instinct. And none will deny that there is also in it the confession of the church's departure from the truth.*

*Will you not be frightened if I deny (as some) your right of conscience thus to judge? Will you not shrink with horror if I assert (as some do) that though you are a Christian, with an open Bible in your hand, and the Holy Ghost as your teacher, neither you nor any other individual has ability to judge, and withdraw from what it condemns, but that you must go on with certain evils which its light has discovered to you, as existing and sanctioned in the professing church today, rather than take God's ground and God's distance from the evil? which place they as good as tell you it is impossible for you ever to reach! And though I have no intention to make such unholy assertions, yet I would humbly suggest that the word "neutrality," however attractive at first sight it may appear, means this, when traced to its*

*legitimate end. For neutrality does not assert that everything in the professing church is right and scriptural; to say this would be to destroy itself, for then, wherefore neutrality? Nor therefore does it totally deny your right to separate yourself from evil, but it sets up a stopping place for you in your path of separation, a place short of what God has set up. If it does not do this, it also destroys itself, and we are brought to ask again, "Wherefore neutrality?" We see then that it has a measure of the negative, but it has not reached the positive. It says, you may separate from evil, but only up to a certain point, at which point you must stop. It tells you that you may go a certain way outside the camp, provided you will be content without reaching Him -- with whom can be no neutrality -- who is to be found there (Heb. 13:13).*

*Now neutrality is not complete ignorance, there is a measure of light in it; but while it is certain that God bears with ignorance, and instructs it -- "The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way" (Psa. 25:9), so surely will that which has a measure of light, yet light not acted upon, be presently judged by Him.*

*Neutrality is the Zoar, the little city, to which many a righteous Lot has fled for refuge since the days of Genesis 19. It is not Sodom, it is far removed from that wicked city, but it is not the "mountain" (see Gen. 19:17), God's place of safety. It is a place reached without much difficulty, for it is in the plain, and no toilsome mountain ascent lies before those who would reach it. It is a principle getting widely spread in our day, which unmasked speaks but plainly when it says, "Let us make the best of both worlds." It is nevertheless (and so is every step from evil) a step in the right direction, but being a resting-place short of the goal, it becomes a snare, and will presently be the most subtle snare of the enemy, for it will be received far and wide. Neutrality is short of a living centre, the person of Christ, awaits His judgment, and receives it in Laodicea [Rev. 3:14-16]. "That servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes" (Luke 13). And it is Christendom that has taken the place of the servant.*

*The responsibility is individual and is ours. It is a solemn thing and brings no true rest, to stop short of God's place for the soul, but there is a yet more solemn consideration than this, for it is the verge of Laodiceanism which is repulsive to the Lord. Where are you, as one in testimony for the Lord amidst all the present confusion? Neutrality will be the reigning characteristic of the professing church on earth in its last stage (Rev. 3:15) when the Lord will reject it as no longer a witness for Him. We are rapidly advancing to it. Principles of neutrality will increase with frightful rapidity, and become more clearly adopted later, and they will be received by the mass*

as right principles to glory in (Rev. 3:17).<sup>5</sup>

### *Haggai 2:10-15: Defilement*

Haggai was a prophet in remnant times. He was found among those who had gone back to the city where God had placed His name (see Ezra). Though the national polity of Israel was gone, and though the people were declared "not my people" and were thus not publicly owned as God's people, the truth concerning defilement had not changed. How could it change? We learn from this that though ruin comes in, we are to act on principles which cannot be ruined. Besides which, the principle of separation from evil to the Lord is the first principle of holiness and walk with God; and thus transcends all dispensations.

Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: Ask now the priests [concerning] the law, saying, If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skin do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any food -- shall it become holy? And the priests answered and said, No. And Haggai said, If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, is it become unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean. Then answered Haggai and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith Jehovah, and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer there is unclean" (Hag. 2:11-14).

Jehovah says, what does the law say? The law says that holiness is **not** transmitted by association with holiness (v. 12). The law also says that uncleanness is transmitted by an unclean connection (v. 13).

The law discusses defilement by leprosy, running issues, death, etc. (Lev. 13; 22:4-9; 15:1-12; Num. 5:1; 9:6, 71; 19:11-16; etc.). Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy over and over again teach defilement by association, concerning the tabernacle, the camp and the individual. The summary is given in Hag. 2:10-13. The application to remnant times is made in Hag. 2:14.

