

6. A kingdom of priests

February 19, 2009

The first seven chapters covered the various sacrifices and laws they had to follow. But in chapter 8 through 10, we are going to learn about the consecration of priests of Israel and how we can apply them into our lives. Leviticus 8-10 describes the eight-day ordination ceremony for the high priest Aaron and his sons.

It was God's original intention to make the entire nation of Israel a kingdom of priests. However, their sin to worship the golden calf in the wilderness prevented this. Instead, only one tribe was taken, the tribe of Levi. Out of this tribe only one man was chosen as the high priest and that was Aaron, the brother of Moses.

The church today is a priesthood and Christ is the great High Priest.

1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

In the future, after the church is gone, I believe that the nation Israel will be the priests on the earth during the Millennium.

A priest is the opposite of a prophet. A prophet comes out from God, to speak for God, to man. A priest comes out from man and goes to God, to speak for man to God, and to represent man. The Lord Jesus is both Prophet and Priest. He came out from God and spoke for God to man. He reveals God to man. Now He has gone from man back to God and is our great High Priest. He represents us in heaven.

A. THE ORDINATION CEREMONY OF AARON AND HIS SONS

Leviticus 8:1-9 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 2 "Take Aaron and his sons with him, and the garments, the anointing oil, a bull as the sin offering, two rams, and a basket of unleavened bread; 3 and gather all the congregation together at the door of the tabernacle of meeting." 4 So Moses did as the Lord commanded him. And the congregation was gathered together at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. 5 And Moses said to the congregation, "This is what the Lord commanded to be done." 6 Then Moses brought Aaron and his sons and washed them with water. 7 And he put the tunic on him, girded him with the sash, clothed him with the robe, and put the ephod on him; and he girded him with the intricately woven band of the ephod, and with it tied the ephod on him. 8 Then he put the breastplate on him, and he put the Urim and the Thummim in the breastplate. 9 And he put the turban on his head. Also on the turban, on its front, he put the golden plate, the holy crown, as the Lord had commanded Moses.

At least twenty times in these three chapters you'll find the word "commanded". Moses and Aaron didn't have to concoct an ordination ceremony. The same God who instructed Moses how to build the tabernacle also told him how to ordain the priests and how the priests should serve in the tabernacle. Nothing was left to chance or to a person's imagination.

In the ministry of the church today, spiritual leaders must constantly ask, "For what does the Scripture say?" God hasn't left us in the dark as to what His church is, how it's to be led, and what it's supposed to do. The reason why many churches are not doing what they are supposed to is because they don't do what they are commanded

to do from the Bible. They add their own opinions, social agendas and trying to be right politically.

Aaron and his sons were bathed ceremonially all over once from the brazen laver in the Tabernacle. From then on, they washed their hands and feet at the laver while they were serving in the tabernacle.

When sinners trust Christ for the first time, they are washed from their sins once and for all. But God's children need to keep their feet clean by confessing their sins to the Lord. In the Bible, water for washing is a picture of the Word of God. As we meditate on the Word of God and apply it to our lives, the Spirit of God uses the Word to cleanse us and make us more like Christ.

B. ANOINTING OF THE PRIESTS

Leviticus 8:10-12 Also Moses took the anointing oil, and anointed the tabernacle and all that was in it, and consecrated them. 11 He sprinkled some of it on the altar seven times, anointed the altar and all its utensils, and the laver and its base, to consecrate them. 12 And he poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron's head and anointed him, to consecrate him. 13 Then Moses brought Aaron's sons and put tunics on them, girded them with sashes, and put hats on them, as the Lord had commanded Moses.

This was done with a special oil that no one was to duplicate in the camp, nor was it to be used on anyone but a priest according to Ex. 30. As you all know, in Scripture, oil is often a symbol of the Spirit of God who has anointed each believer for His work.

Note that the furniture and the things in the Tabernacle were sprinkled with the oil. But the Lord made Moses to pour the anointing oil on Aaron. You talk about serious "Deep oil beauty treatment."

When the Spirit of God is upon a person who makes himself or herself available for the Lord to use them, He will pour out His anointing upon them to do the things He desires that He alone receives honor and praises.

Acts 2:16-18 But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 17 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. 18 And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy.

C. A PREPARATION FOR THE MINISTRY

Leviticus 8:22-23 And he brought the second ram, the ram of consecration. Then Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the ram, 23 and Moses killed it. Also he took some of its blood and put it on the tip of Aaron's right ear, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot.

This is a rather unique procedure to anoint a priest. Why did Moses put the blood of the sacrificed animal on the right ears of Aaron and his sons, the thumbs of their right hands and on the big toes of their right feet?

The right ear symbolizes the fact that they are to listen to the commands of God. The right thumb is to do the will of God and the right big toe is to walk in the way of God.

D. THE PRIESTLY MINISTRY BEGINS

Leviticus 9:1-7 It came to pass on the eighth day that Moses called Aaron and his sons and the elders of Israel. 2 And he said to Aaron, "Take for yourself a young bull as (1) a sin offering and a ram as (2) a burnt offering, without blemish, and offer them before the Lord. 3 And to the children of Israel you shall speak, saying, 'Take a kid of the goats as a sin offering, and a calf and a lamb, both of the first year, without blemish, as a burnt offering, 4 also a bull and a ram as (3) peace offerings, to sacrifice before the Lord, and (4) a grain offering mixed with oil; for today the Lord will appear to you.'" 5 So they brought what Moses commanded before the tabernacle of meeting. And all the congregation drew near and stood before the Lord. 6 Then Moses said, "This is the thing which the Lord commanded you to do, and the glory of the Lord will appear to you." 7 And Moses said to Aaron, "Go to the altar, offer your sin offering and your burnt offering, and make atonement for yourself and for the people. Offer the offering of the people, and make atonement for them, as the Lord commanded."

