

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

PART FOUR – LOVING GOD AND LOVING YOUR NEIGHBOUR

The remaining section covers many topics and does not seem at first to divide logically. The book moves backwards and forwards between priests and their ceremonies,(16,17 and 21-24) and the conduct of everyday life,(18-20 and 25-27). This is exactly the way it should be for the Christian whose life should move naturally from study and worship to life and service without artificial divisions. Worship makes life effective and exciting. Life experience makes worship urgent and relevant.

Lev.16 and 17 deal with the Day of Atonement and the scapegoat. Atonement means 'covering' and was God's way of dealing with sin until the cross, which brought cleansing. Covering is temporary; cleansing is permanent. Two goats were taken, one to be sacrificed, the other to be pushed out of the camp into the wilderness as the scapegoat. The sacrifice that looks forward to the cross is God's way of dealing with sin. The scapegoat, blaming someone else for our failures and then pushing that person out of our community, is man's way of dealing with sin. Jesus Christ is not the scapegoat. This section concludes by forbidding other gods and the drinking of blood. Faith in itself is meaningless or even destructive if it is not based on the God of the Bible. Blood = life according to 17:14. Christ's life was not available for us to 'drink', to receive into us, until after the cross.

Lev.18-20 A cleansed life will show first in the home and family, hence the importance of the Lord choosing our partner who is not to be a close relative, someone of the same sex or an animal. Chapter 19 applies the commandments to life and shows how Christian living begins with our thoughts and attitudes to each other. Compare this chapter with Matt.5. In chapter 20 God ordered life to be withdrawn in 4 circumstances, the worship of Moloch which involved the sacrifice of live children, spiritism, cursing parents, and the forbidden sexual relationships. The first, third and fourth attack family life, the first and second our relationship with God.

Lev.21-24:9 The priests had tremendous responsibilities which were not to be taken lightly. They were to be examples of Christ as the bridegroom of His church, the bride.(chap.21) They alone could feed on the bread which pictures Christ. All Christians are priests. They were to insist that all sacrifices were to be perfect if these were to represent Christ.(chap.22) Their activity was set in an annual calendar as the Christian faith is set in an historic framework.(chap.23) Its features were:-

- (i) The Sabbath - God created, redeemed and empowers; we can rest in what He has done.
- (ii) The Passover - God had brought them out of Egypt; Jesus died and rose again to redeem us.
- (iii) The day of Pentecost,(Pentecost means 50 days) - God taught them at Sinai how they could not live; the Holy Spirit was given at Pentecost to make that life possible.
- (iv) The feast of Tabernacles - God kept them in temporary accommodation until they had learned to trust Him fully; our present bodies are Christ's temporary accommodation until He returns.

Special attention was given to three constant features of the Holy Place, the lamps, the shewbread and the frankincense, which speak of our witness to the world, Bible study and prayer.(chap.24) The last two are the secret of the first.

Lev.24:10-27:34 Blasphemy is equal to murder in God's eyes. Not taking God's character and authority seriously is the cause of all other sin. A loving God wants to deal with the cause of our problems. The law is just,(chap.24:17-22) but the Christian life is based not on justice but on mercy.(Matt.5:38) Giving the land a Sabbath rest was sound farming practice.(chap.25) Practising the concept of land holding described here would do much to remove economic injustice and greed in our society. It would give us a constant reminder of redemption. If God's people were faithful He would bless them and every area of life would be affected.(chap.26) If they were disobedient then they would also have reason to regret it in every part of life. There was always a way out through repentance back to God's forgiveness and blessing. Men of God were to be men of their word.(chap.27) They were to keep their promises if at all possible. If their promises were rash they were to make an equivalent payment. Loving your neighbour includes a transparent honesty in words and actions.(Matt.5:33-37)

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. How do we deal with sin in our societies? Is it effective? If not, why not? How by contrast did God teach His people to deal with their sin? How have you seen the idea of the scapegoat operating in your family or community?(16)
2. Why was there to be only one place where sacrifices could be offered? Why was God so particular about what His people did with the blood of an offering? What does the New Testament say about these two issues? Why are these ideas so important to our faith?(17)
3. What sexual relationships were forbidden? What was God protecting in laying down these boundaries for family life? How do modern attitudes ignore God's wisdom and with what consequences? How should we now deal with such behaviour?(18,20)
4. List the variety of ways in which 'loving your neighbour' was to be expressed in daily life. What consequences have there been from ignoring many of these examples in modern life? How can we go about changing the unloving way our society has become?(19)
5. What special standards were set for priests and for sacrifices? Why were they so tough? How does this apply to us? What did each special feast look back on in Israel's history? What does each one look forward to for us?(21-23)
6. What aspects of the Christian gospel are illustrated by the principles described here? What effect would it have upon our society if our legal system operated as described in this section?

FINAL ASSIGNMENT Take time now to get the feel of what it would have been like to live in Israel in the days when Leviticus was first given. Describe how this book would affect

- your family life
- your business and finances
- when conflict occurred
- your relationship with needy people

Compare this with how you might respond as a Christian to the same situations today.