**Rules for Priests and Unacceptable Sacrifices**

Yesterday was Tax Day. Yay! God loves a cheerful giver but I’ll bet unicorns are more common than cheerful taxpayers. After decades of being a chump, I’ve stumbled onto a novel approach to paying taxes. I’ve created Harbux, a digital crypto currency I’ll use for payment. There are already several varieties of crypto currencies so what’s one more. As I am the owner of all the Harbux in circulation, I am also the sole arbiter of its exchange rate in US dollars. In a startling (but convenient) coincidence, I have discovered that the number of units I previously decided to remit to the government is equal in value to the taxes I owe. I am certain they will find this method of payment most satisfactory, even profitable if the meteoric rise of Bitcoin is an indicator of the potential of this wondrous legal(?) tender. In our study of chapters 20 and 21 of Leviticus, we see God giving more instructions for the priests and the people regarding sacrifices. God knew that the people would be tempted to bring to Him less valuable offerings so He made clear that those would not be acceptable (see 1st Sam 15:22 and Mal. 1:8). As generations passed, offerings devolved into a profitable business for the priests who would disqualify an animal to be sacrificed and require that a substitute animal be purchased from the priest himself. They became so brazen that they operated such enterprises inside the temple (see John 2:14-16, Matt. 21:12-13).

Chapter 21 begins with God telling Moses to Aaron that the priests were not to make themselves ceremonially unclean at the occasion of the death of anyone other than a close relative. In verse 10, God forbade the tearing of clothes by a priest which was often done in mourning. Recall how Aaron had to remain stoic after the death of two of his sons (see 10:6). God also prohibited shaving of heads or priests cutting themselves which were associated with practices of Canaanites in idol worship. In this chapter God also required that the wife of the high priest would be a virgin (Eph. 5:25-27). In verses 16-23, God tells Moses that those who served as priests could not have physical defects. Collectively these requirements showed that God wanted the priests to be as pure as humanly possible so they would best resemble Jesus who is the high priest.

Chapter 22 is devoted to God’s rules for the offering and consuming of sacrifices. The priests were to be clean when they offered sacrifices as well as when they ate meals that came from the sacrifices. God made a provision that a priest who was unclean would become clean after the sun went down. David Guzik pointed out that the Hebrew day actually began at sundown so this was symbolic of putting confessed sins in the past and starting the new day fresh. God also dictated who among a priest’s family could participate in a meal. In verses 17-29 God prescribed sacrifices that would be acceptable to Him. As He had previously told Moses, sacrificial animals were to be without defect although certain free will offerings could be deformed animals. The chapter ends with God reminding the Israelites that He made them holy.

As we are modern day priests (see 1st Pet. 2:9) these chapters should serve as a reminder that we are to approach God reverently and set an example for others to see in hopes they would be drawn to Jesus. Matthew Henry wrote of the priests: The priests were to draw nearer to God than any of the people, and to be more intimately conversant with sacred things, and therefore it was required of them that they should keep at a greater distance than others from everything that was defiling and might diminish the honor of their priesthood.

God’s warning about unacceptable offerings are still relevant today. We may find ourselves devoting our most valuable time to our own pursuits then allocating to God what little is left and for some that is 1 hour on Sunday. We should set aside time to spend in prayer and studying God’s word daily. We should also resolve to set aside a for God a portion of what He has blessed us with financially rather than giving out of what’s left over after we have satisfied our desires.

P.S. If you want some Harbux, I have connections.