

## LEVITICUS 21:1-24 (SUITABLE FOR THE PRIESTHOOD)

When I was a kid, mom and dad would take us up to Massachusetts every year for a summer vacation. It is a beautiful spot out in the remote western mountains, and has the smallest township in the state person-wise, but it is spread out over many miles of beautiful forests, hills, and mountains.

Right in the center of the town, the very heart of it, is where the church is. It's only open for a couple months each summer, and it hires the summer preacher from elsewhere. One year, they hired a person who really wanted to preach. He had the heart and the desire to do so. You had to know this was the truth, because he also had the single worst stststststutter that I, or anyone else in attendance, had ever heard. It was literally painful to listen to.

He would get stststststuck on a T, and it would grow to the point where his face would literally contort. And it wasn't an occasional ststststststick. It happened constantly. Everyone knew the word he was trying to say, and certainly everyone wanted to simply yell it out and get on with the ever-lengthening sermon. Would we have the 2 pm baseball game at Austin farm? There's only 2 hours left and he's only done 10 sentences. The sermon is 25 pages. Baseball? We may not make it to dinner... or breakfast tomorrow.

It really was brutal, but people were polite. Needless to say, he didn't get a re-invite the following year. It may have been better if everyone made light of it and actually yelled out the word he was t t t t t t trying to say. Maybe it would have helped him if we participated. Maybe not. There may have been a filled noose at the parsonage the next morning. It's hard to say, but it was a sad and heartbreaking thing. I think about him often. He really wanted to do what he was wholly unsuited to do.

I feel that way as well. I think I can type a good sermon, but I know my delivery is not Joel Osteen quality – something I'm actually grateful for. We have a small church filled with the best people. I would miss that if I were eloquent and famous. But Sunday afternoon video editing makes me grateful for several things. I am grateful for cut and move, and I am grateful

for morph cut. Cut and move means that I simply cut out my blunders. Morph cut means that I can morph the two images into one so that nobody can tell there was cut and move.

Watching, or listening to, one of my edited versions, you might think, "He's not that bad." The folks in attendance know otherwise, and for their patience, I am weekly grateful. But this poor guy's sermons could never have been edited. There would have been nothing left after editing.

**Text Verse:** "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, <sup>4</sup> just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, <sup>5</sup> having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, <sup>6</sup> to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved." Ephesians 1:3-6

In Christ, we are accepted. This doesn't mean that we all are perfect. And it doesn't mean that we are all qualified to do anything we wish. As much as my heart breaks for that guy in the little church on the mountain, he wasn't qualified to preach. It's not that he was unqualified because his defect was unacceptable to God. It is that he was not acceptable to the ears of his audience. If he was a sound follower of the Lord, I can assure you that the Lord was well-pleased with his faith to try.

I'm grateful for this as well. I don't need to be a Joel Osteen or an Adrian Rodgers. And a large church would mean I didn't have the blessed relationship I have with those in a small church. He has fitted all things according to His wisdom. When that wisdom coincides with our desires, that is the sweet spot. And that is the spot I feel I'm in every single morning when I wake up.

Be sure that if you are in Christ, the Lord has accepted you, even if others don't. There is only favor streaming from Him because of who you are. That's the blessing of being a follower of Jesus. It is the message of Scripture. Today we will look back on what it was like before His coming, and we will look at why it was that way. It's all to be found in His superior

word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

### **I. Priestly Moral Restrictions (verses 1-9)**

**<sup>1</sup>And the Lord said to Moses,**

The opening words are different than are normally given. Usually it says, "And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying..." Here it says, "And the Lord said to Moses." The Hebrew words for "spoke" and "said" carry essentially the same thought of conveying a message, but spoke is more concise. One commentary on the difference says, "You choose DABER if you only need to tell people what to do, but AMAR if the task is so complex that it requires a partnership and people working together." And again, the same word follows in the next words...

**<sup>1</sup> (con't) "Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them: 'None shall defile himself for the dead among his people,**

The Lord uses the same word, *amar*, directing Moses to "'Say' to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them." He twice repeats the same word. But, the phrase He uses is unique to the five books of Moses. Six other times it says, "the sons of Aaron the priests." Only here it reverses that and says, "the priests, the sons of Aaron."

This rewording of the phrase is intended to relay the truth that they are priests *because* they are sons of Aaron, and not because of their own merit. Aaron was called by the Lord, and he did nothing to merit the call. As the book of Hebrews notes, there was no oath rendered in their priestly call, unlike Jesus who was made a Priest based on an oath recorded in the psalms. Like Aaron, who was called apart from any personal merit, this same thought transfers to all of his sons.

