

Intro:

Can you complete this Scripture?

For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be ____ ____

...much required

(portion of Lk 12.48)

What does this passage mean?

- It means that if the Lord gives great privileges to someone, he also has great expectations.

This principle is true for every believer, but God does give differing believers differing privileges. God gives more privileges to some believers – but he expects more of them also.

This principle is evident in both the Old and New Testaments.

We have been looking at the book of Leviticus for our Communion services. Today brings us to Leviticus 21.

Lev 21 and 22 give additional regulations for the priests. They were given a position of great privilege in the Old Testament religion.

- They stood between God and man as mediators of the Old Covenant
- They symbolized the place of Christ as the mediator of the New Covenant

In keeping with these privileges, we find God placing them under exacting regulations which the other Israelites did not have to follow.

In some cases, the regulations were in categories regulated for ordinary Israelites, but the priestly regulations were more strict.

The chapter is fairly short, so we will read the whole thing.

Read Lev 21

Proposition: The priestly regulations call for symbolical perfection in conduct and person; the Effective Priest is perfect in conduct and person.

I. Perfections of solemn behaviour (1-15)

A. The regulations for the ordinary priest (1-9)

1. Dead bodies unclean (Num 19.11-13)

- a. If someone died, someone else would have to physically handle the body for burial

b. The ones who handled the body would be unclean and would have to become cleansed

2. Priests restricted in who they could handle in burial (1-6

a. Only very close relatives (2)

b. And unmarried sisters (3)

c. Does not mention his wife...

“Since she is ‘one flesh’ with him, the law simply takes it for granted that he would defile himself for her.”¹

d. But not for inlaws (4)

e. Restrictions on mourning behaviour (5)

1) No making themselves bald

2) No weird beards

3) No cuttings

Note the regulation for ordinary people (19.27-28)

What is the principle behind this regulation?

“Defacement of the human body is incompatible with holiness, which is symbolized by physical perfection; cf. vv. 18-21.”²

- Defacement is connected with the culture of death – this seems to be a universal across cultures in the world.
- If you belong to God, you are alive in Him – you should not be defacing yourself.

f. Rationale for these regulations (6)

1) Priests who fail to follow them profane God’s name

2) Their offerings before the Lord set them apart from other people *for the Lord*.

Israel as a nation was set apart from the nations.

¹ Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, p. 290.

² Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, p. 291.

The priests were set apart among Israel.

Ought not Christians be set apart in the world today?
Why do you want to look and act like the world?

3. Priests restricted in marriage (7-9)
 - a. No harlots or divorcees (7)
 - b. Similar rationale for the laws of mourning (8)
 - c. A priest's daughter who goes into harlotry profanes (makes common) her father (and the Lord) – severe punishment (9)

All of these regulations are intended to keep God's worship pure.

B. The regulations for the high priest (10-15)

1. Restrictions on mourning (10-12)
 - a. He has been set apart by the anointing oil and the holy garments
 - b. No tearing of clothes or uncovering his head in mourning
 - c. No defilement for any dead person, not even father and mother
 - d. May not leave his duties in the tabernacle

There is only one high priest – there are no substitutes
The high priest is always on duty
Higher regulation than for ordinary priests

2. Restrictions on marriage (13-15)
 - a. In addition to regulations of ordinary priests, no widows
 - b. Rationale: (15)
 - 1) So that he will not profane his children
 - 2) Because the Lord set him apart

These regulations have to do with conduct, to keep the priests from profaning their office and their service before the Lord.

The emphasis is on nearness of contact with the Lord and the contamination of the Lord's name.

II. Perfections of physical wholeness (16-24)

- A. The priests had to be perfect physical specimens (16-21)
1. The laws of holiness had to do with a notion of wholeness
 2. Clean and unclean and sacrificial animals reflect the ‘degrees of holiness’ among animals
 3. The office of a man in Israel reflected his ‘degrees of holiness’
 - a. Gentile sojourners
 - b. Ordinary Israelites
 - c. Levites
 - d. Priests

Thus, the priests, at the top of the pyramid, could not serve if they did not reflect ‘wholeness’.

- B. The allowance for the imperfect (22-24)
1. He had the privilege as a descendant of Aaron to eat the holy food
 2. He could not partake of the holy service

“I the Lord do sanctify them.”

God is setting these men apart from among all the Israelites to perform his service.

But consider this:

- These regulations indicate that any son of Aaron was still not quite up to God’s standard – no one is really completely whole if we are of the race of Adam.

III. Perfections of a perfect mediator (Heb 7.26-28)

- A. Consider the perfections of our high priest (26)
- B. Consider the perfections of His ministry (27)
1. No need to sacrifice for His own sins
 2. No need to sacrifice many times for the many sins: He sacrificed Himself Once

- C. Consider the superiority of our High priest (28)
1. OT priests are priests ‘which have an infirmity’ KJV [‘who are weak’ NAU]
 2. The word of the Oath makes the Son a perfect high priest forever
 - a. The oath is referenced in 7.21
 - b. The oath quotes Ps 110.4
 - c. The oath comes after the Law – so it supercedes the Law
 - d. So we have a Priest who can administer our salvation

Conclusion:

This gives us One who stands between us and God:

- God’s propitiation
- Our atonement and expiation

Our Saviour and High Priest of our Salvation