

# BIBLE BRIEFING

## LEVITICUS

*“When in Canaan, Don’t Do As The Canaanites Do!”*

Chapter 20-22

### Introduction

God was getting His people ready to go into the Promised Land. It was already inhabited, by the various Canaanite peoples. There was to be no cultural exchange between God’s people and the inhabitants of Canaan. The Jews must, in fact, overthrow and destroy the Canaanites.

The Jews were not to adopt the Canaanite practices; you’ll see some of them in Chapter twenty. Instead, they were to be holy; and they were given leaders to be an example for them of holiness before the Lord. You’ll see this in chapters twenty-one and twenty-two.

### Chapter Twenty – Bad Example

Andrew A. Bonar, in his book on Leviticus, calls chapter twenty *“Warnings Against the Sins of the Former Inhabitants.”* In other words, these were the sins of the Canaanites.

Leviticus 20:1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

Leviticus 20:2 “Again, you shall say to the children of Israel: ‘Whoever of the children of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell in Israel, who gives *any* of his descendants to Molech, he shall surely be put to death. The people of the land shall stone him with stones.

Leviticus 20:3 I will set My face against that man, and will cut him off from his people, because he has given *some* of his descendants to Molech, to defile My sanctuary and profane My holy name.

Leviticus 20:4 And if the people of the land should in any way hide their eyes from the man, when he gives *some* of his descendants to Molech, and they do not kill him,

Leviticus 20:5 then I will set My face against that man and against his family; and I will cut him off from his people, and all who prostitute themselves with him to commit harlotry with Molech.

The chapter starts with the worst example of the sin of the Canaanite peoples. Molech was the god of the Ammonites. His metal image was heated red-hot and infants were placed on its arms and burned to death. Was it cruel for God to order His people to destroy the Ammonites? Hardly!

Leviticus 20:6 'And the person who turns to mediums and familiar spirits, to prostitute himself with them, I will set My face against that person and cut him off from his people.

Leviticus 20:7 Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I *am* the LORD your God.

Leviticus 20:8 And you shall keep My statutes, and perform them: I *am* the LORD who sanctifies you.

Leviticus 20:9 'For everyone who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. He has cursed his father or his mother. His blood *shall be* upon him.

This isn't merely saying something bad about or to one's parents; it is likely the calling down of a death-curse on them. "Elaborate curses, many of which appear to have the nature of magical spells, were current in the ancient Near East, and amongst superstitious people often worked with devastating effect since in the eastern mind the curse carried with itself its own power of execution." (Harrison)

Leviticus 20:10 'The man who commits adultery with *another* man's wife, *he* who commits adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death.

Leviticus 20:11 The man who lies with his father's wife has uncovered his father's nakedness; both of them shall surely be put to death. Their blood *shall be* upon them.

Leviticus 20:12 If a man lies with his daughter-in-law, both of them shall surely be put to death. They have committed perversion. Their blood *shall be* upon them.

Leviticus 20:13 If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood *shall be* upon them.

Leviticus 20:14 If a man marries a woman and her mother, it *is* wickedness. They shall be burned with fire, both he and they, that there may be no wickedness among you.

Leviticus 20:15 If a man mates with an animal, he shall surely be put to death, and you shall kill the animal.

Leviticus 20:16 If a woman approaches any animal and mates with it, you shall kill the woman and the animal. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood *is* upon them.

The death penalty was enforced by stoning; or being burned with fire. Being “cut-off” in some places is synonymous with being killed; in others, it seems to refer to expulsion.

These were the disgusting practices of the people in the Promised Land. Don’t follow their example!

As for the Jews, some offenses, if adopted, would bring a lesser penalty:

Leviticus 20:17 ‘If a man takes his sister, his father’s daughter or his mother’s daughter, and sees her nakedness and she sees his nakedness, it *is* a wicked thing. And they shall be cut off in the sight of their people. He has uncovered his sister’s nakedness. He shall bear his guilt.

Leviticus 20:18 If a man lies with a woman during her sickness and uncovers her nakedness, he has exposed her flow, and she has uncovered the flow of her blood. Both of them shall be cut off from their people.

Leviticus 20:19 ‘You shall not uncover the nakedness of your mother’s sister nor of your father’s sister, for that would uncover his near of kin. They shall bear their guilt.

Leviticus 20:20 If a man lies with his uncle’s wife, he has uncovered his uncle’s nakedness. They shall bear their sin; they shall die childless.

Leviticus 20:21 If a man takes his brother’s wife, it *is* an unclean thing. He has uncovered his brother’s nakedness. They shall be childless.

Incest with a full or half sister was forbidden and the penalty was to be executed publicly. God demanded cleanliness in every detail of his people’s lives; especially as it had to do with sexual relations. God forbade sexual relations between those who were near of kin. He did not say that they would not bear children, but that they should die childless - the children would die before the parents who were guilty of this crime.

