

LEVITICUS 21&22

11-10-19

"What's A Priest To Do?"

As we have been learning, there are a number of themes that run through Leviticus; clean and unclean, consecration, sacrifice, offering, the creation of the priesthood, the laws and rules to govern the priesthood - The most important and overarching theme for the book of Leviticus is the Holiness of God!!!

In Leviticus 11, 16, 19, 20, 21 God tells Israel to be holy for He is Holy
- And many more times He reminds them that He is the Lord

He is clean they are not - He is the one who consecrates and separates - The sacrifices and offerings are made to Him - He created the priesthood and determines their parameters of behavior and appearance - He is God and they are not; and thank God for that

When you read Leviticus you see all throughout the book the words; **"The Lord spoke to Moses,"** followed by quotation marks - God's actual words to Moses - This was and is important - God is communicating what He desires for His people - For His nation - For His Church - For Us - He desires holiness!!!

And it's important to remember this; God is still Holy!!! - He was Holy
- He IS Holy - He will always be Holy - He calls us to Holiness

We need to be in constant remembrance of our God and ALL His attributes - But I believe it's His Holiness, more than any other, that should humble us - Our recognition of how high His standard is for us to be able to approach His Throne and enter into His presence should humble us

If we consider His call to holiness even for a moment we will quickly see there is a problem - He is Holy we are NOT - Isaiah chapter 5, the prophet pronounces a series of woes against the nation Israel for their continued rebellion and disobedience - (20) *“Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! (21) Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, And prudent in their own sight! (22) Woe to men mighty at drinking wine, Woe to men valiant for mixing intoxicating drink, (23) Who justify the wicked for a bribe, And take away justice from the righteous man!”*

Then in chapter 6:1-8 he says this; (Read from the Bible)

The recognition of how far we are from His standard, His Holiness - The recognition of how great our sin and depravity is, compared to how high and Holy God is, should overwhelm us

But, we should also have overwhelming joy, because there is Good news - Jesus!!! - The unattainable Holy requirement of God has been provided by God - God Himself, in the flesh, in the person of Jesus Christ - Our perfect sacrificial lamb without spot or blemish - In Genesis 22 Abraham was about to sacrifice his only son Isaac - Isaac asked his father ***“where is the lamb for the burnt offering”*** - Abraham responded and said; ***“My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering”***

The OT sacrifices, offerings and priesthood are a picture, a foreshadowing of the final and complete sacrifice - The holy offering of a sinless life for our sins - The shedding of blood so that we can have eternal life - Our Great High Priest becoming the very sacrifice He requires

14 “Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not

have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Hebrews 4:14-16) - AMEN?

Chapters 21 & 22 are about the priesthood, the priests, and how they are to conduct themselves in all areas of their lives; what they can and cannot touch, who they may marry, their physical appearance

The priests were representatives of God for the people - God told Abraham in Genesis He was going to make a great nation from him and that the whole world would be blessed through that nation

Of course we know that nation to be Israel - God set them apart, consecrated them to be His special people - To be the ones through whom would come the Messiah Jesus, to take away the sins of the world

And the priests were consecrated and separated out from the rest of the nation Israel to be it's representatives before God - And God required them to be clean and pure, and to behave in a manner worthy of His priests

Great responsibility carries great requirements

The first and most important requirement was, they had to be born into the priesthood - They had to be a male child of the tribe of Levi - You didn't apply for the job or go to priest school - You were a male, a Levite and typically a first born male set apart at birth by your parents

Trivia: Who was the first priest mentioned in the Bible? (Before Priesthood or Israel) (Genesis 14)

Who was the first priest called into the priesthood?

