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Leviticus 10

“Sacrifices, Priests, and Feasts”

Part 2 - The Priests

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Our second study in the book of Leviticus focuses on the priesthood. Aaron and his sons were ordained into the ministry of the priesthood,¹ and how they started their ministry.²

In [Leviticus 10:1-2](#) we find out that God killed Aaron’s sons (Nadab and Abihu), because they were disobedient to the Lord in their priestly service. They didn’t follow God’s prescribed way of approaching him, having decided to do things their way. Instead of taking fire from the altar of God that God kindled, they offered what the Bible calls *“unauthorized fire,”* which means they kindled their own fire. So God judged their disobedience by striking them down with fire from heaven!

While this may seem harsh to us and we may wonder why God would kill Nadab and Abihu for kindling their own fire, we need to be reminded that this happened at the start of the Old Testament priesthood. God couldn’t allow the priests to approach him in their own way, because if he did, that would mean that a man-made system would be okay, instead of a God-made system. The bottom line is that whether it’s Old Testament or New Testament, God alone sets the terms concerning how we approach him, our redemption, etc.

In the Old Testament, the terms of redemption were temporary through the sacrifice of animals (a life for a life), which pointed to the New Testament. In the New Testament, the terms of redemption were permanent, because of the sacrifice of Jesus (a life for a life) on the cross for all who would believe.

¹ [Leviticus 8](#)

² [Leviticus 9](#)

On the heels of this tragic incident, God gave Aaron and his surviving sons a mandate for serving as priests, as found in [Leviticus 10:8-11](#).³ God called them to avoid alcohol, to “*distinguish between the holy and the common... the unclean and the clean,*” and to teach all of the Lord’s decrees to the Israelites.

God-given Requirements For Priests

1. Even though Jesus has replaced the priesthood, in the sense that he is the only intermediary between God and man, the responsibilities of pastors are very similar to the priests of the Old Testament.
 - a. Avoid alcohol.
 - i. [1 Timothy 3:3](#) and [Titus 1:7](#) – “... *not given to drunkenness...*”
 - ii. The Greek word used is *paroinos* (combination of *para/near* and *oinos/wine*).
 - iii. These references are the only times this Greek word appears in the Bible.
 - iv. God doesn’t want pastors near alcohol, because their responsibilities and calling cannot be blurred by anything intoxicating.
 - v. Christians need to be exclusively under the control of the Holy Spirit.
2. Distinguish “*between the between the holy and the common... the unclean and the clean...*”
 - a. Pastors are supposed to instruct people in the ways of the Lord so they will have a good understanding of what God considers to be right and wrong.
3. Teach all of the Lord’s decrees to the Israelites.
 - a. [Ephesians 4:11-13](#) – “*It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*”
4. The concept of “*distinguishing between the between the holy and the common... the unclean and the clean,*” looked different than it does today, because God was trying to communicate holiness through health and hygiene.
 - a. The priests had responsibilities that today would make them seem like they were employees of the Department of Health and Human Services!

³ “Then the Lord said to Aaron, ‘You and your sons are not to drink wine or other fermented drink whenever you go into the Tent of Meeting, or you will die. This is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. You must distinguish between the holy and the common, between the unclean and the clean, and you must teach the Israelites all the decrees the Lord has given them through Moses.’”

