

## NOTES AND QUESTIONS FOR INDUCTIVE STUDY IN THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS INDIVIDUALLY OR IN GROUPS -

### PART THREE – THE HIGH PRIEST, THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN MAKE US CLEAN

Lev.8-10 is concerned with Aaron, the first High Priest, and his sons. The best commentary on this section is Heb.3-10 which explains how Jesus Christ is the Christian's High Priest,(Heb.3:1) in some respects like Aaron,(Heb.5:1-5) and in other ways not.(Heb.5:6-10; 6:20-7:17) Both offered sacrifice to God on behalf of man. Aaron however had to do it repeatedly,(Heb.7:27,28) and also for himself as a sinner like the rest of us. Jesus did it once only; being without sin He did not need to do it for Himself, but was Himself the sacrifice without blemish as well as the offerer.(Heb.9:14,23-28)

Lev.8 sets out the High Priest's role. It was:-

- (i) to offer sacrifice for sin.
- (ii) to discover God's will for the people by means of the Urim and Thummim.(8:8)
- (iii) to represent God as King, symbolized by the crown.(8:9)
- (iv) to demonstrate God's holiness, illustrated by the special garments.(8:7)

Jesus Christ's role included all 4 - through Him alone we can be right with God, know His will, enter His kingdom and see His example. Aaron was anointed with oil;(8:12) Jesus was anointed with the Spirit.(Acts 10:38) They were commissioned for their tasks by God, not self-appointed. Aaron was cleansed with blood on his ear, hand and foot so that he would hear God, work for God and go where God wanted him. Jesus listened to His Father, performed His work and went where the Father directed Him.(Lev. 8:23; Jn.5:30; 8:28; 14:31)

Aaron was fed with meat and bread. (8:31) Jesus' food was to do the will of God, (Jn. 4:34) so that we in turn could feed on His strength and word.

Lev.9 shows how the High Priest was meant to be. When he obeyed instructions at the altar (the cross), God's glory became evident first to him,(9:6) and then through him to the people.(9:23) Glory means all that God is made visible. Jesus, in what is often called His high priestly prayer, explains how He glorified the Father (Jn. 17:4), that is, showed the world what the Father was like; He wants His glory to be seen in our lives.(Jn. 17:22) On the Mount of Transfiguration the disciples got a glimpse of God's glory in the body of Christ.(Matt. 17) On Mt. Sinai the Israelites glimpsed God's glory in the face of Moses.(Exod. 34) The more we get our eyes on Christ and His purpose for us in the world, the more others will get a glimpse of God's glory in our lives.(II Cor. 3)

Lev. 10 shows how a high priest was not meant to be.

- (i) Nadab and Abihu offered their own sacrifices not those God commanded.(10:1) Like Cain,(Gen. 4) and Ananias and Sapphira,(Acts 5) they did it their way. They by-passed the cross. God could not allow such a direct challenge to His message to the world to go unanswered, or to allow them to continue to act on His behalf. They died.
- (ii) Eleazar and Ithamar neglected to eat their part of the sin offering. They were acting as professional priests, failing to recognize that it was their sin too for which the sacrifice was made, and failing to draw on strength from Christ. They were warned that God was angry, but they lived. (10:16-20)

Lev. 11-15 is concerned with what is clean and unclean in food, health, sex, clothing, houses and childbirth. What would loving yourself and your neighbour look like in practice? There is a sound preventative medical and ecological basis to all the instructions they received. Moses' God-given knowledge was 3,400 years ahead of its time.

Lev 11 deals with clean and unclean food. Certain animals, fish, birds, reptiles and insects were unclean. There are at least 4 good reasons.

- (i) carriers of disease - pigs, shellfish, mice, vultures, polluted water.
- (ii) poor nutritional value - insects other than locusts.
- (iii) dangerous to hunt - snakes and crocodiles.

(iv) easily made extinct because they reproduce slowly - ostriches. Love includes a concern for the health of our family and guests, and for future generations. The New Testament declared all foods clean for the Christian,(Mk.7:19; Acts 10:15) putting emphasis on a clean heart (Lk.11:41; Tit.1:15), and on knowing Christ within us, not just on His Old Testament shadow. (Col. 2:16,17) In Christ's strength we can know individually in our particular circumstances, time and place in the world, and even state of health, what is clean and good for us.(Rom. 14:2) At the same time we are to have a loving sensitivity to others' very different needs and convictions.(Rom. 14:15-23; Acts 15:20)

Lev. 12 gives instructions for hygiene and sexual abstinence after childbirth. This would reduce infection and immediate further pregnancies. Both would be an expression of love and consideration on the part of the husband towards his nearest and dearest neighbour. Note the sacrifice allowed for poor people and compare this with Lk.2:24 to see the circumstances of Jesus' early life. In the New Testament a greater expression of love is expected in a couple's physical relationship.(I Cor.7:5; Eph.5:25)

Lev. 13 teaches the recognition of leprosy and of mildew in clothing. The priest was to be the leprosy doctor. Isolation of the leper, lonely though it was for the individual, protected others from infection. Wrong diagnosis of leprosy and unnecessary exclusion were also prevented.

Lev. 14 recognized that a leper might be healed and should then be restored to full acceptance in society - still today the hardest part of leprosy treatment in Asia and Africa. Whether healing was natural or supernatural, it was God's work, so He should be thanked. They were not to jump too quickly to the conclusion that healing had occurred. Mildew or rot in houses were the reason for the first local body regulation - for the benefit of present and future occupants. Love was the motive. Jesus fearlessly touched and healed lepers.(Matt. 8:3) Leprosy pictures sin throughout the Bible. In Jesus' strength we have nothing to fear from contact with sinners. Jesus cleansed His Father's house from rotten religion.(Jn.2:13-22)

Lev. 15 dealt with male discharges and female periods and abnormal bleeding. Again the practical issue is infection and the benefit of the whole community. The woman with the haemorrhage who touched Jesus risked public condemnation as she reached out in faith to the One who loved her more than He loved Himself.(Matt. 9:20)

#### QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. How does Jesus play the four roles of the high priest in our lives today? How can we help others to experience these same four benefits of knowing Him?(chap.8,9) But how may we make the same disastrous mistakes Aaron's sons made? How do these mistakes hinder others' growth in faith?(chap.10) How can we avoid these mistakes?
2. In what way does God still want to be involved in our choices of what we eat?(chap.11)
3. What difference did the instructions Moses gave about childbirth make to marriage and the family? How will loving our wives at such times help them and strengthen marriages?(chap.12)
4. Why was the priest's role in dealing with lepers so important for public health? What does leprosy picture in the New Testament? How therefore can we help those who struggle with behaviour today? How would 'leprosy' in a house also be a health issue?(chaps.13,14)
5. How would the instructions about discharge also protect others and so be loving towards them? How might they apply to us today?(chap.15)