Chapter 21:1-4 - Priests were consecrated, separated out from the rest of the nation - They had great requirements placed upon them - They were the peoples representative before God and God's representative to the people - But they were surrounded by many pagan nations and their pagan priests, practicing all kinds of unholy rituals

What God is telling the Israelite priests is; *'Don't be like other nations and their priests'* - I don't want you defiled by touching death - The exceptions were for close relatives only - Again, God is saying; *'You are to be different'* - *'You are set apart and need to live that way'*

Twelve times He says not to profane yourself - Profane can mean; to make common, to devalue or to put out of the Temple - As a Priest of God Most High, do not diminish God's beauty or His worth - Do not make common what is Most Holy - Peter, in 1 Peter 2 says we are a *"holy priesthood,"* a *"royal priesthood"*

We have been called from an unholy life into a holy life which only comes by faith in Jesus - We are justified and are being sanctified, growing ever closer to His Holiness - *"And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God."* (1 Cor 6:11)

Life should be different for the priests, and for us - different from the way the unbelieving world lives; the way they mourn, marry, behave, deal with death

V5&6 - The pagans deface their bodies with signs of mourning for show - You shall not says the Lord - Why? The priests were to be holy to their God and not to profane the name of their God because

they were the ones offering sacrifices to God - In the pagan nations, the priests were part of a power structure and did what they did to maintain their power, position and prestige - Priests of the Most High God are to be humble, holy servants

And we've talked about this many times here at Calvary; Name - When referring to God, 'name' speaks of His Character, Who He is - Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name - Hallowed, meaning Holy, Honored, Revered

Do you think His name is hallowed in today's society? - His name has been reduced to an expletive, a swear word, an exclamation - A lot of modern day christian music reduces God to a pronoun; he, you, him or his without ever mentioning His name

Unbelievers profane His name and many of us Christians have a hard time proclaiming and exalting His name - It should be more than just "Do not profane" His name for us - We should be exalting His name

(Philippians 2)

(9) "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, (10) that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, (11) and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

- AMEN?

V7&8 - God created marriage, in the garden - One man and one woman (Genesis 2:24) - For the priests, part of what they were to do was to maintain the purity of the line of Levite priests - They would marry within the tribe of Levi, and it had to be someone undefiled or not divorced

God is serious about marriage - It's the most important covenant between two people - The relationship between Jesus Christ and His church is analogous to marriage - He is the bridegroom we are His bride - Revelation 19:9 says; ***"Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!"***

It was important that the priests were undefiled in all areas of their lives - Again, pagan practices were completely unholy - The pagan priests would have many priestesses who they would marry - Their function was the pleasure of the priests - Don't do as the pagans do

The end of verse 8 says it clearly - Speaking of the priests; *"He shall be holy to you, for I the Lord who sanctify you am Holy."*

V9 - This is a hard verse but I don't want to ignore it - A lot of commentaries are silent on this verse - There is no easy or soft explanation - Be holy for I am Holy God says repeatedly - God sanctified Israel, set them apart, consecrated them - They were to be different

And the priests even more so - Defilement of the priesthood would be devastating to the nation - This includes defilement of the daughter of a priest - Her sin would be a reflection on her father and on the priesthood

V10-24 - These deal with laws governing the High Priest and were even more strict than for the priests - Part of this was about maintaining a spiritual and moral integrity and purity within the priesthood and through the priesthood, and so the nation

Israel was set apart by God - The priests were set apart out of the tribe of Levi from all the other tribes - And the High Priest was set

apart from all the other priests from the line of Aaron - The High Priest would be ordained and consecrated with anointing oil and given special garments to wear

These ornate garments had meaning and symbolism and pointed to our great High Priest, Jesus - Fifteen times the book of Hebrews calls Jesus our High Priest - These garments were designed for glory and beauty - Compared to everyone else the High Priest would stand out in his priestly garments as glorious and beautiful - He was their representative before God

The High Priest was not good enough in and of himself, but with the garments, he represented the One Who is sinless, pure, Holy, Glorious and beautiful - Only with those intricately woven beautiful garments could he represent the people to the Lord

Isaiah 61:10; *"I will rejoice greatly in the LORD, My soul will exult in my God; For He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness"*

Only Jesus lived a perfectly righteous life and only Jesus can remove our rags of filthiness and clothe us with His righteous robes - AMEN?

