

NOTES
ON
THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS

by

Charles H. MacIntosh

"Things new and old."

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by

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Leviticus 21 - Leviticus 22

These chapters unfold, with great minuteness of detail, the divine requirements in reference to those who were privileged to draw near as priests to **"offer the bread of their God."**

In this, as in the preceding section, we have conduct as the result, not the procuring cause of the relationship. This should be carefully borne in mind. The sons of Aaron were, in virtue of their birth, priests unto GOD. They all stood in this relationship, one as well as another. It was not a matter of attainment, a question of progress, something which one had, and another had not. All the sons of Aaron were priests. They were born into a priestly place. Their capacity to understand and enjoy their position and its attendant privileges was, obviously, a different thing altogether. One might be a babe; and another might have reached the point of mature and vigorous manhood. The former would, of necessity, be unable to eat of the priestly food, being a babe for whom **"milk"** and not **"strong meat"** was adapted: but he was as truly a member of the priestly house as the man who could tread, with firm step, the courts of the Lord's house, and feed upon **"the wave breast"** and **"heave shoulder"** of the sacrifice.

This distinction is easily understood in the case of the sons of Aaron, and, hence, it will serve to illustrate, in a very simple manner, the truth as to the members of the true priestly house over which our Great High Priest presides, and to which all true believers belong (Hebrews 3:6).

Every child of GOD is a priest. He is enrolled as a member of CHRIST's priestly house. He may be very ignorant; but his position, as a priest, is not founded upon knowledge, but upon life. His

experience may be very shallow; but his place as a priest does not depend upon experience, but upon life. His capacity may be very limited; but his relationship as a priest does not rest upon an enlarged capacity, but upon life. He was born into the position and relationship of a priest. He did not work himself thereinto. It was not by any efforts of his own that he became a priest. He became a priest by birth. The spiritual priesthood, together with all the spiritual functions attaching thereunto, is the necessary appendage to spiritual birth. The capacity to enjoy the privileges and to discharge the functions of a position must not be confounded with the position itself. They must ever be kept distinct. relationship is one thing; capacity is quite another.

Furthermore, in looking at the family of Aaron, we see that nothing could break the relationship between him and his sons.

There were many things which would interfere with the full enjoyment of the privileges attaching to the relationship:

- a son of Aaron might "**defile himself by the dead.**"
- he might defile himself by forming an unholy alliance.
- he might have some bodily "**blemish.**"
- he might be "**blind or lame.**"
- he might be "**a dwarf.**"

Any of these things would have interfered, very materially, with his enjoyment of the privileges, and his discharge of the functions pertaining to his relationship, as we read, "**No man that hath a blemish of the seed of Aaron the priest shall come nigh to offer the offerings of the Lord made by fire: he hath a blemish: he shall not come nigh to offer the bread of his God. He shall eat the bread of his God, both of the most holy and the holy; only he shall not go in unto the veil, nor come nigh unto the altar, because he hath a blemish; that he profane not my sanctuaries: for I the Lord do sanctify them**" (Leviticus 21:21-23).

But none of these things could possibly touch the fact of a relationship founded upon the established principles of human nature. Though a son of Aaron were a dwarf, that dwarf was a son of Aaron. True, he was, as a dwarf, shorn of many precious privileges and lofty dignities pertaining to the priesthood; but he was a son of Aaron all the while. He could neither enjoy the same measure or character of communion, nor yet discharge the same elevated functions of priestly Service, as one who had reached to manhood's appointed stature; but he was a member of the priestly house, and, as such, permitted to "**eat the bread of his God.**" The relationship was genuine, though the development was so defective.

The spiritual application of all this is as simple as it is practical. To be a child of GOD, is one thing; to be in the enjoyment of priestly communion and priestly worship, is quite another. The latter is, alas! interfered with by many things. Circumstances and associations are allowed to act upon us by their defiling influence. We are not to suppose that all Christians enjoy the same elevation of walk, the same intimacy of fellowship, the same felt nearness to CHRIST. Alas! alas! they do not. Many of us have to mourn over our spiritual defects. There is lameness of walk, defective vision, stunted growth; or we show ourselves to be defiled by contact with evil, and to be weakened and hindered by unhallowed associations. In a word, as the sons of Aaron, though being priests by birth, were, nevertheless, deprived of many privileges through

ceremonial defilement and physical defects; so we, though being priests unto GOD, by spiritual birth, are deprived of many of the high and holy privileges of our position, by moral defilement and spiritual defects. We are shorn of many of our dignities through defective spiritual development. We lack; singleness of eye, spiritual vigour, whole-hearted devotedness. Saved we are, through the free grace of GOD, on the ground of CHRIST's perfect sacrifice. **"We are all the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus;"** but, then, salvation is one thing; communion is quite another. Sonship is one thing; obedience is quite another.

These things should be carefully distinguished. The section before us illustrates the distinction with great force and clearness. If one of the sons of Aaron happened to be **"broken-footed, or broken-handed,"** was he deprived of his sonship? Assuredly not. Was he deprived of his priestly position? By no means. It was distinctly declared, **"He shall eat the bread of his God, both of the most holy and of the holy."**

What, then, did he lose by his physical blemish? He was forbidden to tread some of the higher walks of priestly service and worship. **"Only he shall not go in unto the veil, nor come nigh unto the altar."** These were very serious privations; and though it may be objected that a man could not help many of these physical defects, that did not alter the matter. The Lord could not have a blemished priest at His altar, or a blemished sacrifice thereon. Both the priest and the sacrifice should be perfect.

