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Leviticus 21

(2019)

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Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Leviticus 21.

FOCUS: LAWS FOR AARON, HIS SONS AND FUTURE PRIESTS

Topics.

- No priest of the sons of Aaron is to make himself unclean for the dead.
- A married priest shall not profane himself amongst the people.
- Priests shall not make bald patches, shave beards or cut their body.
- Priest shall not marry a prostitute or a defiled or divorced woman.
- The daughter of a priest who plays the whore shall be burned.
- Priests shall not let their hair hang loose nor tear their clothes.
- The priest was to take a virgin of his own people for a wife.
- No one with a blemish or a defect may offer the bread of the LORD.
- No priest with a blemish shall go through the veil or approach the altar.

INTRODUCTION: the book of Leviticus is about ceremonial rules and civil laws that God gave to Moses after He had given him the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai.

- These are the statutes and rules and laws that the LORD made between him and the people of Israel through Moses on Mount Sinai. (Lev. 26:46).

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Either on Mount Sinai or when he met with him in the Tabernacle (also called the tent of meeting) when they were in the wilderness near the Mountain. Moses was to give these ceremonial laws to the Levitical priesthood, they embrace rules concerning sacrifices, offerings and worship; the ordination of Aaron and his sons and their ceremonial cleanness; the Day of Atonement; feasts and holy days and the Year of Jubilee. The civil and social laws and laws of justice he was to give to the government of Israel to implement within their society. The ceremonial and civil laws were not given to the secular world but are laws God gave to the nation of Israel. The central message is that God is holy and requires His people to be holy. The book also shows that God graciously provides atonement for sin through the shedding of blood. Most Jews and Christians recognise Moses as the author, writing sometime after the giving of the Law (about 1445 B.C.).

NOTE: for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

The previous chapter: covers children being sacrificed to Moloch, seeking after mediums and wizards and all types of incestuous and sexual sins that resulted in the death penalty. The chapter ended with the LORD telling Israel that they will inherit a land flowing with milk and honey, but if they forsake His statutes and rules the land will vomit them out.

LEVITICUS 21:1

Priests, Sons of Aaron are Not to become Unclean for the Dead.

- **Leviticus 21:1:** 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.

The focus of these verses is not limited to the high priest only, but embraces all the sons of Aaron, who by being his sons are all ordinary priests, but after the death of the present high priest one of them will have the honour of becoming a high priest. The focus shifts from ordinary priests to high priests at verse ten, which says, "the priest who is chief (high priest in KJV) among his brothers" (i.e., among the sons of Aaron), which clearly shows that the focus shifts from ordinary priests to the high priest. The laws concerning the purity and holiness for the nation of Israel spoken of from (Lev. 11:1) to (Lev. 20:27), are now followed by statutes concerning the purity and holiness of the priesthood.

Due to their high calling they were to be examples of both ceremonial and moral purity. The following laws concern the behaviour and personal qualifications of the priests, and are intended to denote the dignity, and preserve the honour of the holy priesthood. Moses is ordered to communicate these statutes to the priests the sons of Aaron, the male children. The only verse that applies to a female is (v9) which states, if a daughter of a priest profanes herself and her father by whoring, she was to be burned with fire. Whether Aarons sons were older or younger, fit for service or having blemishes or not these laws and rules concern them all, for it was the duty of the priests to raise their children in such a manner that they would be morally and intellectually fit to occupy this hereditary office.

There shall none be defiled for the dead: amongst commentators this embraces the idea that a priest was not to:

- Touch a dead body or enter a house with a corpse in it.
- Assist at a funeral or eat at a funeral feast.
- Go near a burial place or grave or be near a dead body.
- Attend a burial at a grave site or join in the burial festival.
- Lament or manifest any sign of mourning for the dead.

