

Defects: Hindrance or Invitation? Leviticus 21 – 2 Samuel 9 – Luke 14

Leviticus can be tedious to read — lots of arcane details, it seems, rituals and ceremonies that we no longer perform unless we're Orthodox Jews, and even then, many of them are not practiced since there is at present no Temple in Jerusalem.

Read Leviticus 21:21-23.

V21 — Refers to “defects” mentioned in verses 18-20 — “blind or lame, disfigured or deformed; no man with a crippled foot or hand, or who is a hunchback or a dwarf,” etc. WHAT DISCRIMINATION! Some would say, “See, I told you your Bible is an antiquated and bigoted book.”

Here's where it's important to take a bit deeper dive into the Book to see WHY it's saying what it's saying! There's more going on here than meets the eye.

This is about the Old Testament PRIESTS who represent both God and the people and who serve or lead worship in God's sanctuary or throne-room... the tabernacle.

1. The tabernacle was a miniature “Garden of Eden.”

- a. **It looked like a garden.** It was the place where God “walked” with his people as he did with Adam and Eve in Eden (same word used in Genesis and Exodus).
 - Both opened to the East.
 - As Adam was to “tend” (“cultivate”) and “keep” (guard) the garden, so the priests were to “tend” and “guard” the tabernacle (same two words).
 - Cherubim guarded both the garden and the Ark.
 - “There was gold in that place” (garden and tabernacle).
 - Lampstand made to look like the “Tree of Life.”
 - Table with bread indicated God meant the tabernacle for the place of table-fellowship with His people.
 - Tabernacle loaded with garden-like embossing and filigrees.
- b. **The Garden of Eden was the place of perfection** — there were no defects found there until Adam and Eve sinned — and they were expelled from the Garden because they were no longer fit to be in God's presence.
- c. **Eden gives way in the biblical story at the End of time to the New Heavens and Earth — where there will be NO DEFECTS!**

2. The priests were forerunners of Christ, our great High Priest — in whom are NO DEFECTS! They were to prefigure Christ as much as was possible for mere humans.

An interesting comment is made in this text – almost an off-hand comment – one we might easily gloss over or read past without much attention: v22 — “**He may eat the most holy food of his God, as well as the holy food.**”

While a priest with physical defects could not serve in the inner sanctuary for the noted reasons, the priest with defects was permitted to eat of “**the holy food of his God.**” In effect, he was invited to the King's table! (God was known to be the King! In ANE a “sanctuary” was the King's residence.)

A priest with defects was invited to the King's table!

This may remind us of another kingly story with an invitation of a person with defects to his table – 2 Samuel 9!

- David asked, “Is there anyone still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan's sake?” (9:1)
- Ziba (steward of Saul) answered the king, “**There is still a son of Jonathan; he is lame in both feet.**”
- “Don't be afraid,” David said to Mephibosheth, “for I will surely show you kindness **for the sake of your father Jonathan.** I will restore to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul, and you will always eat at my table.” (9:7)
- Understand this is pure grace on David's part: Nothing Mephibosheth had done “merited” sitting at the King's table. It was entirely “**for Jonathan's sake.**” Mephibosheth was simply — by God's providence — born into Jonathan's house.
- Mephibosheth bowed down and said, “What is your servant, that you should notice a dead dog like me?” (9:8) He understood it to be pure grace!
- David to Ziba: “And Mephibosheth, grandson of your master, **will always eat at my table.**”
- “**Mephibosheth ate at David's table like one of the king's sons.**” (9:11)
- Last line of the story: “he was lame in both feet” to underline the point!

Perhaps this reminds you, too, of a **parable Jesus once told... (Luke 14)**

- Jesus was at a dinner hosted by a “prominent Pharisee.”
- Jesus referred to the “resurrection of the righteous” (at the End).
- Someone called out: “**Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.**” (14:15)
- Parable: “[A banquet host] sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’
- Their excuses: ‘I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it’... ‘I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out’... ‘I just got married, so I can't come.’
- ‘Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and **bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.**’
- These were the very ones excluded from serving in the Tabernacle — Lev. 21:18f.!

LESSONS:

1. It's the “crippled” who are invited to the King's Table! Mephibosheth “was lame **in both feet.**” Not just one, but both. Totally crippled, but fully accepted as “son of the King.” You say, “I'm crippled.” God says, “Then come to my table!”
2. **You don't have to make yourself whole BEFORE you come to Jesus!** Come and he will make you whole! He will welcome you with your defects, though He loves you too much to leave you with those defects! He's going to work on you to heal you, one way or another, until one day – in glory – you will be fully healed! Jesus does one better than David – He not only accepts us with our defects, but He sets out to heal them!
3. QUESTION: How can the perfect, holy God accept us who are imperfect and not only defective, but defiled? ANSWER: “**For Jesus' sake.**” Compare to “**for Jonathan's sake.**” Jesus took our defilements and defects upon himself and died to take them away. You, by faith, become one of the “King's sons”! The table is yours. You have a place at the Table! Come and enjoy the Father's bounty! Accept His invitation.

REMEMBER this: The most important thing about you is how God sees you... what God says of you! **What God knows to be true is what is true** — not what you think to be true.

“If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything” — 1 John 3:20.

”**We must see ourselves as God sees us in Christ.**” (Peterson, David. *Possessed by God: A New Testament Theology of Sanctification and Holiness*)