The chapter, and this section, closes with a reminder that your sin defiles more than you:

Leviticus 20:22 ‘You shall therefore keep all My statutes and all My judgments, and perform them, that the land where I am bringing you to dwell may not vomit you out.

Leviticus 20:23 And you shall not walk in the statutes of the nation which I am casting out before you; for they commit all these things, and therefore I abhor them.

Leviticus 20:24 But I have said to you, “You shall inherit their land, and I will give it to you to possess, a land flowing with milk and honey.” I *am* the LORD your God, who has separated you from the peoples.

Leviticus 20:25 You shall therefore distinguish between clean animals and unclean, between unclean birds and clean, and you shall not make yourselves abominable by beast or by bird, or by any kind of living thing that creeps on the ground, which I have separated from you as unclean.

Leviticus 20:26 And you shall be holy to Me, for I the LORD *am* holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be Mine.

Leviticus 20:27 ‘A man or a woman who is a medium, or who has familiar spirits, shall surely be put to death; they shall stone them with stones. Their blood *shall be* upon them.’”

God put the Canaanites out of the land because they committed these awful sins. He warns Israel that He will put them out of the land if they do the same things. God is no respecter of persons.

## Chapters 21 & 22 – Good Example

God called His people to live holy lives. He gave them priests as an example.

Priest’s had to meet God’s qualifications in their personal conduct, in their physical characteristics, and in their professional concerns.

## Personal Conduct – 21:1-15

The word “defile” is used four times in this chapter; the word “profane” is used eight times. The priest must remain ceremonially clean by ordering his life according to God’s statutes.

Remember: Every believer is now a priest; we are a kingdom of priests. Every believer is a priest and has access to the throne of grace today. Every believer-priest is required to live a holy life which is possible only by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. As God’s people we are called to a higher way of life. There should be no thought, really, that you can let down your standards if you are not a minister or missionary. At the same time, you should be aware that people do hold you to a higher standard if you are in a position of leadership or even a position of being in front of people.

Your family is often the truest measure of whether things in your spiritual life are in order or not:

Leviticus 21:1 And the LORD said to Moses, “Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them: ‘None shall defile himself for the dead among his people,

Leviticus 21:2 except for his relatives who are nearest to him: his mother, his father, his son, his daughter, and his brother;

Leviticus 21:3 also his virgin sister who is near to him, who has had no husband, for her he may defile himself.

The prohibition regarding dead bodies wasn’t just about touching a dead body, but even being in the same room as a dead body or walking over a grave or touching a tomb.

Death is a penalty of sin, and the idea is that they are not to be contaminated with sin. Physical contact with the dead brings defilement. The priest was permitted to defile himself only for close relatives. He was not, however, permitted to defile himself for the dead of any others. He could mourn in his heart, but was denied physical contact.

Leviticus 21:4 *Otherwise* he shall not defile himself, *being* a chief man among his people, to profane himself.

There are places you should not go... Practices you should not do... Because you don’t want to defile yourself and stumble others.

Leviticus 21:5 ‘They shall not make any bald *place* on their heads, nor shall they shave the edges of their beards nor make any cuttings in their flesh.

These were pagan customs of superstition. People who want to use this to teach against piercings need to realize the context; otherwise, *you couldn’t shave your head either!*

Leviticus 21:6 They shall be holy to their God and not profane the name of their God, for they offer the offerings of the LORD made by fire, *and* the bread of their God; therefore they shall be holy.

Serving God should be so amazing to you that you would rather do it than anything else.

Leviticus 21:7 They shall not take a wife *who is* a harlot or a defiled woman, nor shall they take a woman divorced from her husband; for *the priest* is holy to his God.

Leviticus 21:8 Therefore you shall consecrate him, for he offers the bread of your God. He shall be holy to you, for I the LORD, who sanctify you, *am* holy.

The priest could not marry a prostitute; an adulteress; or a divorced woman. What about today? You become a new creation in Jesus Christ; old things pass away; all becomes new. There are commandments regulating marriage, divorce, and remarriage. In addition, you must marry only another believer. But things from your former life do not automatically disqualify you from serving God.

Leviticus 21:9 The daughter of any priest, if she profanes herself by playing the harlot, she profanes her father. She shall be burned with fire.

The priest didn't lose his ministry; *the daughter lost her life!* The behavior of pastor's kids is an interesting subject. He is to rule his own home well. Sometimes a pastor ought to resign based on the behavior of his kids; sometimes it is not necessary. It must be taken on a case-by-case basis.

Only after sizing-up his family do we look at the priest, starting with the high priest:

Leviticus 21:10 *'He who is* the high priest among his brethren, on whose head the anointing oil was poured and who is consecrated to wear the garments, shall not uncover his head nor tear his clothes;

Leviticus 21:11 nor shall he go near any dead body, nor defile himself for his father or his mother;

Leviticus 21:12 nor shall he go out of the sanctuary, nor profane the sanctuary of his God; for the consecration of the anointing oil of his God *is* upon him: I *am* the LORD.