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Anyone of these pollutes the priest and renders him ceremonially unclean and therefore unfit for performing the services of the sanctuary, and the people. The laws and rules contained in this chapter were to keep the purity and dignity of the sacred office of the priesthood. The following verse shows that contact with a corpse, or even being near to the place where it lay, brought ceremonial defilement and that if a priest was defiled in these ways, they were to be counted unclean for seven days.

- Whoever touches the dead body of any person shall be unclean seven days. (Num. 19:11).
- This is the law when someone dies in a tent: everyone who comes into the tent and everyone who is in the tent shall be unclean seven days. (Num. 19:14).

All priest who were counted as being ceremonially unclean in any of these ways was forbidden to enter the tabernacle for seven days, and since the exclusion of a priest during that week would have brought great inconvenience the whole priestly order was to abstain from all approaches to the dead.

NOTE: they are not priest because of any merit of their own, but because they are the sons of Aaron. Likewise, we are not saved because of any merit of our own, but because we belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.

LEVITICUS 21:2-3

Priest can Bury their Closest Relatives without Being Defiled.

- **Leviticus 21:2-3:** except for his closest relatives, his mother, his father, his son, his daughter, his brother, ³or his virgin sister (who is near to him because she has had no husband; for her he may make himself unclean).

Exceptions to the law of being defiled by the dead, the priest was permitted to bury his, mother, father, son, daughter, brother and his sister, but only a virgin sister that was unmarried, because she had no husband to marry her. For all these the priest was permitted to make himself ceremonial unclean. The restrictions for the priests were strictly confined to the members of their own family. These laws teach all successive priests, that they should forsake all expressions of natural affection and worldly passions and give themselves entirely over to the service of God.

The symbolism: the priests signify the faithful in Christ, so the symbolism is that all who belong to his Kingdom must do all they can to live a lifestyle that honours God and brings a good testimony to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Christian faith, so that by their good example others would be drawn into the Kingdom. In the book of Peter, it is written that those in Christ are being built up to be a royal and holy priesthood:

- You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 2:5).
- You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. (1 Peter 2:9).

And in the book of Revelation:

- Has made us a kingdom of priests to his God and Father. (Rev. 1:5-6).

As a kingdom of priests all are called to set a good example (especially ministers of the Gospel) so that people of the world maybe lead to follow Christ. It should be mentioned here, the faithful sing songs of praise from a devoted and grateful heart lodged within a fallen body, with all kinds inward dysfunctions and aberrations invading the mind, but no one should allow these unwanted invading thoughts to hinder them from serving the Lord.

LEVITICUS 21:4

A Married Priest Shall Not Profane Himself Amongst the People.

- **Leviticus 21:4:** He shall not make himself unclean as a husband (chief man in KJV) among his people and so profane himself (to profane himself in KJV).

Chief man: comes from the Hebrew word (*ba`al*), it means, a master, a lord, a husband and to marry and have dominion over, figuratively it carries the idea of an owner. In the context of this verse the title, "chief man," is not to be understood of any lord or nobleman or any chief ruler or governor of the people; for the context speaks only of priests, and not of other authorities; besides, all who were not priests were always free to mourn and bury the dead. In this context the title, chief man refers to the sons of Aaron, they are called chief men for they are of the family of the high priest, which means that the focus is a married priest. The previous verse tells us the priest was permitted to be involved in the burial services of his mother and father, and his son, daughter, brother and his virgin sister, there is no mention of his wife, which means that the words, "He shall not make himself unclean as a husband," carry the idea that as priest he was not to defile himself by attending to his wife's funeral ceremonies and by attending to the burial ceremonies of any other person than those previously mentioned, (i.e., his immediate family) (v2-3). Attending these

made him unclean and as such unfit to manage his sacred duties. Owing to his high position in the nation, the priest was not to defile himself in any cases concerning the dead except for his mother, father, son, daughter, brother and his virgin sister. (Lev. 21:2-3). If the priest defiled himself for the dead, he made himself unfit to manage his sacred duties, which was not only a public inconvenience to the people to who he should be ministering, but also an inconvenience to his service for the LORD and his tabernacle duties and sacrifices etc.

