

BIBLE BRIEFING

LEVITICUS

Chapters 14 & 15

“You’ve Got Issues”

Introduction

We have an expression to describe people with significant problems. We say they “have issues.” It’s a phrase that will take on a whole new meaning for you after we read Leviticus Chapter fifteen! The KJV uses the word “issues” twenty-four times. The NKJV translates it “discharges.” It refers to running, oozing sores that issue fluids from your flesh.

You’ve got issues! These issues of the flesh are typical of the “issues” of sin. We looked at leprosy last time. Leprosy was a terrible disease and was used to teach us tremendous spiritual lessons about sin. The filthiness and repulsiveness of sin are represented in leprosy. The leper who trudged down a hot, dusty, oriental road crying out, “*Unclean! Unclean!*” was a reminder to the Israelite that he, too, was a moral leper who needed supernatural cleansing.

There evidently were those lepers who were cured by the treatment of that day - whatever it was - and also there were those who were healed supernaturally. Chapter fourteen casts a ray of light and hope into the darkness of the leper’s plight. No physician’s prescription is given for the treatment and cure of leprosy. Rather, it shows the ceremonial cleansing which follows the cure.

The ritual is entirely symbolic. It prefigures what Jesus does in saving you from sin.

Leviticus 14:1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

Leviticus 14:2 “This shall be the law of the leper for the day of his cleansing: He shall be brought to the priest.

Leviticus 14:3 And the priest shall go out of the camp, and the priest shall examine *him*; and indeed, *if* the leprosy is healed in the leper,

The priest must go out to the leper. Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10). He came forth from heaven's glory to this sin-cursed earth where man was suffering from the leprosy of sin. He was called a friend of sinners. We spoke of Jesus as the Great Physician in our last study; He makes house calls on lepers!

God has declared that the heart of man is evil, and so it is God who must pronounce a man clean. He alone can cleanse. "... and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

Leviticus 14:4 then the priest shall command to take for him who is to be cleansed two living *and* clean birds, cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop.
Leviticus 14:5 And the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water.
Leviticus 14:6 As for the living bird, he shall take it, the cedar wood and the scarlet and the hyssop, and dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird *that was* killed over the running water.
Leviticus 14:7 And he shall sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be cleansed from the leprosy, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose in the open field.

The birds were most likely doves. One represents the death of Jesus; the other, His resurrection.

Birds don't belong in earthen vessels (jars of clay). They belong in the heavens above. Jesus belonged in heaven, but put Himself into the jar of human clay - a body of flesh and blood - in order to be the sacrifice required for the cleansing of our sins.

The running water pictures the ministry of God the Holy Spirit. Jesus (we're told) "*offered Himself through the eternal spirit*" (Hebrews 9:14).

Scarlet is a sign of faith. It reminds us of Rahab putting out a scarlet thread – a sign of her faith when Jericho was being overthrown by God.

The blood-stained bird turned loose is Jesus rising from the dead in His resurrection and ascending into heaven in victory over sin and death.

The blood also had to be applied to the leper. Without the shedding of blood there can be no remission of sins (Hebrews 9:22).

How did the leper know he was clean? The priest declared him clean! **We** are declared clean – declared righteous; justified by faith in Jesus Christ.

It was essential to have the two birds to carry out the typical meaning of resurrection. The live bird was dipped in the blood of the slain bird to identify him with the bird that was slain. Then the live bird was given its freedom, permitting it to fly away. Christ was delivered for our offenses and raised for our justification to give us the liberty to stand steadfast in Christ. **“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage”** (Galatians 5:1). Christ took our place, died our death, paid our penalty. He was raised for us. If He died for us down here, then we died in Him (2Corinthians 5:14–15) and we were raised in Him and we are in Him at the right hand of God (Ephesians 1:1–6).

Living water and blood meet in this ceremony. The apostle John was careful to note for us that when Christ died and the soldier pierced His side, blood and water came forth (John 19:34–35). He repeats the fact that Jesus Christ came by water and the blood in his epistle (1 John 5:6).

Leviticus 14:8 He who is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, shave off all his hair, and wash himself in water, that he may be clean. After that he shall come into the camp, and shall stay outside his tent seven days.

Leviticus 14:9 But on the seventh day he shall shave all the hair off his head and his beard and his eyebrows - all his hair he shall shave off. He shall wash his clothes and wash his body in water, and he shall be clean.

The sacrificial ceremony has been completed denoting that the leper has been cleansed and accepted. Now, before he enters back into society, this further ritual shows that his old life has ended for him and a new life opens before him. The clothes represent the habits of life, his life style. The shaving off of all the hair of his body emphasizes the radical and revolutionary change that is taking place in his life.

