

Clean and Unclean

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Preacher: Cory Brock

[0 : 0 0] I'm gonna pray and then we'll dig into Leviticus for a little while and then we'll gather in the small groups as normal and we'll pray. I've got some big things to pray about tonight that are going on in the life of the world so we'll do that in just a little while. Let's pray. Lord we thank you so much for gathering us and we ask now that in your holy presence we would know the presence of the Holy Spirit particularly to illumine this word to us that we would receive such a strange and different context the the legal code of cleanliness laws in your Levitical order Lord would you help us to understand and so we ask for that it's so different than our modern context so Lord be near unto us now as we receive this we recognize this to be your holy word and so we want to hear it oh God and we pray this in Jesus name amen. Alright so we're looking at Leviticus we've been is our fourth time together to do that so there's a handout Leviticus 11 to 15 is what we're gonna think about together for a little while and if you've not been around for this that's okay so so far the big thing we've said is that when you read Leviticus the question is the reality is to see is that we were all made for God's presence and there's a hunger for that in all every single one of us tonight even if we don't feel it at the moment so you might come tonight not feeling hunger and thirst for the living presence of God in your life but that is exactly the thing you were made for and that's what Leviticus is actually all about and so the question of

Leviticus is how can people who were made for the living presence of God enter into that presence when they have unclean lips as Isaiah puts it sinners people of dust like we are how can we enter onto the holy mountain of God's presence that's the question of Leviticus and that's what we've been talking about so far and what we have in Leviticus is basically just God's gracious yes sinners can enter and so sometimes we come to a book like Leviticus and think this is the law and we're gonna get to the grace later but actually Leviticus is unbelievably gracious from top to bottom can a sinner enter into God's presence Leviticus says yes by way of sacrifice we saw already by way of priesthood so you need both so far to enter into God's holy presence and that's what this book of it is about we said the past couple of times that the tabernacle in the book of Leviticus is a representation of the Garden of Eden that's a big claim that we're making and even more than that the tabernacle that

God requires Moses and the priest to build is a representation of the cosmos itself and so in the Garden of Eden the first temple of God God condescended in order to be with us to dwell in our presence and we in his presence and now in Leviticus we have this what the theologians will call a recapitulation of that event mimicked in the way the temple is structured and designed the tabernacle and so just like Adam and Eve exited out of the east gate of the Garden of Eden and Cain was sent further east east of Eden so the tabernacle faces east and you approach the tabernacle the temple the altar by the east gate it's a reentry into the Garden of Eden is the picture we're being given and the further you get into the temple the tabernacle the holy of holies the closer you get to the center of the garden the tree of life so the temple furniture looks like trees flowers the temple is decorated in that way the tabernacle is and so this is all about getting in return going in return from our exile back to the Garden of Eden that's the big picture here now last time we ended at Leviticus 10 and in Leviticus 10 at the end of

Leviticus 9 Moses is able for the first time to enter the tabernacle he had not been able to in Leviticus 1 but by way of sacrifice and priestly ordination he's able to enter the high priest in Moses are and then the very next story is the story of Nadab and Abihu who we said very probably it doesn't tell us for sure entered into the holy of holies where they were not allowed they brought what's called strange fire incense from the altar outside and they were struck dead and so as soon as the temple the tabernacle gets consecrated and we are as human beings able to enter it it's immediately in the next story defiled and so we said that just like Genesis 1 and 2 comes along and there's the Garden Temple then Genesis 3 is the very next story the fall story Leviticus 1 to 9 is like Genesis 1 and 2 new creation new cosmos God's presence condescending in this one place and yet in Leviticus 10 is the fall story so it's already defiled it's already corrupted it lasted about a day and it's broken again that's the that's the image of Leviticus 10 and so you pick up in Leviticus 11 with this whole series Leviticus 11 to 15 of what's clean and unclean this whole code of animals people that are clean and unclean and it begins with Nadab and