- b. In [Leviticus 11-18](#) the priests were called to monitor and enforce regulations concerning the following:
- i. Food
 - ii. Skin diseases
 - iii. Mildew
 - iv. Personal hygiene
 - v. Sexual relations
- c. God gave very specific guidelines regarding regulations about food.
- i. [Leviticus 11:3](#) - *“You may eat any animal that has a split hoof completely divided and that chews the cud.”*
 1. No Eating! - Camels, conies, rabbits, or pigs.
 2. Good for Grilling! - Cattle, goats, sheep, and deer.
 - ii. [Leviticus 11:9](#) - *“Of all the creatures living in the water of the seas and the streams, you may eat any that have fins and scales.”*
 1. No Eating! - Shrimp, lobster, oysters, crabs, and clams.
 - iii. [Leviticus 11:13](#) - *“These are the birds you are to detest and not eat...”*
 1. No Eating! - Eagles, vultures, kites, ravens, owls, gulls, hawks, cormorants, osprey, storks, heron, hoopoe, and bats.
 - iv. [Leviticus 11:21-22](#) - *“Some winged creatures that walk on all fours... that have jointed legs for hopping... these you may eat.”*
 1. Sweet for Snacking! - Locusts, katydids, crickets, and grasshoppers.
 - v. [Leviticus 11:46-47](#) - *“These are the regulations concerning animals, birds, every living thing that moves in the water and every creature that moves about on the ground. You must distinguish between the unclean and the clean, between living creatures that may be eaten and those that may not be eaten.”*
- d. Childbirth ⁴
- i. [Leviticus 12:7b-8](#) - *“These are the regulations for the woman who gives birth to a boy or a girl. If she cannot afford a lamb, she is to bring two doves or two young pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering. In this way the priest will make atonement for her, and she will be clean.”*
- e. Skin diseases ⁵
- i. [Leviticus 14:54-57](#) - *“These are the regulations for any infectious skin disease, for an itch, for mildew in clothing or in a house, and for a swelling, a rash or a bright spot, to determine when something is clean or unclean. These are the regulations for infectious diseases and mildew.”*

⁴ [Leviticus 12](#)

⁵ The King James Version uses the word, leprosy. [Leviticus 13-14](#)

- f. Bodily discharges ⁶
 - i. Pastor Gary suggested that everyone should read and study these privately!
- g. Sexual relations ⁷
 - i. Unlawful and immoral sexual relations included:
 1. Incest
 2. Step-relationships (step-mother, step-sister, etc.)
 3. Aunts or uncles
 4. Homosexuality
 5. Bestiality
 - ii. [Leviticus 18:30](#) - *“Keep my requirements and do not follow any of the detestable customs that were practiced before you came and do not defile yourselves with them. I am the Lord your God.”*

Practical Reasons For God’s Requirements

- 5. There are certain food-borne illnesses that are more prevalent with some of these animals than with others.
 - a. Pork – Trichinosis ⁸ and Hookworm ⁹
 - b. Sea scavengers (bottom feeders) – Parasites
 - c. Meat
 - i. We now understand that eating fatty, cholesterol-rich foods that build up plaque in arteries causes arteriosclerosis.
 - ii. [Leviticus 7:22](#) – God said, *“Do not eat any of the fat of cattle, sheep, or goats.”*
 - d. Hygiene
 - i. Even as recently as the mid-1800’s, the medical community did not understand the transfer of germs and disease.
 1. Dr. Ignaz Semmelweis ¹⁰ was mocked for suggesting that doctors need to wash their hands between autopsies and delivering babies!
 2. God gave specific instructions concerning this subject, approximately 3,300 years earlier, when he said; *“... whoever touches a dead body will be unclean for seven days and must purify himself with water.”* ¹¹

⁶ [Leviticus 15](#)

⁷ [Leviticus 18](#)

⁸ <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/trichinosis/DS00689>

⁹ <http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/hookworm/>

¹⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ignaz_Semmelweis

¹¹ [Numbers 19:11-12](#) – *“Whoever touches the dead body of anyone will be unclean for seven days. He must purify himself with the water on the third day and on the seventh day; then he will be clean. But if he does not purify himself on the third and seventh days, he will not be clean.”*

