

used to direct men to a saving relationship to Jesus Christ, and to teach such persons to lead a godly life. Some translations are better than others, but all can be used to further the kingdom of our Lord here on earth. Likewise, we encourage the use of commentaries, etc. Even though men disagree in those commentaries, comparisons are helpful, as are new ideas. Don't be afraid to use aids; just be alert to the fact that men are given to error in thinking and yet can be helpful to spiritual growth.

LEPROSY — SOME FACTS AND FANTASIES

First, read Leviticus 13 and 14 in your Bible, and try to read it in some modern version like New American Standard, etc., if you can. See also Ex. 4:6; Num. 12:10; II Kings 5:27. There has been needless worry as well as mental suffering over this disease of the Bible. Part of it is because of translation problems, part of it is because of failure to read the text carefully and understand the reason for the treatment of lepers. Certainly a failure to understand God's reasons for commanding the Israelites to do certain things has caused part of the trouble with leprosy. We recommend that everyone read S. J. McMillen's book, *None of These Diseases* (Spire books, Revell) to help in understanding why God commanded the Israelites to do certain things along the line of cleanliness, etc.

Let it be noted that the Bible does not state anywhere that the leper was equal to nor to be treated as a sinner. That the people of Israel all sinned is a rather evident fact—but all who sinned were not required to live outside the camp or village! Everyone would have been outside the camp had that been the case. But lepers were required to live apart from others—doubtless not because

leprosy was worse than sin! The ostracism from society was for an entirely different reason—the “leprosy” was probably contagious, and this was God’s means of “isolation” and quarantine.

The problem arose over the translation of the Hebrew word *tsaraath* and the Greek word *lepra*. These words basically denoted a scaling or peeling condition. The Hebrew term was hence applied to a *number of skin conditions*, which would include something like psoriasis or Leucoderma, which appear with a whiteness, as the “leprosy” in Leviticus 13 and 14 shows. Leprosy (Hansen’s disease) is not white. The word in Greek (*lepra*) came into Jerome’s Latin Vulgate (ca. A.D. 400) as *leprosus*, and from this we get our English word leprosy. The term may have included what we today know as leprosy, but it is rather unlikely.

There are several reasons why modern day leprosy is not what is in the Bible. The appearance is not the same. The affliction in the Bible could be determined in a very short time, and such a short time for the diagnosis of modern day leprosy (better known as Hansen’s disease, after the Norwegian doctor Armauer Hansen, who isolated and identified the leprosy bacillus in 1872. Its Latin term is *Mycobacterium Leprae*.) would be rather difficult. The Bible leprosy could be found in the stone and woodwork of houses, 14:33-57, and in clothing, 13:47-59. Hansen’s disease hardly fits that category. The exclusion from society of the Bible leper was probably because the various skin afflictions included under the Hebrew term *tsaraath* or Greek term *lepra* were infectious and communicable. Hansen’s disease is hardly that, being one of the least communicable diseases known. Modern physicians have established that it is less infectious than tuberculosis. At Carville, up until 1949, with some 50 years of operation, not one doctor or nurse became infected. The same general

fact is applicable to other leper hospitals such as the San Lazaro Leper hospital in the Philippines. The disease is apparently not inherited, though children of leprous parents show a tendency to also develop the disease.

Modern drugs have greatly aided the cure of Hansen's disease. Research especially in India has shown that patients can be cured, and usage of bodily extremities can be helped or cured. One of the problems with Hansen's disease is that it affects nerve endings which results in loss of feeling in the member affected. Thus fingers and toes are often worn off literally, or burned off, etc., because the patient does not realize what is happening.

Modern methods and drugs have greatly helped the people afflicted with Hansen's disease. Many are suggesting that the patients can be treated in doctor's offices just as any other patients, and, in fact, some have and are being treated that way.

If the same sort of effort were made to remove the stigma from the term leprosy, and to completely disassociate the Bible term from Hansen's disease, since they are not identical, much needless mental agony and physical distress caused by false misconceptions among the general public would be removed, and a great service would be rendered many people.

DEATH: WHAT IS IT?

Some religious groups, and others within religious groups, hold the basic position that the people who do not go to heaven, when sentenced by God to hell, are then annihilated, and cease to exist. Thus, the punishment is eternal in its consequence and duration, though not in the person's existence or punishment endured endlessly while existing. The argument is several-sided and not capable of absolute solution either way, though we do not