

Intro:

Last time in Leviticus, we looked at Lev 21 under the theme that we require a perfect priest, one perfect in conduct and person in order to mediate with God for us.

Of course, the OT priests only approximated perfection. Where they were wanting, they were sanctified by God-approved ritual: blood-sacrifices as substitutes for their own death penalty.

In the NT, we have a perfect priest.

- Perfect in conduct
- Perfect in person

We honour him and celebrate him. We worship him and extol him. What a High Priest! What a Saviour! What a Friend!

This month I am going to call you back to Lev 21 and pick up part of it and part of Lev 22. I am back to my slow-go tricks with exposition!

Our subject this month is this:

Eating Holy Food

You will recall that in the sacrificial system, other than the burnt offering, portions of each sacrifice belonged to the priests. These were their means of sustenance, a privilege reserved entirely for them.

The priests also had some fields surrounding their priestly cities, so they possessed normal means of sustenance as well, but the portions of the sacrifices were specially reserved for them.

In addition, the table of shewbread contained twelve loaves each week. At the end of a week, the bread was replaced with new loaves and the stale loaves became the portion of the priests as well.

This was a great privilege, to be so closely in fellowship with God that one may regularly eat meals with him – that is the spiritual picture which this privilege portrays.

But though this privilege was the priest's portion, it was not without regulation.

And it is to these regulations we now turn.

Read Lev 21.16-22.16

Proposition: Participation in God's table is a great privilege that in Christ is made available to all who come to Christ in faith.

I. God-ordained barriers

A. The deformed may not sacrifice but may eat (Lev 21.16-24)

1. The defective restricted

- a. Blind
- b. Lame
- c. Disfigured face
- d. Deformed limb
- e. Broken foot or hand
- f. Hunchback or dwarf
- g. Defect in eye
- h. Skin disease
- i. Or any other deformity

2. He may not sacrifice, but he may eat of the priestly portions

3. Rationale: lest priests profane God's sanctuary (23)

B. The unclean may not sacrifice and may not eat until they are cleansed (Lev 22.1-9)

1. An unclean priest who offers a sacrifice will be cut off from his people (1-3)

2. An unclean priest *in his uncleanness* may not eat of the priestly portions (4-6a)

3. An unclean priest may eat *after his cleansing* (6b-7)

4. A priest shall not deliberately become unclean by eating an animal that dies of itself or by being killed by beasts (8)

5. The rationale: lest priests profane God's table (9)

C. Limitations on laymen: may never sacrifice but some may eat (Lev 22.10-16)

1. The distinction between laymen who may eat and those who may not eat (10-13)

a. Slaves – but not employees (10-11)

b. Daughters (12-13)

1) But not daughters who marry a non-priest

2) Only daughters who were married but are divorced or widowed *and* childless

3) Daughters who never married – it is assumed they may eat

2. The penalty for the layman who eats unintentionally (14)
 - a. Must pay a fine of restitution: replace what was eaten plus 20%
 - b. Treated as if he is a thief
3. Rationale: lest laymen profane the priestly portion (15-16)

As in all the OT laws, the bottom line of God's regulations is to establish the holiness of God and emphasize the difficulty which sinning man has in approaching him.

Of course, we know these are but pictures.

- In reality, it is *impossible* for sinning man to approach God.

The OT religion, however is intended as a picture of God's grace and condescension in making a way for man to approach God.

In light of these regulations, there is an amazing story in the OT of a breach of these regulations...

II. God-approved breach

- A. The man after God's own heart breaches God's regulations (1 Sam 21.1-6)
 1. David is fleeing from Saul with his men (final flight)
 2. David has no provisions and comes to the priests at Nob
 3. David finds them in a state where there is no ready food but the shewbread which is about to be replaced
 4. David is offered and takes the bread of the tabernacle

We are making no comment here about the ethics of everything David did in this story: Matthew Henry is very hard on him here, and perhaps rightly so.

The point of interest is this: David is a man of Judah – most of his men, probably all of them, are not of priestly stock.

David, as far as we know, is never rebuked by God for this breach, nor does he ever have to repay the food taken plus 20%.

In fact, the Lord Himself makes a point in David's favour concerning this bread...

- B. The approval of God from the lips of Christ (Lk 6.1-5, *cf.* Mt 12.1-8; Mk 2.23-28)
1. The Pharisees made an issue of the disciples 'harvesting grain' on the Sabbath (1-2)
 - a. They were threshing grain!
 - b. It's the Sabbath!
 - c. That's work!
 2. The Lord's answer absolves David and the disciples (3-4)
 - a. Jesus cites the hunger of David
 - b. Jesus notes the DIRECT breach of the law, not just a human interpretation of the law
 3. The Lord's rationale: he is Lord of the Sabbath – what He says is the voice of God concerning the Sabbath (5)
 - a. Ethical principle: Life is more important than law
 - 1) David was not starving – but life (represented by the food) is more important than law
 - 2) Disciples were not starving – but life (represented by the food) is more important than law
 - b. Divine authority: The Lord is the arbiter of all things

The Lord's approval of David's breach is a harbinger of some greater thing...

III. God-instituted banquet

- A. The greater thing anticipated (Isa 56.1-8)
1. The Lord calls all men to faith (1-3)
 - a. Calls men to the OT observances in faith (1-2)
 - b. Calls even the unaccepted men to this faith (3)
 - 1) The stranger
 - 2) The eunuch

2. The Lord's promise to the deformed men of faith (4-8)
 - a. A place in my house
 - b. A name that will not be cut off
 - c. An acceptance to the unacceptable
- B. The greater thing realized (Lk 14.16-24)
 1. The sons of the kingdom refused to come to the Lord's banquet
 2. The Lord called for the deformed to be brought in (21)
 3. The Lord called for the stranger to be brought in (23)

Conclusion:

We know that the middle wall of partition is now broken down.

God calls all men everywhere to repent.

Any who respond in faith may come.

The condition is not our perfection in ourselves, but our perfection in Christ, the Lord of the Sabbath.

In him we may enter, and freely eat, if we are in faith.