

Thoughts on Ministry of Healing

(21) Hygiene Among the Israelites (pages 277-286)

Summary:

The teaching God gave to Israel was designed to train them in habits that would help preserve their health. The clean and unclean distinctions played a major role in that. These teachings are also helpful to us.

Thoughts:

In this chapter the focus is on teaching the Israelites how to maintain the health of a large society that had recently been in slavery and ignorance. There are a lot of similarities between the laws of Moses and the concerns of public health today.

According to the chapter, the laws of clean and unclean had more than a religious purpose, they were intended also to assist in preserving health. Through the laws of clean and unclean, contagious and contaminating illness could be isolated from the Israelite encampment. Unsafe dwellings were to be destroyed. Personal cleanliness was to be practiced. Unwholesome foods were to be avoided. (277-281)

This chapter also reminds us that a cheerful spirit, outdoor recreation and a strong social life are essential to both physical and moral health. (281-283)

It is probably helpful to note that most Jews and scholars of the Pentateuch (five books of Moses) do not see these laws as health laws, but rather points of ritual distinction between the Israelites and other people. So in sharing things from this chapter don't expect Jews to be grateful. Rituals of various kinds are important to the unity and cohesion of a family or community. For example, the Adventist stand on alcoholic beverages (total abstinence) cannot be conclusively demonstrated from either the Bible or science, yet has great value on social grounds. While it can be argued that small amounts of alcohol in some contexts may have health benefits, the overall picture of alcohol in society is as destructive as any other negative social element.

Quotable Quotes:

“In the teaching that God gave to Israel, the preservation of health received careful attention. The people who had come from slavery with the uncleanly and unhealthful habits which it engenders, were subjected to the strictest training in the wilderness before entering Canaan.” (277)

“Had the Israelites obeyed the instruction they received, and profited by their advantages, they would have been the world's object lesson of health and prosperity. If as a people they had lived according to God's plan, they would have been preserved from the diseases that afflicted other nations. Above any other people they would have possessed physical strength and vigor of intellect. They would have been the mightiest nation on the earth. (283)

“The Israelites failed of fulfilling God's purpose, and thus failed of receiving the blessings that might have been theirs. But in Joseph and Daniel, in Moses and Elisha, and many others, we have noble examples of the results of the true plan of living. Like faithfulness today will produce like results.” (285)

Tweets of Healing:

Christ has warned us against the pride of life, but not against its grace and natural beauty. (277)

Gratitude, rejoicing, benevolence, trust in God's love and care—these are health's greatest safeguard. (281)

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