

## LEVITICUS -- LESSON THREE

### **Chapters 8 - 10**

- □ I. Consecration to the ministry -- Chapter 8
  - □ A. The central theme of this chapter is consecration to service.
    - □ 1. The unfolding of the chapter includes several concepts relevant to the qualifications for the ministry.
      - □ a. Purification (washing with water).
      - □ b. Preparation (vesting with clothing).
      - □ c. Consecration (anointing with oil).
      - □ d. Sanctification (applying blood).
      - □ e. Inauguration (eating the meal).
    - □ 2. Summary of the passage: In compliance with the Lord's commands and in the presence of the assembled congregation, Moses consecrated Aaron and his sons to the priestly service by an elaborate ritual of washing, clothing, anointing, sanctifying, and inaugurating their new life of service in the sanctuary.
  - □ B. Witnesses: the congregation must know that the consecration of those who minister is from the Lord himself. 8:1-5.
    - □ 1. The Lord commanded Moses to assemble the congregation at the door of the tent of meeting which he did, announcing that that which they were about to do was the thing that the Lord commanded. v. 5
    - □ 2. Because these men had spiritual authority over the people, it was essential that the congregation witness their consecration as priests in order to be convinced that they were made priests by God.
  - □ C. Washing: those who minister must be purified of worldly defilement. v. 6.
    - □ 1. Washing is associated with cleansing, here the spiritual cleansing from sin and defilement.
    - □ 2. In Leviticus it is the ritual that goes with making the unclean clean, whether skin disease (14:8-9) or defilement (15); it represented the purification of a person who had become soiled in life.
    - □ 3. It preceded the ritual of making holy; ongoing sanctification is an essential part of being set apart for ministry, and the first step in sanctification is removing defilement and sin.
  - □ D. Robing: those who minister must be properly prepared to do so. 8:7-9.
    - □ 1. These distinctive garments gave the priests dignity and honor by virtue of their being reminders of the glory and honor of the Lord.
    - □ 2. Wearing these garments impressed upon the priests the awesome task that they had and reminded the people of the high office that they held.
    - □ 3. This was especially true of the garments of the high priest; each part was either useful or symbolic for some specific task (See Exodus 28, 39).
  - □ E. Anointing: those who minister must be set apart for the work of God by his Spirit. 8:10-13.
    - □ 1. Moses anointed the tabernacle and everything in it, then the altar and its utensils, and then Aaron the high priest.

## Chapters 8 - 10

- □ 2. Anointing seems to have represented the special calling and empowerment or enablement by the Spirit of God (see 1 Sam. 10:1; 16:13; Isa. 61:1; Zech. 4:1-6).
- □ 3. When a priest was anointed, it indicated to people that he was recognized by the Lord of the temple and should be treated with special consideration and welcome customary for people to bestow on such persons and things they sought to honor and exalt.
- □ 4. God was in a way welcoming the priest into his house (the temple) and showering honor and affection upon him as someone welcomed into the divine presence.
- □ 5. The one anointed was identified with God's dwelling by having been made fit for his presence.
- □ F. Atonement: those who minister must be sanctified by the blood of the substitutionary sacrifice. 8:14-21.
  - □ 1. Anointing could consecrate, but it could not make atonement; sacrifices were necessary.
  - □ 2. The blood of the purification offering purified the object on which it was smeared. 8:15.
  - □ 3. The priests were about to begin a ministry of offering on the altar and so it had to be purified first.
  - □ 4. The blood of a burnt offering, given as a ransom for their sins, made it possible for them to enter the sanctuary at peace with God.
  - □ 5. Whoever represented God in that ministry must have experienced full atonement.
- □ G. Ordination: those who minister must be dedicated to the total work of the ministry. 8:22-30.
  - □ 1. The third sacrifice made was the ram of ordination. 8:22.
  - □ 2. The center of the ceremony was when some meat of the sacrifice was placed in the hands of the ordinand, along with the other bits of the sacrifice (8:27), so that his hands were full.
  - □ 3. The ceremony involved the application of the blood to the ear (hear the word of the Lord), the hand (do the will of the Lord), and the foot (walk in the way of the Lord).
  - □ 4. Being a priest involved total sanctification of life -- a holy lifestyle.
- □ H. Installation: those who minister must give themselves totally to their new life and service. 8:31-36.
  - □ 1. The last verses of chapter 8 explain that Aaron and his sons remained at the tent seven days, repeating sacrifices, so that their ordination became complete.
  - □ 2. The repetition for seven days stressed the completeness and perfection of the process of being installed in the ministry.
  - □ 3. They underwent this weeklong rite of passage to move from one life to the entirely new life of the priesthood.
- □ II. The beginning of the ministry; the first public sacrificial ritual at the tent of meeting. Chapter 9.
  - □ A. How wonderful it must have been for the ancient Israelites to see the inauguration of their worship.
    - □ 1. They had been redeemed from Egypt, formed into the people of God by covenant at Sinai, and now they had a new sanctuary, a new set of rituals for their sacrifices, and a new priesthood.
    - □ 2. Chapter 9 records how the divinely instituted sacrificial worship was to be carried out so that it would be blessed by God.

