

# ASSOCIATION WITH EVIL: DOES IT DEFILE?

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*"If thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as My mouth: let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them" (Jeremiah 15:19).*

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# Association With Evil: Does it Defile?

In answer to this question, we say, without hesitation, it does. Our witnesses are type, prophecy, and New Testament Scriptures. We will give a few examples.

## THE TESTIMONY OF TYPE

Here we have a large field before us. We will commence with God's people in Egypt, before they leave that land to journey on to Canaan.

### LEAVEN

Chapter 12 of the wonderful *Redemption book*, Exodus, gives by way of type the grounds upon which God could righteously take up that once guilty people and begin with them afresh as *His people*. "When I see the blood, I will pass over" (v. 13). Here their true history commences, and God is now with them. This was pure sovereign grace, and when this is manifested and the people placed in relationship with Him, their responsibility as His people commences. Their lives, and all their associations are now regulated by Him who is holy. When He speaks, they are to *listen*; when He legislates, they are to obey. Verses 1-14 give them God's provision—"the lamb." When the lamb is brought inside the house, God tells His people that all leaven must be put away (vv. 15-20). Now, if these verses are read with 1 Corinthians 5, there is no doubt as to the application. Leaven is a clear type of evil. See also from Matthew 16:6, Mark 8:15, and Galatians 5:9 that God's principle is ever the same,

whether in Exodus 12 or in the New Testament Scriptures—“A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (1 Corinthians 5:6). Jehovah speaks no idle word when He says, “Ye shall put away leaven out of your houses” (v. 15). God will not have that which is a type of evil dwelling in the same house with His people, where the lamb—type of Christ—was. And *neglect* in following these instructions was so serious a thing, that He says, “Whosoever eateth *leavened* bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be *cut off from Israel*” (v. 15). Note the very words: not cut off from *the Lord*, which was true, but cut off *from Israel*—from the very *people of God*—for God was there. He looked for holiness and obedience from a people associated with Him. There could be no link whatever with *leaven*, because they were linked with the Lord. What an immense truth this is, and a very key to unlock much of the Word which teaches us rightly God’s claims of righteousness and holiness, which will develop more fully as we pass on.

### LEPROSY

Our next lesson will be from Leviticus 13 and 14. The instructions regarding this loathsome disease are more lengthy and more minute than those regarding leaven. Jehovah has delivered His people from Egypt. They are now in the *wilderness*, and He dwells in their midst. “Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16) are His words to the whole assembly. All were to hear them; there was no excuse for anyone once the words of the Lord were read.

Now these examples of the breaking out of leprosy, either in a *person*, a *garment*, or a *house*, are all “written for our learning” (Romans 15:4). “All these things happened unto them for [*types*]: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come” (1 Corinthians 10:11).

1. Leprosy in a *person* (Leviticus 13:1-46). When this sore evil broke out in a person, great care was necessary that there might not be undue *haste* on the one hand, or *neglect* on the other in allowing the disease to spread and contaminate others. If there were *external marks* on a person which caused the least suspicion of leprosy, that person was brought to the priest, and if there was any *doubt* after the priest had looked upon him, he was shut up seven days (vv. 1-4). This served a *two-fold* purpose. First, care, lest in case the plague was not leprosy, and the man was put out into a place not meant by the Lord for him—outside the camp. Next, in case he *had* leprosy, or, if even while there was a doubt, he be left free to go where he chose, and defile others, God's word was, he must be "*shut up ... seven days.*" At the close of the seven days the priest looked on him again, and if there was still a doubt, the man was shut up seven days more (vv. 5-8). With what care the Lord instructs them—care for His own glory, and for His people's good. Now we believe there is a special lesson in this for us. If there is suspicion among those gathered to the name of the Lord that evil is manifest in a believer, there ought to be this priestly investigation, and care lest we be too hasty or too slack in the matter. If it seems that there is a serious sin which would warrant discipline, as in 1 Corinthians 5, but the case not fully proven, we believe the man in which there was supposed leprosy furnishes a careful principle given us from the Lord. The man *is shut up for seven days*—denied the liberty of public, Christian fellowship until clear of any suspicion. He is not "*put away*" as in 1 Corinthians 5, but simply "*shut up.*" We believe every Christian assembly should seek to act upon this principle in the grace of Christ and care for the holiness of God's House.

But when the priest detects the leprosy, the man is pronounced unclean—no longer a *supposed* leper, as in the first case, but a *pronounced* one. Verses 44-46 show us that the man is now put *outside* the camp—answering to the discipline of 1 Corinthians 5:13, “Put away from among yourselves that wicked person.”

There were two places in particular in which leprosy might appear—in his *flesh*, and upon his *head or beard*. The former answers to moral evil in one’s ways, as in 1 Corinthians 5, and the latter—leprosy in the *head*—to doctrinal evil, as in 2 John 9-11 and 2 Peter 2:1-3, false teaching, “damnable heresy.” In either case, the only course is excision when the evil is proved. Such is the teaching of God’s holy word.

2. Now, as to *leprosy in a garment*, the same minute care is manifested in Leviticus 13:47-59. This may answer to a man’s *character, circumstances, or habits*. Leprosy was not to be tolerated in *any* way among those with whom God dwelt. The very garments were to be *burnt with fire* if leprosy was there. God’s righteous judgment and displeasure rests upon evil, wherever it is found. May we learn this lesson more fully and seek to take sides with God against it, no matter *where, or in whom*, it may be found.

