

BIBLE CLASS STUDY GUIDE

LEVITICUS 21-22

REGULATIONS FOR PRIESTS

These two chapters deal with the rules of holiness for the priests of God. Being representatives of God before the people, the priests were held to even “higher standards” of behavior so that they would in no way bring disgrace upon their offices. These men were, after all, *consecrated* to God— separated and dedicated for service to Him.

Chapter 21

Regulations for the Priests

ORDINARY PRIESTS . . .

- ! Were forbidden contact with dead bodies, except those of close relatives. Thus priests did not generally participate in funerals or other activities mourning the dead (1-4).
- ! Were not to shave their heads or beards, or cut their bodies (5-6). These things were common among pagan death rituals.
- ! Were not to marry women who had been prostitutes or who had been divorced (7-8). Marriage to such women could easily bring accusations on the priest and the priesthood, even if the woman had been forgiven any previous sins.
- ! Were to burn any of their daughters who became prostitutes (9). See Titus 1:6 and 1 Tim 3:5 for New Testament comments on the need for a minister’s family to be holy to the LORD.

HIGH PRIESTS . . .

- ! Were subjected to even stricter standards of ceremonial cleanness. The high priest was not permitted to look unkempt, nor was he allowed to tear his clothes to show grief (10-12).
- ! A high priest was not allowed to marry a former prostitute, a divorced woman, or a widow. Only a virgin from Israel would make an acceptable bride for a high priest (13-15).

How might these marriage remind us of Jesus Christ, who is called the both “high priest” and “bride of the Church?” See Eph 5:25-27.

FURTHER REGULATIONS FOR ALL PRIESTS

Those with certain physical deformities would not be allowed to offer sacrifices on the altar to the LORD. Yet those who were not allowed to offer could still eat the meat of the sacrifices (16-24).

Consider Jesus the great High Priest (Heb 7:26) in connection with these regulations.

Chapter 22

Regulations for the Priests

The LORD goes on to say that if a priest has been made ceremonially unclean, he must not approach the altar to offer sacrifices until he has been cleansed (1-8).

The priests were to take their office and their responsibilities very seriously. They were, after all, the LORD's representatives to His people. Those who treated this office with contempt were to die (consider Eli and his sons).

As you recall from earlier chapters, the Levites had no work other than the work of the temple. They received their livelihood from portions of the sacrifices that were not burned on the altar. Only the priest and his immediate family (exception: a slave born into the household) were allowed to eat the meat of sacrifice. If anyone ate a sacred offering by mistake, they were required to make restitution to the priest, adding 1/5 of the value of what was eaten (10-16)

- ! Why do you suppose the LORD was so insistent that only the priest's immediate family have access to the meat of the sacrifices?
- ! Notice in verse 16 how God puts in a reminder that guilt requires payment.

(17-25) brought to the minds of the Israelites once again that they were not to bring sacrifices to God that were blemished or deformed. Holiness was required in all the *required* sacrifices. For a freewill offering, certain defects could be present, although others were not allowed even for these sacrifices.

Animals were not to be sacrifices that were less than eight days old, nor were female animals who had just given birth to be sacrificed immediately (26-28).

God wanted the sacrifices offered to Him to be acceptable in His sight (29-33). He is the most holy God and we are to observe His commandments in holiness and purity.

- ! Notice in verse 31— after all these regulations— how reference is made to something good and exciting. "I am the LORD, who makes you holy." How does God make us holy in His sight today?