

# **CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE- PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian  
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

## **DHW BIBLE CLASS LESSON 12 LEVITICUS CHAPTERS 21 & 22**

### **INTRODUCTION**

These two chapters address the code of holiness of the priesthood in Israel. In the Old Testament, God made a distinction between the priesthood and the people. In the previous three chapters (18-20) the code of holiness for the people was given. The code of holiness for the priesthood was more stringent than that for the people. This is understandable as the priests were the leaders and mediators between God and the people. It was a privilege to serve God and this came with responsibility. God laid down these rules for the priesthood which clearly showed that God claimed the totality of their public and private lives.

While some of these regulations might not be directly relevant to New Testament Christians, the principles underlying them still apply today. New Testament Christians are all priests.<sup>1</sup> The recurring statement, “for I the LORD, which sanctify you, am holy” (21:8, 15, 23; 22:9, 16, 32) emphasizes the intention of God to make them holy so that they would not profane His holy

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Peter 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

name and that He might be hallowed among His people Israel (22:32). In so doing, God would be glorified through His people and the surrounding nations would see and be attracted to Him. This is the same for us today.<sup>2</sup>

The underlying principles in these chapters provide the background to the teachings of Christ and the New Testament.

### **OUTLINE**

- A. Restrictions On Mourning And Marriage Of The Priests (21:1-24).
  - 1. To The Ordinary Priests On Mourning And Marriage (21:1-9).
    - a. The commandment to the sons of Aaron (v.1a).
    - b. Prohibition from contact with a dead body (v.1b).
    - c. Permission for contact with a relative's dead body (vv.2, 3).
    - d. Prohibition from contact with a relative by marriage (v.4).
    - e. Prohibition from doing the rites of mourning (v.5).
    - f. The reason was that they should be holy unto God (v.6).
    - g. Prohibition from marrying a prostitute or a divorcee (v.7a).

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<sup>2</sup> Zechariah 8:23 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.

Matthew 5:16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

- h. The reason was that the priests were holy unto God (vv.7b-8).
  - i. A priest's daughter who became a prostitute would be put to death (v.9).
3. To The High Priest On Mourning and Marriage (21:10-15).
- a. Prohibition from contact and mourning for anyone who died (vv.10-12).
  - b. The high priest could marry only a virgin from among the Israelites (vv.13, 14).
  - c. His children too must observe the same ruling (v.15).
4. Physical Defects Of The Sons Of The Priests Disqualified Them From Serving God (21:16-24).
- a. The Lord gave the commandment (vv.16, 17).
  - b. The description of the defects (vv.18-20).
  - c. The prohibition to serve reiterated (v.21).
  - d. The priests' sons could eat the offerings brought by the people to God (v.22).
  - e. He could not enter the Holy Place and draw near to the altar (v.23).
  - f. Moses told these things to Aaron and his sons, and the children of Israel (v.24).
- B. Impediments To Aaron And His Sons From Eating The Sacrificial Offerings To God (22:1-33).
1. The Importance that the Sons of Aaron Keep Themselves Holy and undefiled in the Things Belonging to God (vv.1-9).
- a. The injunction to keep the holy things of God separated from uncleanness (vv.1, 2).
  - b. If any of Aaron's sons who was unclean, touched the hallowed things, he would be cut off as punishment (v.3).
  - c. Any priest who had a physical defect, was forbidden from eating the hallowed food (v.4).
  - d. Any priest who touched an unclean priest was made unclean until the evening, and could only eat the hallowed food if he washed himself (vv.5-7).
  - e. The priests were forbidden from eating any animal that died of itself or was torn by beasts (v.8).
  - f. The need to keep the LORD'S ordinance (v.9).
2. Members of the Priest's Family Who Could and Could Not Eat of the Hallowed Food (22:10-16).
- a. No outsider was allowed to eat the hallowed food (v.10).
  - b. A slave who was purchased by the priest was qualified to eat the hallowed food (v.11).

- c. A priest's daughter who married out could not eat the hallowed food (v.12).
  - d. Subsequently should she become single again and returned to her father's home, she could eat the hallowed food (v.13).
  - e. If a person unintentionally ate the hallowed food, he must make good the food consumed plus another 20 percent (v.14).
  - f. The caution to observe these laws (vv.15, 16).
3. The Priests were to Ensure that All Animals Brought to the LORD as an Offering had Zero-Defect (22:17-33).
- a. The importance of making a free-will offering with animals which were without defects (vv.17-21).
  - b. The blemishes of the animals were listed (vv.22, 23).
  - c. The prohibitions concerning the offerings and those of outsiders were reiterated (vv.24, 25).
  - d. The animals must be eight days old before they could be offered as a free-will offering made by fire (vv.26, 27).
  - e. An animal might not be sacrificed with its young on the same day (v.28).
  - f. An offering of thanksgiving must be made voluntarily (vv.29, 30).
4. The Call of the LORD to Keep His Commandments (22:31-33).