LEVITICUS 21:5

Priest and Bald Patches, shaving Beards and cutting the Body.

- **Leviticus 21:5:** They shall not make bald patches on their heads, nor shave off the edges of their beards, nor make any cuts on their body.

This command not to "make bald patches on their heads, shave the edges of their beards and cut their body is in the context of mourning the dead, no priest was to disfigure their body in any way to express their mourning. Disfiguring the body in these ways was a common practise amongst the surrounding nations and idolaters to outwardly manifest their grief for the dead, especially when they attended funeral ceremonies. The three things here prohibited to the priests are also forbidden to the people at large under other circumstances.

- You (all the people of Israel) shall not round off the hair on your temples or mar the edges of your beard. ²⁸You shall not make any cuts on your body for the dead or tattoo yourselves: I am the LORD. (Lev. 19:27-28).
- You (all the people of Israel) are the sons of the LORD your God. You shall not cut yourselves or make any baldness on your foreheads for the dead. (Deut. 14:1).

These prohibitions (also given to the people of Israel at large) (Lev. 19:27-28) (Deut. 14:1) had a special application for the priests, for they were the chosen ministers of God's divine will for overcoming death, all the sacrifices they ministered over were types of the death of Christ, which swallowed up death in victory.

- When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." ⁵⁵"O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" ⁵⁶The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 15:54-57).

This is one of the reasons it would have been unfitting for them to have the same freedom as other people to show extreme grief and mourning. Concerning death, the apostle Paul wrote:

- For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ²²If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. ²³I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. ²⁴But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. (Philip. 1:21-24).

Priests were not to adopt the pagan practises of idolaters and the heathen nations whose dead died with no hope, for they were God's representatives on earth carrying the message of life beyond the grave, and the blood sacrifices they offered before the LORD, all foreshadowed God's perfect Lamb without blemish to come who by his death and resurrection invites all into his eternal Kingdom of glory and everlasting happiness.

LEVITICUS 21:6

Priests shall be Holy to God for they Offer the Bread of their God.

- **Leviticus 21:6:** 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 (the offerings of the LORD made by fire in KJV); therefore they shall be holy.

The reason the priests are not to outwardly disfigure themselves in any way was because they were to be holy before the LORD, meaning they were:

- To be wholly given up to the LORD, His service and His work.
- To have no interest in worldly things that would hinder them from the LORD's work or make them unfit for it.
- To never do anything that would cause God's name to be profaned and spoken evil of on their account.
- To abstain from all impurity both of flesh and spirit, from all uncleanness, moral and ceremonial.

The LORD 's bread offering: (v6) (food offering in KJV), of their God made by fire in KJV) refers to the following three things:

1. The twelve loaves of showbread also called the Bread of the Presence. These were the cakes or loaves of bread, which were always present on a table of acacia wood overlaid with pure gold in the Holy Place of the temple that was especially dedicated for the bread. The priests attended to these loaves every week and changed them every seven days.
2. Since the verse refers to offerings of the LORD made by fire, it can also refer to the sacrifices the priests offered to the LORD on behalf of the people on the brazen altar of burnt offerings in the outer court.
 - The priest shall burn it on the altar as a food offering to the LORD. (Lev. 3:11).
3. Grain offerings and all other offerings besides burnt-offerings; which are referred to bread or called bread, because bread is commonly put forward for all food as the following verses show:
 - You shall sanctify him, for he offers the bread of your God. (Lev. 21:8).

The word bread here is rendered as food in the following two verses:

- The priest shall burn it on the altar as a food offering to the LORD. (Lev. 3:11).
- The priest shall burn them on the altar as a food offering with a pleasing aroma. (Levitical 3:16).

And rendered meat in the following verse:

- 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 (meat in KJV). (Lev. 22:11).

