

Chapters 19-22 are all built on chapter 19, verse 2:

“You shall be holy, for I Yahweh your God am holy.”

This theme returned at the end of chapter 20, verse 26,

“You shall be holy to me, for I the LORD am holy
and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine.”

What does it mean to be holy?

To be set apart – to be separate – yes!

But just as much – *that you should be mine!*

God’s holiness is not just his distinctness –

it is also what impels him to draw near to us,

and to draw us near to himself –

so that we might share in his holiness!

Otherwise what does it mean “you shall be holy *to me*, for I the LORD am holy.”

God’s purpose in our sanctification is that we might share in his holiness.

We saw in chapter 19 how we are to love the LORD our God

with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength –

and we are to love our neighbor as ourself.

Love for God and neighbor is the essence of holiness.

If you just think of holiness in terms of “being separate”

then this makes little sense.

All of the exhortations to holiness emphasize the importance of engaging well,

loving well, seeking relationship – seeking connection.

God’s holiness is *not* about him being far off and distant.

God’s holiness is what impels him to draw near –

and to create a way for us to draw near to him.

Holiness requires separation from evil *because* we are separated *to and for* God!

He made us for himself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in him.

Things that are moving in the direction of the unclean – and worse –

are moving toward death.

Things that clean – and moving towards the holy –

are moving toward life!

For the last few weeks we have been looking at how God called Israel to be holy.

Now we are looking at the priests.

The land is holy—yet there is a special holiness focused on the tabernacle.

Even so, the people are holy—yet there is a special holiness focused on the priests.

Chapters 21-22 focus on four things,

the first two we saw last night, talking about the holy *priests*:

v1-15 avoiding defilement

v16-24 physical holiness

Now tonight, we turn to holy *things*

v1-16 who may partake of the holy things

v17-30 what animals may be offered as holy sacrifices

concluding with a focus on God *holy name*.

Each of the four sections is prefaced with “And the LORD said to Moses...”

1. How to Treat Holy Things (v1-16)

a. Unclean Priests May Not Touch the Holy Things (v1-9)

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ² “Speak to Aaron and his sons so that they abstain from the holy things of the people of Israel, which they dedicate to me, so that they do not profane my holy name: I am the LORD. ³ Say to them, ‘If any one of all your offspring throughout your generations approaches the holy things that the people of Israel dedicate to the LORD, while he has an uncleanness, that person shall be cut off from my presence: I am the LORD. ⁴ None of the offspring of Aaron who has a leprous disease or a discharge may eat of the holy things until he is clean. Whoever touches anything that is unclean through contact with the dead or a man who has had an emission of semen, ⁵ and whoever touches a swarming thing by which he may be made unclean or a person from whom he may take uncleanness, whatever his uncleanness may be—⁶ the person who touches such a thing shall be unclean until the evening and shall not eat of the holy things unless he has bathed his body in water. ⁷ When the sun goes down he shall be clean, and afterward he may eat of the holy things, because they are his food. ⁸ He shall not eat what dies of itself or is torn by beasts, and so make himself unclean by it: I am the LORD.’

While chapter 21 deals with the social and physical holiness of the priests,

chapter 22 deals with the holiness of the sacrifices.

22:1-16 speaks of the priest’s handling of the offerings

Since they dealt with holy things every day,

they had to be reminded that such familiarity should not breed contempt!

They must respect the holy things of the sacrifices.

Any priest who approached the holy things while unclean

must be cut off from the presence of the LORD.

To be cut off from the presence of the LORD

means to be banished from the priesthood.

Verses 4-8 give us a bit more detail.

Echoing the language of chapters 11-15,
Leviticus makes it clear that an unclean priest
may not serve in the sanctuary.

The priest who fails to maintain ceremonial cleanness will profane the sanctuary,
and therefore has brought death into the sanctuary of life!
(he has treated the LORD's holy place as a common place).

⁹ They shall therefore keep my charge, lest they bear sin for it and die thereby when they profane it: I am the LORD who sanctifies them.

Verse nine makes it clear that the priest who profanes the sanctuary *deserves* death.
But that does not mean that he would be executed by human hand.
“lest they bear sin for it and die thereby when they profane it” –
That is not a command but a warning!

And especially when you consider the final line:
“I am the LORD who sanctifies them.”

When you profane God's holy name –
when you profane God's holy sanctuary and treat it as a common thing –
you are heaping up judgment against yourself.

And if you say, “Well, but God hasn't done anything about it yet!” –
that's rather short-sighted of you!

God is merciful – and patient – yes!
He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance!
But if you don't repent, he will deal with you as your sin deserves!

The priests are supposed to be the ones who mediate God's blessings to Israel!
If they profane the holy place – if they turn it into a common place –
then there will be no place where God can meet with his people.

