

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Leviticus 22:1-9

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it is time for us to read the Bible again. Today, we will be reading from Leviticus chapter 22, verses 1 to 9.

Chapter 21 speaks about the ordinances for the holy lives of priests. Often, saints have a mistaken notion that priests refer only to pastors or other salaried clergy, and as a result, they feel these ordinances are unrelated to them. We must understand that every New Testament saint is a royal priest—this refers to the identity of the saints. However, for saints to fulfill the duties of a priest, they must possess a certain measure of spiritual maturity. Not only must they avoid the eleven spiritual diseases mentioned in Chapter 21, but they must also steer clear of spiritual death, refrain from following worldly fashions, and maintain purity before God. Only then can they suitably fulfill the duties of a priest.

When priests begin their ministry, their role is to help the people offer sacrifices to God. As a result, priests inevitably come into contact with the sacrifices and offerings that the people dedicate to God. These are holy things, set apart for God. In Chapter 22, God, through Moses, instructs Aaron and his household—the priests—on the ordinances concerning the handling of holy things.

From a New Testament perspective, the offerings and sacrifices presented by the people represent the saints' experiences of Christ. Since the saints possess different measures of life, their experiences of Christ will naturally vary in length, breadth, and height. The New Testament priests, serving in the church, are responsible for helping the saints present their experiences of Christ during gatherings. For this service to align with God's will, New Testament priests must adhere to the spiritual principles revealed in this chapter. May all saints who have a heart to serve in the church join in learning these truths together.

Verses 1–2: “Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ‘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.’”

God instructed Moses to tell the priests from Aaron’s lineage that they must handle the holy offerings presented to Him by the Israelites with utmost care. The translation in the Chinese Union Version renders this as “separate themselves from the holy things of the children of Israel.” However, the phrase “separate themselves” is not accurate. The priestly service inherently involves assisting the people in offering sacrifices, meaning priests would inevitably come into contact with the holy offerings. How then could they separate themselves? The NIV translates it as “treat with respect,” emphasizing handling with reverence, and the ASV translates it as “be careful with,” indicating cautious handling. These translations are more accurate. The offerings consecrated to God by the Israelites are sacred, representing their devotion and intentions toward God, which God delights in and accepts. Therefore, the priests must approach these holy things with fear and reverence, ensuring they do not act carelessly or profane God’s name. This serves as a stern warning to the priests, with God emphasizing, “I am the Lord,” as a reminder that He is constantly observing their service.

In the Old Testament, the Israelites offered sacrifices of animals. In the New Testament, saints offer prayers, praises, possessions, or even themselves. When saints make offerings to God in the church, those serving within the church must treat these offerings with great seriousness to avoid offending God. For instance, if a young believer, moved by God, prays or testifies publicly for the first time, though they may stumble over their words due to nervousness, this still represents their measure of life in Christ and their offering to God. Those serving ones must stand by to support and, if necessary, help complete the offering. This is precious in God’s sight, and it constitutes holy things presented to Him by this young saint. Priests must not take this lightly.

Verse 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.’”

Any descendant from Aaron’s family, throughout their generations, who serves as a priest, but approaches the holy things dedicated to God by the Israelites while in a state of uncleanness, must be cut off from God’s presence. This means they are no longer qualified to serve as priests and must depart from God’s presence. Anything consecrated by the people to God becomes holy, and priests who defile these holy things through their uncleanness commit a grave offense. Such a person must be cut off from God’s presence.

Dear brothers and sisters, service within the church is sacred because it involves matters related to God. Therefore, whether it is leading worship, speaking for God, serving the bread and cup, ministering to children, or even preparing meals, every form of service represents offerings made by saints to God. These are esteemed and treasured by God. Thus, every person who serves must be purified, removing all uncleanness, so they do not offend God in holy matters. Each time we serve, we must pray for cleansing, asking the Holy Spirit to purify us from any uncleanness, so we can serve God with clean hands and pure hearts.

In the end times, various corrupt practices will emerge. Hence, saints who serve in the church must exercise special vigilance, especially against those who exploit the name of Christ for personal gain, fame, or power. Such individuals can cause significant harm to the church. Therefore, saints responsible for service must diligently maintain the church’s purity before God. In verses 4 through 9, God lists numerous examples of uncleanness to remind the priests of their duty to maintain their holiness.

Verse 4a: “Whatever man of the descendants of Aaron, who is a leprosy or has a discharge, shall not eat the holy offerings until he is clean.”

When the Israelites made offerings to God, apart from burnt offerings, which were entirely consumed on the altar for God's satisfaction, portions of other sacrifices were designated for the priests. However, if a priest had leprosy or a discharge, they were considered unclean. The portions of offerings designated for the priests were holy, and those who were unclean could not partake. They were prohibited from eating until their leprosy or discharge was healed, making them clean again. This was a regulation in the Old Testament.

