

Message #38

Leviticus 21:1-24

No matter what the organization—whether a sports team, a corporation, a military or a church—success depends on its leadership. When it comes to the work of God, we are all priests; however, we have different gifts, abilities and callings. The spiritual leaders of Israel were in charge of worship. I love something J. Vernon McGee said, “I have very little patience with men who accept an office in the church and then say they are not able to come to the mid-week service or come on Sunday night. Well, my brother, you should not have accepted the office.”

GOD’S LEADERS ARE TO BE EXAMPLES OF MEN WHO ARE HOLY AND CONSECRATED TO THE LORD AND THEY ARE NOT TO DEFILE OR PROFANE THEMSELVES BY DOING CERTAIN THINGS GOD FORBIDS.

The word “defile” is used four times in this chapter (v. 1, 3, 4, 11). The word “profane” is used eight times in this chapter (v. 6, 7, 9 (twice), 12, 14, 15, 23). It is obviously possible for a priest to do something that is defiling and profaning in the sight of God. The Hebrew word “defile” means to do something God views as unclean, impure, polluted (Gesenius, p. 322). The Hebrew word “profane” means to do something that will pierce God’s people and property and will lay it open to wounds and destruction (Gesenius, p. 281). It is possible for priests to do things that pollute God’s place of worship and actually bring about God’s judgment.

PART #1 – THE WAYS THAT PRIESTS ARE NOT TO DEFILE THEMSELVES.

DEFILING WAY #1 – A priest shall not defile himself in death. 21:1-4

If a priest touched the corpse of a dead person or even went into a tent where a dead person was, he was unclean for seven days and could not serve in His priestly capacity (Num. 19:11-14). One who ministers for God must be completely clean. See a very important principle—**there are things that everyone else can do, there are places that everyone else may go that a priest who wishes to glorify God may not do and go.**

DEFILING WAY #2 – A priest shall not defile himself in mourning. 21:5-6

In the secular culture in which the Israelites lived, it was a custom of mourning that one would cut off hair, shave part of the beard and put cutting marks on the body. These were pagan practices from which the priest of God was to abstain. Just like **verse 6** says, they are to be holy and keep at their ministry even if everyone else is emotionally unstable.

DEFILING WAY #3 – A priest shall not defile himself in marriage. 21:7-8

Now there were two kinds of women a priest was not to marry: 1) A woman who had been a prostitute; 2) A woman who had been divorced.

Now prostitution in the O.T. economy is not quite the same as we understand it. A prostitute in our day is what we would call a “professional hooker” or “professional streetwalker.” In O.T. times, they were employed by false religious organizations. There were always religious overtones to prostitution.

There is an instance in the O.T. where God demanded that the priests divorce their wives—Ezra 10:10-11. However, God did not want his priests marrying these women who had been divorced and especially he did not want the priest to have a wife who had been divorced by another Jewish brother.

DEFILING WAY #4 – A priest’s daughter who is a prostitute shall be burned. **21:9**

Now I want you to notice three things here: 1) The child of a leader was held more accountable than other children; 2) The child (not the parents) took the full blame and received the full consequences for her actions; 3) The leader did not lose his leadership position if his daughter did this.

PART #2 – THE WAYS THAT HIGH PRIESTS ARE NOT TO DEFILE THEMSELVES. 21:10-24

The High Priest had a stricter code than the regular priests because he was a type of Christ.

Restriction #1 - A High Priest shall not mourn in any way. **21:10**

Restriction #2 - A High Priest shall not approach any dead person. **21:11-12**

Restriction #3 - A High Priest is to be married . **21:13-15**

He was to marry a virgin Jewish girl, not a former prostitute or divorced woman or widowed woman.

Restriction #4 - A High Priest may not have any physical defects. **21:16-24**

There were certain requirements to be a high priest.

Defect #1 - A High Priest could not be blind. **21:18a**

Defect #2 - A High Priest could not be crippled. **21:18b**

Defect #3 - A High Priest could not be disfigured or deformed. **21:18c**

Defect #4 - A High Priest could not have a broken hand or foot. **21:19**

Defect #5 - A High Priest could not be a hunchback or dwarf. **21:20a**

Defect #6 - A High Priest could not have eye defects, face blemishes, scabs or crushed testicles. **21:20b**

Part of the reason why God would not permit a handicapped person to do this was because he could not physically offer the offerings. Secondly, he needed to be blemish free because he was a type of Christ.

Do we not see that leadership has serious responsibilities?