## Chapters 8 - 10

- □3. The culmination of this service came in the appearance of the glory of God in the sanctuary; hereafter, worshippers sought the spiritual presence of the Lord when they came with their offerings to worship him..
- □4. Israel now knew that to enter this courtyard truly meant they were entering the presence of God, who was dwelling among them; accordingly, they also knew that they dare not treat it lightly.
- □B. God's people anticipate meeting him in their worship. 9:1-6.
  - □1. The first verses of chapter 9 record the instruction of Moses to Aaron to prepare sacrifices and to have the people prepare sacrifices.
  - □2. The obedience of Aaron and the people is instructive, for they prepared to worship as they were commanded.
    - □a. Worship has always been an act of obedience, for the word of the Lord calls the covenant people to come and appear before him.
    - □b. And when they come into his court they must do so properly.
  - □3. The striking thing in this chapter is the threefold emphasis on this goal of worship -- that the Lord (or the glory of the Lord) would appear to the people.
    - □a. All of the other elements of sacrifice, offering, and blessing lead up to this.
    - □b. The promise of the Lord's appearing occurs in 9:4 after the instructions and again in 9:6 after the report of Aaron's bringing all the sacrifices.
    - □c. After the sacrifices had been offered and the blessing given, the promise was fulfilled: the glory appeared (9:23).
    - □d. Down through history the faithful want to see the Lord in the sanctuary, to behold his power and glory (Psalm 63:2). He made his presence known through his provisions for them; and they acknowledged his presence through their sacrifices of praise.
    - □e. All of that was, and still is, a preview of the time when the saints will behold his presence in glory.
- □C. God's people approach him on the basis of the blood of the atonement. 9:7-21.
  - □1. The second part of this chapter describes Aaron's offering of sacrifices.
  - □2. He first made purification and burnt offerings for himself (9:7-14); Making these sacrifices was a clear acknowledgement of his sinfulness and need of forgiveness.
  - □3. He then offered purification, burnt, meal, and peace offerings for the people (9:15-21).
    - □a. The purification purified the sanctuary of the defilements the the people brought with them, assuring them cleansing and forgiveness.
    - □b. The burnt offering made atonement for them so that they were accepted by God with his pleasure.
    - □c. The meal offering expressed their dedication to him as Lord and Savior.
    - □d. The peace offering was the means of celebrating that peace with God.
    - □e. Aaron offered every type of sacrifice except the reparation offering; his purpose was to atone for the general sinfulness of the nation, to dedicate the whole nation to the worship of the Lord, and to pray for God's blessing on his people.
    - □f. The order of the sacrifices is instructive.
      - □1. The purification offering was first to show that the priority was cleansing the holy place due to defilement and sin.