The Old Testament teaching about ceremonial uncleanness by touching something unclean has a spiritual application. 2 Cor. 6:14-18 says "touch not what is unclean." What is unclean? Well, what does the passage say? Unbelievers, lawlessness, darkness (see Eph. 5:11; Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Cor. 5; 2 John 9,10), Belial, idols. We MUST bow to this altogether, because it is written! Legality will limit it as much as possible, for palliation of evil can go with legality. The truth is that what we have in 1 Cor. 5 is uncleanness. So is what we have in 2 John 9,10; Rev. 2:14-16; Gal. 5:9; Lev.13.

2 Cor. 6:17 says, "touch not [what is] unclean." What? A professed

Christian who holds leavened doctrine is not unclean? You say "touch" denotes believing it yourself? But that would be like an Israelite defiled by touching a dead body having to become dead in order to be defiled. The truth is that 2 Cor. 6:14-18 teaches defilement by association with those kinds of things mentioned -- and the list is no more exhaustive than is 1 Cor. 5, which omits murder and stealing, for example.

### *Eliashib: Undermining*

The book of Ezra tells us of the recovery of the altar (i.e., worship) at the one divinely appointed center where the national unity of Israel was expressed. The book of Nehemiah is concerned with the building of the wall (i.e., the protection of the purity of the recovered worship).

In the following remarks I shall speak of Eliashib in a typical way. Eliashib was among those who were back at the divine center, a man of influence and position amongst the people of God. He was high priest (Neh. 3:1). He was a builder among the builders. We note that many worked on the wall and many worked on the gates. These gates had locks and bars (Neh. 3:3, 7, 13, 14, 15; 7:3). It is noteworthy that Eliashib was a gospel man: he worked on the sheep-gate. But the scripture does not say that he put locks and bars on the gate. I think it quite improper to suppose that this gate was not to have locks and bars! The principle of separation from evil to the Lord must be applied to gospel work as to all else that engages us. He did not care for separation from evil to the Lord. That is the meaning of the absence of mention of the locks and bars on the sheep-gate. There were other priests associated with him in this.

That this is the meaning of the absence of mention of the locks and bars is consonant with the course of Eliashib. He didn't care for separation from evil to the Lord for his home either. Someone else repaired the wall (of separation) in front of the house of Eliashib (Neh. 3:20) and then another continued from his door (Neh. 3:21). Gospel work is commendable, but sad it is indeed when separation from evil to the Lord is not practiced. There is a moral link between the home and the work. When one does not practice separation from evil to the Lord, it affects all spheres in which one moves.

This is not the end of the story. Refusal to practice separation from evil to the Lord in his service and home had its results and we are permitted to see one of these in the life of Eliashib. Eliashib was a kinsman of Tobijah (Neh. 13:4,28), the enemy of the Lord. This means that a wrong marriage had been contracted in the family of Eliashib. Did this bow him in self-judgment before God? No, he rather went and made a place for Tobijah in divine matters (Neh. 13:4-9). I believe that this is morally linked with the refusal to practice separation from evil to the Lord as noted in his work and his home. It is sad indeed that a man engaged in the work of the gospel, or any other work, has no

5. *The Bible Treasury* 12:250-251.

concern, or little concern, for the holiness that becomes God's house. The lesson we learn from the notices of Eliashib is that the end result of such a course is the introduction of unholy things amongst God's people. It must necessarily be so.

Evil will enter when given the opportunity. We must understand that in accordance with the way things are, that the TENDENCY is ALWAYS toward the destruction of divine things. Separation from evil to the Lord must be practiced personally, in our families, in our service, and among the people of God.

## *The Typical Use of Leaven in the Old Testament*

Leaven is used in both the Old Testament and the New Testament as a figure for evil. The following article discusses its typical use in the Old Testament.

In the law, that teaching-shadow of good things to come, leaven was forbidden. "Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leaven" (Ex. 34:25). Again, "No meat-offering, which ye shall bring unto the Lord shall be made with leaven: for ye shall burn no leaven, nor any honey, in any offering of the Lord made by fire." Both these are shadows, of which the substance and reality is Christ Himself. In the blood of His sacrifice there was only to be found His own singular perfectness; even the very rendering it was the perfection of obedience; and, while it was a sacrifice of bloodshedding, it was, at the same time, an offering of a sweet-smelling savor unto God. And so of the meat-offering, the expression of that perfection of character in which God Himself could take complacency; it was singular; nothing could be added to it; nothing taken from it; whilst, even in "His own" (John 13), as to character, how much is wanting, how many flaws need to be removed.