3. We will now turn to chapter 14 to learn what God teaches as to *association with evil*. Verses 33-57 give us *leprosy in a house*. The *house*, we doubt not, presents to us “the house of God”—*the assembly* of God’s people, where God dwells, (1 Timothy 3:15). Hence, this refers more to our corporate fellowship. In chapter 13, we get leprosy in an individual; in chapter 14, we get leprosy among a company of Christians—the house. So from these verses we learn, typically, more fully what the New Testament teaches as to cases of evil in an assembly that are required to

be dealt with. God's principles of holiness and righteousness are ever the same, whether in the Old Testament or in the New: "Holiness becometh Thine house, O Lord, for ever" (Psalm 93:5).

Let us look, then, at what is taught regarding leprosy in a house. First, "When ... I put the plague of leprosy in a house" (v. 34.) This is never stated concerning leprosy in a *person*, or a *garment*, but only of leprosy in a *house*. Does it not illustrate, in a special way, the faithfulness of the Lord to those among whom He dwells? If evil is there, the faithful Lord will, by the very fact of His presence among them, *put the plague there*—manifest to those who have eyes to see, that there is something seriously wrong, and requiring investigation. Second, priestly inspection follows. The house was to be *emptied* where there was supposed leprosy, and this also for a double reason—in case leprosy was there, that "all that is in the house *be not made unclean*" (v. 36), and in order to lay every part of the house bare for priestly inspection. Nothing was to be covered, but all exposed to his eye. If, after investigation, there was still a doubt, the house was to be *shut up seven days*, just as was the *individual*. This is the way in which all true and obedient Israelites were to treat a house in which there was supposed leprosy. Yea, so strict was the God of Israel that verse 46 states, "Moreover he that goeth into the house all the while that it is shut up shall be unclean until the even." One man might enter it through carelessness, and another through self-will and independency of spirit—to defy others. In either case, *God pronounces the man unclean*, and this when the house was, as yet, only "shut up."

What then are the lessons for us in this? Are there any? Surely there are, and if the house represents an assembly of Christians, then we are furnished with holy principles to guide

us in exercising holy care among a gathering of God's people. Further, it establishes the truth that *association with evil defiles*.

If *moral evil* breaks out in a gathering, or "*damnable heresy*," is it to be allowed to continue while the gathering is to feel no care or responsibility concerning it? We need scarcely answer this question for those who know their Bibles. The gathering is required to act upon the plain teaching of 1 Corinthians 5 to clear themselves in the matter. If there is carelessness as to this, the gathering ought to be dealt with, just as the *home* was while leprosy was suspected—"*shut up*." During that time, every heart rightly taught of God, and upright before Him, would carefully refrain from association with that gathering. If not, verse 46 is clear as to them—"he ... shall be unclean." Does this mean that he is a *leper* also? By no means, but association with those *only supposed to be leprous*, rendered a man unclean. How wonderful the holiness of Israel's God—of our God. "Who is like unto Thee, O Lord ... glorious in holiness?" (Exodus 15:11). Time and again God's people have had to act according to this Scripture where gatherings were seemingly tolerating evil. They were *shut up*, and while in some cases it has led to self-judgment, in others it has manifested the state of the assembly as being so low that it could openly take sides with the evil doer and refuse to put him away. Verses 39 and 40 teach us further as to this. When the seven days were expired and the priest looked again upon the house (showing that there was no undue haste), and it was manifest that there was leprosy in one or more stones, then the stones were taken out and "cast ... into an unclean place without the city." This is the way the Corinthian assembly acted after receiving the apostolic letter—they cleared themselves by putting away from among them that wicked person (1 Corinthians 5; 2 Corinthians 7).

This was serious work in either case—serious for the owner of the house in Leviticus 14, and serious for the whole gathering at Corinth. But they were following the Lord’s instructions, which are as necessary in maintaining holiness and discipline in His house as the blessed work of proclaiming the good news of salvation is necessary for lost sinners; it is only through obedience to God’s Word that a gathering is enabled, here on earth, to manifest the character of His holiness in expelling evil from their midst.

Now a further work goes on: “He shall cause the house to be scraped” (v. 41). Every stone must be scraped after the putting away of any that were leprous. What searching of heart should follow every case of discipline requiring excommunication. Each heart should be bowed low before God as there is the individual inquiry, “Am I indulging in any sin that displeases the Lord?” Thus, wrongs are discovered, confession is made to God, and sins—in every form—are judged at the very root. How successfully this was carried out at Corinth. After putting away the evil, there was truly a scraping of the house: “Ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what *carefulness* it wrought in you, yea, what *clearing* of yourselves, yea, what *indignation* ... yea, what *zeal*, yea, what *revenge!* In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter” (2 Corinthians 7:11). Would that this result might always follow such cases of discipline. It would prepare God’s people for future service and fresh work, though it is a sorrowful way of learning our lessons which might be learned in communion, if walking carefully and prayerfully. Leviticus 14 also gives us light as to *the new work*. “And they shall take other stones, and put them in the place of those stones; and he shall take other mortar, and shall plaster the house” (v. 42).

