Leviticus 21-22 | Sunday August 17

Each week in this study of Leviticus we have been reminded of how Israel was to reflect the holiness of God. From what they ate, to their morality, to how they worshipped everything was to show that they were His people. As we move into chapters 21 and 22 the instructions switch from the people back to the priest and high priest. God's standard for the priest is higher then for the Israelite, and higher yet for the high priest. **The closer you get to God's presence the higher standard you are held to.** This can even bee seen in how the tabernacle is designed. Jews who had upheld the laws about cleanliness and worship could enter the courtyard. Then only priest following a separate set of instructions could enter the Holy place. Finally, only the high priest once a year, and following the strictest standards, was allowed in the holy of holies. **The closer you are to God the more you are to reflect Him.**

Leviticus 21:1-6 ESV

(1) And the LORD said to Moses, "**Speak to the priests**, the sons of Aaron, and say to them, No one shall make himself unclean for the dead among his people,
(2) **except for his closest relatives**, his mother, his father, his son, his daughter, his brother,
(3) or his virgin sister (who is near to him because she has had no husband; for her he may make himself unclean).
(4) He shall not make himself unclean as a husband among his people and so profane himself.
(5) They shall not make bald patches on their heads, nor shave off the edges of their beards, nor make any cuts on their body.
(6) **They shall be holy to their God and not profane the name of their God**. For they offer the LORD's food offerings, the bread of their God; **therefore they shall be holy.**

At that time to participate in a funeral would make a person ceremonial unclean because you had been near a dead body**. When a priest became unclean they would not be able to continue serving in the tabernacle until they were cleansed**. God is giving them instructions on who they are allowed to become unclean for. In general it was for immediate family only. These commands are not against the grieving process but is elevating the important role the priest had been called to.

Leviticus 21:7-9 ESV

(7) They shall not **marry a prostitute or a woman who has been defiled**, neither shall they marry a woman divorced from her husband, **for the priest is holy to his God.**
(8) You shall sanctify him, for he offers the bread of your God. **He shall be holy to you, for I, the LORD, who sanctify you, am holy.**
(9) And **the daughter of any priest**, if she profanes herself by whoring, profanes her father; she shall be burned with fire.

The priest was restricted on who He was allowed to marry and his family was also held to a higher standard. The restrictions are taken one step farther for the high priest.

Leviticus 21:10-15 ESV

(10) "**The priest who is chief** among his brothers, **on whose head the anointing oil is poured** and who has been consecrated to wear the garments, shall not let the hair of his head hang loose nor tear his clothes.
(11) **He shall not go in to any dead bodies nor make himself unclean, even for his father**

or for his mother.
(12) He shall not go out of the sanctuary, lest he profane the sanctuary of his God, for the consecration of the anointing oil of his God is on him: I am the LORD.
(13) And he shall take a wife in her virginity.
(14) **A widow, or a divorced woman, or a woman who has been defiled, or a prostitute, these he shall not marry. But he shall take as his wife a virgin of his own people,**
(15) that he may not profane his offspring among his people, **for I am the LORD who sanctifies him."**

The High priest is not allowed to make himself unclean even for his own parents. His role is too important. He had to be extremely careful not to become unclean somehow and take that uncleanliness into God's presence. He had even more restrictions on who he was allowed to marry. Both priest and high priest could not marry a woman who had been divorced. This is not commenting on remarriage after divorce but is holding the priesthood to a high standard. **The priesthood is to live above reproach**. The chief priest is not even allowed to marry a widow. No sin is involved in being a widow. The high priest's son would be the next high priest so God only allowed Him to marry a virgin so there would be no question of the blood line of the next high priest. **The priest and High priest had a high calling on their lives, and had to give up certain freedoms for the sake of what they had been called to.** While these specific commands only applied to the priesthood in Israel, this high calling still applies to us today, **because we have been made priest.**

Revelation 1:4-6 ESV

(4) John **to the seven churches** that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before His throne,
(5) and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. **To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood**
(6) **and made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father**, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

We have been made priest unto God through the access we have in the blood of Jesus Christ. **We are able to come into God's presence so our lives are to reflect this high calling.** In the church age there is no clergy, laity difference. Meaning there is not a level of church leadership that is the priest and then everyone else is the "regular or normal believer." **In the church we are all priest**. We all have access and are all called to holiness.

This does not negate the qualifications and stricter judgment for elders, teachers and deacons, but it reminds us that **we all are called to a high standard**. We do not go through a man, or a church leader to have access to God but each and every believer has been given direct access to Him.

Philippians 2:14-16 ESV

(14) Do all things without grumbling or disputing,
(15) that you may be blameless and innocent, **children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation,** among whom **you shine as lights in the world,**
(16) **holding fast to the word of life,** so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.