This special holiness of the priests is the theme of the warnings of verses 10-16:

b. Non-Priests May Not Eat the Holy Things (v10-16)

¹⁰ “A lay person shall not eat of a holy thing; no foreign guest of the priest or hired worker shall eat of a holy thing, ¹¹ but if a priest buys a slave^[a] as his property for money, the slave^[b] may eat of it, and anyone born in his house may eat of his food. ¹² If a priest's daughter marries a layman, she shall not eat of the contribution of the holy things. ¹³ But if a priest's daughter is widowed or divorced and has no child and returns to her father's house, as in her youth, she may eat of her father's food; yet no lay person shall eat of it. ¹⁴ And if anyone eats of a holy thing

unintentionally, he shall add the fifth of its value to it and give the holy thing to the priest.

The people are not to eat of a holy thing,
neither are the hired servants or foreign guests of a priest.
but, a slave may eat of the holy things,
because he belongs to the household of the priest.

On the same principle,
if the daughter of a priest marries an ordinary Israelite,
she may no longer partake of the holy things;
but if she is widowed or divorced (and has no child),
then she may return to her father's house.
Of course, if she has a child, then she still belongs to her husband's family.

Understandably, it would quite possible to err by accident in these matters,
in which case the one who ate of a holy thing unintentionally
could make restitution, adding a fifth of its value.

You might wonder, how could one eat of the holy things unintentionally?
If you think about the daily sacrifices at the tabernacle,
you can easily imagine a situation where a leg from a ram for a sin offering
(a holy thing)
could get mixed up with a leg from a ram for a peace offering.

The worshiper grabs the wrong leg and accidentally profanes the holy things!

By now I hope that you have sufficiently come to appreciate the seriousness of such a fault!
But that should also then help you see how seriously God takes our intentions.

If it was willful then you would have to bring a whole guilt offering!
But if it is unintentional – then just replace it with a 20% “oops” tax!

This is an important principle.
If you make an “honest mistake” – you still need to repair your fault,
and pay for the damage and trouble of correcting the mistake.

Verses 15-16 take the warning against profaning holy things and applies it to the people:

¹⁵ They shall not profane the holy things of the people of Israel, which they contribute to the LORD, ¹⁶ and so cause them to bear iniquity and guilt, by eating their holy things: for I am the LORD who sanctifies them. ”

The LORD is the one who sanctifies his people!
He sanctifies the priests – so that, through their priestly service,

they might mediate God's sanctifying presence to his people.

But the result is that God is bringing a people near to himself!
He is showing the way – not back to Eden –
but forward to the New Creation!

2. What Animals May Be Offered as Holy Things (v17-30)

a. Unblemished Offerings (Like Unblemished Priests) (v17-25)

¹⁷ And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ¹⁸ "Speak to Aaron and his sons and all the people of Israel and say to them, When any one of the house of Israel or of the sojourners in Israel presents a burnt offering as his offering, for any of their vows or freewill offerings that they offer to the LORD, ¹⁹ if it is to be accepted for you it shall be a male without blemish, of the bulls or the sheep or the goats. ²⁰ You shall not offer anything that has a blemish, for it will not be acceptable for you. ²¹ And when anyone offers a sacrifice of peace offerings to the LORD to fulfill a vow or as a freewill offering from the herd or from the flock, to be accepted it must be perfect; there shall be no blemish in it. ²² Animals blind or disabled or mutilated or having a discharge or an itch or scabs you shall not offer to the LORD or give them to the LORD as a food offering on the altar. ²³ You may present a bull or a lamb that has a part too long or too short for a freewill offering, but for a vow offering it cannot be accepted. ²⁴ Any animal that has its testicles bruised or crushed or torn or cut you shall not offer to the LORD; you shall not do it within your land, ²⁵ neither shall you offer as the bread of your God any such animals gotten from a foreigner. Since there is a blemish in them, because of their mutilation, they will not be accepted for you."

Verses 17-30 then speak of the character of Israel's offerings.

Verses 17-25 explain that any defect in an animal renders it unfit for sacrifice.

As the priest's body must be holy and unblemished, so also the sacrifices.

And the list that Moses gives is pretty much exactly the same list as for the priests

Anyone who approaches the altar – the holy place – must be holy.

Anything that is burned on the altar must be holy.

The priest that offers – and the animal that is offered – must both be without blemish.

There is one exception.

A bull or lamb whose limb is either too long or too short may be offered
for a freewill offering—but not in any other case.

Since this offering is not required,
a slight defect is acceptable.

But in none of the prescribed sacrifices is the slightest defect acceptable.

You are to bring only perfect and pure sacrifices.

b. Treating the Lower Creation with Respect (v26-30)

²⁶ *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,* ²⁷ *“When an ox or sheep or goat is born, it shall remain seven days with its mother, and from the eighth day on it shall be acceptable as a food offering to the LORD.*

Verses 26-27 then point out that no animal shall be brought as a sacrifice until it is eight days old.

A male child is to be circumcised on the eighth day.

That circumcision includes the shedding of blood,
and is designed to set apart the child for the service of Yahweh.

Likewise, the priests are consecrated for service for seven days,
and only enter the holy service of Yahweh on the eighth day.

So also the sacrifice must be eight days old before it is suitable.