These words are to be conveyed to all of the priests who descend from Aaron. The instructions are given solely for them in this chapter. So far, the laws for holiness of the entire community have been given, and which

pertained to all – both priest and layman. But, those who administer the law are set apart to the Lord in a unique way, and therefore additional requirements are to be laid upon them. The first, and thus chief requirement is that...

**1 (con't) 'None shall defile himself for the dead among his people,**

The last chapter ended in a seemingly odd manner. It reintroduced the thought which said, "A man or a woman who is a medium, or who has familiar spirits, shall surely be put to death; they shall stone them with stones. Their blood shall be upon them." As I said then, mediums and wizards were to be stoned because they infringed upon a realm which belongs to God alone.

People who practiced these things consulted the dead on behalf of the living. Instead of this, the people were to consult those who mediated the law on behalf of the people, meaning the priests. And the priests were to remain completely separate from the defilement of death. In this verse, the Hebrew does not say, "for the dead." Instead, it reads, "for (a) soul do not be defiled." The idea is that of a dead person however. When a soul leaves the body, you are mourning not for the body, but for the soul that has departed. The body without a soul is defiled, and it will transmit that defilement.

No priest was to touch a dead body, enter the house where a dead person was, help prepare or carry a dead body, etc. Such things defiled a person, and they became unclean for seven days, which then required certain rites of purification for their uncleanness. The reason for this, above all, is that death is the result of sin. It is the greatest penalty for sin, and it is the final identifying mark that a person bore sin. The law has already said that the man who does the things of the law will live by them. Each death was another testimony to the fact that no person had done the things of the law, and they suffered the just consequences of their failure.

In death, the mortal body began its rapid process of corruption and decay. This sign of the fallen world was a defiling marker for any who came in

contact with it. Priests were expected to administer the law of life, at least life as far as the law could provide.

Every sacrifice that was detailed in the first half of Leviticus was an anticipatory type of death which foreshadowed the Person and work of Christ. It is He who, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, swallowed up death in victory. For the priests to be defiled by death, it would indicate that their mediation was tainted. Thus, they were to be prohibited from the same freedoms granted to the lay people. For them, however, gracious exceptions were made...

**<sup>2</sup>except for his relatives who are nearest to him: his mother, his father, his son, his daughter, and his brother;**

The scholar Keil says that, “in the case of death among members of the family or household, defilement was not to be avoided on the part of the priest as the head of the family.” This is an insufficient explanation. No exception is given if a slave died in a house, which would by default render someone unclean, but that would have been just as unavoidable. This defilement due to a near relative is obviously given out of God’s kindness to the priest’s humanity.

It should be noted that this is second of only three times in the Bible where the mother is mentioned before the father. Several reasons probably exist for this subtle change. The first is the extremely close bond between a child and the mother. This would go hand in hand then with the already seen kind nature of God towards the priest’s humanity.

It extends even to the thought of Christ on the cross who took the time to care for the mother who bore Him before giving up His breath. Secondly, as the son’s qualifications for the priesthood depend on his mother’s character as will be seen in verse 7, the mother is identified before the father, who by his nature as a priest makes the child qualified for the priesthood as well.

This again points to Christ whose mother had necessary qualifications which needed to be highlighted in order for Him to qualify as our High Priest. Chief among them, He needed to be born of a virgin. Further, as Christ’s human

father was via adoption, there is a distance there which brings the nearness of Mary closer to Him than Joseph. In the end, naming the mother first subtly looks forward to Christ as much as anything else. In all of the mentioned family members, there is a nearness considered in these exceptions. It allowed the priest to mourn over his dead close relatives. It is a nearness which extends to a certain point, however, and no more...

**<sup>3</sup> also his virgin sister who is near to him, who has had no husband, for her he may defile himself.**

When a woman of Israel married, she went to her husband as one flesh, and she ceased being united in the unique family relationship that she once stood. Until that occurred, when she was a virgin near to him, he could defile himself for her, but upon her marriage, this right and honor ended. At that time, the husband was responsible for her funeral and tending to her internment.

**<sup>4</sup> Otherwise he shall not defile himself, being a chief man among his people, to profane himself.**

This is a highly debated, and wholly confusing verse in the Hebrew. However, before reading what the Hebrew says, who is it that has been markedly left out of the list of people a priest can defile himself for? The wife. Here, the Hebrew reads, *lo yitama baal b'amav l'he-khalow*. No shall defile husband in his people to profane himself. "To profane himself" gives the sense of "with respect to a marriage by which he profanes himself."