3. When people in the medical community adhered to this practice, as outlined in the Bible, the infant mortality rate dropped significantly!
 - ii. We now know more about typhoid, cholera, and dysentery.
 1. **Deuteronomy 23:12-13** - *“Designate a place outside the camp where you can go to relieve yourself. As part of your equipment have something to dig with, and when you relieve yourself, dig a hole and cover up your excrement.”*
 - iii. In the 14th Century, the pandemic Black Death (Bubonic Plague) killed an estimated 75–200 million people, which reduced Europe’s population by 30–60%.
 1. The unchecked spread of the plague was halted when people practiced the biblical teaching of quarantining the sick.
 - a. **Leviticus 13:46** - *“As long as he has the infection he remains unclean. He must live alone; he must live outside the camp.”*
 - iv. Sexual relations
 1. Besides being immoral, there was an increased likelihood that there would be genetic mutations if close relatives had children.
 2. We know how diseases like hepatitis, HIV/Aids, and sexually transmitted diseases (STD) are associated with homosexual behavior, as well as promiscuous heterosexual behavior.
6. All of these rules and regulations demonstrate how God wants to protect his people from disease and premature death by implementing simple, modern sanitary science.

Spiritual Reasons For God’s Requirements

7. Health and hygiene regulations only help with the external and with the physical.
8. The truth is that no matter how many times someone bathed or practiced these sanitary guidelines, they would never be clean on the inside (the heart).
9. God used these sanitary regulations to expose the greater problem of the uncleanness of the heart.

10. In Jesus' time, the Pharisees practiced these rules of cleanliness without regard to the heart, and he had some very strong and pointed things to say about them!¹²
11. The ultimate message of the Bible is that we are all unclean, unholy, and in the process of dying of a terminal disease called sin.
12. We have a heart problem that is incurable!
13. All of the rules and regulations about external purification pointed to the greater need for internal purification of the heart that was provided for us by the death of Jesus on the cross.
 - a. **1 John 1:9** - *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* (King James Version)

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **Leviticus 10:8-11** to provide an overview for this study.
3. Spend time talking about this statement: "Christians need to be exclusively under the control of the Holy Spirit."
 - a. Do you think there is liberty for Christians when it comes to drinking alcohol?
 - b. Do you think this is a legalistic way of saying that Christians shouldn't drink alcohol?
 - c. Have you ever heard anyone comment on the blessings and benefits of alcohol in their personal or family life, marriage, career, etc.?
 - d. How important is it to you that you are under the complete control of the Holy Spirit?
4. Read and discuss **Ephesians 4:11-13**.¹³
 - a. How has the pulpit ministry of Cornerstone Chapel helped you become equipped for "*works of service*"?
 - b. How have you used your God-given gifts to serve the Lord, the church, and people in Jesus' name?

¹² **Mark 7:1-8, 14-23.**

¹³ Paul outlines the four-fold ministry of apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor/teachers. Some incorrectly believe this Scripture defines a five-fold ministry.

- c. What are some of the insights you've learned from the pulpit ministry of Cornerstone Chapel that have helped you grow in your walk with the Lord?
 - d. How has the pulpit ministry at Cornerstone Chapel helped you understand the difference between what God considers to be right and wrong?
 - e. In your opinion, are the Cornerstone Chapel pastors effective in "*distinguish between the holy and the common... the unclean and the clean*"?
 - f. Even though the philosophy of pulpit ministry at Cornerstone Chapel is not unique, can you describe how a "Genesis to the maps in the back" approach helps people understand the whole counsel of God?
5. Provide an overview of the God-given instructions in [Leviticus 11-18](#). (See #4a-g above)
 - a. Spend time talking about the practical reasons God gave these instructions/requirements to be a benefit to the people. (See #5a-d above)
 6. Read and discuss [Mark 7:1-8, 14-23](#).
 - a. Do you see yourself in the list of sins Jesus gave?
 - b. Share your experiences about times when all you had was an external religion?
 - c. How has the Lord done a cleansing work on your heart?
 - d. How would you describe the "heart operation" the Lord performed on you?
 - e. Read and discuss [2 Corinthians 5:17](#).
 7. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: purpose in their heart to daily live under the influence and control of the Spirit in every aspect of their life; allow the Holy Spirit to help them know what God considers to be right and wrong; seek the Lord's leading and gifting to help them do "*works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.*"

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).