

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

PART ONE - CLEANNESS, AND THE SECRET OF LOVE

The book of Leviticus is usually neglected but immensely exciting.

The name in English is quite inadequate, implying that it is for the Levites, the priests, only. Beware of the danger of leaving interpretation of the Bible to the experts! The Hebrew title is 'And He called', from the opening words of the book.

The writer is Moses.(1:1) This is confirmed by Jesus in the New Testament. Matt. 8:4 refers to Lev.13:49, 14:2.

The time of writing is the second year after the Exodus, and the place Sinai.(Exod.40:1, Lev.1:1, Num.1:1) God is recorded speaking to Moses 38 times at Mt Sinai.

The purpose of Leviticus is to show how the theocratic (God governed) state God used Moses to set up was to operate. The two basic principles are brought out by the way its message is emphasized and applied in the New Testament. This is often a vital clue to the key theme of an Old Testament book.

1. Lev.26:11,12 is quoted in II Cor. 6:16. Notice how Paul slightly changes the words of Leviticus for an important reason. God would live among His people on the condition they got clean and stayed clean. Today the Holy Spirit lives in us on condition that we become clean from our sin. He lives through us when we stay clean. The ceremonial and sacrificial laws (chap.1-7, 16 & 17) taught them how to be clean. The priests (chap.8-10) were to lead them in this (chap.21-23). The priests had to be clean before they could lead others to become clean. So must we as witnesses of Christ and teachers.

2. Lev.19:18 "you shall love your neighbour as yourself." is quoted seven times in the New Testament. This would be the evidence that He lived among them and is now the evidence that He lives in us.(Jn.13:35). The seven quotations emphasise the four areas of life in which His presence among them, and in us, must show.

(a) Matt.19:19 relates this principle to **money and the needs of the poor** for the rich young man who loved his possessions more than the Lord. Leviticus deals with Israel's economic system (chap.25,27). Jas.2:8 brings this teaching to a practical level.

(b) Matt 22:39 and Mark 12:31 show how loving God totally is the only basis for **right behaviour and true morality** in which we love our neighbours more than ourselves. Leviticus deals with God's moral code for Israel.(chap.18-20)

(c) Luke 10:27 explains that loving our neighbours means a **practical caring for everyone** in need in our society. Leviticus presents a social system, God's ideal state, which was concerned with food, clothing, health, housing and welfare.(chap.11-15) Gal.5:14 gives a specific application.

(d) Rom.13:9 is in the context of **our civil responsibility even in a heathen state**. Leviticus gave God's civil law.(chap.24,26).

The problem of Leviticus for Christians is - which bits still apply? All, some or none? Jesus in Matt.5:17-20 said that the whole law was to be fulfilled. The question then is - how? As we have seen the law had two parts, love God and love your neighbour. The purpose of the law is to show us:

1. Christ.(Col.2:16,17). For the Christian it has done this, so look at Him not just His shadow.(Heb.9:28-10:10).

2. Our sin.(Gal.3:23-25). Having done this our 'tutor' comes to live inside us and makes us His sons, that is, like Him.

3. The impossibility of the Christian life.(Rom.7) Once it has done this we have His power in us to make the impossible, possible.(Rom.8).

In each case the law has been fulfilled by something vastly better being provided. If I owe you \$1.00, but give you \$1,000.00 my debt is paid. For example:

1. In Leviticus some days were special. For the Christian every day is special and belongs to God.(Rom.14:5-12) Each individual is to work out his programme before God who perfectly understands Him.

2. Leviticus said yes or no to the particular foods that were healthy in one part of the world at one time in history. There was a sound medical basis for the instructions given. The Christian has the Lord in him to show him what food He knows will suit him as an individual, both in quality (this will vary according to his age, sex, state of health, weight, occupation, culture and financial state) and quantity at any place in time.(Mk.7:19, Acts 10:15, Rom.14:14).

3. In Leviticus the priest alone could approach God. Now every Christian can do so.(I Pet.2:9, Rev.1:6).

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. What means has the Lord provided in the New Testament to make us clean from sin?(I Pet.2:24; Rom.3:24,25) What do we have to do today to be clean before God?(I Jn.1:7,9)

2. How today does God live among His people?(Rom.8:9-11; Rev.3:20) Why is our situation so much better than in Old Testament times? Give practical examples of how this works for you.

3. Why is it not enough just to tell people to love their neighbours as they love themselves? How does this principle work out if you have a difficult neighbour?

4. What difference would it make to your home country if the book of Leviticus was the law of the country? Would it work?