The implicit reading of this is that a husband is not to defile himself for his wife. Scholars disagree, saying it is obvious that as she is nearest to him of his close relatives, she is by default included. There is nothing obvious about that. The fact that the wife is not mentioned in the list completely negates that.

Scholars also say that Ezekiel was specifically told to not mourn his wife, thus implying that the normal thing to do was to mourn for a dead wife. But mourning and defilement are not the same thing. And so that can be tossed

out. What is obvious is that the word *baal*, or husband, is used, and it is in conjunction with three verses which specifically leave the wife out.

One would ask though, “Why is a priest not permitted to defile himself for his own wife?” The only answer which makes any sense is that in the death of his wife, he has profaned himself already. According to Genesis 2:24, the man and the woman become one flesh when they married. Therefore, there is a state of profanation which exists because of her death, and it is not to be further exacerbated by his defiling himself for her soul.

And doesn’t this look forward to Christ and the church? When a soul departs, there is death, but in Christ, there is no defilement. As we noted earlier, death is swallowed up in victory. But Christ had to first profane Himself, taking on our sins, in order for that defilement to be cleansed. He became unclean so that we might be clean. The priest in type is looking forward to Christ because he was not to defile himself for his wife. Nor does Christ now defile Himself for us. Cleansing occurred at the cross, and there is now no defilement because of this.

**<sup>5</sup>‘They shall not make any bald *place* on their heads, nor shall they shave the edges of their beards nor make any cuttings in their flesh.**

This verse is referring to other nations ways of expressing grief which were seen when someone died. Verse 19:28 has already warned against these things for the lay people, and it now explicitly extends to the priests. It is certain that this is speaking of mourning for the dead, because in Deuteronomy 14:1, the prohibition is repeated with the words, “for the dead.” These things are comparable to today’s customs of wearing black, and so on. The priests were not to change their appearance in such outward signs of mourning, because they were holy unto the Lord, and were to reflect His glory at all times.

**<sup>6</sup>They shall be holy to their God and not profane the name of their God,**

This explains the reason for the prohibitions given so far. The priests were to be holy, as the Lord is holy. In defiling themselves in these various ways,

they would otherwise profane His name. The name which is then explicitly stated...

**6 (con't) for they offer the offerings of the Lord made by fire, *and* the bread of their God; therefore they shall be holy.**

The Lord, Yehovah, is their God. It is to Him that their fire-offerings were made. These are then explained as the “bread” or “food” of their God. The word “and” doesn’t belong here. The fire-offerings stand as representative of all of the offerings to the Lord. It is because they make these offerings, all pointing to Christ, that they were to be holy, and to not deviate from that state.

**7 They shall not take a wife *who is* a harlot or a defiled woman, nor shall they take a woman divorced from her husband; for *the priest* is holy to his God.**

The rules now go from contact and mourning for the dead which defiles, to contact with the living which could do the same. A woman who was a prostitute, even if she was reclaimed, could not become the wife of a priest. A defiled woman would be one who had lost her virginity, which in Israel would already be improper. But a priest could marry a woman not of Israel, and so this prohibition is stated so that it is understood that even if a foreigner, she was not to have been defiled. A priest was also not to marry a divorced woman. Any of these would demonstrate an unholiness which was incompatible with his position as a priest of God.

**8 Therefore you shall consecrate him, for he offers the bread of your God. He shall be holy to you, for I the Lord, who sanctify you, *am* holy.**

Verse 1 said, “Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron.” It appears that this is what is being referred to here. Each priest was to hold every other priest accountable for their marriages. They were to ensure that no such illegal marriage was to take place, because he, along with each of them, offers “the bread of your God.” The priest then was to be holy, and they were to be holy to one another. And the exacting reason is again given as it has



been at other times. It is because Yehovah is the one who sanctifies them. They were to be holy because the Lord set them apart as holy.

**<sup>9</sup>The daughter of any priest, if she profanes herself by playing the harlot, she profanes her father. She shall be burned with fire.**

There are no exceptions here that later Jewish traditions introduce. The words are clear and precise. If a priest's daughter become a whore, the name of her father would be profaned. In profaning his name, the name of the Lord would be profaned. There was to be no leniency for such an act. However, there is dispute as to what being burned with fire means. Does it mean that she was to be first stoned and then burned? Or was she to be put on a heap of sticks and burned alive? It goes unstated here. Either way, she was toast.