The seven days indicate a complete cycle of testing and inspection. He is to be tested before he returns to society. I think that sometimes

we let new converts give a testimony too soon. Believers are to be put up and watched for a while. There must be a newness of life.

At the end of this time, he washed himself thoroughly. The child of God needs to be continually washed. “Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you” (John 15:3). “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17).

Interesting – There are seven Churches in Revelation; at the end of which Jesus presents Himself a cleansed and spotless bride.

Eight is the number of new beginning. On the eighth day, the leper made a new beginning:

Leviticus 14:10 “And on the eighth day he shall take two male lambs without blemish, one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish, three-tenths *of an ephah* of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering, and one log of oil.

Leviticus 14:11 Then the priest who makes *him* clean shall present the man who is to be made clean, and those things, before the LORD, *at* the door of the tabernacle of meeting.

Leviticus 14:12 And the priest shall take one male lamb and offer it as a trespass offering, and the log of oil, and wave them as a wave offering before the LORD.

Leviticus 14:13 Then he shall kill the lamb in the place where he kills the sin offering and the burnt offering, in a holy place; for as the sin offering *is* the priest's, so *is* the trespass offering. It *is* most holy.

Leviticus 14:14 The priest shall take *some* of the blood of the trespass offering, and the priest shall put *it* on the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot.

Leviticus 14:15 And the priest shall take *some* of the log of oil, and pour *it* into the palm of his own left hand.

Leviticus 14:16 Then the priest shall dip his right finger in the oil that *is* in his left hand, and shall sprinkle some of the oil with his finger seven times before the LORD.

Leviticus 14:17 And of the rest of the oil in his hand, the priest shall put *some* on the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot, on the blood of the trespass offering.

Leviticus 14:18 The rest of the oil that *is* in the priest's hand he shall put on the head of him who is to be cleansed. So the priest shall make atonement for him before the LORD.

Leviticus 14:19 “Then the priest shall offer the sin offering, and make atonement for him who is to be cleansed from his uncleanness. Afterward he shall kill the burnt offering.

Leviticus 14:20 And the priest shall offer the burnt offering and the grain offering on the altar. So the priest shall make atonement for him, and he shall be clean.

Verses eleven through twenty are one sentence in Hebrew!
Interesting: Part of this ritual is exactly the same as the ordination ceremony for the priest. The blood put upon the tip of his right ear indicates that he can now hear the voice of the Son of God saying, "Thy faith hath made thee whole." The blood on the right thumb indicates that with clean hands he can now serve God. The blood on his right toe indicates that the cleansed leper can now walk in the way of God. The oil poured on his head indicates he is now totally dedicated to God. All these offerings speak of Christ, through whom the cleansed leper is acceptable to God.

Verses 21–32 explain the offering he could bring if he were poor. It would be logical to think that a person who had been a leper would not be able to afford an elaborate ritual. Again, the provision of God for the poor is marvelous. No one is shut out because of poverty. Turtledoves or pigeons could be substituted in the offering.

Leviticus 14:21 "But if he *is* poor and cannot afford it, then he shall take one male lamb as a trespass offering to be waved, to make atonement for him, one-tenth of an *ephah* of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering, a log of oil,

Leviticus 14:22 and two turtledoves or two young pigeons, such as he is able to afford: one shall be a sin offering and the other a burnt offering.

Leviticus 14:23 He shall bring them to the priest on the eighth day for his cleansing, to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, before the LORD.

Leviticus 14:24 And the priest shall take the lamb of the trespass offering and the log of oil, and the priest shall wave them as a wave offering before the LORD.

Leviticus 14:25 Then he shall kill the lamb of the trespass offering, and the priest shall take *some* of the blood of the trespass offering and put *it* on the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot.

Leviticus 14:26 And the priest shall pour some of the oil into the palm of his own left hand.

Leviticus 14:27 Then the priest shall sprinkle with his right finger *some* of the oil that *is* in his left hand seven times before the LORD.

Leviticus 14:28 And the priest shall put *some* of the oil that *is* in his hand on the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed, on the thumb of the right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot, on the place of the blood of the trespass offering.

Leviticus 14:29 The rest of the oil that *is* in the priest's hand he shall put on the head of him who is to be cleansed, to make atonement for him before the LORD.

