

**A STUDY OF THE HOLINESS CODE IN LEVITICUS 19 AND ITS
IMPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIANITY IN NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT

Christianity is the way of life that stems from the will of the LORD God as revealed in Jesus of Nazareth. It has its foundation on Jesus Christ and the teaching of scripture. Its lifestyle is characterized by the nature and character of the LORD God as taught in the Old and New Testaments. This way of life is expected to reflect the holiness of God, which is His divine nature that is par excellence and that permeates all attributes of God as revealed in Jesus Christ and in scripture.

The failure of the Church to exemplify God's holiness in their expressions has led to the present low moral standard of our society. The thesis thus focuses on the Holiness Code in Leviticus 19 and its moral implication for Christianity in Nigerian with the aim for the Christian church to become relevant to the Nigerian society and the world in general as the case may be. It discusses how the church has not been conscientious of her status as God's representative in the world of sin. The definitions and holiness of holiness code are given as to guide the readers to know their implications. This is necessary as the Church has not exhibited the qualities of holiness, which is the essence of God's nature. Holiness connotes the idea separateness, apartness and distinctiveness. It is understood through this research that holiness is a major religious phenomenon in the ancient Near East where Israel as God's nation happens to be part of. Moreover, holiness precedes anything when it is related to God. It however discusses that the application of holiness in Israel is based on Divine or Yahweh's directive over and against the background of kings' decree, which is a common phenomenon of the ancient Near East.

It is observed that God is the author of holiness, and thus, He is also the one who sanctifies or makes holy. While this holiness discusses the religious undertone of the

holiness code, it stresses more on the moral requirements embedded in holiness even in its ritual and ceremonial practices. Emphasis is made on divine justice, which must reflect God's moral distinctiveness and His outstanding perfection and distinctiveness.

It is expedient that the sinful man be made right or associated with God through the means of atonement sacrifice, which serves as the typology of Christ sacrificial death. All the sacrifices ordered by God in Leviticus are meant to be for guilt reparation (for the sins committed). The holiness code is given to promote justice divine justices in all areas of life.

It behoves the Church to apply all that is directed by God in the scripture both Old and New Testaments especially with regard to holiness to make her relevant in the society. It is mainly a challenge to Christian faith to live in reflection of God's character of holiness, love and service for mankind.

Nigerians especially Christians therefore called to live their lives in accordance to God's will for the church and the world He has created. They are to be actively involved in all that is in conformity with God's character. It is also recommended by the researcher of this thesis that all that will lead to healthy spirituality of the church should be jealously coveted and imbibed by the church and biblical scholars for a healthy moral church and society.

Recommendations

The church needs to teach her members what faith or belief in Christ entails. That is, they should be intimated with their responsibilities to God and their fellow persons as entrenched in the revealed will of God and in scripture. While the physical welfare of people especially of God's followers is of vital importance in God's redemptive plan, it does not take the place of spirituality in their lives. Emphasis on welfare of the Christians must be related to obedience to God in its totality as the prerequisite to attainment of man's needs.

The reputation of Nigerian lies largely on Christian response to the spiritual truth of God and His (God's) moral character. To this end, Christians should endeavour to be Christ like in all their relationship and engagement in every circumstance. In order to achieve this, Christian leaders and ministers are to engage in educating people on how to pattern their lives after God's character as revealed in Jesus of Nazareth.

Biblical scholars need to write and publish more books and article based on God's holistic lifestyle. The message of the Bible should be communicated with regard to the revealed will of God for His church and the world He has created.

Christians in politics should be conscious of their God-given responsibilities and wisdom, which they need to apply to better the lots of Nigerians who they serve as well as others they come in contact with. Equal distribution of national resources will help to bring succour to those who are suffering through which their poor standard of living will be alleviated. At the same time much attention should be given to areas producing more of the wealth of the nation, by providing them basic amenities such as

potable water, easy communication through network roads, schools, hospitals, electricity etc. Christians in leadership can be of help in this regard.

Scholars need to delve into other areas not treated or given adequate attention in this research though related such as the ritual and ceremonial implication of holiness. They also need to embark on more research on the practice of holiness in the ancient Near East and how it must have informed biblical truth on the subject.

Scholars are advised by this researcher to embark on some correlation study of the Decalogue and the Holiness Code with the aim to establish relationship between the two Codes. While embarking on such study the Deuteronomic Code could be considered. This academic exercise coupled with previous work on the law codes including the holiness code discussed in this thesis will lead to a better and experiential understanding of the theology of the Old Testament and possibly the New Testament as well, for these law codes serve as basic foundation for the teaching of the Bible.

It should be noted that the above recommendations when considered along with what has been discussed in this thesis, will go a long way to shape the church spirituality and African Society, particularly the Nigerian society. The church will, as a result, become more relevant to her environment as she practiced the faith in the incarnate Jesus.

Conclusively, in the light of all what is discussed in this research, it behoves the Christian Church of Nigeria to evaluate their status as God's representative in the world that is dented with sin, vices, satanic influence marked with corruption of many forms. Christianity needs to develop avid interest in the study of the scripture both Old and New Testament especially the holiness code and 1 Peter chapters 1-2 with the aim to allow God's revelation to have impact in the lives of the Christian. There is the need to apply God's prescriptions and instruction for the betterment of one's

relationship with God and fellow persons as far as holiness is concerned. There should also be need to apply all that is relevant in the holiness code especially as deposited in Leviticus 19 and as expatiated by God and revealed in Jesus Christ to one's existential life. The Christian highest goal should be how he or she can consistently reflect the nature of God characterized with holiness from which all Christian virtues emanate. Christians should always strive to rid themselves or herself of all profanity and immoral acts and resolve to be agent of transformation in the hands of God who expresses his purpose and desire through his people of covenant relationship.