In all these exercises, souls ought to get a deeper appre-

hension of grace, which will lead to reviving of heart, more carefulness as to godliness of life, and fresh energy and power in making known the gospel; not brooding over past troubles, but taking them from God's hand, and going out among the unconverted and bringing in *new material*. Does not the Lord often permit such exercises to teach us how little our sympathies have been going out in this direction? We believe time has been lost and fresh sorrow brought among us through trying to get back *old material* in which leprosy has not been fully judged. Our sympathies are never to guide us in these things, but God's mind should be apprehended and His Word followed. Oh, that the importance of this principle, "They shall take *other stones*, and put them in the place of those stones," were impressed more fully upon the hearts of one and all!

Now we have one point more in connection with leprosy in a house: "If the plague come again ... he shall *break down* the house, the stones of it, and the timber thereof, and all the mortar of the house; and he shall carry them forth out of the city into an unclean place" (v. 43-45). This was the word of the Lord in cases where the leprosy continued or reappeared. The whole house was set aside, pulled down, and put in an unclean place (the same as when dealing with one stone, only that here it was the setting aside of a *whole house*), picturing the setting aside of a defiled gathering.

Surely none should doubt its application. If the house represents a gathering where evil breaks out (either moral, as in 1 Corinthians 5, or doctrinal, as in 2 John), and the assembly fails to clear itself by putting the evil away, grace may wait seven days as in the first case, and while under quarantine none were to go in (v. 38). But in this case of leprosy reappearing, the house is set aside entirely by the Lord and put in an unclean

place according to His instructions. So, when a gathering of professed Christians tolerates such evil, it is the bounden duty of those who follow God's word, and who care for the honor of Christ, to refuse to own such a gathering any more, but give it the place God does when He says it is unclean.

Thus far, all may agree. "But," says someone, "while we fully own that there may be leprosy in the house, and the house unclean, we do not see that this would affect any one who merely went in and came out from it." But the Lord said far otherwise—"He *that goeth into the house ... shall be unclean*" (v. 46). It does not say that if he went in he would be a leper, but "he ... shall be *unclean*"—thus proving that any link with defilement rendered a person unclean.

Now if we turn to 2 John 9-11, we see that God's principles abide ever the same. Verse 9 gives us a man unsound as to the doctrine of Christ. This is leprosy in the head. Now, how are we to treat him? To be true to Christ, and to be faithful to such a one (for he may be deceived), verse 10 teaches us, "*Receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed.*" This goes much further than church fellowship, and includes even the *social sphere*. Why, we ask, is God so careful? Because He is the same One who speaks in Leviticus 13-14, and to be true to Himself and us, He cannot lower His standard of holiness to suit man's low thoughts as to how far-reaching defilement is. Hence we read, "For he that biddeth him [the unsound teacher] God speed is partaker of his evil deeds" (v. 11). Could anything be plainer? The Apostle does not say that if one receives him, he will also be a false teacher and unsound, as the man who went into a leprous house did not by that act become a leper, yet God said he was *unclean*. So God also says that by receiving a false teacher, one is a "partaker of

his evil deeds”—put into the same company because of being careless about a grave question such as this that ought to stir every Christian. And if there is this careless spirit, those who honor Christ would have to treat them the same as *the teacher*; the assembly that would retain such would be, like a *leprous house*, set aside, and no further fellowship with it permitted. This attitude will be ours if the honor of Christ is cared for and an effort is made to check the spread of defilement among God’s people. How simple and plain the Word is if we are but willing to be guided by it!

#### “RUNNING ISSUE”

So far we have dwelt chiefly on the minuteness of the care of the God of Israel as to leprosy which answers to the more serious forms of evil which may manifest themselves among the Lord’s people, and the treatment of such cases. Now we will turn to Leviticus 15 and look at the “running issue” and “association with evil as defiling” is there even more fully developed. In both cases, those with *leprosy* and a “*running issue*” were put outside the camp (Numbers 5:1-3). The running issue represents evil working in a believer, but of a less serious nature than leprosy. Yet, even for this, one was to be put outside the camp. Leviticus 15:1-3 teach that the man was unclean. Verses 4-14 show that *any contact whatever with such was also defiling*: “Whosoever *toucheth* his bed shall ... be unclean.... And he that *sitteth* on any thing whereon he sat ... shall be unclean.... And he that *toucheth* the flesh of him ... shall be unclean.... And if he that hath the issue *spit* upon him that is clean ... he shall ... be unclean.... And what *saddle* soever he rideth upon ... shall be unclean. And whosoever *toucheth* any thing that was under him shall be unclean ... he that *beareth* any of those things shall ... be unclean.... And the *vessel of earth*, that

he toucheth ... shall be broken: and every *vessel of wood* shall be rinsed in water.”

How *very* minute are the instructions given in this chapter, yet how God-like, when we know the lessons which the Lord seeks to teach us:

1. The man was unclean.
2. Everything that he touched was unclean.
3. Every person who touched that which the man touched was unclean.