When reading an English Bible, it should be kept in mind that bread, meat, and food, were considered equal terms when the English translation was made, this is, why meat and bread is commonly put forward for all food.

LEVITICUS 21:7-8

Priest shall Not Marry a Prostitute or a Defiled or Divorced Woman.

- **Leviticus 21:7-8:** They shall not marry a prostitute (whore in KJV) or a woman who has been defiled (profaned in KJV), neither shall they marry a woman divorced (put away in KJV) from her husband, for the priest is holy to his God. ⁸You 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.

The priest was to be careful in selecting a wife concerning her chastity and legitimate descent, because all priests must take care that all the members of their family were free from all suspicions of wrongful behaviour. The respectability of the office of a priest, and the honour of the Jewish faith depended upon the priest and his family having an appearance of an unblemished lifestyle. Three types of woman are mentioned here, a prostitute, a defiled woman and a divorced woman, we will cover each one separately:

1. **A prostitute:** a woman who through lust or for financial gain takes men into her bed.

2. **A defiled woman:** amongst commentators this could refer to a woman:

- Whose chastity had been violated, unwillingly (i.e., physically forced upon her).
- Who had been enticed and seduced by charm and flattery but did not make a practice of such wrongful behaviour.
- Who is not born of Hebrew blood and therefore not a true Israelitish woman, this idea is supported by the following words of Ezekiel: "Priests shall not marry a widow or a divorced woman, but only virgins of the offspring of the house of Israel, or a widow who is the widow of a priest." (Ezek. 44:22).
- Who was not born of an Israelite, at least of an Israelitish woman, as proselytes or freed persons.
- Who had been sexually active, with her husband, but is now a widow.
- Who had been born of an incestuous marriage which was forbidden. (Leviticus chapter eighteen).

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3. **A divorced woman:** embraces a woman:

- Whose husband had put her away, because she had had a sexual affair.
- Whose husband had put her away for some other reason than adultery, which was common for Jewish husbands to do in these ancient times, even when he was the one at fault and she was innocent, however, once a husband put his wife away it leaves a blemish upon her and made such woman suspect of having done something bad, unseemly or amiss.

A priest was not to put himself in any position that could bring scandal or reproach upon himself his family, his ministry, the Jewish faith and upon God Himself. Likewise ministers of the Gospel today should not act in any manner that brings dishonour to God and shame to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Christian faith.

LEVITICUS 21:9

The Daughter of a Priest who Plays the Whore shall Be Burned.

- **Leviticus 21:9:** And the daughter of any priest, if she profanes herself by whoring, profanes her father; she shall be burned with fire.

The word whore here comes from the Hebrew word (*zanah*) meaning wanton, to continually commit fornication, to, play the harlot, to commit adultery (usually by the female) and less often of simple fornication. Figuratively, it carries the idea of committing idolatry, because the Jewish

people were regarded as the spouse of the LORD. The daughter of any priest embraces a betrothed (engaged) daughter, a married daughter, and a single daughter for there is no exception in the verse for any daughter no matter what her situation maybe.

Profane herself by whoring: such a daughter brings scandal and disgrace on:

- Her father, her family and all who had the honour of being related to a person in such a sacred and holy office.
- The respectability of the priesthood and the faith of her nation Israel.

The fact she had the advantage of a holy religious education and had eaten of the holy things in her father's house made her crime more scandalous, disgraceful and shameful to her, her father, his reputation, his religion and his office and exposes him to reproach, and the ridicule of others saying, "this is a priest's daughter that has committed this immorality."

She shall be burnt with fire: the following verses shows that the punishment for a betrothed daughter of a layman who willingly slept with another man was death by stoning.

- If there is a betrothed virgin, and a man meets her in the city and lies with her, ²⁴then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city, and you shall stone them to death with stones, the young woman because she did not cry for help though she was in the city, and the man because he violated his neighbor's wife. So you shall purge the evil from your midst. (Deut. 22:23-24).