We live in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, and yet we are to be different. We are to shine as lights. **Unfortunately we are not always as bright as we have been called to be.** Verse 16 gives us the answer to help our light shine into the darkness, the word of life. **It is God's Word that instructs us how to live as a priest**. It shows us how to walk in a daily worship with Him. Paul is so concerned about this high calling in believers lives that he would consider it vanity, empty, pointless if they did not reflect God's holiness in their lives. Noone is perfect, but we are called to pursue Him, we are called to be blameless without blemish. **We are priest of a holy God and are to learn through the word what that means daily**. His holiness even required that no priest have any physical blemish in God's sight.

Leviticus 21:16-24 ESV

(16) And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,
(17) "Speak to Aaron, saying, **None** of your offspring throughout their generations **who has a blemish may approach to offer the bread of his God.**
(18) **For no one who has a blemish shall draw near**, a man blind or lame, or one who has a mutilated face or a limb too long,
(19) or a man who has an injured foot or an injured hand,
(20) or a hunchback or a dwarf or a man with a defect in his sight or an itching disease or scabs or crushed testicles.
(21) No man of the offspring of Aaron the priest **who has a blemish shall come near to offer the LORD's food offerings; since he has a blemish, he shall not come near to offer the bread of his God.**
(22) **He may eat the bread of his God**, both of the most holy and of the holy things,
(23) but **he shall not go through the veil or approach the altar, because he has a blemish** , that he may not profane my sanctuaries, **for I am the LORD who sanctifies them."**
(24) So Moses spoke to Aaron and to his sons and to all the people of Israel.

This list of blemishes is graphic and offensive to our culture. It includes birth defects, injuries from accidents, and various other diseases. Just as the sacrifice had to be perfect and free from blemishes because it pointed to the perfect sacrifice of Jesus **the priest had to be blemish free as well.**

Hebrews 7:26 NAS95

(26) For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, **holy, innocent, undefiled**, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens;

The priests of the old treatment were to point to the perfect Priest who was to come. These blemishes were not a result of individual sin and **God is not devaluing a person's value or worth with this restriction.** This is shown in that these priests with blemishes are still included in partaking of the food reserved for priest. They are invited to have fellowship and share at God's table. This is a picture of you and I in the church.

Luke 14:16-24 ESV

(16) But he said to him, "A man once gave a great banquet and invited many.
(17) And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say **to those who had been invited**, **'Come, for everything is now ready.'**
(18) But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.'

(19) And another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.’
(20) And another said, ‘I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.’
(21) So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, **‘Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.’**
(22) And the servant said, ‘Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.’
(23) And the master said to the servant**, ‘Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled.**
(24) For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.’”

Jesus uses this story to describe the rejection of the Jews and God’s turning to the gentiles in the church. **The Jews, His chosen people were the ones initially invited to the banquet.** They refused to come because of earthly focuses, greed, and pleasure. Instead, God turned to the poor, crippled, blind and lame. **Those who had no hope of being included in this banquet, is who God sought out.** Then He turned to the highways and hedges, that is us as gentiles. We did not even know a banquet was happening and He invited us anyway. Our God reaches out and has fellowship with those who have no hope and cannot offer anything in return. These priests with blemishes were still viewed as a priest and still invited to eat God’s food. This is the same truth we find in David reaching out to Mephibosheth.

2 Samuel 9:3; 6-8; 13 ESV

(3) And the king said, “Is there not still someone of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God to him?” Ziba said to the king, “**There is still a son of Jonathan; he is crippled in his feet.”**
(**6**) And **Mephibosheth** the son of Jonathan, son of Saul, came to David and fell on his face and paid homage. And David said, “Mephibosheth!” And he answered, “Behold, I am your servant.”
(7) And David said to him, “Do not fear, **for I will show you kindness** for the sake of your father Jonathan, and I will restore to you all the land of Saul your father, **and you shall eat at my table always.”**
(8) And he paid homage and said, “**What is your servant, that you should show regard for a dead dog such as I?”**
(**13**) So Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, **for he ate always at the king's table. Now he was lame in both his feet.**

Mephibosheth was the only son of Jonathon who was still alive. Out of fear his nurse hide him when David rose to power. As she was fleeing their was an accident and Mephibosheth became lame. Out of David’s goodness He reaches out and cares for Mephibosheth. He wants to show him kindness and invite Mephibosheth to have fellowship with him. **Mephibosheth now was at the kings table and he always marveled at this privileged position. He viewed himself as a dead dog,** and was in appreciation for what David had done. This describes our salvation. **We are the dead dog who has been invited to feast and have fellowship with the King.** Not all Israelites were allowed to partake of the food of the tabernacle.