By this we learn that defilement goes on and on until God’s word is submitted to and the unclean person washes himself with water. And yet, with all those types and the plain Scripture in 1 Corinthians 5: “A little leaven *leaveneth* the whole lump” and 2 John: “is partaker of his evil deeds” many tell us that “*association with evil does not necessarily defile.*”

### **DEFILEMENT BY THE DEAD**

Having traced out the leading thoughts regarding care in the cases of “*leaven,*” “*leprosy,*” and the “*running issue*” (these three in themselves referring more to *evil itself working*), we will now look at Numbers 19 and gather some lessons from defilement by the dead. This chapter leads us to consider the important fact that association with evil does defile.\* The book of Numbers is the *wilderness book*, and there we need the greatest care and caution to follow the Word of the Lord. If not, contact with many things defiles. But the same book tells us of *love* and *grace* also; hence there is a provision made

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\*Yet we are told Numbers 19 refers not to association with evil doctrine and practice, but to the evil doer himself. This is wholly a mistake. That is the lesson we get in the leper and the running issue, but in Numbers 19 there is no disease in the man personally, but contact with what was unclean and corrupting defiled him.

to cleanse the people of God from defilement, and thus fit them to abide and walk with Him day by day. Now let us note, first, the defilement itself and how far-reaching that defilement goes. “He that toucheth the *dead body of any man* shall be unclean *seven days*” (v. 11). “And whosoever toucheth one that is *slain* with a sword in the open fields, or a *dead body*, or a *bone of a man*, or a *grave*, shall be unclean *seven days*” (v. 16). From these Scriptures we would learn what God’s thoughts are concerning defilement, and as Israel sat at the Lord’s feet (Deuteronomy 33:2,3) and heard these words, they too learned what were His thoughts from the very words given. And Jehovah spake no idle words.

Now the only way a man knew he was unclean was by the Word. To this they turned for guidance, and when, by that Word they were made aware of having contracted defilement, then the obedient heart would turn to the same Word for light as to how such defilement was to be removed. And if there was any neglect of this, very serious were the results as we shall see. “The man that shall be *unclean*, and *shall not purify himself*, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation, because he hath defiled the sanctuary of the Lord: the water of separation hath not been sprinkled upon him; he is unclean” (v. 20). “And whatsoever the unclean person toucheth shall be unclean; and the soul that toucheth it shall be unclean until even” (v. 22). “Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4). Hence we are fully warranted in taking up this book of Numbers, for God’s principles are the same. These various things that would defile in Numbers 19 would suggest *certain evils* today that are of so serious a nature that contact—or association—with them unfit

even those who are God's people for communion with the Lord and with those who walk according to the Word. Those evils we will point out as given in the New Testament.

To be defiled by this or that in an *open field* may suggest contact with *more open evil*; a *grave*, evil more *hidden*, yet corruption and death being there, it defiled. Even though man's eye could not see it, Jehovah's did, and hence they were to avoid even the touching of a grave. Here there was no margin left for the weak thoughts even of Israel of old. They might reason and say, "But we cannot see the body beneath," but God would answer, "Although you cannot see it, I do, and that is enough, and My Word to guide My people is 'whosoever toucheth ... a *grave*, shall be unclean *seven days*.'" Oh, how this weighty principle of truth would settle so many difficulties with God's people (even if they could not see to the full end) if they would *search* the Word and follow its teaching as to separation from evil in its various forms today. God's knowledge of evil is thorough, is perfect; how that evil corrupts and defiles He also knows, and hence has written, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Timothy 2:19).

True, there are stages of discipline, and for every cause people are not to be "put away," but Scripture is very clear as to this: "Warn them that are unruly" (1 Thessalonians 5:14), and "Them that sin *rebuke* before all" (1 Timothy 5:20). Yet there are others that need excision, and a careful reading of 1 Corinthians 5 informs us of some of those evils, as well as 2 Peter 2:1 and 2 John 9, where we learn of *evil doctrines*, the most serious of all, because they directly attack the *person* and *glory* of our Lord Jesus. All those cases in Numbers 19 refer to those who merit excision because of links of *association* with those whose teaching or ways are so serious as to defile others.

In verse 14 the Lord adds: “This is the law, when a man dieth in a *tent*: all that come into the tent, and all that is in the tent, shall be unclean *seven* days.” Now to preserve cleanliness among those among whom He dwelt, God gave those instructions, and only as they followed His Word did they preserve this cleanliness. Turn with me, dear reader, in thought, and behold that people as they march across the desert sands. See them as they halt upon their march and pitch their tents. The cloud now rests upon the many thousands of Israel. Jehovah their God is in their midst; their tents, as a cluster, are gathered around His dwelling place.

Soon after their halt, the news spreads that someone in Tent No. 1 has died, yet people are seen going in and coming out. If Numbers 19 is carefully read, we learn that such are “*unclean seven days*”—those who are in the tent and those who *enter* the tent. Nothing could be plainer if Scripture would guide. Now imagine that you see a man coming out of Tent No. 1—the defiled tent. As he turns his face towards Tents No. 3 to No. 10, and as the people in those tents (we omit No. 2 purposely) see him coming towards them, they close their curtain doors as *one man*, and refuse to let him enter. He, when told the reason from Numbers 19, complains, saying, “But I am not the dead man, and I am as much one of the Lord’s people as you are.”

