

Leviticus 21

This chapter respects the priests, the sons of Aaron, and forbids their mourning for the dead, unless in some cases, #Le 21:1-6; or their marriage with an whore or a divorced woman, #Le 21:7,8; and the daughters of any of them to commit fornication, which is made punishable with death, #Le 21:9; and it contains particular laws for the high priest to observe, who was not to mourn for any, even for his parents, #Le 21:10,11; nor to go out of the sanctuary, #Le 21:12; nor to marry any woman but a virgin, #Le 21:13-15; and it also directs, that none of the priests having any blemish in them should be employed in divine service, though they might eat of the holy things, #Le 21:16-24.

This chapter deals with the holiness of the priesthood. This priesthood of Aaron prefigured the priesthood of the believer. Christ was prefigured by Mel who met Abraham with bread and wine.

This chapter gives various and sundry laws governing the actions of the priests. Basically, these laws separate him and his family from the pagan society into which they are going, Canaan.

Vv. 1-9

Vv. 1-4, the priest could not defile himself for the dead unless the dead person was immediate family.

The priest, *being a chief man among his people*, was to represent life, not death; therefore, he had to avoid contact with the dead. Moreover, he was a leader, so he could not mourn for everyone in the community who died.

However, he was not without feelings nor sympathy. He was permitted to express his grief over mother, father, son, daughter, brother and unmarried sister

Notice the absence of any mention of his wife: Could it be that she was assumed, being of his own flesh?

There is an interesting point presented here: brother, sister, &c., could this refer to Christian brothers and sisters? We weep with those who weep, we show emotion and love one for another, and by this, all men know that we are His disciples.

The only record we have of Christ weeping is over the death of Lazarus.

Vv. 5,6, they were forbidden to mourn after the manner of the heathens, for they preformed an holy duty; therefore, they were to be holy:

1 Thes 4:13, *But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.*

Bonar makes a good point in passing:

Not that ministers of Christ now are *priests* at all in the sense of offering sacrifice, or standing as mediators between God and the people. But they are servants who occupy a station in sight of the people, and are sent by God to point others *to the sacrifice already offered*.

The Old Testament priests pointed God's people to the Sacrifice to come; the New Testament minister of God points God's people to the Sacrifice that came.

Christians, ministers especially, must show the world a spirit and manner of actions that represent a hope of life, not death.

Vv. 7, 8, the priest was to marry within the bounds of holiness as established by the Lord. The woman was to be publicly known as blameless.

The priest prefigured the priesthood of the Lord Jesus; therefore, this OT priest had to have a holy bride. The reason for such strict laws concerning the persons in the priesthood is given again: they have holy responsibilities; therefore, they are to be proper representatives of holiness.

He could not marry a divorced woman. Note this is an all inclusive statement, with no exceptions, *e.g.*, the man at fault. The woman, however, could be a widow. The Lord hates divorce, Mal 2:16, but it is a fact of sin.

I think, furthermore, here we are confronted again with the fact that Jehovah God of the OT cannot "remarry" OT Israel: He divorced her, and now the church is His bride. OT Israel is gone!

V. 9, the unmarried daughter reflected her father. Strangely, there is no punishment fixed against the one who lay with the girl. The major responsibility here rests on the priest's daughter, and her punishment is quite serious for not living the way she was trained up in.

The obvious New Testament reference is Tit 1:6: Ministers of the gospel are qualified by their children.

For the conduct of the family is noticed by the world, and they 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 had a blessed effect on the children. Woe to them if it be otherwise! Double woe! for thus 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... [Bonar]

Fire, the flames of wrath of God against sin is especially strong against the children of God's representative.

I should note here that the Spirit of the Lord is the One who must work in the hearts of the children, or they will clearly go to the devil. Certainly, the parents are responsible to live properly, but without the saving power of God's grace, the best training in the world will fail to train Godly children.

It is the Lord Who causes one to be faithful to Himself, *i.e.*, *GRACE*.

Vv. 10-15.

This section continues with laws of holiness for the priests, with specific mention of the office of high priests. This office looked forward to Christ though He was a priest forever after the order of Melch...

The high priest who was on "duty" when a family member died, could not defile himself in any way, though vv. 1-3 permitted a certain amount of defilement.