- **"no man that hath a blemish of the seed of Aaron the priest shall come nigh to offer the offerings of the Lord made by fire"** (Leviticus 21:22).

- **"but whatsoever hath a blemish, that shall ye not offer; for it shall not be acceptable for you"** (Leviticus 22:20).

Now, we have both the perfect priest, and the perfect sacrifice, in the Person of our blessed Lord JESUS CHRIST. He, having **"offered himself without spot to God,"** passed into the heavens, as our great High Priest, where He ever liveth to make intercession for us.

The Epistle to the Hebrews dwells elaborately upon these two points. It throws into vivid contrast the sacrifice and priesthood of the Mosaic system and the Sacrifice and Priesthood of CHRIST. In Him we have divine perfectness, whether as the Victim or as the Priest. We have all that GOD could require, and all that man could need. His precious Blood has put away all our sins; and His all-prevailing intercession ever maintains us in all the perfectness of the place into which His Blood has introduced us.

"We are complete in him;" (Colossians 2); and yet, so feeble and so faltering are we in ourselves; so full of failure and infirmity; so prone to err and stumble in our onward way, that we could not stand for a moment, were it not that **"He ever lives to make intercession for us."**

These things have been dwelt upon in the earlier chapters of this volume; and it is, therefore, needless to enter further upon them here. Those who have anything like correct apprehensions of the grand foundation truths of Christianity, and any measure of experience in the Christian life, will be able to understand how it is that, though **"complete in him who is the head of all principality and power,"** they, nevertheless, need, while down here amid the infirmities, conflicts, and buffetings of earth, the powerful advocacy of their adorable and divine High Priest.

- the believer is "**washed, sanctified, and justified**" (I Corinthians 6).
- he is "**accepted in the beloved**" (Ephesians 1. 6).
- he can never come into judgment, as regards his person (See John 5:24, where the word is *krisin* and not *katakrisin*).

Death and judgment are behind him, because he is united to CHRIST who has passed through them both, on his behalf and in his stead. All these things are divinely true of the very weakest, most unlettered, and inexperienced member of the family of GOD; but yet, inasmuch as he carries about with him a nature so incorrigibly bad, and so irremediably ruined, that no discipline can correct it, and no medicine cure it, inasmuch as he is the tenant of a body of sin and death - as he is surrounded, on all sides, by hostile influences - as he is called to cope, perpetually, with the combined forces of the world, the flesh, and the devil - he could never keep his ground, much less make progress, were he not upheld by the all-prevailing intercession of his great High Priest, who bears the names of His people upon His breast and upon His shoulder.

Some, I am aware, have found great difficulty in reconciling the idea of the believer's perfect standing in CHRIST with the need of priesthood.

"If," it is argued, "he is perfect, what need has he of a priest?" The two things are as distinctly taught in the word as they are compatible one with another, and understood in the experience of every rightly-instructed Christian. It is of the very last importance to apprehend, with clearness and accuracy, the perfect harmony between these two points. The believer is perfect in CHRIST; but, in himself, he is a poor feeble creature, ever liable to fall. Hence, the unspeakable blessedness of having One who can manage all his affairs for him, at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens - One who upholds him continually by the right hand of His righteousness - One who will never let him go - One who is able to save to the uttermost - One who is "**the same yesterday, today, and for ever**" - One who will bear him triumphantly through all the difficulties and dangers which surround him; and, finally, "**present him faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy**." Blessed for ever be the grace that has made such ample provision for all our need in the blood of a Spotless Victim and the intercession of a divine High Priest!

Dear Christian reader, let it be our care so to walk, so to "**keep ourselves unspotted from the world**," so to stand apart from all unhallowed associations, that we may enjoy the highest privileges and discharge the most elevated functions of our position as members of the priestly house of which CHRIST is the Head. We have "**boldness to enter into the holiest, through the blood of Jesus**" - "**we have a great High Priest over the house of God**" (Hebrews 10). Nothing can ever rob us of these privileges. But, then, our communion may be marred - our worship may be hindered - our holy functions may remain undischarged. Those ceremonial matters against which the sons of Aaron were warned, in the section before us, have their antitypes in the Christian economy.

- had they to be warned against unholy contact? So have we.
- had they to be warned against unholy alliance? So have we.
- had they to be warned against all manner of ceremonial uncleanness? So have we to be warned against "**all filthiness of the flesh and spirit**" (I Corinthians 7).

- were they shorn of many of their loftiest priestly privileges by bodily blemish and imperfect natural growth! So are we, by moral blemish, and imperfect spiritual growth.

Will any one venture to call in question the practical importance of such principles as these? Is it not obvious that the more highly we estimate the blessings which attach to that priestly house of which we have been constituted members, in virtue of our spiritual birth, the more carefully shall we guard against everything which might tend in any wise, to rob us of their enjoyment? Undoubtedly. And this it is which renders the close study of our section so pre-eminently practical. May we feel its power, through the application of GOD the Holy Ghost! Then shall we enjoy our priestly place. Then shall we faithfully discharge our priestly functions.

- we shall be able **"to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God"** (Romans 12:1).

- we shall be able to **"offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name"** (Hebrews 13:15).

- we shall be able, as members of the **"spiritual house"** and the **"holy priesthood,"** to **"offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ"** (I Peter 2:5).

- we shall be able, in some small degree, to anticipate that blissful time when, from a redeemed creation, the hallelujahs of intelligent and fervent praise shall ascend to the throne of GOD and the Lamb throughout the everlasting ages.

~ end of chapter 21-22 ~

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