*I am the Lord who sanctifies you  
Therefore you shall be holy as I am holy  
To this precept you shall be true  
You shall follow My word and emulate Me*

*You shall not profane the name of your God  
You shall not defile yourselves before Me  
You shall walk circumspectly on the path you trod  
You shall be holy for I am holy*

*I have redeemed you from your past, a life of sin  
I have called you unto holiness, yes, to be holy  
You were destined for hell, you were all but done in  
And I saved you; now you shall follow after Me*

## **II. Requirements of the High Priest (verses 10-15)**

**<sup>10</sup>'He who is the high priest among his brethren, on whose head the anointing oil was poured and who is consecrated to wear the garments, shall not uncover his head nor tear his clothes;**

This is the first use of *ha'kohen ha'gadol*, or “the priest, the great one.” He is distinguished by the office of high priest. This is explicitly noted in mentioning the anointing oil which was poured on him, and who alone was allowed to wear the garments of the high priest. These two things in particular distinguished him as Israel’s high priest.

First and foremost he is commanded to not uncover his head. Specifically, this means to allow his hair to be loosed, meaning unkempt. This was a sign of mourning, and he was never to demonstrate such an attitude. He was first, foremost, and always, to be holy to the Lord. Further, he was not to tear his clothes. To do so was an indication of distress or anguish. As the intercessor between the Lord and the people, his conduct in one of these ways would give either a sense of utter despair to the people, or that he was impugning the Lord’s fairness, justice, or ability to control any given situation. It is ironic that this first command to the high priest of Israel was openly disobeyed in the presence of the Lord who gave the command –

And the high priest arose and said to Him, “Do You answer nothing? What *is it* these men testify against You?” <sup>63</sup> But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, “I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!”

<sup>64</sup> Jesus said to him, “*It is as* you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

<sup>65</sup> Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, “He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy! <sup>66</sup> What do you think?” Matthew 26:62-66

Jesus was placed under oath by the high priest. Because of the position of the high priest, He was bound by the Law of Moses, which He gave to Israel, to tell the truth. He did, and therefore He remained without guilt in the matter. And yet, the high priest was guilty of violating a precept of the very law which he said Jesus was guilty of violating. There is an irony that runs through the Bible that is truly amazing when put in its proper light.

**<sup>11</sup> nor shall he go near any dead body, nor defile himself for his father or his mother;**

To go near a dead body means to enter a house or other area where a dead body was. He was not to come near any such dead person and thus contract defilement. The anointing oil on him was of more importance to keep free from defilement than even to defile himself for his own father or mother. His call to the office of high priest was one bestowed upon him by the Lord, and so to the Lord alone was his full, continuous, and pure devotion to be fixed.

**<sup>12</sup> nor shall he go out of the sanctuary,**

There is a dispute as to the meaning of “go out of the sanctuary.” Most scholars take this as “for the sake of a funeral, mourning, or some other sorrow or disaster which would take him from his duties.” Others say that he literally was never to leave the sanctuary because he was the high priest, and to the Lord, his life was dedicated. It seems more likely that this is speaking of going out of the sanctuary in abandonment of his duties in order to grieve, but that he was not restricted to the sanctuary at all times. This then would explain the next words...

**<sup>12</sup> (con’t) nor profane the sanctuary of his God;**

This means that if he were defiled at some point, he could not enter the sanctuary until his time of purification was complete. He could not enter the sanctuary if he had never left the sanctuary. And so it seems that the first clause is speaking of not all times, but at times referred to in the other verses. This is the more obvious when the high priest got married as all men do. In his marriage union, he *would* contract defilement according to the chapter on discharges. This would certainly not be something he would do while in the sanctuary. Therefore, it cannot be that the high priest was never to leave the sanctuary.

**<sup>12</sup> (con’t) for the consecration of the anointing oil of his God is upon him: I am the Lord.**

These words can be translated in two major ways. The first is that “the consecration of the anointing oil of his God is upon him.” Thus, the anointing oil is being used as representative of the high priestly office as it

was in verse 10, along with his other garments. The second is “for crown, anointing oil is upon him.” The word used here, *netser*, is the same word used to describe the golden crown which adorned the high priest’s turban, and which also can mean “consecration.” Thus, both the crown and the oil are being used as representative of the office.

As the golden crown was engraved with the words *Qadosh Yehovah*, or “Holy (to) Yehovah” the final words of this verse, *ani Yehovah*, or I (am) Yehovah, seem to point to both being referred to. It is hard to be dogmatic, and no matter which, the office of high priest anticipates the greater office of Christ as High Priest, the oil of the anointing points to the prophetic influence of the Spirit resting upon Christ, and the crown points to Christ’s kingly status. Thus, He is our prophet, priest, and king.