They might reply, “It is quite true that you are not the dead man, and we are also aware that you are one of God’s people. These things we do not doubt, yet the Word of the Lord must guide us. You have been in Tent No. 1, where a dead man is. Now in Numbers 19:14, Jehovah our God says that you are *unclean*, and unless you are purified with the water of purification, you remain unclean. Verse 22 states further that everything

you touch is *unclean*, and therefore we refuse you until the defilement you contracted in Tent No. 1 is removed. Verses 17-19 give us the only way that any can be cleansed from such defilement. So we advise you to follow this chapter, and avail yourself of God's provision—the *water* of purification—and then, brother, come to us after the seventh day. For then, as verse 12 states, you shall be *clean*, and we will receive you with all our hearts. We can assure you at this time that we love you, but we also desire at all costs to follow God's Word and maintain purity in all our tents as far as we can."

Now, if truly submissive to God's Word, would not this instruction from Numbers 19 be hailed with great joy? And is not this the *time* and *place* to give such instruction in order to check the spread of defilement?

But suppose, instead of being thankful, he further complains that they are too strict. Nevertheless all those tents from No. 3 to 10 remain firm as *one man*. But now he perceives that Tent No. 2 (the nearest to the defiled one) remained *independent* of all the others and left their door open. So he turns to them with the hope that they will receive him and save him all the trouble of having the water sprinkled upon him and also the inconvenience of waiting seven days. And as he approaches Tent No. 2, they greet him. He states his difficulties. They reply that all these tents from No. 3 to 10 are "*very* 'exclusive'—they *exclude* many of God's people—but we are more '*open*'—we do not doubt that you are the Lord's, and we know you are not the *dead man*, therefore we are happy in receiving you into our tent." Now, dear reader, I leave it with you to decide, in the light of Numbers 19, which of these have acted aright—those who *refused* him because God said he was unclean, or those of Tent No. 2 who *received* him while yet unclean. We do not raise

the question as to his being the *dead man*, nor yet do we deny that he is the Lord's.\* But the Lord in Numbers 19 teaches us that the man was *unclean*, and everywhere he might go was rendered unclean by his contact with it. This man represents any today, be he a child of God or not, who holds any link of association with moral evil as in 1 Corinthians 5, or doctrinal evil as in 2 John. It furnishes us with God's way for a person to be cleansed before being received by those who seek to maintain *truth* and *holiness* according to the words of truth.

Now in case the man who absolutely refused God's way of cleansing:

1. He *remained unclean*.

2. He defiled those he came *in contact with*. (See the application of Haggai 2:11-14 to the nation in a later day.)

3. He was deprived of the passover (Numbers 9:5-7), no doubt a picture of the Lord's table.

4. He was *put outside the camp*, where the *leper* was, and the man with the *running issue* (Numbers 5:1-3), though he himself was neither, but was *defiled by the association* with the tent where a dead man was.

Yet how lovely is God's grace seen in Numbers 9:9-12 to give those who had been defiled by the dead an extra provision. They could keep the Passover on the second month, thus giving them time to comply with Numbers 19 and be cleansed. How beautiful to see in those *defiled* men that they were *earnest*, and so pressed their case, and *conscientious*, for they hid not

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\*Neither do we dwell upon the personal graces otherwise of any in Tents No. 1 or 2. This would only blind our eyes as to the main principles. On the other hand there might be failure in detail in Tents No. 3 to 10, "in many things we offend all" (James 3:2), but the principles of truth and righteousness we here insist upon.

the fact, but confessed: “We are defiled by the dead body of a man” (Numbers 9:7). No wonder that God made an extra provision for such. My dear reader, if you are a child of God, seriously meditate upon these themes which develop the holiness and care of God for the good, yea, the permanent good of His own people among whom He dwells.

Now we will pass on to Tent No. 2 and see how they are to be dealt with. From Numbers 19:22 it is clear *they are unclean*, and the last words of this chapter inform us that the soul that toucheth it (Tent No. 2) “shall be unclean until even.”\*

Hence, Tent No. 2 would also be *under quarantine* until those there who had become defiled were cleansed from their defilement. If they persisted in this course, we learn in verse 20 that “the man that shall be *unclean*” by contact with the dead (or even with those made unclean by the dead, see verse 22), “and shall *not* purify himself, that soul shall be *cut off* from among the congregation.” Numbers 5:1-3 further teaches that he would be “*put out, without* the camp.” The truth thus applies to one or one hundred just the same. We verily believe that Tent No. 2 would occupy a very serious position in treating with *indifference* the truth of Numbers 19, also lowering the standard of purity in the congregation as to association, and also acting in *independency* of Tents No. 3 to 10, who sought to act for God.

Ponder these things over, dear reader, and if perplexed as to this subject, rest not till you get from the Word itself “thus

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\*It is said by some that “Numbers 19 teaches that the responsibility rests wholly with the individual defiled, and not the assembly.” Let the reader judge from verse 20, where we read, “that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation” (see also Numbers 5:1-3 and Numbers 9:5-14). No doubt the aim of the above statement is to deny assembly responsibility.

saith the Lord” as to these things. Men in the world understand these principles, and so do God’s people in everyday life. If *small pox*, *diphtheria*, or the *cholera* break out (as these things in the Old Testament broke out in the camp), see the care people exercise—they will not permit any with the disease to enter their home. Further, they will not allow any who have been where the *small pox* patients are to enter, lest they bring it in their clothing or otherwise, *although they do not have the disease*—thus association is not permitted. These are the principles of care we are contending for in spiritual life and association, because these lie nearer the heart of Christ and all who are truly loyal to Him. Any violation of these principles thus becomes more serious—especially when God has spoken, and spoken so plainly.