A much stricter conduct was required for the main man. All of us should aspire to the summit. The application for us is to identify and appoint leaders who are dialed-in, who are examples.

Leviticus 21:13 And he shall take a wife in her virginity.

Leviticus 21:14 A widow or a divorced woman or a defiled woman *or* a harlot - these he shall not marry; but he shall take a virgin of his own people as wife.

Leviticus 21:15 Nor shall he profane his posterity among his people, for I the LORD sanctify him."

The first-born son of the high priest was the next high priest. These physical restrictions kept things in order. For our sake, we would caution anyone who sees their future as one of leadership to consider carefully their choice of spouse. The ministry is brutal; it chews-up families. While we don't believe the Bible teaches there are woman pastors, it is nevertheless a calling to be the wife of a pastor or other Christian leader.

### Physical Characteristics – 21:16-24

It may seem odd, but next follows a list of physical traits that disqualified someone from being a priest:

Leviticus 21:16 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

Leviticus 21:17 “Speak to Aaron, saying: ‘No man of your descendants in *succeeding* generations, who has *any* defect, may approach to offer the bread of his God.

Leviticus 21:18 For any man who has a defect shall not approach: a man blind or lame, who has a marred *face* or any *limb* too long,

Leviticus 21:19 a man who has a broken foot or broken hand,

Leviticus 21:20 or is a hunchback or a dwarf, or a *man* who has a defect in his eye, or eczema or scab, or is a eunuch.

Leviticus 21:21 No man of the descendants of Aaron the priest, who has a defect, shall come near to offer the offerings made by fire to the LORD. He has a defect; he shall not come near to offer the bread of his God.

Leviticus 21:22 He may eat the bread of his God, *both* the most holy and the holy;

Leviticus 21:23 only he shall not go near the veil or approach the altar, because he has a defect, lest he profane My sanctuaries; for I the LORD sanctify them.”

Leviticus 21:24 And Moses told *it* to Aaron and his sons, and to all the children of Israel.

He could participate fully in the religious rites, but could not officiate. It seems harsh and cruel; it's not. The priests in Israel pictured Jesus and offered unblemished sacrifices. Their defects would take away from the symbolism.

Often defects become avenues of blessing. Beautiful souls can live in crippled bodies. Fanny Crosby, the great hymn writer, was blind; we could cite many others whose service was restricted so they could discover some greater blessing.

## Professional Concerns – 22:1-33

In addition to the personal and physical requirements, the priest must conduct himself in an acceptable manner. The phrase in verse two, “**separate themselves from the holy things,**” sets the tone in this chapter. They must be careful not to let their service become ritual – even though they went through the motions over-and-over again in carefully prescribed ways. They must not become religious professionals.

Leviticus 22:1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,  
Leviticus 22:2 “Speak to Aaron and his sons, that they separate themselves from the holy things of the children of Israel, and that they do not profane My holy name *by what they dedicate to Me: I am the LORD.*

Professionalism is something that has a good connotation in most fields – but not in serving God. Professionalism revealed itself in three ways: Unclean priests, unqualified guests, and unacceptable sacrifices.

### Unclean priests:

Leviticus 22:3 Say to them: ‘Whoever of all your descendants throughout your generations, who goes near the holy things which the children of Israel dedicate to the LORD, while he has uncleanness upon him, that person shall be cut off from My presence: I *am* the LORD.

Leviticus 22:4 ‘Whatever man of the descendants of Aaron, who *is* a leper or has a discharge, shall not eat the holy offerings until he is clean. And whoever touches anything made unclean *by* a corpse, or a man who has had an emission of semen,

Leviticus 22:5 or whoever touches any creeping thing by which he would be made unclean, or any person by whom he would become unclean, whatever his uncleanness may be -

Leviticus 22:6 the person who has touched any such thing shall be unclean until evening, and shall not eat the holy *offerings* unless he washes his body with water.

Leviticus 22:7 And when the sun goes down he shall be clean; and afterward he may eat the holy *offerings*, because it *is* his food.

Leviticus 22:8 Whatever dies *naturally* or is torn *by beasts* he shall not eat, to defile himself with it: I *am* the LORD.

Leviticus 22:9 ‘They shall therefore keep My ordinance, lest they bear sin for it and die thereby, if they profane it: I the LORD sanctify them.



You could be unclean or become defiled... *and no one would know it!*  
No one, that is, but God. The priest who hid his defilement and did nothing about it was in danger of death at the hand of the Lord.

It's important to deal with sin among leaders and those in front. Their sin affects the whole ministry.