Leviticus 14:30 And he shall offer one of the turtledoves or young pigeons, such as he can afford -

Leviticus 14:31 such as he is able to afford, the one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering, with the grain offering. So the priest shall make atonement for him who is to be cleansed before the LORD.

Leviticus 14:32 This *is* the law *for one* who had a leprous sore, who cannot afford the usual cleansing.”

Next is something we here in the valley can readily identify with: ***Houses that had leprosy!*** It is hard to know exactly what this meant. Perhaps it was some mold, fungus growth, or dry rot which entered into the fabric of the house. The priest would examine the house for greenish or reddish streaks and would examine it again in seven days to see if the plague were spreading.

The picture is that we live in an old house down here, which is our body. And we live in this world which is also contaminated by sin. The old house we live in is filled with leprosy.

There are three stages in the ceremonial cleansing of the house. First, the house was emptied of the furniture and occupants. The priest inspected it and then shut it up for seven days before making another inspection. If he then found a trace of leprosy, he removed the plaster from the infected part and took away the diseased stones.

Leviticus 14:33 And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying:

Leviticus 14:34 “When you have come into the land of Canaan, which I give you as a possession, and I put the leprous plague in a house in the land of your possession,

Leviticus 14:35 and he who owns the house comes and tells the priest, saying, ‘It seems to me that *there is* some plague in the house,’

Leviticus 14:36 then the priest shall command that they empty the house, before the priest goes *into it* to examine the plague, that all that *is* in the house may not be made unclean; and afterward the priest shall go in to examine the house.

Leviticus 14:36 then the priest shall command that they empty the house, before the priest goes *into it* to examine the plague, that all that *is* in the house may not be made unclean; and afterward the priest shall go in to examine the house.

Leviticus 14:37 And he shall examine the plague; and indeed *if* the plague *is* on the walls of the house with ingrained streaks, greenish or reddish, which appear to be deep in the wall,

Leviticus 14:38 then the priest shall go out of the house, to the door of the house, and shut up the house seven days.

Leviticus 14:39 And the priest shall come again on the seventh day and look; and indeed *if* the plague has spread on the walls of the house,

Leviticus 14:40 then the priest shall command that they take away the stones in which *is* the plague, and they shall cast them into an unclean place outside the city.

Leviticus 14:41 And he shall cause the house to be scraped inside, all around, and the dust that they scrape off they shall pour out in an unclean place outside the city.

Leviticus 14:42 Then they shall take other stones and put *them* in the place of *those* stones, and he shall take other mortar and plaster the house.

Leviticus 14:43 “Now if the plague comes back and breaks out in the house, after he has taken away the stones, after he has scraped the house, and after it is plastered,

Leviticus 14:44 then the priest shall come and look; and indeed *if* the plague has spread in the house, it *is* an active leprosy in the house. It *is* unclean.

Leviticus 14:45 And he shall break down the house, its stones, its timber, and all the plaster of the house, and he shall carry *them* outside the city to an unclean place.

Leviticus 14:46 Moreover he who goes into the house at all while it is shut up shall be unclean until evening.

Leviticus 14:47 And he who lies down in the house shall wash his clothes, and he who eats in the house shall wash his clothes.

There will be a time when God will demolish this earth that is tainted with leprosy. He is going to make it clean. There will be a new heaven and a new earth and they will be free from sin.

The same ritual of the two birds is followed here (verses 48-53) as in the case of the ceremonial cleansing of the leper:

Leviticus 14:48 “But if the priest comes in and examines *it*, and indeed the plague has not spread in the house after the house was plastered, then the priest shall pronounce the house clean, because the plague is healed.

Leviticus 14:49 And he shall take, to cleanse the house, two birds, cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop.

Leviticus 14:50 Then he shall kill one of the birds in an earthen vessel over running water;

Leviticus 14:51 and he shall take the cedar wood, the hyssop, the scarlet, and the living bird, and dip them in the blood of the slain bird and in the running water, and sprinkle the house seven times.

Leviticus 14:52 And he shall cleanse the house with the blood of the bird and the running water and the living bird, with the cedar wood, the hyssop, and the scarlet.

Leviticus 14:53 Then he shall let the living bird loose outside the city in the open field, and make atonement for the house, and it shall be clean.

The chapter concludes:

Leviticus 14:54 “This *is* the law for any leprous sore and scale,
Leviticus 14:55 for the leprosy of a garment and of a house,
Leviticus 14:56 for a swelling and a scab and a bright spot,
Leviticus 14:57 to teach when *it is* unclean and when *it is* clean. This *is* the law of leprosy.”