Now let us pause and consider briefly what this provision of Numbers 19 speaks of—His provision to keep His own clean.

*The red heifer* without spot. None could answer to this but One—Jesus our Lord. The heifer *slain*—Jesus *put to death*. The heifer *burnt to ashes* with *cedar wood* and *hyssop* and *scarlet*—Jesus our adorable Lord in death, meeting the full penalty of sin, bearing the judgment of evil in every phase and form, and laying a righteous basis before the throne of God, enabling Him to walk with His people, already redeemed, and to keep them clean all along the way. The *ashes kept*—the abiding *remembrance* of Christ in this place of death. The *running water* and ashes sprinkled upon the unclean—the *Holy Spirit* through the Word, bringing home to heart and conscience, when we get *defiled*, that this very uncleanness came in by sin and caused, yea, *necessitated* the death of Christ. We then, according to the Word—the water—take sides with God against evil in every

form that brings defilement, and clear ourselves from all association with such. May we profit by these lessons which teach us the purity and holiness of God's dwelling place!

### FALSE PROPHETS AND IDOLATRY

We will now turn to *one more type*. This we will find in Deuteronomy 12 and 13 where we get a perfect *harmony* of truth with all we have examined so far. Here we have some phases more fully developed, yet the principle is the same. In chapter 12 we are taught, as the people enter the *land* (vv. 1-3), their *path of separation* from those who were there, whose ways and forms of worship were defiling.

From verses 4-32, the Lord instructs them concerning their *worship* and their *sacrifices*: even their *place* of worship is marked out for them. They have *no choice, no arrangement* whatever. The *land*, the *place* Jehovah put His Name, all was Jehovah's *choice* and *ordering*.

"Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings *in every place* that thou seest: But in *the place* which *the Lord shall choose* in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, and there thou shalt do all that I command thee" (vv. 13,14). This chapter affords much instruction for the Lord's people now, and was for Israel in the Old Testament much the same as 1 Timothy is for us in the New.

In chapter 13 we proceed a step further and instruction is given to His people as to how to deal with evil in its various forms. True, they were not expected to be *occupied* with evil, and neither should we be, yet the Lord saw fit to instruct them, as He does His people now, concerning how to deal with such whenever it does arise. Ignorance of facts and principles are no virtue, surely. In the New Testament, 2 Timothy and the later epistles are much what chapter 13 of Deuteronomy was

for Israel. God does not leave His people to their poor, weak, and divided thoughts as to how they ought to act in times of failure. Hence, in verses 1-5 the Lord instructs His people.

1. How to deal with *a false teacher*. If such were true, that a prophet arose who sought to turn the hearts of His people *away from Him* who brought them forth from Egypt and *redeemed* them—he was put to death (v. 5). This was law. Now under grace, he is *put away*, as in 1 Corinthians 5. So serious such a course would be, that it would be wrong to bid Him “*God speed*” (2 John 10,11).

2. In verses 6-11 instruction is given them how to deal with *friends or relatives*. “If thy brother ... or thy son, or ... wife ... or thy friend ... entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods ... thou *shalt not consent* unto him, nor *hearken* unto him; neither shall thine eye *pity* him, neither shalt thou *spare*, neither shalt thou *conceal* him: But thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be *first* upon him ... thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die; *because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the Lord thy God*, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt.” Those lines inform us how serious it is, even for those linked by ties of nature, to step in and *lead* God’s people from paths He marks out for them to walk in. Natural links have their place, yet persons can only rightly fill this place in proportion as they follow the Word. If otherwise, in the end, the lesson will be learned that instead of being a help, they have been a hindrance to others. We long to see an awakening among God’s people in this respect; we long to see individual consciences exercised in the presence of God (instead of friends following friends, and relatives following relatives), and a true inquiry for God’s mind and a desire to walk with Him in paths of righteousness. It is true that wives

are to obey their husbands, and children their parents, yet we would add—“*in the Lord*” (Ephesians 6:1), and “as it is fit *in the Lord*” (Colossians 3:18). When these things are kept in remembrance before the heart, and true subjection to the Lord is *first* sought, everything else will adjust itself according to His mind. Deuteronomy 13, Luke 12:51-53, and 14:26,27 need to be pondered well by all when the question “what is truth?” arises and a path with God is sought after.

3. In verses 12-18 we get information on how to deal with evil in a *city*, and so maintain order according to God through the various *cities of Israel*.

“If thou shalt *hear* say in *one of thy cities* ... saying, Certain men, the children of Belial, are gone out from among you, and have withdrawn the inhabitants of their city, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which ye have not known; Then shalt thou *inquire*, and make *search*, and ask diligently; and, behold, if it be truth, and the thing certain” (vv. 12-14).