Abihu why because when Nadab and Abihu died in the holy of holies their dead corpses today's on the cleanliness and unclean codes is a little a little heavy so their dead corpses were laying inside the tabernacle and a dead body is defiling to the to the presence of God the tabernacle so immediately you have the first unclean event take place Nadab and Abihu's bodies so the priests the high priestess to go in and get those bodies out and then from Leviticus 11 to 16 next time we'll see this you have this ritual called the day of atonement how in the world are you going to get a temple that's been filled with dead corpses clean again and that's what the day of atonement is all about Leviticus 16 but before we get to that we've got okay people of Israel by the way here are all the other ways you can defile the temple that's what Leviticus 11 to 15 is doing all right so what I want to do briefly is three quick things one what are these cleanliness laws saying just try to get a basic sense of it quickly so

[6 : 53] I've printed a majority I've just printed some quotes for you from the text to kind of get some clarity on that and then let's just I'm gonna give you three to five kind of summary statements what do the cleanliness laws mean just the most basic way you can take it with you and hopefully use it in your own Bible reading and then lastly why does it matter to us in the light of Christ very briefly so let's let's think about that all right what are these cleanliness cleanliness laws saying the first in chapter 11 is about food so you'll see that on your handout and the first thing we're told is the Lord speaks to Moses and Aaron and he says to them speak to the people of Israel and say this there these are the living things that you may eat among the animals and what is it whatever parts the hoof and choose the cudd you may eat so everything else largely is unclean all right so what animals let me see if we can get some audience participation what what animals part the hoof and chew the cudd cows yeah cows that's a big one sheep yep yep I had to look this up all the different options and the ancient areas that this could fit gazelles dear no not pigs no they don't they don't fit because they don't chew the cudd row book wild goats I don't even know what this is the ibex anybody ibex okay form of good excellent thank you for that antelopes mountain sheep these are the types of things we're talking about then in verse 9 it's look how it's divided land water air this follows Genesis 1 in reverse okay water these you may eat what can you eat from the waters well the only thing you can eat from the waters is that which has both fins and scales and everything else is unclean okay and then in the air it doesn't list the birds of the air that you can eat it lists all the ones you can't eat and when you read it it's things like the eagle the vulture different types of vultures falcons so make a note just let me ask you for I'll mention something about this in just a minute but what kind of animals are these just think about that for a second and capture especially the birds I think and then at the very end of the food laws at the end of the food laws

God says now instead of eating unclean food be holy as I am holy and then he says because I brought you out of the land of Egypt all right so he gives you a reason for the food laws at the end be holy as I'm holy because I brought you out of Egypt we'll come back to that when in the kind of conclusion section so just think about it for now then it comes to chapter 12 and chapter 15 chapter 12 is all about women chapter 15 is all about men now to prevent making everybody here incredibly uncomfortable for a little while I won't say any detail at all about this though in the detail there is a whole lot of symbol and meaning that's very important but 12 to if a woman conceives and bears a male child then she shall be unclean seven days and at the time of her menstruation she shall be unclean if she has a male child she shall be unclean sorry female child she shall be unclean for 14 days unless that's an interesting why okay we'll come back to that why is it that a woman would be unclean giving birth to a baby boy for seven but a girl for 14 that's an interesting question we'll come back I'll provide an answer for that in a second that's it Jean you got it 15 one when any man has a discharge from his body his discharge is unclean you can read the rest of chapter 15 to understand all the conditions of that and then we see in verse chapter 15 verse 29 what do you do in these situations you take two turtle doves or two pigeons this is what Mary the mother of Christ does in the gospel so we're told in the gospel that she couldn't afford the highest level of this particular sacrifice so she had to take two pigeons and she brought and she brings them to the priest to the entrance of the tent of meeting and the priest shall use one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt the word burnt there remember if you were with us week one is a sentient offering so the sentient offering is the offering that says you are reconciled to the presence of the Lord that's what it says and so in the act of giving birth you have to go through the process of atonement and offering to reenter the camp or the presence of God amongst the people of

