



The Quarry Gospel Church

BIBLE STUDY - 19.05.21

BIBLE STUDY - LEVITICUS - 15.THE MANUAL OF HOLINESS - Leviticus 17-26

Part 5 - GOD'S WORD ON SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP - Chs.21-22

INTRODUCTION

- *Ch.21* begins "The Lord said to Moses, "Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron"
This phrase also used in other places in *Chs. 17,21,& 22* - The focus is clearly on Aaron and his sons, those anointed by God to the priesthood - spiritual leaders.
See also *Lev. 21:16, 22:2,17*.
- God lays down qualifications/standards the priests are expected to meet.
- Israel needed leaders committed to the pursuit of holiness.
- Real holiness - an all encompassing issue.
- God expected high standards from the nations as a whole and even higher standards from the priests, its spiritual leaders.

This principle is seen also in the New Testament - *Luke 12:48; James 3:1*.

Today, the principles apply to all believers as well as leaders in the church, because:

- a) Responsibility for holiness is not on the priests' shoulders alone
The people had the responsibility to hold the priests to God's word.
Today - leaders should be prayed for and encouraged to maintain their calling according to the word of God.
- b) All believers following Jesus are priests. *1 Peter 2:5,9; Revelation 1:6, 5:10*.
Priests to *our* "Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the whole world" (*Acts 1:8*)

HOWEVER - We do not achieve what is asked of us in our own strength!

Lev.21:8 "I the Lord am holy, I who make you holy" (also 21:15,23; 22:9,16,32)

Holiness - was not a result of the priest's unaided effort - and so with us -

Our commitment to obedience is required!

Holiness and obedience are bound together.

1. THE PERSONAL QUALIFICATIONS OF THE PRIESTS (Ch.21:1-15)

Instructions in 2 sections - to Sons of Aaron, priesthood in general (*21:1-9*) and the one in the role of High Priest (*21:10-15*) and related to mourning and marriage.

Mourning:

- **priests** (*vv1-6*) - allowed to engage in mourning ceremonies only for blood relatives (not relatives by marriage - including their own wives)
not allowed to shave head etc. (that was seen as being like pagan practices)
- **high priests** (*vv10-12*) - more stringent instructions - no signs of mourning at all. He must put His loyalty to God over and above any obligation to family and friends.

Purpose of these rules to display the importance of the priest's relationship with God.

Marriage:

- **priests** (vv7-9) - had to be careful whom they married so that nothing could taint their service to God. Not allowed to show mercy to a daughter who became a prostitute (she would be stoned).
- **high priests** (13-15) - again more stringent instructions - bride must be a virgin - other disqualifications from being a priest's wife include being a widow.

(In addition to the pursuit of personal holiness in service to God, another purpose of these laws was to safeguard the purity of the Levitical line.)

We see the above principles restated in the New Testament: *1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6*

2. THE PHYSICAL FITNESS OF THE PRIESTS (Ch.21:16-24)

- "Fitness" - better interpreted as "suitability" for service and for offering sacrifices.
- Looks more at defects and disabilities (similar to those looked for in animals offered for sacrifice - compare *21:16-24 and 22:22-24*)
- God lists 12 types of disabilities which disqualify a priest from serving - nothing but perfection is acceptable in God's eyes.

N.B. THIS IS NOT a rejection of the "disabled" by God!

- There would still be other jobs to do around the temple in the outer court - they were simply prevented from serving at the altar or at the curtain.
- The law still provided for them in terms of living and food (vv21-23)
- It was more a comment on God's holiness than their disability - God was not judging them.

3. THE PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT OF THE PRIESTS (Ch.22)

The priest was bound to perform his duties as God ordained and with great care. Failure in this demonstrated lack of respect for God and His word, which could lead to death (vv2,9) Half-heartedness in God's service is never acceptable.

God gives instructions in 3 areas to assist in the pursuit of holiness:

A) vv1-9 - The Service that is not admissible

- focus is on v3 - coming near sacred offerings when ceremonially unclean - the result of which is being cut off from God's presence.
- "Cut off" in this context - similar Hebrew word to Deut.10:8 - and means no longer allowed "to stand before" - i.e. no longer allowed to serve.
- Essence of these verses - rules that apply to the people apply just as much to the priests, if not more so.

B) vv10-16 - Negligence and Carelessness is not acceptable

- danger in leadership - becoming so familiar with things of God that you begin to treat them casually.
- 2 illustrations where boundaries can be blurred:
 - i) Who can eat food set aside sacrificial offerings - i.e. who was considered to be part of the priest's family (N.B. Slaves were "part of the family")
 - ii) If a priest eats a sacred offering by mistake - again the priest is bound by the same laws as the people.

C) vv17-30 - Instructions regarding the sacrificial animals

- what makes them unfit for sacrifice;
- how they are/are not to be dealt with.

Chapter 22 - as a whole:

- a "guide to good practice"
- the priest's manual on the "dos and don'ts" in God's service.

APPLICATION

The sacrificial system is no more nor the "jobs" connected to it, but the principles employed in these 2 chapters are still important today for Christian leaders and all believers:

- We are bound to take the things of God seriously and reverently.
- We are not to be careless or negligent.
- We are not to think we are excused from what God expects of others.
- God requires that we put Him first, every day and in every way. (*Romans 12:1*)

Under the New Covenant we have ONE Great High Priest - Jesus Christ:

- He alone can offer a sacrifice for sin - which He did, once and for all.
- He is the perfect fulfilment of these principles of the Priesthood.
- He is our perfect sacrifice on Calvary.
- Jesus lived a life of total consecration and performed His duties with excellence.

His purpose? - that one day He might present to Himself a radiant church without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, holy and blameless.