Unqualified guests:

Leviticus 22:10 'No outsider shall eat the holy *offering*; one who dwells with the priest, or a hired servant, shall not eat the holy thing.

Leviticus 22:11 But if the priest buys a person with his money, he may eat it; and one who is born in his house may eat his food.

Leviticus 22:12 If the priest's daughter is married to an outsider, she may not eat of the holy offerings.

Leviticus 22:13 But if the priest's daughter is a widow or divorced, and has no child, and has returned to her father's house as in her youth, she may eat her father's food; but no outsider shall eat it.

Leviticus 22:14 'And if a man eats the holy *offering* unintentionally, then he shall restore a holy *offering* to the priest, and add one-fifth to it.

Leviticus 22:15 They shall not profane the holy *offerings* of the children of Israel, which they offer to the LORD,

Leviticus 22:16 or allow them to bear the guilt of trespass when they eat their holy *offerings*; for I the LORD sanctify them.'"

A priest could eat portions of certain offerings as specified; he could share these portions with members of his family who were qualified to eat. He could not offer the portions to others.

Even his own daughter, if she married an outsider, could not be included in the feast.

Today we must say "No" when a believer wishes to marry an unbeliever. We must seek to guard our kids from ungodly relationships.

Unacceptable Sacrifices – 22:17-32

Leviticus 22:17 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

Leviticus 22:18 "Speak to Aaron and his sons, and to all the children of Israel, and say to them: 'Whatever man of the house of Israel, or of the strangers in Israel, who offers his sacrifice for any of his vows or for any of his freewill offerings, which they offer to the LORD as a burnt offering -

Leviticus 22:19 *you shall offer of your own free will a male without blemish from the cattle, from the sheep, or from the goats.*

Leviticus 22:20 *Whatever has a defect, you shall not offer, for it shall not be acceptable on your behalf.*

The priests sometimes sent the worshipper away because their sacrifice was unacceptable. The regulations apply to the people, but the enforcement applies to the priests. No offering with a blemish was to be permitted because the offerings pointed to Christ. Any departure from this was to lower the concept of the person of Christ and the holy demands of God.

Leviticus 22:21 *And whoever offers a sacrifice of a peace offering to the LORD, to fulfill his vow, or a freewill offering from the cattle or the sheep, it must be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no defect in it.*

Leviticus 22:22 *Those that are blind or broken or maimed, or have an ulcer or eczema or scabs, you shall not offer to the LORD, nor make an offering by fire of them on the altar to the LORD.*

Leviticus 22:23 *Either a bull or a lamb that has any limb too long or too short you may offer as a freewill offering, but for a vow it shall not be accepted.*

Leviticus 22:24 *'You shall not offer to the LORD what is bruised or crushed, or torn or cut; nor shall you make any offering of them in your land.*

Leviticus 22:25 *Nor from a foreigner's hand shall you offer any of these as the bread of your God, because their corruption is in them, and defects are in them. They shall not be accepted on your behalf.'*

Leviticus 22:26 *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:*

Leviticus 22:27 *"When a bull or a sheep or a goat is born, it shall be seven days with its mother; and from the eighth day and thereafter it shall be accepted as an offering made by fire to the LORD.*

Leviticus 22:28 *Whether it is a cow or ewe, do not kill both her and her young on the same day.*

Natural deformity in an animal as well as bruises and cuts and broken bones comprised the blemishes. Any of these should make them reject the animal as an offering. No stranger was to make an offering. And any offering animal was to be at least over seven days old. Seven represents completion - it was to have lived a complete cycle.

It was at this point of offering animals without blemish that Israel failed miserably. They brought that which was torn and lame and sick for their offerings and God called forth from the prophets a denunciation of their offerings. We find this in Malachi 1:6–14.

Leviticus 22:29 And when you offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the LORD, offer *it* of your own free will.

The offering was to be a freewill offering. The priests were not to manipulate or coerce the offerings.

Leviticus 22:30 On the same day it shall be eaten; you shall leave none of it until morning: I *am* the LORD.

God was emphasizing urgency and freshness in fellowshiping with Him.

Leviticus 22:31 “Therefore you shall keep My commandments, and perform them: I *am* the LORD.

Leviticus 22:32 You shall not profane My holy name, but I will be hallowed among the children of Israel. I *am* the LORD who sanctifies you,

Leviticus 22:33 who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I *am* the LORD.”

They were to be a witness for God. They were not to go as witnesses to the ends of the earth as you and I have been called to do today. They were called to serve God as a nation. As they did this, the whole world would come to Jerusalem. God’s holy name was to be represented in every act of worship.

Conclusion

The world is full with its bad examples. You and I are to be the good examples.

The world is reading you. Remember this little poem:

*The Gospel is written a chapter a day  
By the deeds that you do and words that you say.  
Men read what you say whether faithless or true.  
Say, what is the Gospel according to you?*