

### **Jesus Heals a Leper Mark 1v40-45**

**40 And a man with leprosy \*came to Jesus, imploring Him and kneeling down, and saying to Him, “If You are willing, You can make me clean.”**

**A Man with Leprosy** -Leprosy was a dreaded disease in ancient times, causing physical disfigurement and social isolation. It is generally agreed that Leper in the Bible is used for a wider range of diseases than what we call leprosy (Hansen’s disease) today, although, it also includes these cases, so we know only that this man would have been suffering from a disfiguring skin disease which was known to be contagious. God had given the Israelites instructions on what to do if someone became leprous in Leviticus 13-14. There are a lot of details, but it boils down to diseases that are contagious, disfiguring, not just superficial, actively spreading, and therefore needing some means to prevent further spread. These rules are designed to distinguish malignant from nonmalignant forms of disease in a culture which did not have modern medical testing. In Old Testament times, it was such a feared disease that it was regarded as a punishment from God, and indeed in a few rare instances in the Old Testament, it was. In Exodus 4:6-8, God gave Moses the proof that he was to show to the Children of Israel to show that he was from God. God used this disease as a teaching tool in Numbers 12:8b9-15, when Miriam, Moses’ sister spoke against God’s servant Moses. God said **So why were you not afraid To speak against My servant, against Moses?” 9 And the anger of the Lord burned against them and He departed. 10 But when the cloud had withdrawn from above the tent, behold, Miriam was leprous, as white as snow. As Aaron turned toward Miriam, behold, she was leprous. 11 Then Aaron said to Moses, “Oh, my lord, I beg you, do not hold us responsible for this sin by which we have turned out to be foolish, and by which we have sinned. 12 Oh, do not let her be like a dead person, whose flesh is half eaten away when he comes out of his mother’s womb!” ...15 So Miriam was shut outside the camp for seven days, and the people did not move on until Miriam was received again.** So, it’s clear that to the Israelites, and even the Egyptians who had educated Moses, leprosy was considered like a death sentence. God used it as a sign to Naaman, the great commander of the armies of Aram in 2 Ki. 5:81–27 **9 So Naaman came with his horses and his chariots, and stood at the doorway of Elisha’s house. 10 And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, “Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh will be restored to you and you will be clean.” 11 But Naaman was furious and went away, and he said, “Behold, I thought, ‘He will certainly come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the site and cure the leprosy.’ 12 Are Abanah and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, not better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?” So he turned and went away in a rage. 13 Then his servants approached and spoke to him, saying, “My father, had the prophet told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, ‘Wash, and be clean’?” 14 So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, in accordance with the word of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.** And, of course, when Gehazi, Elisha’s servant tried to take credit for, and profit greedily by God’s miracle, running after profit, just like Balaam, God used leprosy as his punishment. Elisha said in Numbers 5:26-27 Then he said to him, **“Did my heart not go with you, when the man turned from his chariot to meet you? Is it a time to accept money and to accept clothes, olive groves, vineyards, sheep, oxen, and male and female slaves? 27 Therefore, the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and to your descendants forever.”** So he went out from his presence afflicted with leprosy, as white as snow. Even good kings of Judah, like Uzziah, whom the Lord was with, and who built up and strengthened Judah, acted foolishly toward God, they were apt to be taught a lesson using this dreaded disease. In 2 Ch. 16-21 we read **16 But when he became strong, his heart was so proud that he acted corruptly, and he was untrue to the Lord his God, for he entered the temple of**

**the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense. ...19 But Uzziah, with a censer in his hand for burning incense, was enraged; and while he was enraged with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead in the presence of the priests in the house of the Lord, beside the altar of incense.** During Uzziah's reign there were many prophets active from whom He could have learned to act better. There was Isaiah, Hosea, Amos, and Jonah who are mentioned in the Bible. This shows that even good men who are servants of God, when they act foolishly, and pridefully, risk chastisement, and sometimes very severe chastisement from the Lord. All of these judgments of God resulting in Leprosy have to do with someone doing something that they absolutely should have known better than to have done, making themselves unclean before God—so God made sure everyone knew that they had made themselves unclean by giving them an outward sign of this uncleanness. It has to do with willful sin by someone who should know better, or who have knowledge that this is not the way that they are supposed to act.

**came to Jesus, imploring Him and kneeling down, and saying to Him, “If You are willing, You can make me clean.”**-- The leper, who had either seen Jesus' mighty works or had heard about them, came beseeching Jesus to remove from him the ravages and stigma of this dreadful disease. In the firm conviction, “If you will you can make me clean,” he is asking for healing. The man, desperate for healing, falls at Jesus' feet and pleads with him, saying, “If you are willing, you can make me clean.” The leper approached to within touching distance, in defiance of the taboo, and even what was to be done in accordance with the Law. This word means that the man came close to Jesus, and it's even sometimes used to indicate that he took the initiative even more boldly by himself touching Jesus, as clasping the around the knees, begging Him to heal Him, which was a recognized gesture of supplication in Greek culture, or may simply have, which would be more consistent with Jewish culture, fell down on his knees before Jesus. Basically, this is a strong, urgent appeal.