God all right so that that's works for not only women but also men and in all of these situations what's going on it's very clear if you look at chapter 12 and 15 together that it's the issue of losing bodily fluids in a way that's not the everyday norms okay so that could be that you have a cut that won't stop bleeding or other types of losing loss of body bodily fluids and later on in the book of Leviticus we we are told in the blood there is life all right so hold on to that we'll come back to that in just a second of what what that means and then lastly chapter 13 and 14 is all about the uncleanness and the defilement around visible diseases so leprosy is the word that gets used but when you read it really carefully one of the things you realize is it's not just about leprosy in the sense that we mean it it literally means any visible skin condition that is infectious so it's very clear when you read it that it's talking about infections so you could have Hansen's disease leprosy where you have what looks like infections all over your body boils things like that but it's talking about not just bumps and bruises but actually any spot that's become infected is clearly the white and the red is what is quite often referenced you can see that in chapter 13 the text there and then even further in that chapter it talks about how if there is white red black green these different types of colors are mentioned not all of those can't remember exactly which ones in a garment so it references leprosy in a garment leprosy on your walls what is that mold yeah it's saying mold so if you go to your house and it has leprosy infection of the wall infection of the garment it says first you have to remove the stones where the infection is found meaning the spots in your wall and then if it doesn't stop you have to tear the house down right so it's talking about mold right so you see these conditions now in all of these the pouring out of blood and from a human person in some way mold on your walls visible infections on the body or these certain types of animals did anybody gather okay you can eat a cow you can eat you can eat an antelope but what kind of animals can you not eat scavengers what else predators yeah so predatorial animals are disallowed scavenging animals are disallowed right any type of animal that's associated with what what types of things are scavengers cave-dwelling animals predators associated with death and what is bleeding associated with death and what is visible infection associated with decay and death right and so what we have here is that in all these instances of the cleanliness code the cleanliness code is not suggesting that someone who gives birth is a sinner for it no not at all and it's not suggesting that somebody who contracts leprosy is a sinner for that not at all and it's not saying that an amphibian that lives in a cave is a particularly sinful type of animal not at all the issue is not sin the issue is the symbolic reality of the curse upon the world that results in visible defilement or I should say contamination that leads to symbolic defilement all right so in all these cases you can see on the back of your sheet what does it all mean and number one the meaning of this is this that in

every one of these instances and in the whole tour of there's this spectrum that takes place in symbols and the spectrum goes from the order of life life and order life and organization right what's the difference in a garden in the wilderness you can have the same exact plants right in the wilderness in the garden but the difference is in the in the garden they're organized so gardens are just organized wildernesses which makes them not wildernesses anymore there's life in order life in order are signs of the presence of God and then there's this spectrum that goes all the way to the other end of death and chaos life away from the presence of the Lord and so in the Old Testament the wilderness is the visible sign in terms of place of death and chaos right so if you're at the mountain of God Sinai the Garden of Eden you're near the presence of God you're near life in your near order but if you worship an idol where do you go you go to the wilderness for 40 years you wonder where's the wilderness the wilderness is the land of death it's the land of chaos it's the land of danger another symbol that plays this out in the Old Testament is seas right so the land is the place of life the seas are the place of death quite often symbolically in the Old Testament and so you've got this playing out exactly in the cleanliness and defilement codes here the unclean is both symbolic and simultaneously a real expression of the curse on creation right so it's never sinful for a woman to give birth but it is a sign of the curse at the same time why because in Genesis 3 childbirth was cursed and so it's a public announcement from God that this event is good and not what it should be full of pain right so there's something wrong with this while in the midst of its greatness in the midst of its beauty right so these are not sinful acts that no not at all none of it being a leper no but at the same time you look at leprosy and you say that shouldn't exist it's a product of defilement and curse right so what we have in the cleanliness codes is a symbolic presentation of all the visible conditions of the curse being manifest used through symbol to represent death chaos and defilement right in other words when God says you're unclean what do you have to do you have to stay outside the camp of God's people and the way the camp was structured is the tabernacle is right at the center and then in concentric circles the people camp around it right but if you're unclean you have to live outside the boundary of the camp meaning what death chaos and the symbols of death and chaos do not belong in the city of God they don't belong in the presence of God and so what that means to take it to bring it all together is that the camp of Israel in the Torah is a representation of the city of God that would one day come in the book of Revelation it's never to be repeated we should never organize ourselves in the way they did we should not follow it as a pattern for how to do church no not at all never because this is a once in a in a in a whole in a whole of history moment in redemptive history of a presentation of the symbol of the city of God that is to come right it's showing that what one day we will have a life without the curse that's the pronouncement of the cleanliness law so we can't reiterate probably how strange these laws are to us as modern people and yet when you read them in the light of the whole of redemptive history they make every sense as symbols now the