This seems to be an emphatic enforcement of the law concerning the cleansing of the leprosy. Notice that the primary purpose of the ritual was to teach. “To teach when it is unclean, and when it is clean.”

This is a great spiritual lesson and it is meant to teach us. You and I have spiritual leprosy. If either you or I went to heaven without Jesus Christ, without trusting Him, we would cry out, “*Unclean, unclean,*” and we would be cast out. In Christ, we are accepted in the Beloved!

We have had two chapters on this matter of leprosy, and that has been bad enough, but it is going to get worse in the next chapter. We are hearing a great deal about the pollution of our ecology in these days but there is a pollution of our souls also, and of our minds - of our entire beings.

In Chapter fifteen the key word is “*issue,*” used twenty-four times. It refers to a discharge or running sore from the body. These running sores are highly contagious and infectious and they reveal to us the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

Leprosy was a disease that could not be kept a secret for long. It worked slowly, but it would finally break out. In contrast, many running issues could be kept secret for a lifetime. These represent the thought life of man as well as the overt act of sin. Sins of solitude and secrecy.

J. Vernon McGee:

“Human nature is an overflowing cesspool and a sewer of uncleanness. Not only is human nature defiled, but it is defiling; not only is it corrupt, but it is corrupting. This chapter holds up the mirror to human nature, and after one look, no flesh can glory in His sight.”

J.A. Seiss:

“A man may be truly penitent. He may be a true believer... The empire of sin may be dethroned in his heart. And yet, every now and then, he will find the disgusting uncleanness of sin quietly and unintentionally escaping from him, contaminating himself and those who come in contact with him, or touch what he has touched. His whole nature is yet so full of remaining corruption, that the least agitation causes it to trickle over.”

Leviticus 15:1 And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying,
Leviticus 15:2 “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When any man has a discharge from his body, his discharge *is* unclean.
Leviticus 15:3 And this shall be his uncleanness in regard to his discharge - whether his body runs with his discharge, or his body is stopped up by his discharge, it *is* his uncleanness.

Some of these discharges are normal; some are abnormal. Personal hygiene and God’s concern for women is part of this; but mostly it is figurative. All of us have sins that occasionally “issue” to defile us and others!

Abnormal male discharges:

Leviticus 15:1 And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying,
Leviticus 15:2 “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When any man has a discharge from his body, his discharge *is* unclean.
Leviticus 15:3 And this shall be his uncleanness in regard to his discharge— whether his body runs with his discharge, or his body is stopped up by his discharge, it *is* his uncleanness.
Leviticus 15:4 Every bed is unclean on which he who has the discharge lies, and everything on which he sits shall be unclean.
Leviticus 15:5 And whoever touches his bed shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening.
Leviticus 15:6 He who sits on anything on which he who has the discharge sat shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening.
Leviticus 15:7 And he who touches the body of him who has the discharge shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening.

This involved anything from diarrhea to discharges from a sexually transmitted disease; bleeding hemorrhoids; urinary tract infections; anything unusual. Things touched needed cleaning or destroying. The possibility of infection was taken seriously.

Leviticus 15:8 If he who has the discharge spits on him who is clean, then he shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening.
Leviticus 15:9 Any saddle on which he who has the discharge rides shall be unclean.

Leviticus 15:10 Whoever touches anything that was under him shall be unclean until evening. He who carries *any of* those things shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening.

Leviticus 15:11 And whomever the one who has the discharge touches, and has not rinsed his hands in water, he shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening.

Leviticus 15:12 The vessel of earth that he who has the discharge touches shall be broken, and every vessel of wood shall be rinsed in water.

The former regulations had to do with conduct in the home and now this pertains to contact on the street or in a public place. Some of this we might call accidental contact.

We find this today. A believer often finds himself in a public place or on the street and some vile, dirty-minded person opens his mouth and spews out undiluted profanity and unspeakable blasphemy. This is contaminating. A believer may feel dirty after leaving such a group, and he is dirty. **He needs to wash himself.** That is the reason it is so very important for us to stay in the Word of God. "*Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word*" (Ps. 119:9). *We get dirty in this life!*

Leviticus 15:13 'And when he who has a discharge is cleansed of his discharge, then he shall count for himself seven days for his cleansing, wash his clothes, and bathe his body in running water; then he shall be clean.

Leviticus 15:14 On the eighth day he shall take for himself two turtledoves or two young pigeons, and come before the LORD, to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and give them to the priest.

Leviticus 15:15 Then the priest shall offer them, the one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering. So the priest shall make atonement for him before the LORD because of his discharge.

