



**Scriptures and Doctrine :: Levi and the Good Samaritan**

**Levi and the Good Samaritan - posted by mlem, on: 2012/2/27 21:33**

Leviticus 21 : 1-5 (NASB)

1 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them:

"No one shall defile himself for a dead person among his people, 2 except for his relatives who are nearest to him, his mother and his father and his son and his daughter and his brother, 3 also for his virgin sister, who is near to him because she has had no husband; for her he may defile himself. 4 He shall not defile himself as a **relative by marriage among his people, and so profane himself.**

**I don't understand in Luke 10 : 30-32, basically the passage about the good Samaritan, why would Jesus use the example of a Levi knowing that the law disallowed Priest to be near a dead person, the scripture said half dead which he may appear to be lifeless.**

**Just seeking an understanding to this.**

**Re: Levi and the Good Samaritan - posted by philologos (), on: 2012/3/1 5:42**

It's an interesting question.

The victim of Luke 10 however was not dead, only half dead.

Priests could be cleansed from the ceremonial pollution of touching a dead body but it would be costly and take some time. The sacrifice of the red heifer was specifically used to cleanse priests who had been 'contaminated' by coming into contact with a dead body. (Numbers 19)

I think the prohibition of Lev 21 has in mind a 'functioning' priest i.e. one who is at that time fulfilling his priestly responsibilities. There is no indication that the priest of Luke 10 was 'en route' to the Temple to act as a priest.

Another point is that parables were designed to focus on one key issue. We can get ourselves into some problems if we try to apply every part of the parable. For example, Christ will return as a thief in the night. That does not mean he will be coming to steal your video recorder but simply that he will come unexpectedly. The key truth of the Good Samaritan is 'caring' for our neighbour, the details about the Levite and the Priest are just 'local colour'.

Hope that helps.

**Re: PS from the London Times! - posted by philologos (), on: 2012/3/7 4:28**

I came across this letter in the Times on Saturday morning!

"Sir, David Aaronovitch is wrong to suggest that fear of corpse defilement would be a good reason in Jewish law for the priest and Levite not to aid a dying man ("The parable of the not-so-clever Samaritan", Opinion, Mar 1). As Hyam Maccoby explains in Early Rabbinic Writings, the duty of saving lives - *pilkuach nefesh*- overrides all ritual laws. Moreover (Mishnah, Nazir 7:1), even a High Priest must attend to a wayside corpse (a corpse of commandment), while Levites were not forbidden to incur corpse uncleanness. The parable shows a priest and a Levite in defiance of Jewish law showing less concern than a Samaritan for saving human life. The familiar Jewish moral was that goodness does not depend on rank.

Cynthia Maccoby, Leeds."

Interesting coincidence?

**Re: - posted by roadsign (), on: 2012/3/7 7:50**

Quote:  
----- The parable shows a priest and a Levite in defiance of Jewish law showing less concern than a Samaritan for saving human life.  
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It's a joy to see your offerings of wisdom again, Philologos. This one is especially meaningful to me. This quote helps preserve the pure intent of the law. In other words the law cannot be blamed for imposing a conflict on their conscience or for unfairly tempting the Levite and priest to avoid the dying man. The problem was not the law! It was a dulled conscience. Carter Conlon noted that in his own application of this parable. He said, "It is easy for our conscience to become dulled under religions study. We can come to wrong conclusion from right study." (Mar. 4 sermon, Hope when Love is Gone)

Diane

**Re: - posted by mlem, on: 2012/3/8 0:15**

Thank you very much, philogos! It makes sense now why Jesus would to compare the Samaritan and a High Priest/Levi. It just show the nature of God who loves abundantly i.e. goes the extent (His Son died on the cross). The issue of love, mercy and grace are relay by action and not who one may claim he/she is or what one understanding or view of the law means. Thank you once again. And I not sure if it is coincidental but I would say God answers.

**Re: - posted by ginnyrose (), on: 2012/3/18 6:18**

QUOTE:

"The victim of Luke 10 however was not dead, only half dead.

Priests could be cleansed from the ceremonial pollution of touching a dead body but it would be costly and take some time. The sacrifice of the red heifer was specifically used to cleanse priests who had been 'contaminated' by coming into contact with a dead body. (Numbers 19)"

Once again, it just goes to prove that a careful reading of ALL of the words will answer our questions! I, too, have wondered the same but then considered the man may have given evidence of not being dead that could even be seen from the road. The Levite just did not want to be bothered or inconvenienced...human nature has not changed any in the two thousand years since, has it?

I am deeply gratified when I have been disabled along the road and some good Samaritan stopped to help me! Granted, I was not half-dead, but I needed help. God bless them!