### COMMENTARY

In contrast to the commandment of the LORD to Moses to speak to the children of Israel in chapter 18, the LORD told Moses to speak to the **“priests the sons of Aaron”** (21:1). The regulations given applied to the priesthood. These regulations were stricter than those for the people.

#### Mourning & Marriage

It is not clear why God addressed only two experiences in the life of the priests—**mourning and marriage**. The priests must keep themselves undefiled with regards to these two experiences. In the case of **mourning**, the priests were forbidden to come into physical contact with the dead (21:1b). However, if the dead were his “kin” he was allowed to do so, that is, to prepare the body for burial. The word “kin” (Hebrew, *shaer*) means “flesh” and in the context here it means “blood relations”. While the wife was not mentioned, it was obvious that she was included among his “kin.” An added prohibition was that they must not imitate the pagan rites of mourning by shaving their hair and beard and mutilating any part of their body (21:5). The priests must keep themselves holy, separated and sanctified unto God. To break these regulations was to make themselves unfit to serve God.

In the matter concerning the private life of the **priests in marriage**, the priests must not marry a prostitute or a profane woman (of bad character and virtue) or a divorcee (21:7). God had sanctified them, made them holy unto Him. The wife of a priest or a leader of

the people played an important role and function. She could mar and undermine his office and service before God and the people. God demanded exemplary character and conduct from both the priest and his wife.

### **High Priest & Family**

In the case of the **high priest**, the laws were more stringent. If the **daughter of the high priest** were to profane herself, she would face the death penalty by fire. The reason was that she had profaned her father who was the high priest of the LORD.

The high priest, who was anointed to represent the whole nation before God, must not **mourn for the dead** nor come into contact with them, not even his father or mother! Whereas the other priests were allowed to come into contact with their kin, the high priest was forbidden from doing so. He was not allowed to leave the tabernacle to attend the funeral rites. In the private **matter of his marriage**, he could only take a wife who was a virgin. He could not marry a widow or a divorcee or a prostitute or a woman of bad character. He must marry a virgin from his own people. Moreover, the high priest must see to it that **his children** did not profane themselves among the people. In other words, he must rule his family well and be acceptable in the sight of God.

### **Physical Wholeness**

The latter part of chapter 21 deals with physical impediments. The priests must be whole morally, spiritually and physically. Any physical defect would disqualify him from serving God. But he was allowed to eat the food of the sacrificial offerings by the people. The worth and dignity of the disabled/handicapped person was

upheld in that he would not be cast away or despised. However, in the service of God, a whole body was required. The list was given: he must not be blind or lame or have a “flat nose” (disfigurement of the face) or a broken foot or hand or a hunchback or a dwarf, or have a defect in the eye or have sores of the skin or “hath his stones broken” (testicles damaged). No priest who had a physical defect could serve the offerings of the people before God.

### **The Holy Things**

Aaron and his sons must ensure that they do not abuse the handling and use of the holy things brought by the people of God (22:1-2). If any priest breached the regulations governing these things, he would be totally cut off from serving the LORD. The priest must be physically whole to serve. If he touched anything that was unclean, he would be rendered ceremonially unclean until the sunset and he must wash himself before he could resume his priestly obligations (22:4-7). He was not allowed to eat of the meat of any animal that died of itself or was torn by other animals as it would render him ceremonially unclean.

### **Family Members of the Priests**

These people were forbidden from eating the sanctified food offered by the people to God: an outsider, a guest of the priest, a hired servant (22:10). But a person who had been bought by the priest was considered as a member of the family. He was allowed to eat of the sanctified food (22:11). If the priest's daughter was married to an outsider, she was considered as a member of her husband's family and would not be able to partake of the sanctified food. But if she was widowed or divorced and childless (no children to support her), she could return to her father, the priest,

and she would be allowed to eat of the sanctified food (22:12-13).

### **Eating Unintentionally**

If a person ate the sanctified food unintentionally, he must make good what he had taken, add another 20 percent and gave it to the priests (22:14). The holy things of God must not be taken for granted. They must be properly handled and administered according to the regulations stipulated by God. Anyone who broke these rules must bear the punishment of his sin and trespass.

### **Animals for the Offerings**

For animals that were brought as offerings before the LORD, the priests must ensure that they met the requirements which were stipulated by God. These animals must be without any defect. They must be perfectly sound and whole (22:20). The LORD described the animals that were less than perfect (22:21-25).

The animal must be at least eight days old. An animal younger than that would not be accepted (22:27). And if the animal was a female, its young must not be offered on the same day (22:28). The meat that was permitted to be eaten had to be consumed on the same day. None of it should be left till the next day.