Up to this point, Moses had been offering the sacrifices. Now Aaron and his sons would take up their priestly ministry.

Aaron and his sons had to offer a bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. From then on, they would be offering a burnt offering on the altar every morning and evening. Each day must begin and end with total consecration to the Lord. Being imperfect, the priests had to offer sacrifices for themselves first before they could offer sacrifices for the people.

Another important thing we should notice is the sequence of the offering:

- 1) Sin offering
- 2) Burnt offering
- 3) Peace offering
- 4) Grain offering

It never starts with peace offering. Sin must be dealt with before we get to dedicate ourselves totally to the Lord and have peace with Him.

E. THE GLORY OF LORD IN FIRE

Leviticus 9:23-24 And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of meeting, and came out and blessed the people. Then the glory of the Lord appeared to all the people, 24 and fire came out from before the Lord and consumed the burnt offering and the fat on the altar. When all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces.

Aaron, the first human high priest, was representing the role of Jesus who was not only the High Priest, but also the Atoning Sacrifice for the entire human race.

Hebrews 9:10-14 concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation. 11 But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. 12 Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. 13 For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, 14 how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Including myself, I am sure that many of us would love to see even a tiny portion of the glory of God. The fire coming down from heaven to consume the burnt offering would have been quite a sight to behold.

The Bible gives us six examples of where God showed acceptance of a sacrifice with fire from heaven:

- Abel – Genesis 4:4
- Aaron – Leviticus 9:24
- Gideon – Judges 6:21
- Manoah – Judges 13:19-23
- Solomon – 2 Chronicles 7:1
- Elijah – 1 Kings 18:38

Fire was often associated with God's presence and work. John the Baptist promised Jesus would come with a baptism with the Holy Spirit and with fire in Matthew 3. The Holy Spirit manifested His presence on the day of Pentecost by tongues of fire in Acts 2.

When we see the glory of God, there will be two responses from us: Joy and Fear. That is what happened here in Leviticus 9.

Psalm 2:11 Serve the Lord with fear, And rejoice with trembling.

F. THE RESULT OF THE PROFANE FIRE

Leviticus 10:1-3 Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. 2 So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. 3 And Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the Lord spoke, saying: 'By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; And before all the people I must be glorified.' " So Aaron held his peace.

Everything that these two men did was wrong. To begin with, they were the wrong people to be handling the incense and presenting it to the Lord. This was the task of their father, the high priest. They also used the wrong instruments, their own censers instead of the censer of the high priest, sanctified by the special anointing oil. They acted at the wrong time, because it was only on the annual Day of Atonement that the high priest was permitted to take incense into the holy of holies, and even then he had to submit to a special procedure.

In burning the incense, they used the wrong fire, what Scripture calls "strange fire" – NIV translates "unauthorized fire". The high priest was commanded to burn the incense on coals taken from the brazen altar, but Nadab and Abihu supplied their own fire, and God rejected it. They acted from the wrong motive and didn't seek to glorify God alone. We don't know the secrets of their hearts, but we get the impression that what they did was a willful act of pride.

Not only that, they also were drunk in my opinion by reading v8-10.

Leviticus 10:8-10 Then the Lord spoke to Aaron, saying: 9 "Do not drink wine or intoxicating drink, you, nor your sons with you, when you go into the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations, 10 that you may distinguish between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean

Like God rejected Cain's offering which was done in his own way instead of the Lord's way, He also rejected Nadab and Abihu's stupidity.

If every single believer of Jesus Christ was judged because we came to Him in a wrong motive and wrong way, not many of us would be left alive! But our merciful Lord extended His love and grace toward us through His Son Jesus.

With the privileges of ministry come much responsibilities and sacrifices. It may seem strange to us that God killed Nadab and Abihu instead of merely warning them. But often at the beginning of a new era in salvation history, the Lord brought judgment in order to warn the people. The priestly ministry at the tabernacle was about to begin, and the Lord wanted to be sure the priests understood the seriousness of their work.

When Israel entered the Promised Land, God used Achan's disobedience as a warning in Joshua 7. The death of Uzzah was God's warning when the ark was brought to Jerusalem in a wrong way in 2 Sam. 6. Early in the Church Age, the death of Ananias and Sapphira served as a warning to the believers not to try to lie to God the Holy Spirit in Acts 5.

It wasn't enough for the priests merely to teach the people the difference between the holy and the unholy. They also had to practice it in their own lives. As His royal priests, all of us have tremendous responsibility to live the life our God wants.

G. APPLICATIONS

- 1) What God commands us is not something we take as recommendations to consider, but they are commands to obey.
- 2) What God consecrates for His service is our lives – yielding, being obedient and being marked by the blood of Jesus and anointed by the Holy Spirit.
- 3) What God wants from us is not what we can concoct with our own righteousness, but what He can do through our lives.
- 4) What God wants us to remember about the privileges of ministry bring serious responsibilities we cannot and should not neglect.