(Chapter 22)

In chapter 21 God told the priests not to become defiled by unclean things - Chapter 22 God tells the priests not pollute the clean things with themselves

The priests would become unclean from time to time and He wanted to insure they didn't compromise or take any shortcuts

V1-9 talks again about clean and unclean - Don't mix the two - ***"do not profane My Holy name"*** - "You are coming to me and I expect

you to be clean, to follow your priestly regulations and rituals; to show yourself approved' - If a priest became unclean he could not come into the tabernacle and serve until he was clean again

If the priest came to dedicate in a state of uncleanness he would be cut off from the presence of the Lord - This is a repeated theme throughout Leviticus, which tells us that it's very important to the Lord and that the people and the priests needed continuous reminding

No uncleanness may enter the presence of the Lord or be upon the representative to the Lord - Once again this points to Jesus, our sinless High Priest (1 Tim 2:5) *"For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus"* - He is our sinless, spotless, perfectly clean sacrifice, making intercession for us in Heaven

V10-16 define who can and cannot eat the holy things; the food the priests ate, such as the bread and the offerings - No foreigners could eat - Family could eat but not a daughter if she married an "outsider" Those born in his home could eat - But not a hired servant or someone who just lives with him

It seems a bit complicated and required that the priest know and pay attention to everything and everyone - The priest himself was responsible for all that happened in his home, including who was eating what at the dinner table

V17-30 - Sacrifices cannot have a blemish, it must be the best you have, no cast offs or throw aways - It must be a male without blemish - What qualifies as a blemish? - God tells the priests and the Israelites; It cannot be blind, broken or maimed - Those that have an ulcer, scabs or skin disease were not acceptable - In V21 the Lord

says; *"it must be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no defect in it."* - It had to be the best they had

We human beings, if not told specifically, would easily give up the three legged goat, the one eyed bull or the scabby sheep - But God doesn't want our unwanted, He wants our best - Why?

Remember; all of this is a picture, a foreshadowing of the final perfect sacrifice - Our great High Priest became the sacrifice - He was both Priest and sacrificial Lamb

We are born into a royal priesthood, born again by placing our faith and trust in Jesus' finished work on the cross and His resurrection

He wants our best - God gave His best as an offering for us!!! - God the Father gave His Son, our Savior Jesus - Jesus, God in the flesh - A sinless sacrifice, without blemish or spot or defect, to take away the sins of the world

All well and good for the Israelites but what does that mean for us? Do we have responsibilities and requirements? - There are no requirements - All requirements have been met - Our account marked; 'Paid In Full'

We believe - We are saved - We are redeemed and justified - Yes we are declared righteous by our faith in Jesus - I do believe we have a responsibility to respond to the call that has been placed upon our lives as Believers - Jesus gave it all, we ought to respond in kind

"Go and make disciples of all nations" Jesus said - Feed the hungry - Tend to the sick - Minister to the prisoner - Proclaim the good news, not out of obligation or requirement, in an attempt to earn anything,

but out of a grateful heart, a changed heart - A heart, a life being sanctified and transformed by the Holy Spirit

The Levitical priests committed their lives to the service of the Lord and the nation Israel - They had great responsibility and many requirements

As part of a holy priesthood, a royal priesthood let's commit our lives to the service of our Savior, Who gave His all - We've given God our hearts, let's give Him our lives, our obedience and our submission

The Levitical priesthood was about offering - Jesus came to be an offering - Let our lives be an offering

The priesthood was about bringing a sacrifice to the Lord - Jesus came to be the sacrificial Lamb - Let's live sacrificially

The priesthood was about serving God and their nation - Jesus said in Matthew 20 that He came to serve not to be served - Let's be servants of the Most High God and those all around us

Israel was set apart, consecrated by God - The priesthood was set apart, consecrated by God - We, by our profession of faith and allegiance to Jesus Christ are consecrated, a set apart people - In the world but not of the world - A royal priesthood - A holy priesthood

Read: (Hebrews 7:24-8:2)

(Rev 4:8) *"The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night saying: 'Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty Who was and is and is to come!'"* - AMEN!!!