

讀經

Bible Reading



利未記二十一：1-8；16-17；
二十二：31-33

Leviticus 21: 1-8; 16-17; 22: 31-33

21:1 The LORD said to Moses, “Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them: ‘A priest must not make himself ceremonially unclean for any of his people who die, ² except for a close relative, such as his mother or father, his son or daughter, his brother, ³ or an unmarried sister who is dependent on him since she has no husband—for her he may make himself unclean. ⁴ He must not make himself unclean for people related to him by marriage, and so defile himself.

⁵ “Priests must not shave their heads or shave off the edges of their beards or cut their bodies. ⁶ They must be holy to their God and must not profane the name of their God. Because they present the food offerings to the LORD, the food of their God, they are to be holy. ⁷ “They must not marry women defiled by prostitution or divorced from their husbands, because priests are holy to their God. ⁸ Regard them as holy, because they offer up the food of your God. Consider them holy, because I the LORD am holy—I who make you holy.

21:16 The LORD said to Moses, ¹⁷ “Say to Aaron: ‘For the generations to come none of your descendants who has a defect may come near to offer the food of his God.

22:31 “Keep my commands and follow them. I am the LORD. ³² Do not profane my holy name, for I must be acknowledged as holy by the Israelites. I am the LORD, who made you holy ³³ and who brought you out of Egypt to be your God. I am the LORD.”

21:1 耶和華對摩西說：「你告訴亞倫子孫作祭司的說：祭司不可為民中的死人沾染自己，
2 除非為他骨肉之親的父母、兒女、弟兄，
3 和未曾出嫁、作處女的姊妹，纔可以沾染自己。
4 祭司既在民中為首，就不可從俗沾染自己。
5 不可使頭光禿；不可剃除鬍鬚的周圍，也不可用刀劃身。
6 要歸神為聖，不可褻瀆神的名；因為耶和華的火祭，就是神的食物，是他們獻的，所以他們要成為聖。
7 不可娶妓女或被污的女人為妻，也不可娶被休的婦人為妻，因為祭司是歸神為聖。
8 所以你要使他成聖，因為他奉獻你神的食物；你要以他為聖，因為我使你們成聖的耶和華是聖的。

21:16 耶和華對摩西說：

17 「你告訴亞倫說：你世世代代的後裔，凡有殘疾的，都不可近前來獻他神的食物。

22:31 「你們要謹守遵行我的誡命。我是耶和華。

32 你們不可褻瀆我的聖名；我在以色列人中，卻要
要被尊為聖。我是叫你們成聖的耶和華，

33 把你們從埃及地領出來，作你們的神。我是耶和
華。」

證道 Sermon



事奉之規

The Precept of Serving the Lord

The difficulty of studying Leviticus is that there are contents which are rather difficult to apply in today's context. For example, the rule of a woman's monthly period. Thus, some scholars conclude that the Leviticus is written for the Israelites when they lived in the wilderness. The culture, environment and especially rules related to hygiene are so different from us. This is not easy to understand. So many conclude that that it is simply a record of history not a command the LORD has given us today.

However if this is only a record of history and irrelevant, why is it included as one of the books that make up the Law and taught to the Jews?

Since it is also part of the Cannon of the Bible, it must have its significance for us and lessons for us to learn from.

Scholars agree that chapter 17 is the start of a new section in the book (chapter 17-26 is often referred to as ‘The Holiness Code’). The terms used in this section are different from the rest of Leviticus, especially in the theme of “Holiness”. It especially describes the order of priest and their need to be consecrated before the LORD. “Holiness” here means to set apart from the world and serve the LORD.

The question is what does this Holiness Code have to do with us?

1 Peter 2:9

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

Being a Christian, we also are a royal priesthood. Thus, the Spiritual truth applies to us as well.

1. The Grace of being chosen

this is a very important proclamation:

**“..., because I the LORD am holy –
I who make you Holy.” Leviticus 21:8**

No doubt this is the main theme of this section because
it is repeated six times
(21:8, 15, 23; 22:9, 16, 32)

God declares he is active in his work and we are on the receiving end. It is He who makes us holy. We have nothing to contribute to our holiness. Why would the LORD choose Israelites but not to other nations? Is it because the Israelites are a superior race?

Well we know from their history that the Israelites were always rebellious, even referred to as stiff-necked people.

No one can fathom the plan of God. Thus the only conclusion we can conclude is that he sovereign in how he bestows the power of his Grace.

Illustration:

I am not the best among those who are growing up with me in Christ, but he chose me.

Application:

Always be thankful, Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought

On the other hand, quite often we took “being holy” as a harsh task that is so hard to achieve, and worry that we won’t be able to make it.

For instance : Dr. A.B. Simpson, when he was young, he dared not to pursue holiness, fearing that once he reached the level of holiness, he would die.

However, what is declared here points to another perspective of holiness.

Note the name of God is mentioned here. The name is significant in ancient Near East Civilization. It implies a genuine promise, a very significant proclamation.