**<sup>13</sup> And he shall take a wife in her virginity.**

If the high priest were to marry a woman who was not a virgin, it would profane his seed. In this, he was a type of Christ to come. In 2 Corinthians 11, Paul writes the following –

“For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present *you as a chaste virgin to Christ.*” 2 Corinthians 11:2

In each way, the type was to lead to the Antitype. He was to be an Old Testament example of the greater High Priest to come.

**<sup>14</sup> A widow or a divorced woman or a defiled woman or a harlot—these he shall not marry; but he shall take a virgin of his own people as wife.**

These prohibitions are given against the words of the previous verse. You shall do this; you shall not do this. There was no room for reinterpreting the law in another way.

**<sup>15</sup> Nor shall he profane his posterity among his people, for I the Lord sanctify him.”**

What this means is that the high priest was not to enter into such a forbidden marriage because it would then render his children, born of such a union, ineligible for the privileges of the priesthood. The Lord had sanctified him, and he was to maintain that line of sanctity through holy offspring.

However... in Christ's line women of these categories are seen, such as Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba, among others. Thus, the regulations here are symbolic only. True defilement doesn't occur from such unions. It is the picture of Christ being betrothed to the chaste virgin to which these verses point. In the end, regardless of one's genealogy, all defilement ceases in Christ. This is even true with the first high priest who had to be sanctified in order to enter the priestly line in the first place.

*A High Priest, perfect in all ways  
One who is consecrated to mediate for us  
And He is qualified to do so for eternal days  
He is our Lord; He is the Lord Jesus*

*Unto Himself a spotless bride He has taken  
A chaste virgin beautiful and pure  
Someday our departure we will be a'makin'  
Until then, we patiently endure*

*But soon we shall be off to the sanctuary of God  
For now, we await the time when unto Him we go  
But our feet are ready, with the gospel we are shod  
As we direct others on the correct path to follow*

### **III. Defects Among the Priests (verses 16-24)**

**<sup>16</sup> And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,**

We now return to the usual means of address where the Lord speaks (*daber*) to the people. In the previous section, the people were to do something in conjunction with the word of the Lord in order to not become

defiled. Here, the people are designated as defiled *by* the word of the Lord. They need do nothing to be so; it is simply the way it is.

**<sup>17</sup> “Speak to Aaron, saying: ‘No man of your descendants in *succeeding* generations, who has *any* defect, may approach to offer the bread of his God.**

If the sacrifices which were offered to the Lord were to be without blemish, how much more should those who make them be without defect! The word *mum*, or defect, is now introduced. Most of the 21 times it is seen will be in the books of Moses. It indicates a blemish which can be either physical or moral.

The spiritual nature of the sacrifices looked to the Person and work of Christ. The same is true with the spiritual nature of the priests. This was seen in exacting detail in the description of their garments, and in their ordination. These words now continue to expand on that thought.

Throughout the time of the Aaronic priesthood, any who was otherwise qualified to serve, but then who showed a defect as named here, would thus be deemed as unacceptable to serve. The entire time of the law, the people were being shown only types and shadows of Christ to come. Thus, until He came, the same standards and expectations were required in their priests as would be seen in the true Priest. This is the lesson here in order for Israel to understand the holiness of the Lord.

**<sup>18</sup> For any man who has a defect shall not approach: a man blind or lame, who has a marred *face* or any *limb* too long,**

These words now begin to list what “defect” of the previous verse means. One who is *ivver*, or blind, was disqualified. The word comes from the word *or*, or skin. It is as if skin is pulled over the eye, causing it to not see. Such would be disqualified. Next is the *pisseakh*, or lame. The word is introduced here and it comes from a primitive root meaning “to hop.” One who is lame will appear to make small hops to correct his defect. Such was disqualified to minister before the Lord.

The *kharam*, or marred, was also disqualified. The word is used to indicate a city to be dedicated to God through destruction. Thus, it would be a flattened nose, a destroyed face, mutilated ear, etc. These such appearances disqualified their making offerings to the Lord. And then is noted the *sara*, or deformed. This word is seen for the first of but three times. It means, “to extend,” or “stretch out.” Thus it is anything superfluous or deformed. It would certainly include things like extra fingers and toes, long arms, etc.