Whereas, a betrothed daughter of a priest who willingly slept with another man was punished with death by fire. This was perhaps to signify that her father and the priesthood was completely cleansed of the shame, guilt and disgrace she had brought upon them.

The man's punishment: no punishment is mention here for the man who lay with her, because the focus is the daughter of a priest, but the following verse shows that any man who sexually laid with a betrothed or married woman (whether she was a priest's daughter or not), was to be stoned to death.

- If there is a betrothed virgin, and a man meets her in the city and lies with her, ²⁴then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city, and you shall stone them to death with stones, the young woman because she did not cry for help though she was in the city, and the man because he violated his neighbor's wife. So you shall purge the evil from your midst. (Deut. 22:23-24).

Based upon these verses the man would have been stoned, since he was separated from the priesthood, while the daughter belonging to the family of a priest was burned by fire.

LEVITICUS 21:10

Priest's shall Not let their Hair Hang Loose nor Tear His Clothes.

- **Leviticus 21:10:** "The priest who is chief (high priest in KJV) 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 (shall not uncover his head in KJV), nor tear his clothes.

The priest who is chief among his brothers (i.e., among the sons of Aaron) refers to the high priest, amongst the nation of Israel there was no higher position than that of the high priest. Two of the distinctive features involved in the consecration of the high priest was:

1. The pouring of the anointing oil like a crown poured on the head of the high priest and those who succeeded him.

- He (Moses) poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron's head and anointed him to consecrate him. (Lev. 8:12).
- You (Moses) shall take the anointing oil and pour it on his (Aaron's) head and anoint him. (Exod. 29:7).

2. The putting on to the holy garments was the second part of the single consecration ceremony.

Pouring the oil upon the head anointed the high priest and putting on the holy garments consecrated and ordained the high priest and those who succeeded him for the service of the LORD to minister on behalf of the people before the LORD. (Exodus 29:29).

Shall not tear his clothes: (v10), which was done in times of distress, sorrow and grief, and when mourning for the dead, or the loss of a battle and destruction of their city, lands and temple. Outward expressions of sorrow such as these might lead those who the priests minister over, to feel that the priest questions, disagrees and challenges God's divine justice and judgment. The following verse shows that priests did tear their robes in cases of what they believed to be blasphemy.

- Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy. (Matt. 26:65)

Shall not let the hair of his head hang loose: (v10) (shall not uncover his head in KJV), which was also a sign of mourning. When Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, offered unauthorized incense before the LORD and fire came out from before the LORD and consumed them Moses said to Aaron Eleazar and Ithamar his two surviving sons:

- Do not let the hair of your heads hang loose, and do not tear your clothes, lest you die, and wrath come upon all the congregation; but let your brothers, the whole house of Israel, bewail the burning that the LORD has kindled. (Lev. 10:1-6).

At this time this was the common posture of mourners, but later covering the head became a sign of mourning.

- David went up the ascent of the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went, barefoot and with his head covered. And all the people who were with him covered their heads, and they went up, weeping as they went. (2 Sam. 15:30).
- Mordecai returned to the king's gate. But Haman hurried to his house, mourning and with his head covered. (Esther 6:12).

The expression, "he shall not let the hair of his head hang loose," may also carry the idea that he was not to put off the priestly covering or mitre but shall continue ministering in the work of his holy calling, which was signified by keeping on his priestly garments. It is most likely the high priest was not to show signs of mourning for he was a type of Christ carrying the message of life beyond the grave, and the blood sacrifices they offered before the LORD, all foreshadowed God's perfect Lamb without blemish to come who by his death and resurrection invites all into his eternal Kingdom of glory and everlasting happiness. It is certain that from heavens perspective death for a believer is not loss but gain. The eternal God has a different view to death than mortal man has, the prophet Isaiah wrote:

- The righteous man perishes, and no one lays it to heart; devout men are taken away, while no one understands. For the righteous man is taken away from calamity (from the evil to come in KJV). (Isaiah 57:1).