But there are two remarkable exceptions in the law, in favor of leaven. Thus, we read: "And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the Sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave-offering; seven Sabbaths shall be complete; even unto the morrow after the seventh Sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat-offering unto the Lord. Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals; they shall be of fine flour; *they shall be baken with leaven*; they are the first-fruits unto the Lord" (Lev. 23:15-17). The body of this shadow, the reality of this feast, was manifested when the Day of Pentecost was fully come; and the Church was *formally* set up on earth by the coming down of the Holy Ghost from heaven. This is the real new meat-offering unto the Lord; even those who have the first-fruits of the Spirit", and are, thereby, "a kind of first-fruits of His creatures." Whilst our hearts rejoice in the knowledge of what the Church is as presented in Christ and through Christ "holy and unblamable, and unrebukable" before God in heaven; we know, also, full well what it actually is; but even as it is actually with the divine recognition of *leaven* in it; it is a new meat-offering unto the Lord. In the world, though it be sorely tempted and tried as it is, mourning over its own declension, ashamed and confounded and self-loathing, it is still the Church,

the gift of the Father to the Son; the object of the Son's perfect love, and inhabited by the Holy Ghost. It is regarded here, whilst the leaven is in it, with the same love as that with which it is regarded in heaven, where it is only seen in virtue of Christ's sacrifice in the unleavened perfectness of Christ. Soul-cheering truth in such a day as this, "brethren beloved of God"! It is the one object on the earth of present divine complacency, because it is "accepted in the beloved"; and, regarded in this light, "rebuke, discipline, and chastening," are only proofs of divine love.

The law of the peace-offering is remarkable. "This is the law of the sacrifice of peace-offerings, which he shall offer unto the Lord. If he offer it for a thanksgiving, then he shall offer with the sacrifice of thanksgiving *unleavened* cakes mingled with oil, and cakes mingled with oil, of fine flour, fried. Besides the cakes he shall offer for his offering *leavened* bread, with the sacrifice of thanksgiving of his peace-offerings" (Lev. 7:11,12). "Christ is our peace"; the joy of a believer is in Him, from Him, and through Him. In its highest aspect it is unaccompanied with leaven, "in whom, though now ye see Him not, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." But there are many occasions in which, although Christ be the source of our joy, natural susceptibilities may enter. Such might have been raised in the bosom of the Apostle, when he says to the Philippians, "But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again."

When the tear tickles down the cheek on witnessing any manifestation of the grace of God in converting a soul -- in answering prayer -- or sending an unexpected deliverance -- there is frequently found the leaven of the peace-offering. In many cases, too, when anguish of spirit has brought on bodily malady, and the soul is set at liberty through the reception of the truth, so that joy and thanksgiving take the place of mourning and depression, it can hardly be denied that the feelings of nature enter into the expression of gladness for deliverance. The source and cause of the joy is unleavened; it is Christ Himself; but there is that which accompanies the joy, partaking of the character of leaven, because natural feelings almost necessarily find their entrance. There is danger of only regarding natural emotion; and that danger has been so manifest in the downward road of the great professing body, that Christians, in avoiding that path, almost seem to forget that they have any peace-offerings. Even in the days of allowed shadows, the very shadow was perverted. The harlot can say (too faithful picture of the corrupt Church), "I have peace-offerings today; this day have I paid my vows. Therefore came I forth to meet thee" (Prov. 7:6-23). It is thus, too, in later days, that the prophet rebukes Israel: "Come to Bethel and transgress; at Gilgal multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes after three years; and offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving *with leaven*, and proclaim and publish the free offerings; *for this liketh* you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord God" (Amos 4:4,5). There lacked the liking for such ordinances in which the worshiper took no part himself, but which was either wholly rendered to God or the portion of the priest. But where the chief part belonged to the worshiper, there they liked to seem religious. And so, in the history of the Church, the great realities centered in the precious work and

offices of Christ. The food of the quickened soul, and the ground of its joy, have been passed over, to make way for a form of godliness into which nature can readily enter, such as in the christening and wedding. Here it liketh men well to be religious; the leaven so entirely predominates, that there is no remembrance of "the unleavened cakes with oil"; no spiritual thought whatever relative to Christ; so that persons who despise Christ's work, and hate the doctrines of grace, would be grievously scandalized if they were not married, or their children baptized, after a Christian fashion. The popular meaning of the word "holiday" most significantly proves that God's permission of leaven, in the peace-offerings, has been perverted by men into the denial of the doctrine of the cross of Christ.