other thing I wanted to mention of that is in every one of these sections they give you a reason for them and one of the reasons that gets put they get repeated is to say that I brought you out of Egypt so don't do that and that means that there there's something here there's aspects of these laws here that we just don't understand as modern people that weren't in the context with them and one of those aspects is very probably that a lot of the things are being spoken against here are things that were happening in Egypt so God says later in Leviticus don't drink blood and it's very probably because the Egyptians drank blood and so he's over and over again he says I brought you out of Egypt stop behaving like an Egyptian you should look different you should be a sign of the world to come a better world and so that's one of the things that's going on throughout these passages all right how does it matter to us before I mentioned that let me just wrap up a couple of threads that I've mentioned earlier never wrapped up one is why why in the world would a woman be unclean for seven days with a boy 14 days with a daughter and it is because in

[20 : 57] Leviticus the boy is circumcised on the eighth day and the act of circumcision that takes place in Levitical code is an act of sacrifice meaning it is the atoning act the cutting is an atoning act and so it shortens the uncleanness it's all symbol right we know in Hebrews the blood of bulls and goats or the act of circumcision any of it is not salvific in the slightest right it's sign and symbol right and so in the Old Testament when the covenants are made the verb that gets used every time is that the covenants are not made the verb is actually they're cut so when you read something like and he made a covenant with Abraham it says in Hebrew he cut the covenant with Abraham and that's why circumcision was the associated sign the cutting as hard as it is for us to talk about maybe here that's exactly what was going on and why the language was used right and so that's the difference in the seven and fourteen days so let's a little threads like that in Leviticus you pick up on and say but why was this why that and there usually are very helpful answers on things like that and sometimes they just have to be hunted for a little bit how does this matter to us I wanted to just mention one or two things and we'll close and that's this I'm quoting here from I've printed a piece of this in your in your handout Sinclair Ferguson tells the story of a friend of his who had been converted to Christ out of a lifestyle of drug abuse and all sorts of trouble and addiction and in recounting the story Ferguson said that his friend would often say to him for something dirty to become clean for something dirty to be cleaned something else has to become dirty and so for you to clean something that's dirty the thing you use to clean it with has to become dirty right and then his friend would say that's what happened to me that's the gospel and somebody would have to become unclean so that we might become clean and when you come to the gospels what do we have what scenes do we have I've listed I haven't listed them actually what what scenes did the uncleanness laws remind you of or what what in the gospels comes up I'll give it's okay if nobody wants to say anything but but I'll just maybe give an option to ask can you can you think of moments in the gospels where Leviticus 11 to 15 are directly raised in the narrative in the story with Jesus it will in Leviticus 17 to 19 so come come back to that one in a few weeks yes when Jesus heals the leper and when Jesus heals the leper the leper says if you will touch me I could be clean I could be healed right and the disciples were there the scribes saw this now if you were a scribe if you're a disciple of the first century Jewish you know your Leviticus backwards and forwards right what are you saying to

Jesus in that moment what are you thinking do not touch him you you can't come to the temple you can't be in the presence of God you can't come to Sabbath and Jesus says I will be clean and he touches him right what else any others there's a few the woman that we're told is bleeding has a has had a discharge of blood whatever it is we don't know for years right and what happens in that story she touches him and he doesn't become unclean she becomes clean right and so we have all these moments in the gospels there's more than just that where Jesus is coming and not only not not subverting the cleanliness laws no that's a temptation for us to think that but what is he doing he's fulfilling the cleanliness laws he is showing that he is the object of the sign and symbol the shadows of the cleanness laws are finding their fulfillment in him and so just like Sinclair's friend said something for something dirty to become clean something must become dirty and that's the gospel so in the same way a guy I know in the States named Nick Badsig he says at the cross Jesus was treated as a spiritual leper on the cross he took the unstoppable flow of blood he subjected himself to death on the tree he was made sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in him now when Jesus touched the leper a