Here we are brought face to face with the question of *government* in the cities of Israel, and the link that binds all together—“in *one of thy cities*.” The nation was one in God’s sight, and although the people were divided into various cities, yet one *government* guided all—one law. Thus, while there were many cities, yet was there *one people*, and one government ruling all; this would give each an interest in all. And when serious evil arose as in chapter 13, each would have great concern for the other. True, each city was responsible to govern all within her walls, and act aright *before the Lord*. When all did this, the same order prevailed throughout all Israel. But if a city failed to maintain order according to God, this brought out a *further responsibility* for the others because it was “*one of thy cities*.” And if evil arose, as in this chapter, and after *earnest, patient inquiry*

it was found to be truth that this city had failed to *govern* those within her borders, God's Word to them was that they were to "*smite* the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, destroying it utterly, and all that is therein" (v. 15). They were not left to their poor sympathies here. Their work now was not that of grace, but of *righteousness*, and in this God did not lead them to make a mistake. Thou "shalt burn with fire the city" (v. 16). The city was *set aside* entirely, and all within her border. We see a beautiful exception in 2 Samuel 20, where there was a man of Belial, "Sheba, the son of Bichri." As Joab surrounds the city to destroy it, verses 16-22 give us the act of a faithful woman. The man is judged—is dealt with—and this satisfies Joab, and they retire and the city is spared.

We believe these examples are full of profit for us now. We looked at the defilement in a *tent*, the leprosy in a *house*, and now evil in a *city*—yet all have to be dealt with. And so it is in the New Testament with evil in a gathering of God's people. We believe the word "*one of thy cities*" gives a key to their unity of old, as well as for us now. There may be hundreds and thousands of assemblies scripturally gathered all over the world, yet as Israel, the people are one, yea, *one* by a *closer* link than Israel ever was. They were the typical people; we have the blessings typified. If 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4:4 are carefully read, there can be no mistakes as to this. Times have changed since these lines were penned, yet the truth ever abides till the end for us to enjoy, and to follow. God had no separate *government* for every city, and neither has He for His people now. There is but *one* government, *one* order, *one* discipline, *one* authority, *one Book*. Oh, that this was apprehended more! How it would enlarge our hearts—our sympathies, and give us care and concern for all.

Now if evil was allowed in one of those cities, it was set aside, if not judged by themselves. And the same is true now among God's people. If any gathering of professed Christians allows practices or doctrines that are heretical, or links of association with them, and refuses to judge such and put them away, hearts true to Christ everywhere would reject such, and refuse it as a gathering—set it aside, as Israel did one of their cities. The question of later years has been asked: "What Scripture have you for cutting off assemblies?" The answer has been well given: "We have Scripture for cutting off sin, whether in one or more." Those Scriptures in Deuteronomy 12 and 13 I have but briefly noted, but trust the chapters themselves will be closely studied by every reader, and we are sure much profit will be reaped from their important lessons.

## THE TESTIMONY OF PROPHECY

Having now closed our lessons on the types, we will briefly notice prophecy, mainly that of *Haggai*. This is one of the last three prophets, and ought to be read with the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. I purposely refer to this prophecy because of its special application to our day and to those for whom I write. It was also part of the last voice (Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi) from the Lord to His people before John's voice announced Christ's coming.

This remnant to whom they prophesy, having returned from Babylon, are once more in their *land*—once more in the place of *Altar* (Sacrifice) and *Temple* (right place of worship). God can now meet and bless them according to His Word. This no doubt represents the return of God's people in those last days to God's order as given in the Word for His people, which the church had so sadly departed from—a return to

the true ground of Christian fellowship and worship, left, by the great Head of the Church until His return to take His people home.

Now, if Ezra and Nehemiah are read with care, it will be seen that although the work commenced in the energy of the Spirit, yet failure soon manifested itself among these people in their tendencies to indifference and carelessness about the things of God. Hence the need of the prophet's voice to bring them into God's presence in exercise as to their walk and ways, and also as to the need of always maintaining *order* and good *government* firmly as established by the Lord for the blessing of His people. Now we will turn to that wonderful prophesy of Haggai—just two chapters, yet *five* distinct messages for His people. Verses 1-11 give the *first message*. Here their sins are pointed out—faithfully presented. They were dwelling in *their ceiled houses*, and the Lord's house laid waste, as the Apostle wrote later: "All seek *their own*, not the things which are *Jesus Christ's*" (Philippians 2:21). Home *life, comfort, and ease* were sought and provided for, but the Lord's work—the Lord's interest here on earth—was neglected. No wonder a great dearth follows: "Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit" (v. 10). Have we not seen the same? Have we not felt this keenly? May God give us further awakening everywhere, as in the prophet's day. Verse 12 shows how this first message affected the remnant: "The remnant of the people, *obeyed* the voice of the Lord their God."

*Second message—verse 13*. The Lord's Word is full of cheer and encouragement to an awakened people: "*I am with you, saith the Lord.*" Then they once more resumed the work of the house of the Lord that they had neglected because of the difficulties from their enemies around. "In the world ye shall

have tribulation” is a truth ever true until our Lord comes, yet “Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world,” are His words to His people (John 16:33).

Now in Haggai 2 we learn lessons of another character.

*Third message—verses 1-9.* The past glory of the house is pointed out. Their present weakness also, compared with the past—yet they were not to fear on account of that. “Be *strong ... be strong ... be strong ...* for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts” (v. 4) are the words of a faithful God to His people at such a time. The future glory was what they were to look on to: “The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former” (v. 9) Forgetting the past, now encouraged by the *presence* and Word of the Lord, they are to look forward to the end—rejoice in the hope of the latter glory.