The LORD God imposed these on the priests and the children of Israel for the purpose of hallowing His Name among the people of Israel. His Name must not be profaned or defiled so that the glory of God might be seen in His people and others might be drawn to Him. God's purpose was that Israel served as His showcase to the other nations and as teachers of His oracles.

## **PRACTICAL VALUE**

We may think that these laws apply only to leaders in the Church and not to the ordinary members. In a way, it is true. Members of the church who hold office must set an example for the rest to follow. It is a privilege to serve the LORD but the privilege comes with responsibility.

In a sense, every Christian is a leader among the non-believers. He is a priest in so far as God is concerned. In his possession are the knowledge of God and salvation. He is privileged to know these things. He has the light and is expected to live up to the expectation, virtues and characteristics of the Kingdom of God. He must set an example to the world. His moral standards must be above those of the world. How can the world be attracted to the Lord Jesus Christ if a Christian is no different than his non-Christian friend or neighbour. We have seen that God intends for Christians to be different. God has promised that He will grant the power for that transformation.

We should portray ourselves as Christlike not just in public but also in private. There is a temptation among leaders to be "public Christians" -- in public they behave like Christians but in their private lives, they do otherwise. This is not acceptable to God. God requires us to be Christlike in our conduct and behaviour, morally, spiritually and physically.

The leader of the church must have an exemplary family. His wife and children must have excellent character and conduct. His children's good behaviour reflects on his ability to lead and build his family. If he fails in these areas, he is less likely to be able to lead and build the bigger family of God—the

church. Andrew Bonar comments that the family of a Christian father is worth contemplating:

*Very awful is your responsibility if you diminish your zeal, love, spirituality, by marrying one who has more of earth and a present world in her person and spirit, than of heaven and a coming eternity. For the conduct of the family is noticed by the world who lay the blame of their misdeeds at the door of their parents. There is a responsibility connected with belonging to a godly house, the privileges enjoyed there ought to have a blessed effect on the children. . . they hinder the usefulness of their father, who loses influence in the eyes of the world if his counsels and walk have not succeeded in drawing his own family to God.”<sup>3</sup>*

We observe that not only does God demand a high moral and spiritual standard but also our wholesome physical health. God place a high premium on a healthy and able body. While we always pray to God for good health and strength, we must remember that we have a part to play in ensuring the desired result. We must do those things that build up the body—regular physical exercise, proper diet, adequate rest and sleep. The key to good health and strength is given by Paul, the Apostle, (1 Corinthians 9:25) “And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to

obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.”

We learn that the things dedicated to God must not be abused. These things must not be taken for granted. Proper care and use of these things are necessary. The church is said to be the “house of God”. Everything in it belongs to God. We must take good care of it. People have a bad habit of paying little attention and little care for things that are outside their home. Such an attitude should not be found in a Christian, even more so towards the things of God. We must maintain the highest level of cleanliness within the church premises and use the things that belong to the church properly.

God’s purpose in giving these laws is not that we will be holy but that we will be different. Our holiness is inherent by the divine act of redemption in Christ which opens the way for the empowering of the Holy Spirit who indwells us. God has given us, who are His children, the power to obey Him and hallow His name among the nations. God’s desire is that all should come to Him. He has made us to be the light and salt of the earth so that the nations will see His glory in us and be drawn to Him.

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<sup>3</sup> Andrew Bonar, *Leviticus*, (Edinburgh , England: The Banner of Truth Press, 1846), 375-376.

**DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**Daily Readings**

**Monday:** Leviticus 21:1-15; 1 Samuel 2:12-25; 1 Timothy 3:4-5.

**Tuesday:** Leviticus 21:16-24; James 3:1-12.

**Wednesday:** Leviticus 22:1-16; Hebrews 7:25-28.

**Thursday:** Leviticus 22:17-25; Titus 1:5-9.

**Friday:** Leviticus 22:26-33; 1 Peter 2:1-10.

**Discussion Questions**

1. What is the key thought in Leviticus 21:1-15?

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2. What two experiences in life are addressed in Leviticus 21:1-15?

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3. Were there any differences between the requirements for the priests and the high priest?

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4. In what way does a child “profane” his/her father (21:9)?

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5. What requirement for the priesthood is emphasized most in Leviticus 21:16-23?

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6. What does God intend to accomplish in these laws in chapter 21?

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7. What principle is laid down concerning things holy and things unclean (22:1-3)?

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8. How is this principle applied today?

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9. What would you say were the rules and principles of worship that God has laid down and that we must obey?

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10. How do we prepare ourselves to attend worship? What must we do to make our worship acceptable to God?

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11. What valuable lessons strike you most in these two chapters?

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