**<sup>19</sup> a man who has a broken foot or broken hand,**

Included also were those with the foot or hand which was broken. The word is *shever*, and it indicates a break, a fracture, a crushing, etc. In ancient times, when someone broke a bone, it would often mean he would be deformed permanently. And so whether born this way, or he became this way, the defect rendered him unsuitable to minister before Yehovah. Although not a priest, one such person was Saul’s son. He was broken in this manner as a child and remained lame throughout his life. That is recorded in 2 Samuel 4 –

“Jonathan, Saul’s son, had a son *who was* lame in *his* feet. He was five years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel; and his nurse took him up and fled. And it happened, as she made haste to flee, that he fell and became lame. His name *was* Mephibosheth.” 2 Samuel 4:4

**<sup>20</sup> or is a hunchback or a dwarf, or a man who has a defect in his eye, or eczema or scab, or is a eunuch.**

The *gibben*, or hunchback, is a word found only here. It is from an unused root meaning to be arched or contracted. And so it would indicate a hunchback, a crook-back, etc. However, another possibility is that this is speaking of an arch over the eyes, and thus a gnarl-browed person who resembles an ape. This is a minority opinion though.

After him is the *daq*, or dwarf. The word comes from *daqaq*, or crushed. By implication it is something small or thin; a very little thing. Next comes another unique word to the Bible the *tebalul b’enow*, or “defect in eye.” The

word comes from a word meaning to mix or confuse. This is probably speaking of cataracts or some other confusion of colors within the eye which is defective.

Anyone with *garav*, or eczema, was out. This word is seen first here, and it will be seen only once more in Leviticus and once in Deuteronomy. It comes from a root meaning to scratch. Thus it is an itchy affliction of the skin. No itchy people may serve. Likewise, the *yallepeth*, or scab, renders a person unclean. It is an eruptive disease which will be seen here and in the next chapter, and then it will be history.

And lastly, the eunuch was excluded. The term is *meroakh ashek*. Both words are only found here. Together, they mean crushed stones, and thus testicles. The idea here is that any such defect would render a person unsuitable to minister to the Lord.

These verses have caused much consternation to people in the world, and questions abound on Christian Q&A sites as to why the Lord disqualified such people. The questions inevitably go on to ask if these things continue on today. The first has been answered by me already. These things were given to point us to the true and perfect High Priest, Christ Jesus. The second will be answered before we finish today. It should be noted though that even in the Old Testament, a perfect appearance was no indication of a perfect person. The same word, *mum*, or blemish, was used to describe Absalom, the son of David as being perfect in his appearance, having no blemish. And yet, he was a loser who ended by being buried beneath a pile of stones, signifying the loser life he led. Others with blemishes were decent people who found the Lord's favor, such as the Ethiopian eunuch Ebed-Melech. That is recorded in Jeremiah 39:16-18 –

Go and speak to Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian, saying, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: "Behold, I will bring My words upon this city for adversity and not for good, and they shall be *performed* in that day before you. <sup>17</sup> But I will deliver you in that day," says the Lord, "and you shall not be given into the hand of the men of whom you *are* afraid. <sup>18</sup> For I will surely deliver you, and you shall not fall by the sword; but your life shall be as a prize to you, because you have put your trust in Me," says the Lord.'"



**<sup>21</sup> No man of the descendants of Aaron the priest, who has a defect, shall come near to offer the offerings made by fire to the Lord. He has a defect; he shall not come near to offer the bread of his God.**

These words are given to supplement what has already been provided. Twelve named defects were given to outline the general state of who would be considered unacceptable to minister before the Lord. Those twelve were only representative, however, of any and all other defects not specifically mentioned. It is certain that a person missing a limb or an ear would be likewise unqualified. A deaf person would be unsuitable to minister, etc.

This verse is given to demonstrate this. Twelve is the number of *perfection of government*. In the priestly government, there was to be perfection, and so those twelve items were given to support this idea. Those who offered the bread of their God were to be perfect in type because the One they picture is perfect in reality.

However, the restrictions on these sons of Aaron were only for drawing near to make the offerings to the Lord. They were not forbidden from assisting in other things that the priests needed to accomplish. During second temple times, periodic examinations of all priests were made. If any had become disqualified, they could still perform these assistant duties. If any had become well, they could be reintroduced into the regular priesthood. But all still had the same right to receive the provisions of the priests...

**<sup>22</sup> He may eat the bread of his God, *both* the most holy and the holy;**

All things given to the priests, both the most holy and the holy offerings, were acceptable for all of the priestly class, regardless of any defect. This is something that a priest who was defiled because of uncleanness could not do. And so even under the law, we see a difference between natural infirmities and moral defilement. The typology of Christ is what is important. The rewards for maintaining that typology were bestowed upon all. This included things like wave offerings, other sacrificial portions reserved for the priest, first-fruits, tithes, things laid under a ban, etc.