*Fourth message—verses 10-19.* Here we learn of the Lord’s further desire—a revival of *holiness* and *purity* among themselves (this is also the testimony of Malachi 1 and 2). “Ask now the priests concerning the law, saying, If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No” (vv. 11,12). That is, could holiness and purity be transmitted to others by association? The answer is but one, as given here: No. To follow the same principle further, if you put one drop of pure water into a bucket of poison, will it cleanse it? Surely not.

“Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean *by a dead body* touch any of these, shall it be 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” (vv. 13,14). How God’s standard of purity as given in Numbers 19 abides ever the same, be it in the wilderness—the begin-

ning of their history—or among the remnant in Haggai. This passage insists upon this weighty truth, that association with evil defiles. Hence, if in chapter 1 we get a revival of *work*, in chapter 2 we learn of God’s desire for a revival of *walk* and *association* according to His Word. We will not dwell further upon this defilement by the dead, having done so in the previous pages on Numbers 19.

*Fifth Message—verses 20-23.* These verses give us the closing message. Now the prophet seeks to *revive their interest* in the future, when every enemy would be overthrown. Yet, in that day, God’s people (as Zerubbabel) would have a sure abiding place. This will all be fully realized at the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## THE TESTIMONY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

We will now turn to a few passages in the New Testament which require a word, although reference has been made to them again and again previously.

### MORAL EVILS

In 1 Corinthians 5 we get *moral evils* pointed out and how they are to be dealt with. But here it is not one overtaken in a fault that requires to be restored (as in Galatians 6:1), nor yet one simply “*unruly*” needing a warning (as in 1 Thessalonians 5:14), but one *known* to have pursued *a wicked course* whom God’s holiness requires to be “*put away.*” Here the Apostle refers to a weighty principle drawn from “leaven” as in Exodus 12 and elsewhere: “a little leaven *leaventh the whole lump*” (v. 6). Efforts have been made to weaken the force of this, and to say that Corinth was *not leavened*. How could *such evils* be there and known—“*puffed up*” (v. 2), “*glorying*” (v. 6)—without them being defiled? What does the language mean, “Purge

out therefore the old leaven, *that ye may be a new lump*" (v. 7) if they had not already become leavened—defiled? This does not imply they all were fornicators, but in permitting such among them, they—as we have learned from the Old Testament lessons—were defiled. "*That ye may be a new lump*" is a clear proof. During this time Apollos refused to go there even to minister (1 Corinthians 16:12), and the Apostle stays away until they not only put the man away, but repent and judge their whole condition and so clear themselves. What exercise this gave the Apostle, yea, what prayers and tears were poured out on their behalf. They eventually acted and cleared themselves, and the assembly was spared, as was the city (2 Samuel 20).

But what is the meaning of "*Ye are unleavened*" in verse 7? Does it mean that though those evils were there, yet they were not so serious as to *leaven* the others? Surely every other line in the chapter would witness against such an explanation. "As ye are unleavened" has a far different meaning; surely it is the Apostle giving God's view of them from the top of the rocks as He did Israel in Numbers 23:21. By virtue of their acceptance through Christ and His work, they were *perfect*; He *beheld* no iniquity in them. Hence, drawing their attention to this was calculated to humble them, because their practice—their conduct—was the opposite. We fail, yea we *all fail*. Let us own this, confess it freely, yet never lower God's standard of purity and holiness and the far-reaching effect of association with evil: "a little leaven leaveneth the *whole* lump."

### DOCTRINAL EVILS

But there is even a more dangerous character of "*leaven*" than this we have pointed out in 1 Corinthians 5—that of *teaching*. In the second epistle of John we get instruction as to this, and also the same care as to association—a system of

teaching in which we see the craft of Satan to mar the glories of the person of the *Lord Jesus*. It may be that he uses those to do his work who are those in *position* and *wealth*, men of *culture* and *learning*, and much else to attract the natural man. This shows us the subtlety of the enemy all the more—to deceive the unwary. Concerning those, the Apostle urges the elect lady: “Receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds” (v. 10,11). All Christians true to the Lord ought to understand “receive him *not*,” yet what follows is what we would here insist upon—“He that biddeth him God speed is *partaker* of his evil deeds.” If even a Christian has so little concern about what is due to Christ, we learn that the slightest link of association renders him a “partaker of his evil deeds.” The words do not say that by bidding him “God speed,” he is also a false teacher, nor that he has yet imbibed his false teaching, but is “partaker of his evil deeds”—the same as touching a “leper,” or one with a “running issue,” or even a “dead man,” defiled and unfitted a person for the worship of the Lord and the company of the Lord’s people. So also this person would have to be treated.

Now, I close. Let each reader ponder well the lines of thought pursued in these pages, and pray earnestly over every reference to the Word of the Lord. May it lead both reader and writer more into the power and reality of those lessons of righteousness and holiness needed in these closing days to sanctify from all evil.

“Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen” (Jude 24).  
—A.E.B.



Drawing on the lessons of types found in the Old Testament, the lessons of prophecy, and New Testament teachings concerning moral and doctrinal evils, the author sets forth a clear, Scriptural path for those who would seek to be “vessels unto honor.”

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