In the New Testament application, the offerings of the saints symbolize their experiences of Christ, which become the sustenance of those who serve. This is a unique concept. Jesus Himself stated in John 4:34, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work." Therefore, when saints serve in the church, their service becomes their sustenance, a special portion granted by God to those who serve.

I believe that saints who have served in the church for many years can testify to the joy of witnessing the spiritual growth of those they minister to, as well as their offerings within the church. Such experiences bring indescribable satisfaction, akin to partaking in a spiritual feast. However, if a servant suffers from leprosy or a discharge, they are disqualified from sharing in this spiritual feast.

Spiritually speaking, leprosy symbolizes rebellion against God's authority, while a discharge represents the loss of spiritual vitality. Leprosy indicates that a servant's ministry lacks submission to God's authority, making their service self-centered rather than God-centered. A discharge reflects a breach in the person's life, leading to continual spiritual loss. Servants afflicted with leprosy or a discharge cannot partake in the spiritual feast until they confess, repent, and address their rebellion or seal the breaches in their spiritual life. Only then can they enjoy the feast of life together. Thus, saints who serve in the church must frequently examine themselves to ensure they are submitting to God's sovereignty and avoiding any breaches in their lives that may result in spiritual loss. Those with unresolved issues in their lives will find their service displeasing to God. They must first address these personal issues before serving in the church.

Verses 4b–6: “Whoever touches anything made unclean by a corpse, or a man who has had an emission of semen, 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—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.”

This passage speaks of priests not being unclean due to their own sickness but becoming defiled in their daily lives by contact with unclean persons or objects. This could include touching a corpse, someone with an emission of semen, or unclean creeping creatures. Any priest defiled by such contact cannot eat the holy offerings. They must first wash their body with water and wait until evening—the beginning of a new day—before they are considered clean and may partake of the holy offerings.

Similarly, New Testament saints must not partake of Christ’s provision, symbolized by the holy offerings, if they have been defiled in their daily lives by unclean persons or matters. They must first wash themselves with the water of life to cleanse their defilement and wait until evening, symbolizing the start of a new day with new grace. Only then can they be clean and partake of Christ’s provision. This aligns with Titus 3:5, which states: “through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.” On one hand, it refers to the washing away of defilement; on the other hand, the Holy Spirit provides a new beginning, guiding individuals to experience fresh grace. In this way, they can properly partake of Christ's provision.

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

At sunset, marking the start of a new day, the priest becomes clean and can eat the holy offerings, which are his rightful food. Dear brothers and sisters, do you often feel that reading the Bible brings no light or spiritual sustenance? Perhaps it is because you have not first cleansed yourself. Your mind may be preoccupied with mundane and trivial matters of daily life, preventing God’s Word from working

within you. Why is it that you find it easier to receive spiritual nourishment during a Sunday sermon? Often, it is not because the preacher is exceptionally gifted but because your own state is different. By partaking in the bread and cup and remembering the Lord Jesus Christ, you have been cleansed, making it easier for God's Word to nourish you. We must learn to cleanse ourselves each time we approach God's Word, opening ourselves fully to Him. When we are prepared to meet God in His Word, we can truly receive nourishment.

Verse 8: "Whatever dies naturally or is torn by beasts he shall not eat, to defile himself with it: I am the Lord."

Animals that die naturally or are torn by beasts must not be eaten because their blood has not been properly drained, leaving blood in the flesh, which would defile anyone who eats it.

The New Testament application is to avoid contact with spiritual death. In the church, it is inevitable that some saints may fall into a state of spiritual death, whether due to personal reasons or conflicts with other saints. Spiritual death often carries a strong contagion, spreading to others who come into contact with it. The first response of saints should be to protect themselves, refraining from contact, and allowing more spiritually mature saints to address the situation. A common issue in the church is that younger saints inadvertently engage with spiritual death, are unable to handle it, and spread it further, causing significant harm to the church. Therefore, every saint must first learn to safeguard their own holiness and not become a source of difficulty for the church.

Verse 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."

Priests are to assist the people in offering sacrifices, and they must carefully observe God's ordinances, setting an example for the people. In particular, they

must not be careless in handling the holy offerings. Holy offerings pertain to God's holiness, and profaning them incurs severe punishment from God. Therefore, God warns the priests not to be negligent, lest they bear guilt and die. He adds a crucial statement: "I the Lord sanctify them." God is holy and desires His people to be holy. He especially sanctifies the priests so they may fulfill their priestly duties appropriately, helping the people present their offerings. Dear brothers and sisters, as New Testament priests, we must first preserve our holiness before God.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You for Your grace. You have granted us the privilege of the priesthood and, in our service, given us the special portion of the priests to enjoy. Help us to consider spiritual principles when handling holy matters, removing all uncleanness from ourselves. Bless my church and its ministry. May everyone serving in the church be accepted by God, becoming qualified priests who can lead the church wholly into God's presence, pleasing Him. I pray this in the holy name of our Lord Jesus Christ.