**<sup>23</sup> only he shall not go near the veil or approach the altar, because he has a defect, lest he profane My sanctuaries; for I the Lord sanctify them.”**

To go near the veil means to perform the duties in the holy place where the table of showbread, menorah, and altar of incense was located. Each of these were serviced at specific intervals by the priests. To approach the altar means to assist in the sacrifices there, including the daily, and other regularly, scheduled sacrifices. For them to perform those duties would profane His sanctuaries. The word is plural to indicate that each was its own holy place, with its own typological significance as it points to Christ. For a defective person to serve there would then violate the typology.

**\*<sup>24</sup> And Moses told *it* to Aaron and his sons, and to all the children of Israel.**

The words here are in fulfillment of those given in verse 1. But they go further. Not only were the words imparted to Aaron and his sons, but to all of the children of Israel. This is important, because it was to tell Israel that all people were to know how the priests were to conduct their affairs. There was not a code for the priests which they alone could manipulate. There was a set code that the people could see being adhered to, or being violated. The priestly class, in this sense at least, was not above the common people.

And this is true with the requirements for elders and deacons today. The church hierarchy *does not decide* who is qualified; God does. From there, the people have the right to see those qualifications being lived out in their leaders. How unlike the way the affairs of larger denominations are run today. How unlike Catholicism which secrets away perverts from public and congregational scrutiny.

Earlier, I noted that parts of this passage have caused consternation among people. This is both within, and without, the church. People who want to show how bad the God of the Bible is will come here and type up ridiculous commentaries on how God doesn't accept people with defects. Confusion among Christians follows suit.

As to why the Lord required people with such defects to be excluded from making offerings, that was already answered. It was to maintain the typology in anticipation of Christ. As with the sacrifices, as with the furniture, utensils, conduct of the people, and so on, so it is with the physical infirmities of the people. As to whether these requirements are still in effect today, I will give you two different commentaries from two different, widely accepted, scholars, both of whom I cite from time to time. Listen to the difference between the two –

“Let no man say this is a part of the Mosaic law, and we are not bound by it. It is an eternal law, founded on reason, propriety, common sense, and absolute necessity. The priest, the prophet, the Christian minister, is the representative of Jesus Christ; let nothing in his person, carriage, or doctrine, be unworthy of the personage he represents. A deformed person, though consummate in diplomatic wisdom, would never be employed as an ambassador by any enlightened court, if any fit person, unblemished, could possibly be procured.” Adam Clarke

“As these priests were types of Christ, so all ministers must be followers of him, that their example may teach others to imitate the Saviour. Without blemish, and separate from sinners, He executed his priestly office on earth. What manner of persons then should his ministers be! But all are, if Christians, spiritual priests; the minister especially is called to set a good example, that the people may follow it. Our bodily infirmities, blessed be God, cannot now shut us out from his service, from these privileges, or from his heavenly glory. Many a healthful, beautiful soul is lodged 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 church.”  
Matthew Henry

Adam Clarke’s commentary could not be more flawed, both to the point of ridiculous, and disgusting. Further, it bears in it one of the most legalistic, unrealistic, and mishandled evaluations of Scripture that I have ever read. Moses had a defect of the tongue as did Paul. Paul had a physical infirmity which necessitated others to tend to him. Adam Clarke gets 1001 demerits for his perverse commentary.

The answer is that the law is annulled in Christ, in its entirety. He has arbitrarily picked and chosen selected portions of it for his own perverse view on that which is clearly not moral in nature. I have highlighted this several times in this passage alone. The reason for the prohibitions is typology. As the typology is fulfilled in Christ, then it is done. We cannot insert after-Christ's ministry typology into what Christ has done as if it bears on what He did. Further, he uses the term "ambassador" when speaking of ministers. This is incorrect. The apostles were Christ's ambassadors, and Paul – such an ambassador – had defects.

Our instructions for choosing elders and deacons in the Gentile-led church age is defined by Paul in the pastoral epistles written to Timothy and to Titus. Those letters define who can minister, and what their requirements are. We do not go back to a fulfilled, obsolete law to determine who can and cannot serve as a minister.

Beloved, if you are in Christ, God sees you without any flaws, without any defects, and without any sin. He sees you through the accomplished work of His Son, and when He does, He sees absolute perfection. Every spot is erased, every ding is filled in, every crack is smoothed over, and every misalignment is aligned. If you want to see how Christ sees His people, watch the music video on YouTube call Flawless, by Mercy Me. They do a great job of it.

