

“THE ONE CLEANSING SACRIFICE”

Ephesians 4:30-5:2

Does God need a pandemic to “get our attention”? To show us the comforting realities of Scripture?

I. WHAT IN THE BIBLE IS CLOSEST TO COVID-19?

A. It is Not “Pestilence”

Ps 91:4-6; Jer 14:12 (cf. Deut 32:24). Was the bubonic plague of the 14th century a Biblical pestilence?

B. It is More Like Large Scale Leprosy

Lev 13-14. Hebrew *TSARA’ATH*. Not just “Hansen’s disease” (Luke 17). Patience necessary while the examination periods (quarantines) run their courses. Similarities: 1) Calls for careful, even scientific, investigation. 2) If discovered that his disease is infectious, he is treated with compassion and concern. 3) Person is unclean while his disorder continues.

II. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE “UNCLEAN”?

A. Clean versus Unclean: Normal versus Non-Normal

Not categories of righteousness versus sin or hygiene. Back to Noah (Gen 7:2; 8:29). Lev 12; 21:17ff. Disorder and chaos. What we are living through now is “unclean.” Doesn’t mean we have done something wrong. Dirt is matter out of place. (Leprosy does not denote sin).

B. Sin is Pretending the Non-Normal is Normal

III. CHRIST’S SACRIFICE BOTH CLEANSSES AND RESTORES

A. The Healed Person is Fully Restored on the Eighth Day

Two birds; four kinds of sacrifices; full restoration on the 8th day. All flows from the resurrection! Law can only diagnose and prescribe. Cannot heal. Gospel removes both guilt and pollution.

B. The Cleansing Sacrifice is Christ the High Priest

1) The bird that was killed and the one that remained alive and flew away illustrate the One who was put to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification (Rom 4:25).

2) The smearing of blood on the former leper was a token of cleansing through a life that had been offered up vicariously.

3) The washing and shaving of the body pointed to a fresh beginning for the former leper in the society of ceremonially clean people.

4) The four sacrifices combined point to the finished work of Christ in all its aspects – the guilt offering overcomes the misuse of holy things; the sin offering addresses the need for purification; the burnt offering obtains divine favor; and the grain offering expresses gratitude.

5) The person cannot cleanse himself; can only accept what God has already provided. Trusts the mercy of God which provided the means; allows the blood and oil to be placed on his body.

Christ the Great High Priest is why disorders like COVID-19 have not overtaken the world already. His sacrifice has kept away the pestilence that a sinful world like ours deserves. Aaron’s censer filled with fire was the only thing that stopped the plague (Num 16:46-48). Likewise, Jesus interposing between a holy God and a fallen, unholy, and unclean world is what keeps the plague away, and a measure of order going (covenant with Noah). We do not yet see everything in subjection to Him, but He will visibly rule and reign as the Resurrected Lord, the author of a new world order, a new heaven and earth, in which righteousness reigns, where sin and death are no more; where pain, sorrow, tears forgotten; the eternal 8th day of restoration.

Conclusion