And the apostle Paul said:

- For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ²²If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. ²³I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. ²⁴But to remain

in the flesh is more necessary on your account. ²⁵Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith. (Philippians 1:1-30).

For further information see the title:

- Priest shall not make Bald Patches, Shave their Beards, or Cut their Body,” following (v5) (above).

LEVITICUS 21:11

The Priest shall Not Go to His Father or His Mother Dead Bodies.

- **Leviticus 21:11:** He shall not go in to any dead bodies nor make himself unclean, even for his father or for his mother.

In (v1-3) we are told that priests could bury their mother and fathers’ dead body, and here we read that they were not to go near the dead body of their mother or father. Clearly this seems to be a contradiction, but the two verses can be easily harmonized. The focus of (v1-3) is not limited to the high priest only, but embraces all the sons of Aaron, who by being his sons are all ordinary priests, whereas (v10) says, the priest who is chief (high priest in KJV) among his brothers (i.e., among the sons of Aaron), which clearly shows that the focus is now upon the high priest. It is the high priest who is not to attend to any dead body, even the body of his own father and mother, nor was he to enter-into a tent, a house or a place where a human corpse was lying for he would then be defiled and therefore unfit to perform his duties as high priest for seven days.

- This is the law when someone dies in a tent: everyone who comes into the tent and everyone who is in the tent shall be unclean seven days. (Num. 19:14).

The ordinary priest: was permitted to attend the funeral ceremonies of his mother, father, son, daughter, brother and his virgin sister. (Lev. 21:1-3).

The high priest: was not permitted to attend the funeral ceremonies of anyone, not even his own mother, father. (Lev. 21:11).

LEVITICUS 21:12

The High Priest Shall Not Leave the Sanctuary, Lest He Profane It.

- **Leviticus 21:12:** He shall not go out of the sanctuary, lest he profane the sanctuary of his God, for the consecration of the anointing oil (crown of the anointing oil in KJV) of his God is on him: I am the LORD.

The command, “he shall not go out of the sanctuary,” does not mean he was never to go out of the sanctuary for this he often did to minister to the people in the outer court, but that he was not to go out for the purposes previously mentioned (i.e., to bury the dead). When news came to him of the death of a loved one including his own mother and father he was not forsake the service of the LORD and leave the sanctuary to attend to their funerals, for the following two reasons:

1. It would then appear that he had a greater regard for the dead than for the service of the living God.
 2. If he did go out to attend to the dead, he would be defiled for seven days.
- Whoever touches the dead body of any person shall be unclean seven days. (Numbers 19:11).

This means if he returned to the sanctuary within the seven days, he would also defile it. However, he could go out to perform his duties to the people in the outer court and after he had completed his services before the LORD return to his own house in Jerusalem.

The consecration of the anointing oil: (crown of the anointing oil in KJV), this can carry the following two ideas:

1. The golden plate, which the following verse shows was called a holy crown.
 - You shall set the turban on his head and put the holy crown on the turban. (Exodus 29:6).
2. The anointing oil of his God was upon him, which was a crown of glory, in that it exalted him above all others and showed him to be a holy priest and a king amongst the people, signifying Christ who is a priest and King upon his throne.

Zechariah prophesied saying:

- Say to him, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: for he shall branch out from his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD. ¹³It is he who shall build the temple of the LORD and shall bear royal honor, and shall sit and rule on his throne. And there shall be a priest on his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both." (Zech. 6:12-13).

The anointing oil and crown signify, that he is set aside and consecrated to serve God and the people as high priest and by these was exalted above his brothers, the priests, the head governor and civil magistrates, for he was a type of Christ, who is Priest and King.

LEVITICUS 21:13-15

10

The Priest was to Take a Virgin of His Own People for a Wife.

- **Leviticus 21:13-15:** And he shall take a wife in her virginity. ¹⁴A 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, ¹⁵that he may not profane his offspring among his people, for I am the LORD who sanctifies him."