This does not mean that we do not have expectations for our chosen men who minister before the Lord, but they are not physical, bodily expectations. They are *moral* guidelines and precepts which reflect the already-finished work of Christ.

This is what we need to remember when we come to difficult passages like this. Inevitably, someone is bound to ask you about hard concepts like our last verses of the day. We can absolutely blow it like Adam Clarke did, or we can see *the grace... in Christ's face, and we can be ready to share that message everywhere and everyplace*. We are accepted because of Jesus. That is, if we belong to Jesus. If you don't let's get that settled today.

**Closing Verse:** “Go, eat your bread with joy,  
And drink your wine with a merry heart;  
For God has already accepted your works.” Ecclesiastes 9:7

**Next Week:** Leviticus 22:1-33 *In attending during this sermon, you will not be bored...* (I am the Lord) (35<sup>th</sup> Leviticus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if you have a lifetime of sin heaped up behind you, He can wash it away and purify you completely and wholly. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

### **Suitable for the Priesthood**

And the Lord said to Moses  
“Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron what I have said  
And say to them:  
‘None shall defile himself among his people for the dead

Except for his relatives who are nearest to him  
His mother, his father, his son, his daughter, and his brother  
Also his virgin sister who is near to him  
Who has had no husband, for her he may defile himself  
-----but for no other

Otherwise he shall not defile himself, as I say  
Being a chief man among his people, to profane himself in any way

‘They shall not make any bald place on their heads  
Nor shall they shave the edges of their beards also  
Nor make any cuttings in their flesh  
These are prohibited as you now know

They shall be holy to their God  
And not profane the name of their God, this shall never be  
For they offer the offerings of the Lord made by fire  
And the bread of their God; therefore they shall be holy

They shall not take a wife who is a harlot  
Or a defiled woman, this thing shall not be  
Nor shall they take a woman divorced from her husband  
For the priest to his God is holy

Therefore you shall consecrate him  
For he offers the bread of your God; these offerings to Me  
He shall be holy to you  
For I the Lord, who sanctify you, am holy

The daughter of any priest  
If she profanes herself by playing the harlot  
-----morality she has spurned  
She profanes her father  
She shall with fire be burned

'He who is the high priest among his brethren  
On whose head the anointing oil was poured  
-----such as everyone knows  
And who is consecrated to wear the garments  
Shall not uncover his head nor tear his clothes

Nor shall he go near any dead body  
Nor defile himself for his father or his mother too  
Nor shall he go out of the sanctuary  
Nor profane the sanctuary of his God, as I now instruct you

For upon him is the consecration of the anointing oil of his God  
I am the Lord; circumspectly he shall tread

And he shall take a wife in her virginity  
A widow or a divorced woman or a defiled woman or a harlot too  
These he shall not marry  
But he shall take a virgin of his own people as wife, so he shall do

Nor shall he profane among his people his posterity  
For I the Lord sanctify him, and so this is how it shall be

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying  
These words to Him He was relaying

“Speak to Aaron, saying:

‘No man of your descendants in succeeding generations  
Who has any defect, may approach to offer the bread of his God  
No, even of his closest relations

For any man who has a defect shall not approach:  
A man blind or lame, who has a marred face or any limb too long  
A man who has a broken foot or broken hand  
Or is a hunchback or a dwarf; when such with him is wrong

Or a man who has a defect in his eye  
Or eczema or scab, or is a eunuch – they shall not apply

No man of the descendants of Aaron the priest  
Who has a defect, shall come near to offer  
The offerings made by fire to the Lord  
He has a defect; no such thing shall he proffer

He shall not come near to offer the bread of his God  
He may eat the bread of his God without reproach  
Both the most holy and the holy  
Only he shall not go near the veil or the altar approach

Because he has a defect  
Lest My sanctuaries he profane  
For I the Lord sanctify them  
And so from these duties he shall abstain

And Moses told it to Aaron and his sons as well  
And to all the children of Israel

Lord, in You is found the perfect High Priest  
And because of You, we are accepted before God  
From the greatest of us, even to the least

To Your greatness, we shout and applaud  
As a kingdom of priests, we shall minister before You  
And it shall be so even for eternal days  
Offering worthy sacrifices, from hearts proven and true  
Yes, before Your throne, we shall give You eternal praise

Glory to God in the highest; glory to our King  
Glory to God in the highest; hear our voices sing

Hallelujah and Amen...