Jesus touch or the woman touched him he did not become unclean in himself he did not become a sinner but he did become unclean in a different distinct way so you see what's happening there it's not that he became a sinner like her but he became ceremonially unclean and that's exactly what gets picked up on in 2nd Corinthians 5:21 when it says he who knew no sin became sin in every way now what does the word became mean some of you are in st class today and we talked about this what does it mean that he became thin it does not mean that he became a sinner no no no if he became a sinner the gospel is lost forever he never became a sinner yet Jean yet the uncleanness was reckoned to him accounted to him placed upon him by the judge of the courtroom the father in a way that was never true of him that's the gospel he became dirty by reckoning legally unclean by covenantal union with us never truly therefore he could be the perfect righteousness who died in unjust death in our place right the gospel depends on the fact that Jesus became unclean but was never unclean simultaneously he was never a sinner but he became sin so all these cleanliness laws are pointing to a symbol a reality in us chaos death destruction disaster disease that was placed on him in the gospel but was never true of him and that's the reason he can be our salvation lastly chapter 10 of Acts verse 3 we learn that Cornelius Cornelius goes and get this this Gentile goes and gets

Peter the apostle and Peter has this vision and he sees this sheet descending and in it the Lord says verse 12 all the animals the reptiles the birds of the air rise Peter kill and eat and Peter says no way I've never eaten anything common or unclean and then the Lord says what God has made clean you never call common now for us because of Jesus the ceremonial laws of Leviticus 11:15 are fulfilled and abrogated done away with right and we have that pronouncement here in Acts chapter 10 and so I just want to finish with this on your sheet because Jesus became the ceremonial leper because he blood because he became the curse these ceremonies are fulfilled in him therefore 1st Timothy 4:4 to 5 is there a reality to these ideas of common and sacred in our life yes there is how well now the way it works clean and unclean you can treat something as common or sacred or in other words the common can become sacred that's what this was all about these cleanliness laws what common things like people or animals can come to the presence of the Lord how can they become sacred well we have that in the New Covenant too how does something become sacred holy in the New

Covenant era 1st Timothy 4 4 to 5 everything created by God is good and nothing is to be rejected if it's received with Thanksgiving for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer in other words everything in the Christian life is made good if it is pronounced good by the word of God and then a prayer of Thanksgiving so how do you make the table at your house sacred you pray you give thanks and say the Lord gave us this food and I dedicate it I give it back to God in Thanksgiving and it has now been made holy we're told so all the things the furniture the instruments in the Old Covenant to enter into the temple they got to be holy but now in the New Covenant what makes something holy just recognizing God made this it's not for me I'm just a steward and praying a prayer of Thanksgiving and now you have taken in this world and made it holy unto God you can do that with your work your vocation you say I want my work life to be for the Lord you've taken something that God said is good work but was cursed in Genesis 3 and reconstituted it for the Lord in the light of the gospel and it's been set apart it's been consecrated it's been made holy right all right let's pray Father we thank you for the Old Covenant and the New Covenant for Leviticus and all that you teach us there about Jesus through cleanliness and uncleanness laws defile mental or we know we are people defiled by our sin and yet cleaned by Christ and so I just ask Father that you would make these images and symbols powerful unto us that we would not merely approach them as strange but in their strangeness to us as modern people that would be because Jesus has come and so we ask that you would teach us how to receive it in a new covenant order how we would think about all the ways our lives can become holy unto the Lord all the things we do the practices we take up Lord forgive us for the ways we continue to act in ways that make us unclean through sin and we ask that you would habituate us away from our sinful patterns mortify our sins and bring us closer and closer to the undefiled life not because it earns us your favor but because we've already got it and so we we asked for these hearts in Jesus name amen