**If you are willing**--The if you are willing here is not because the leper doubts whether Jesus would be willing, it's more like 'if you would be so kind' But, what is very noticeable is that the leper's unquestioning assumption of Jesus' ability to cure his condition, given that it is incurable. This is the kind of faith that always gets Jesus' attention, wherever He goes. We don't know whether Jesus' reputation (v. 28) has reached even to this man cut off from society, or if God gave this man the knowledge that even leprosy, normally assumed to be incurable, comes under His power and authority. This word *Katharizo καθαρίζω* is used consistently as the regular term for curing leprosy in all gospel passages concerning leprosy--but never in connection with other diseases and conditions. In Matthew 10:8 Jesus instructs the 12 apostles that He sent out to heal and deliver, saying **8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those with leprosy, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give.** This distinction is important, since leprosy is not only a disease that made you unhealthy, and afflicted, but it also cut you off, not only from society, but from God. Remember that the Israelites had to offer sacrifices to cover their sins in the Temple in Jerusalem. Lepers couldn't do this, so they were cut off, unclean, unable to be cleansed. That is precisely the state that we found ourselves in, before we were saved; cut off from God. But Jesus not only healed us, but He cleansed us from our sins, like He cleansed this leper. And it was part of His priestly role to cleanse both this leper, and to cleanse us from our sins. This is why these healings of lepers are so prominent, and so separate from Jesus' other healings. They stand for Jesus' role as the one who makes atonement, the one who cleanses from sins, as God's High Priest. He restores us, not only to polite society, but he cleanses us from all sins.

**41 Moved with compassion, Jesus reached out with His hand and touched him, and \*said to him, “I am willing; be cleansed.” 42 And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed.** --Jesus, moved with compassion, reaches out and touches the man, something considered taboo due to the contagious nature of leprosy. In that moment, a powerful miracle

takes place as the man is instantly healed. The scene is filled with a mix of emotions – the man’s desperation and hope, Jesus’ compassion and power, and the awe of those witnessing this incredible moment. Mark certainly wants us to understand that Jesus was emotionally affected by the When Jesus touched the leper, He was cleansed, clean, and so Jesus did not make Himself ritually unclean, as would have been the case if he did not heal him. And, also, here is one of those many cases where Jesus disregards convention or tradition, if it gets in the way of God working to alleviate human suffering. The leper didn’t render Jesus unclean, Jesus rendered the leper clean by the touch. God heals everything He touches. So let Him into those areas of your heart and life that you most want to keep Him out of—let Him heal and cleanse, for He will, if you will only let Him.

**43 And He sternly warned him and immediately sent him away, 44 and He \*said to him, “See that you say nothing to anyone; --**Jesus commanded the former leper to be silent concerning his healing, and instructed him to show himself to the priests, who alone could declare him clean, and to offer the sacrifices prescribed in the Mosaic Law. And, it goes on from there. Someone being cured of leprosy was a big deal! And, so leprosy In the Old Testament, was a visible sign of spiritual uncleanness, and only a priest could declare a person clean. Jesus’ healing of a leper in the New Testament is often interpreted as a Messianic miracle, fulfilling the requirements of Leviticus 14, which required a priest to examine and cleanse the leper. This event marks Jesus as the ultimate Priest, who not only pronounces but also removes impurity, fulfilling the expectations of the Old Testament. The healing of lepers was considered a significant sign of the Messiah’s arrival, as it involved following the rituals of the Law. Thus, the healing of lepers in the New Testament is seen as a direct fulfillment of the Old Testament’s expectations regarding the Messiah. Jesus’ demand that the man comply with Mosaic regulation is qualified by the words “for a testimony to them.” understand “them” as the priests, for it is they who must examine the man to determine whether the leprosy has been removed. Jesus’ statement then means that if the priests establish that healing has taken place and accept the sacrifice for cleansing but fail to recognize the person and power through whom healing has come, they will stand condemned by the very evidence which they have supplied. The healing of the leper demonstrated that God had done something new. If they neglect this sign or deliberately refer this gracious act to an evil origin, the accomplished sacrifice will testify against them on the day of judgment.

**45 But he went out and began to proclaim it freely and to spread the news around, to such an extent that [z]Jesus could no longer publicly enter a city, but stayed out in unpopulated areas; and they were coming to Him from everywhere.--**It is explicitly stated in verse 45 that Jesus was hindered from entering any further towns as a result of the man’s failure to heed Jesus’ injunction. As a consequence, the preaching mission within the synagogues of Galilee, reported in Ch. 1:39, was interrupted. The man blatantly disregarded the instructions. The result was that Jesus’ ministry in the synagogue was hampered, for he was no longer able to enter any town without encountering crowds of people waiting to throng one who could heal a leper, claiming benefactions for themselves. This was not the mission Jesus had come to fulfill.