But this abuse ought not to hinder real Christians from having their peace-offerings. The word still remains, "Rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." There is and there ought to be, a holy jealousy in our souls lest we only like "sacrifices with leaven"; but we have to watch against a morbid feeling arising from this very jealousy. It is "the oil of gladness" with which Jesus anoints his fellows. There is joy in the Holy Ghost, joy from above brought into the sorrow here below; and whilst one who loves the Lord Jesus Christ cannot but be sorrowful at witnessing the joy of the world, so soon to be turned into sorrow, he is still to be "as always rejoicing," whether he look *back* to the cross, *at* present circumstances, or *onward* to the future, or *upward* to God. The Holy Ghost glorifies Jesus, and taking of his things and showing them unto us, turns everything to profit. And if "fearfully and wonderfully made," we find it hard to distinguish between the flesh and the spirit, Jesus above can separate the precious from the vile, and we must not deprive ourselves of the sober, holy joy of the Holy Ghost, because we cannot exactly analyze our feelings. There was leaven in the peace offerings. The characteristic of real Christian joy would be equable cheerfulness, so distinct from mere temporary excitement often followed by depression. Hence the word, "Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be ye filled with the Spirit." <sup>6</sup>



***Appendix 1:***  
***An Open Communion Denies that***  
***Association with Evil Leavens***

**And every open vessel, which hath no covering bound upon it, shall be unclean** (Num. 19:15).

We have pointed out before that the idea of independency of assemblies is usually interlocked with the denial that evil associations defile (although the reverse is not necessarily true). Hence H. P. Barker wrote:

A plea often urged against the independence of assemblies is that discipline is thereby rendered impossible. We are reminded that what is bound on earth is bound in heaven, and therefore every act of "binding" by any assembly must be endorsed by every other. It is a sufficient reply to this to point out that no Exclusive meeting recognizes the discipline of every assembly, but only that of certain ones. They pick and choose as it suits them. Nor do they attach the same importance to "loosing" as they do to "binding." Collective forgiveness has no place in their system. Worldwide division is the result.

But to speak of being "gathered on the ground of the one Body," and to invoke this great truth in order to secure unity of discipline, is to go outside the bounds of Scripture.<sup>8</sup>

We may well wonder at such a crass setting aside of Matt. 18:18 and at such a begging of the question (characteristic of his paper). His "sufficient reply" is no reply whatsoever except that it exposes his rejection of Matt. 18:18. To him, one assembly may excommunicate a person with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 5:4), but although the action is bound in heaven, it is not binding on other assemblies! What this amounts to is that Corinth may excommunicate a wicked person but that action is not binding on Ephesus. If Ephesus received him, knowing he was excommunicated, this would not affect their position as gathered together to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ may, by the assembly, put a wicked person out at Corinth; but the same Lord Jesus Christ may, by the assembly, receive that wicked person at Ephesus. Is not this the true import of this unholy notion? Of course it is! It may be said that to express fellowship Ephesus "ought" not to receive an excommunicated person, but in this system there is not really any effect upon Ephesus. Such a

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7. *Why I Abandoned Exclusivism*, p. 17.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

procedure would not leaven the saints at Ephesus; and if persisted in, such a course would not change their status as gathered to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ according to this theory. The power of the false theory of independency of assemblies is seen in how it blinds the mind to this. This is the deplorable and unholy result of these views. Let the reader be aware that this view of the church, and this view of leaven, are connected; and must both be rejected. His alleged alternate of "confederacy" is a myth. Both independency and confederacy are false.

The grand truth is that the Lord Jesus Christ was in the midst of His gathered saints in Corinth, and everywhere else at that time, and caused those gathered together on the basis that THERE IS ONE BODY to acknowledge as bound what He Himself caused the assembly at Corinth to bind. The same is true of loosings (of which I have experienced practically the same number as with bindings, concerning collective forgiveness, thank God). To reject such action is to reject the action of Christ in the midst. It denies the assembly as gathered together to Christ and is the willfulness of independent flesh.

H. P. Barker's comment about Num. 19:15 is this:

To spend time alone with Him in prayer and worship, and to gather fresh thoughts of Him and His beloved Son by meditation on the Scriptures, is the way to get a covering for our souls that will protect us from contamination.

Rather, the way to cover the vessel to prohibit the entry of defilement is to take positive action in resisting defilement in accordance with scripture. The scriptural and prayerful application of the doctrine that evil associations defile is the covering. This the followers of Bethesda do not do. Let no one be duped by extenuations and palliations, and clever use of and definitions of "intercommunion" by the followers of independency and rejectors of the scripture teaching that evil associations defile.

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9. *Why I Abandoned Exclusivism*, p. 22.