

# LEVITICUS 21& 22

## STANDARDS FOR SERVICE

These two chapters address the priests and set out the high standards they were expected to meet.

### STRUCTURE

The whole section divides into six sections, each of which closes with the formula "I am the LORD who sanctifies them" (21v8,15,23; 22v9,16,32).

- 21v1-9 Restrictions on mourning and marriage for ordinary priests.
- V10-15 Restrictions on mourning and marriage for the High Priest.
- V16-24 Physical deformities that disqualify for priestly service.
- 22v1-9 Ceremonial uncleanness.
- V10-16 Eating holy food.
- V17-33 Unacceptable sacrifices.

#### 1. The personal life of the priests 21v1-15

This set of laws concerns priests when they are off duty with their families at home. Two issues are highlighted:

##### Mourning 21v1-6, 10-12

A corpse was a source of uncleanness and touching one would defile a priest for seven days. However, a concession was made for the ordinary priests who were allowed to attend the funerals of close blood relatives. No concession was made for the H.P

The priests were to distance themselves from the pagan mourning rites of the heathen and demonstrate unswerving loyalty to God (see Luke 9v59,60,14v26).

##### Marriage 21v7-9, 13-15

The priests were consecrated to God and their wives must be of good character. They must not marry prostitutes, raped or divorced women. They must choose either a virgin or a widow. The High Priest could only marry a virgin, this was to safeguard the purity of the priestly line.

#### 2. The physical fitness of the priests v16-24

The unblemished lifestyle of the priests had to be matched by their unblemished bodies. A list of twelve physical disabilities which would disqualify a priest from service is given. These rulings have nothing to do with the worth or value of people. It was a temporary visual aid teaching the church in this kindergarten stage that holiness equates to wholeness and to give us a preview of the perfection of Jesus Christ our great High Priest.

#### 3. The professional conduct of the priest 22v1-33

From personal requirements we now come to the actual performance of the job. This chapter brings out a number of situations in which the priest's handling of the sacrifices would be disrespectful. Ceremonial uncleanness v1-9. Desecration of holy food v10-16. Sacrifices that were unacceptable v17-33.

#### Leviticus 21&22 and the N.T

They point us to Christ who is both perfect priest (Heb 7v26) and perfect victim (Heb 9v14, 1 Pet 1v19). His bride is the Church, whom He is sanctifying to make her "without spot...or blemish" (Eph 5v27 Rev 19v7,8; 21v2).

The leaders of the Gospel Church should similarly be of good character (Acts 6v3, 1 Tim 3; Titus 1v5-11). Their wives (1 Tim 3v11) and their children (1Tim 3v4; Titus 1v6) should be well behaved.