Leviticus 22:1-16 ESV

(1) And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, (2) “Speak to Aaron and his sons so that they abstain from the holy things of the people of Israel, which they dedicate to Me, so that they do not profane My holy name: I am the LORD. (3) Say to them, ‘If any one of all your offspring throughout your

generations approaches the holy things that the people of Israel dedicate to the LORD, while he has an uncleanness, that person shall be cut off from my presence: I am the LORD. (4) None of the offspring of Aaron who has a leprous disease or a discharge may eat of the holy things until he is clean. Whoever touches anything that is unclean through contact with the dead or a man who has had an emission of semen, (5) and whoever touches a swarming thing by which he may be made unclean or a person from whom he may take uncleanness, whatever his uncleanness may be— (6) the person who touches such a thing shall be unclean until the evening and shall not eat of the holy things unless he has bathed his body in water. (7) When the sun goes down he shall be clean, and afterward he may eat of the holy things, because they are his food. (8) He shall not eat what dies of itself or is torn by beasts, and so make himself unclean by it: I am the LORD.' (9) They shall therefore keep My charge, lest they bear sin for it and die thereby when they profane it: I am the LORD who sanctifies them. (10) "**A lay person shall not eat of a holy thing**; no foreign guest of the priest or hired worker shall eat of a holy thing, (11) but if a priest buys a slave as his property for money, the slave may eat of it, and anyone born in his house may eat of his food. (12) If a priest's daughter marries a layman, she shall not eat of the contribution of the holy things. (13) But if a priest's daughter is widowed or divorced and has no child and returns to her father's house, as in her youth, she may eat of her father's food; yet no lay person shall eat of it. (14) **And if anyone eats of a holy thing unintentionally,** he shall add the fifth of its value to it and give the holy thing to the priest. (15) They shall not profane the holy things of the people of Israel, which they contribute to the LORD, (16) and **so cause them to bear iniquity and guilt**, by eating their holy things: **for I am the LORD who sanctifies them."**

Only the immediate family of the priest was allowed to eat the holy food from the tabernacle. If you were a sojourner, or hired worker of the priest you were not allowed to eat it, even if you were staying with the priest. When the priest's daughter was married she could not eat it anymore because she was in a new family. **It is truly amazing that we have been made priest and are invited to eat of His table.** Paul had the same perspective as Mephibosheth.

1 Timothy 1:15 NAS95

(15) It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, **that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.**

We owe everything to Jesus. We are filthy sinners who have been made priest. We are full of blemishes and yet because of Jesus we are invited to feast with Him. It is all possible because He was the one who was blemish free.

Leviticus 22:17-30 ESV

(17) And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,
(18) "Speak to Aaron and his sons and all the people of Israel and say to them, When any one of the house of Israel or of the sojourners in Israel presents a burnt offering as his offering, for any of their vows or freewill offerings that they offer to the LORD,
(19) if it is to be accepted for you it shall be a male without blemish, of the bulls or the sheep or the goats.
(20) **You shall not offer anything that has a blemish, for it will not be acceptable for you.**
(21) And when anyone offers a sacrifice of peace offerings to the LORD to fulfill a vow or as a freewill offering from the herd or from the flock, **to be accepted it must be perfect; there shall be no blemish in it.**

(22) **Animals blind or disabled or mutilated or having a discharge or an itch or scabs you shall not offer to the LORD** or give them to the LORD as a food offering on the altar.
(23) You may present a bull or a lamb that has a part too long or too short for a freewill offering, but for a vow offering it cannot be accepted.
(24) Any animal that has its testicles bruised or crushed or torn or cut you shall not offer to the LORD; you shall not do it within your land,
(25) neither shall you offer as the bread of your God any such animals gotten from a foreigner. Since there is a blemish in them, because of their mutilation, they will not be accepted for you."
(26) And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,
(27) "When an ox or sheep or goat is born, it shall remain seven days with its mother, and from the eighth day on it shall be acceptable as a food offering to the LORD.
(28) But you shall not kill an ox or a sheep and her young in one day.
(29) And when you sacrifice a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the LORD, you shall sacrifice it so that you may be accepted.
(30) It shall be eaten on the same day; you shall leave none of it until morning: I am the LORD.

The animals that were to be used as a sacrifice relating to sin had to be perfect. No blemishes were allowed at all. **This did not make the blood of that animal able to deal with sin, but pointed to the perfect sacrifice who could.**

Hebrews 9:14-15 ESV

(14) **how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God**, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.
(15) Therefore He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, **since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.**

Jesus offered up His perfect blemish free blood to God the Father. This was the cost for you and I to be able to receive eternal life. For us to be redeemed from our sins. So that we could become priests and be invited to eat at the Lords table and have fellowship with Him. We have been given so much, we should not take it for granted.

Leviticus 22:31-33 ESV

(31) "So you shall **keep My** commandments and **do them**: I am the LORD. (32) **And you shall not profane My holy name,** that I may be sanctified among the people of Israel**. I am the LORD who sanctifies you, (33)** who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God: I am the LORD."

He is the one who set us apart so we are called to keep His commandments and do them. We will never regret the tradeoff. As we walk in obedience to God as a priest in fellowship with Him, we turn from the death and darkness of the world. As believers today He is offering us fellowship, lets walk with Him.

Revelation 3:14; 19-21 NAS95

(14) "To the angel **of the church** in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this:
(19) 'Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent.
(20) 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; **if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.**

(21) 'He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.