

April 15

Scriptures: Read Leviticus 11 & 12

Key Verse: “For I am the Lord who brings you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.” (Leviticus 11:45)

Overview

After the terrible blight upon the new priesthood (10:17, 18), the Lord reassured and after Moses' rebuke (10:17, 18), the Lord reassured and honored Aaron in his high priestly position by speaking directly to him along with Moses. Aaron was to have great respect from all the people because of the position God had given him. It was necessary for Aaron to hear these regulations since he was given the responsibility of teaching the people. God gave instructions regarding foods that were clean and unclean. He was concerned for the spiritual and physical well being of His people. We must understand that the Israelites had lived under the poor conditions of slavery in Egypt. They had much to learn, and their loving God of the covenant had their best interests in mind and was certainly the one to give the wisest laws. These distinctions between clean and unclean foods had been known to a certain degree in the time of Noah (Gen. 7:2). This knowledge had probably been passed down verbally throughout the generations. No doubt God instructed Adam about these regulations, but over the centuries and during the many years in Egypt, they may have become careless. However, now with their new covenant relationship with God and their new honored position as God's holy nation, they needed more specific laws to clearly show them to be a distinct nation, a people set apart for God as a holy and pure people.

The basic guidelines God gave His people were: concerning animals, only those that chewed the cud and had a split hoof (11:3) were permitted to be eaten; from the water, only creatures with fins and scales were to be eaten (11:9). Birds and insects were also covered; neither bird of prey nor most insects were to be consumed (11:13-23). After making these demands, God gave the reason they were to obey; simply because He was their God and deliverer who brought them out of bondage; He was holy and, therefore, they too were to be holy (11:44, 45).

These sound health and sanitary principles were especially needed at that time of Israel's history. They were traveling in a desert area, constantly exposed to the elements and to wildlife of all sorts. In such an area, sickness could be easily transmitted. Following the Lord's instructions would not only lead to better physical health but, even more importantly, to better spiritual health. If observed carefully, these laws would serve as a constant reminder to the Israelites that they were to be a separated and holy nation. In obeying God and keeping themselves pure they were in a better position to have communion with Him. When we obey an honor the Lord, and are nourished with the spiritual food found in God's Holy Bible. We too can have better fellowship with God and grow in Him.

In chapter 12, we learn that the Israelite women were ceremonially unclean for a period of time after childbirth, meaning they could not participate in the worship activities at the Tabernacle. A possible reason for this may be related to mankind's sinful nature, which is imparted to a child at conception. However, in the Old Covenant, having children was considered a joy and a blessing from God (Ps.127:3-5), and in obedience to His command to “be fruitful and multiply”

(Gen.1:28; 9:7). It is a serious consideration to bring into the world children who will, by nature, inherit the depravity of sin, but God gave a hope for man's restoration to Him which was symbolized in the offerings the new mother would bring after her time of uncleanness was over. Curiously, this time period was twice as long for a girl baby as it was for a boy. It may be that the time was shortened because of the boy's rite of circumcision on the eighth day, symbolizing the covenant relationship with God (12:3; Gen.17:12).

Today we do not need to worry about following these specific ceremonial laws, since they do no apply to us (see 1 Tim. 4:3-5). The Apostle Paul, speaking of the ceremonial law, wrote that Jesus "has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross" (Col. 2:14, see also verses 16, 17). We do, however, need to concern ourselves with being obedient to God and keeping ourselves pure, holy, and undefiled in a world full of uncleanness (1 Pet. 1:14, 15). It is only by the power of Jesus Christ and His Holy Spirit within us that we can live a holy life.

Prayer

Almighty God, we ask for Your work of holiness in our lives. Grant us the grace to obey You and keep ourselves pure, holy and undefiled. We pray this in Jesus' all-powerful Name, Amen!