There is a connection between the male child, the priest, and the sacrifice.
(Right about now your brain should be saying, “JESUS!!!!”)

After all, there is only one answer to the question,
where do you find a male child (circumcised on the eighth day),
who was a blameless high priest *and* a sacrifice without blemish?!

Verse 28 adds,

²⁸ *But you shall not kill an ox or a sheep and her young in one day.*

A mother animal and her young should not be sacrificed on the same day.

That would mingle their blood and their bones,
a most inappropriate mixture!

The blood and the bones of the offspring was once inside the womb of the mother.
To mingle the blood and bones of mother and offspring together
is just mixed up!

You may recall that God forbade Israel to boil a goat in its mother’s milk –
in other words, the life-giving fluid that nourished the young goat
should not be used to cook the young goat!!

That’s mixed up!

(The modern Jewish notion that forbids cheeseburgers –
because it combines dairy and meat –
is *not* at all the point.

You can cook a young goat in some *other* goat’s milk!
Just not its *own mother’s milk!*)

The principle has to do with the impropriety of mixing life and death.

When Nicodemus came to Jesus by night,

he wondered how we could be born again –
do we have to enter our mother’s womb again?!!

And Jesus says, do you, a teacher of Israel, not understand this?

The earthly things of the Law were designed to teach us heavenly things.
When Moses went up the mountain to meet with God,
God said to him, “Exactly as I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle,
and of all its furniture, so you shall make it.” (Ex 25:9)

The heavenly pattern was revealed at Sinai in earthly form.

And that was good!
But then the Word became flesh.
The heavenly pattern *himself* took earthly form in the womb of the Virgin Mary.
No longer did earth and heaven meet in a structure of wood or stone.

Now earth and heaven meet in the flesh and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 29 then reminds us:

²⁹ And when you sacrifice a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the LORD, you shall sacrifice it so that you may be accepted. ³⁰ It shall be eaten on the same day; you shall leave none of it until morning: I am the LORD.

With some sacrifices (the vow offering or the freewill offering)
you could eat it on the second day.

But the sacrifice of thanksgiving (also called the peace offering for thanksgiving)
was to be eaten on the same day.

We’ve seen a couple time already that the freewill offering has the loosest restrictions.
It is entirely a voluntary offering – so there are fewer rules.
The vow offering was also largely voluntary –
in the sense that you didn’t have to take the vow! –
so there are few restrictions.

But the sacrifice of thanksgiving was when you are giving thanks for what God has done.
It’s not about *you*.
It’s about *him*.

And so all the meat needs to be eaten today.
What does that mean, practically?
It means that there are likely going to be leftovers.
This is a good way to feed the hungry – the widow and the orphan.

And again, God says, “I am Yahweh” –
I am the LORD.

Remember who I am?
I am the one who fed you in the wilderness.
Trust me.
I know what is good for you!

And again, in verse 31, God says:

3. The Holy Name of God (v31-33)

³¹ “So you shall keep my commandments and do them: I am the LORD. ³² And you shall not profane my holy name, that I may be sanctified among the people of Israel. I am the LORD who sanctifies you, ³³ who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God: I am the LORD.”

Four times in four verses – from verse 30 to verse 33 –
God says I am the LORD.

The priests are to treat God as holy,
so that all of Israel will sanctify his holy name.

Why?

Because I am Yahweh, who sanctifies you.

Indeed, I am Yahweh who brought you out of Egypt to be your God.

I am Yahweh.

The priests are to be holy because God is holy,
and because he is the one who make Israel holy through the holy sacrifices
performed in the holy place by the holy priesthood
on behalf of the holy people.

We sang Psalm 51 earlier

Read 51:16-17

*For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it;
you will not be pleased with a burnt offering.*

¹⁷ *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.*

This has often been taken to mean that David had come to understand that the sacrifices
were not enough by themselves–

that the sacrifices were mere ritual performances.

But then how do you make sense of verse 19?

*then will you delight in right sacrifices,
in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings;
then bulls will be offered on your altar.*

No, David says that God would not delight in sacrifice or burnt offering
because he has been guilty of adultery and murder.
And no blood sacrifice can satisfy for those sins.
David knows that he deserves death for his sins,
and so he prays that God will be merciful and deliver him from bloodguilt.
David does understand that there must be something beyond the ordinary sacrifices,
because he hopes for the forgiveness of his sins.
There must be some way to deal with intentional sins--
something the law does not provide.

In Christ we have now a high priest who deals with all sins.
Hebrews 9:11-14.

¹¹ But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come,^[e] then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) ¹² he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. ¹³ For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify^[f] for the purification of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our^[g] conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

This is why we speak of a new covenant.

The old covenant had no way of dealing with intentional sins (9:7).

We now have a new sacrifice, a new priest, a new temple, and a new people of God.

Christ is the perfect priest – unblemished in soul or body!
Christ is the perfect sacrifice – unblemished in soul or body!
And Christ has entered not just an earthly sanctuary –
but the greater and more perfect tent!