The high priest could not marry a divorced woman, a woman who has been defiled or a prostitute, but only a virgin from his own people. The ordinary priests were also not to marry a prostitute, a woman who had been defiled, or a divorced woman. (Lev. 21:7), however, they were permitted to marry a widow of a priest. (Ezek. 44:22), whereas the high priest could not.

A virgin of his own people: this did not limit the priest to marry in the tribe he dwelt in only. Descendants of Aaron and Levites were scattered amongst the twelve tribes, but had no inheritances in them, and therefore they were not limited to marry a woman from the tribe they dwelt amongst but could marry into any other tribe of Israel.

LEVITICUS 21:16-20

No One with a Blemish or Defect May Offer the Bread of the LORD.

- **Leviticus 21:16-20:** 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. ¹⁸For 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, ¹⁹or a man who has an injured foot or an injured hand, ²⁰or a hunchback or a dwarf or a man with a defect in his sight or an itching disease or scabs or crushed testicles.

The focus here is not limited to the high priest only but embraces all the offspring of Aaron for they were all priests that served the LORD.

The bread of his God: refers to the holy and sacred duties of the priest before the LORD, the people and within the temple itself.

Who has a blemish: the outward physical deformities mentioned in these verses can be summed up in the words, anyone whose body is mutilated, disfigured or suffering some form of sickness cannot minister in the sacred and holy duties of the LORD. Physical visible bodily blemishes disqualified the descendants of Aaron from serving the LORD at the altar and to officiate in public service. Following are two possible reasons for this:

1. In ancient times, people did not understand visible deformities as we do today and therefore such deformities tend to have a strong influence on their minds and detracted from the authority of the sacred and holy office. It should be mentioned here that it did not mean that those who had some form of deformity were considered less before God in love or less in His Kingdom or that they should be treated as outcasts, for they could minister in other ways and enjoy all the privileges as a son of God, just not in the most holy office of the priesthood.
 2. Only those without a blemish could minister in the most holy office of the priesthood, to signify the Holiness of God and Christ the Lamb of God without blemish.
- For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. (Heb. 7:26).

LEVITICUS 21:21-24

11

No Priest with a Blemish shall enter the Veil or Approach the Altar.

- **Leviticus 21:21-24:** 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. ²²He may eat the bread of his God, both of the most holy and of the holy things, ²³but 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." ²⁴So Moses spoke to Aaron and to his sons and to all the people of Israel.

He may eat the bread of his God: (v22) though those with a physical blemish are not permitted to serve at the altar, they were permitted to partake of holy sacrificial gifts, such as the peace shoulder, the tithes, and the first-fruits, and also eat what remained of the meat-offerings, the sin-offerings, and the trespass-offerings, which were most holy. The Scripture clearly show here the great difference between natural infirmities a person suffers through no fault of their own and moral defilements that they bring upon themselves, for such people were forbidden to partake of such privileges. Outward bodily deformities do not shut people out from God's Kingdom or eternal life and everlasting happiness. Many faithful and devoted spirits dwell in a feeble, deformed body and those who may not be suited for the work of the ministry, may serve God with comfort in other duties in his Kingdom. Priests could enjoy the blessings and gifts of God despite their outward deformities, whereas those who had moral infirmities and defilements brought upon by their own actions could not.

He shall eat the bread of his God: referring to that part of the sacrifices which was appropriated by the LORD to the priests for food for them and their families, for though their natural deformities disqualified them for the most holy service, they were not morally or ceremonial impure, and therefore could eat of the sacrifices, while those who were morally and ceremonially impure could not. From this law the following tradition was

established, priests who had a visible physical blemish (whether permanent or temporary) could eat of the holy food, but not offer it. The priests had no inheritance, nor any way of getting their livelihood, because their provision was dependent upon the tithes and offerings (i.e., meat and grains etc), of the people and therefore those with outward physical blemishes could eat the offerings, otherwise they would perish.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

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