Here, again, we have both the water and the blood introduced. The blood removes the guilt of sin and the water removes the stain of sin.

The Holy Spirit must apply the sacrifice of Christ to those secret sins which are in our lives today. We need to confess and be cleansed of our secret sins. "*I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin*" (Psalm 32:5). "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*" (1 John 1:9).

Normal male discharges:

Leviticus 15:16 'If any man has an emission of semen, then he shall wash all his body in water, and be unclean until evening.

Leviticus 15:17 And any garment and any leather on which there is semen, it shall be washed with water, and be unclean until evening.

Leviticus 15:18 Also, when a woman lies with a man, and *there is* an emission of semen, they shall bathe in water, and be unclean until evening.

There is no inference that marital intercourse is wrong or sinful. However, it does involve the discharge of bodily fluids; and these make you ritually or ceremonially unclean to offer sacrifice. Perhaps the Lord is letting us know that even in the beautiful expression of marital love there is opportunity for our sin nature to go to work and defile it. Even your sexuality involves pleasing God and not just yourself.

Normal female discharges, specifically her menstrual cycle:

Leviticus 15:19 'If a woman has a discharge, *and* the discharge from her body is blood, she shall be set apart seven days; and whoever touches her shall be unclean until evening.

Leviticus 15:20 Everything that she lies on during her impurity shall be unclean; also everything that she sits on shall be unclean.

Leviticus 15:21 Whoever touches her bed shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening.

Leviticus 15:22 And whoever touches anything that she sat on shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening.

Leviticus 15:23 If *anything* is on *her* bed or on anything on which she sits, when he touches it, he shall be unclean until evening.

Leviticus 15:24 And if any man lies with her at all, so that her impurity is on him, he shall be unclean seven days; and every bed on which he lies shall be unclean.

This seems unusually severe and I have no real explanation – except to remind you that these regulations are more figurative than hygienic. Women are reminded of the curse pronounced upon Eve in the Garden of Eden.

Abnormal female discharge of blood:

Leviticus 15:25 'If a woman has a discharge of blood for many days, other than at the time of her *customary* impurity, or if it runs beyond her *usual time of*

impurity, all the days of her unclean discharge shall be as the days of her *customary* impurity. She *shall be* unclean.

Leviticus 15:26 Every bed on which she lies all the days of her discharge shall be to her as the bed of her impurity; and whatever she sits on shall be unclean, as the uncleanness of her impurity.

Leviticus 15:27 Whoever touches those things shall be unclean; he shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening.

Leviticus 15:28 'But if she is cleansed of her discharge, then she shall count for herself seven days, and after that she shall be clean.

Leviticus 15:29 And on the eighth day she shall take for herself two turtledoves or two young pigeons, and bring them to the priest, to the door of the tabernacle of meeting.

This gives us some insight into the plight of the woman with the issue of blood who came to Christ for healing (Luke 8:43–48). The Law had shut her out from contact with others, yet she touched Jesus. The Law had shut her out from the temple and from the public worship of God. The grace of our Lord healed her and restored her, and He commended her faith. Jesus is the fountain for the cleansing of the uncleanness of our hearts.

Conclusion

We belong to God and we are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Hidden sin is not a trivial matter to God. Neither does He ignore the secret sins of believers. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1Corinthians 3:16–17).

Leviticus 15:31 'Thus you shall separate the children of Israel from their uncleanness, lest they die in their uncleanness when they defile My tabernacle that *is* among them.

Leviticus 15:32 This *is* the law for one who has a discharge, and *for him* who emits semen and is unclean thereby,

Leviticus 15:33 and for her who is indisposed because of her *customary* impurity, and for one who has a discharge, either man or woman, and for him who lies with her who is unclean."

"When they defile my tabernacle": **None** of these discharges would make a man or a woman "sinful," only ceremonially unclean.

But why? Two reasons could be suggested:

1. Beyond whatever hygienic reasons, discharges of semen and menstruation are included, not because there is anything inherently wrong with them, but the two are connected with symbols of life and redemption, **blood** and **seed**.
2. There was a separation between sex and the worship of God; this might seem obvious, but in the ancient world, it was common to worship the gods by having sex with temple prostitutes.

In Mark 7:1-9 Jesus criticized the Pharisees for their overemphasis on ceremonial cleanliness and their lack of regard for internal cleanliness. These laws were meant to have both hygienic reasons and spiritual applications; they were never meant to be the way to be right with God.

We don't live under these laws. But they teach us there should be **no** area of our lives where God is excluded.