Christ, the Great High Priest, followed this and every law completely: He never defiled Himself, never *uncovered His head nor rent His clothes* for the dead. He clearly showed great tenderness, *Jesus wept*, but He always fulfilled the public responsibilities of a representative of God the Father.

Vv. 13-15, the topology of Christ, our Great High Priest, continues as the Lord here describes what kind of bride He must have, the church. The priest had to take a wife who reflected his required holiness in the Lord's service.

The Lord set apart the man **and his sons** for the priesthood; therefore, he could not do anything to disqualify him or his sons after him. V. 15, tells us that the wrong kind of wife will disqualify the children from serving the Lord.

In other words, marriage had to look forward to even the well being of the children in the Lord.

Paul clearly enforced this law and applied it to both sexes in 2 Cor 6:14, when he forbade believers marrying

unbelievers. When a believer marries an unbeliever, the children will be profaned: they will naturally, with VERY FEW exceptions, follow after the unbeliever in attitudes and actions. The children may "get saved," but they will still have instilled in them the character traits of the pagan. [Cf. Eph 5:6ff.]

1 Cor 1 [v. 12] is clearly given in the context of the new church and the great influx of pagans into it through conversion. Obviously, with its explosive growth, the Lord would call one marriage partner while leaving the other behind. The result was that many families were split, but the split was not man's doings, but God's. The Spirit only saw fit to call one of the two parents. Paul addresses the problem of many "split" homes that had already been established.

To understand this passage, and 1 Pet 3, to justify "mixed marriages" with the confidence that God will save the unsaved partner, is presumption. That is not at all what is said here. Besides, the husband/wife relationship pictures the Christ/church relationship, Eph 5:22ff. & Col 3:18ff. Intentional "mixed marriages" would say that Christ does not require a "saved" church, a church without *spot or wrinkle, or any such thing*.

Saying that God permits mixed marriages says that He cares not whether the bride of Christ is converted. Obviously, however, not everyone who claims to be a child of God is. The church may mistakenly contain the unconverted as a person who after he or she is married might find out the mate is unconverted. There will come a day of separation in the church, but separation in the marriage will not come until death, or major grounds for divorce.

"Mixed marriages" thus clearly violate the law given in Lev 21:14, 15.

Vv. 16-21

This section deals with physical defects. Again, the high priest prefigured Christ as our Great High Priest; therefore, there could be NO physical blemish in the high priest, from the most obvious--*blind, lame, &c.*--to the most secret--*stones broken*.

The Song of Solomon may cast some light on this passage. In setting forth purity and loveliness under figurative terms, it uses almost all the references to the bodily qualities that are found here. *Here*, the defects are spoken of; *there*, the excellences (see specially Song, v.) [Bonar]

V. 17, *the bread of his God*. "The sacrifices are the *bread of God*," as in other places. Does this term refer to Christ, who came down as the *bread of life*?

V. 22-24

The blemished persons, though forbidden the priesthood, could still eat of the food provided from the offerings as provided for the priesthood.

One should note here that no matter how pure and zealous one's motive might have been, if he had a blemish, he profaned God's sanctuary if he tried to *go in unto the veil, or come nigh unto the altar*.

Thus strongly taught is that no human blemish, works, can merit anything before the Lord God: Only Christ meets the perfection required to approach the Holy Heavenly Father. Bonar makes an interesting observation here also:

Alas! what must they be exposed to who are conscious of being excluded by God from the ministry, and yet enter it for a piece of bread? What do they mean? They are unconverted, they have no call, they are blemished men; yet they venture to stand forth "as though God did beseech" men by them! Alas! they shall yet feel that to be true--"*I the Lord to sanctify my sanctuaries.*"

Unqualified men in the ministry for the bread! They will one day meet the One they defied.

V. 24, all the people were told what kind of men were to fulfill this office of priest; through this office requiring

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perfection as much as humanly possible, the people were told what to expect from the One Who was yet to come.

THE PRIESTHOOD AND APPROACH TO GOD:

The man could disqualify himself by marrying wrongly or by simply defiling activity. The man could be disqualified by God if the Lord permitted him to be born with a blemish.

Thus though the Lord established the qualifications of holiness, and the Lord chooses who would be in the priesthood by birth, individuals still had a great amount of personal responsibility.