And the proclamation is:

‘...because I, the LORD, am holy’ (Leviticus 20:26)

It points out that 'Holiness' is the very nature of God. It is Him who invites us into his holiness and to have fellowship with him.

Consider this - a short and imperfect life can be filled with God's holiness and enter into his eternity.

This is the acceptance of love, this is grace. Because of God's chosen and grace, we are made holy.

It is by grace alone – having nothing to do with our effort. Thus to be holy is not by how hard we try – we are merely recipients of this glory. When we are united with God, we enter into his holiness. We need to learn to walk with God, in union with him. This is the meaning of ‘being in Christ’ as Apostle Paul says.

Example:

When we are in Christ, all things become less important. We don't need other things to satisfy our soul. Humans love can never be compared with Christ unconditional and sacrificial love.

This is his grace of being chosen.

2. Strict Rules of Consecration

The LORD said to Moses, “Tell Aaron and his sons to treat with respect the sacred offerings the Israelites consecrate to me, so they will not profane my holy name. I am the LORD.

Leviticus 22:2

The term “treat with respect” is used in the book of Hebrews (“nazar”). It comes from the same root word as “Nazirite”. The meaning of which is ‘offertory or consecrated to God’.

Therefore, the verse should be understood to say, “You need to keep the sacred offering by staying consecrated before me”.

So, the ultimate meaning of “Holiness” is not to set apart. The ultimate meaning of “holiness” is to be consecrated to God.

God is holy, therefore what is offered to Him should be holy, and not contaminated. Or else it will profane His name.

Therefore, what is to be offered has to be set apart.

Illustration: Utensils of the temple

Do not think the rules of holiness as restrictive, the rules are meant to be a response of love and offering. Therefore, holiness is for a higher ideal – offering.

Illustration: A man who works in China as expat, who loves his wife and does not commit adultery.

Here, it mentions three practices that are prohibited.

1. Pagan Contamination

21:5 Priests must not shave their heads or shave off the edges of their beards or cut their bodies.

These are practices of Gentiles and pagans. Israelites are to have nothing to do with it.

2. Contamination in the areas of sexual relations

In verses 21:7, 13-15, it mentions how priests are to be holy in terms of sexual relations and marriage. Some note that these rules are to keep the priest bloodline pure, and there should not be impure bloodline serving as priest

But it is more likely that it is talking about sexual relations where two become one flesh (as Apostle Paul mentions)

Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? In uniting with someone who is unclean is to sin against oneself, and profaning God's holiness.

These two restrictions, including eating blood are written in the Book of Acts. These rules are important for the believers, including Gentile believers.

3. Restriction of unclean things including corpse

This was important in Hebrew tradition, likely because it was a hygiene issue. But more importantly, it is because it involves the correct attitude in serving the Lord. In serving Him, we should keep ourselves holy.

We see that the rules for the high priest are stricter than the regular priest. For example, they cannot even touch the corpse of their parents. And the principle is

He must not make himself unclean for people related to him by marriage, and so defile himself.

Leviticus 21:4

He is the leader of God's people; therefore, the requirement is higher for him.

Application: Leaders should be cautious of sex, power and money.

Because God is holy, the offering for him has to also be holy, or else it would profane his name.

3. Perfect Offertory

Here it mentions that if the descendants of the priests are deformed, they cannot serve in front of God. Is that discrimination? In the passage, it explains that they will profane the holy temple (21:23). This is coming from a Hebrew concept - the reason for deformities and sickness is sin.

It is not his/her own sin but his parents. So, if something is unclean, it cannot be offered to God. Therefore in 22:3-9 it explains if the priest touched the unclean, he cannot perform the sacrifice ritual.

But Jesus clearly taught that a man who is deformed is not always because of sin. For example, the man who was born blind. So do we need to follow the Leviticus? Today we have pastors who are deformed.

We need to look into 22:21-25 as well. In Verse 22
**“Do not offer to the LORD the blind, the
injured or the maimed, or anything with warts
or festering or running sores.”**

The sacrifice needs to be flawless. From these two
commands, we come to an important spiritual
truth:

God is holy, majestic, kind and above all things, He is incomparable, He is worthy for us to offer the best. This teaches us to offer our best to Him, not the second best.

Illustration: When the imperial visit, he will be given the best service.

Should we not give our best to the Lord?

Application:

An elderly man would iron straight his paper notes in offering..

When we are offering our best, it is the prime time of our lives.

Our offering needs to be the best, or else there are dire consequences.

“The priests are to perform my service in such a way that they do not become guilty and die for treating it with contempt. I am the LORD, who makes them holy.” Leviticus 22:9

Illustration: Arron’s two sons

Application: Prepare well, and serve God respectfully.

Conclusion:

All believers are priests, and the requirement also applies to us today. We are to remain unclean and offer our best to God. And don't forget, this is not a restrictive rule, but our response to God's gracious love.