## Chapters 8 - 10

- □2. Then the worshipers could find full acceptance in the presence of God through the atoning effect of the burnt offering.
- □3. This prompted their dedication to the Lord, as expressed through the meal offering.
- □4. Finally, the worshipers could enjoy celebrating peace with God with the communal meal of the peace offering.
- □g. Believers not only anticipate meeting God in worship, but they must also approach him in the prescribed manner -- on the basis of the ritual of divinely instituted sacrifice.
- □D. God's people have access to this presence only through the intercession of their high priest (9:22-23a).
  - □1. In order for the ritual to be appropriately presented to God, there had to be a mediator.
    - □a. Thus, the next step in working out the pattern of worship, before the glory appeared, was the intercessory work of the high priest.
    - □b. In the sequence of events of this inaugural service, Aaron blessed the people when he came down from the altar of the sacrifices, and then Moses and Aaron went together into the tent to apply the blood and to pray for God to fulfill his promise to bless the people by appearing to them.
    - □c. They then came out of the tent and blessed the people.
  - □2. This was instructional not only for Aaron in his high-priestly duties, but also for the congregation.
    - □a. Along with the ritual of the sacrifices made for purification and atonement, a mediating high priest was required to take the blood into the innermost shrine and complete the process of intercessory work.
    - □b. There was no other way for the people to gain access into the presence of God except by this representative.
    - □c. There was no other way that the blessing of God could be given to the people except by this mediator.
  - □3. The word "blessing" carries with it the basic idea of "enrichment, endowment, gift"; it refers to any enrichment that one gives another, any kind of gift.
    - □a. When the word is used for God's blessing people, it signifies that he enriches them, physically, materially, emotionally, and, of course, spiritually.
    - □b. That blessing also includes the ability to do what God has instructed or promised.
    - □c. In the Old Testament if a person said "May the Lord bless you" (Ruth 2:4), it was probably a greeting or a wish.
    - □d. However, if theocratic leaders made such a statement in their official capacity, especially after coming out of the holy of holies in the sanctuary, it was different -- they spoke for God; they were announcing an oracle, a word from God that was present or imminent.
    - □e. For Aaron and Moses to pronounce the sacerdotal blessing was to declare God's gift or gracious bounty for the people.
    - □f. At the very least that blessing declared that the system was working, that the way of access into God's presence had indeed been opened.
    - □g. The people had previously pulled back in fear at the sight of the presence of the Lord; now they had a high priest who actually went into the presence of the Lord God on their behalf and came out with the good news that intercession had been made, the blood had been applied, and atonement had been completed.

## Chapters 8 - 10

- □ h. All was well between them and God; and they could go home from this ceremony knowing that they were right with God because the ritual worship had been successful.
- □ 4. So too in the New Testament the greatest blessing that we have from God is salvation through Jesus Christ.
  - □ a. He is the true mediator, the eternal high priest, who has entered the presence of God the Father in heaven to make intercession on our behalf.
  - □ b. Because he is our High Priest, the Apostle Paul draws on the main point of this high-priestly blessing to begin his epistles: "Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Gal. 1:3.
- □ E. God's people find assurance for their faith in the evidence of his presence. 9:23b-24.
  - □ 1. When the sacrifices were made and the blood applied and the blessing pronounced, divine approval was vividly and dramatically revealed for all time by the appearance of the glory of the Lord and the consuming fire.
  - □ 2. The glory that appeared was a manifestation of the presence of the Lord that now dwelled in the sanctuary.
  - □ 3. Consequently, life was different because the Lord was in the camp.
    - □ a. This glory was seldom seen again; it remained in the holy of holies under the tent.
    - □ b. But the covenant people remembered this event and knew that God was there; thus God authenticated the new worship with the revelation of his glory.
  - □ 4. In Lev. 9 the people responded by shouting for joy and falling to the ground to worship; God's greatness and holiness cannot be ignored; he must be acknowledged by our whole being -- nothing less is adequate.
- □ F. In the New Testament Jesus fulfills the typology of the high priest, the sacrifices, and the revelation of the glory of the Lord on earth.
  - □ 1. According to the Gospel, the glory of the Lord is manifested in Jesus the Messiah.
    - □ a. In John 1:14 we are told how the Word "tabernacled among us", the text stressing the allusion to the tent of meeting from the Old Testament setting.
    - □ b. John says that they beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten Son of God, full of grace and truth.
    - □ c. The New Testament writers understood the design that God had begun in the Old Testament; now that the Messiah had come and fully revealed the glory of the Lord present among his people, he was the center of worship forever.
  - □ 2. We may not always be caught up in the meaning of it all, especially when worship becomes a routine ritual as it did with Israel; but when our worship takes us out of ourselves and into his presence, then we experience the reality of the risen Christ.
- □ III. The violation of the ministry; Judgment on Nadab and Abihu. Chapter 10.
  - □ A. History tells of many who had auspicious beginnings filled with promise who, in an unguarded moment, suddenly fell.
    - □ 1. The nature of their errors might seem relatively mild at first glance.
      - □ a. A leader loses his temper and strikes the rock instead of speaking to it. Num. 20:9-13.
      - □ b. Impious hands touch the holy things of God's sanctuary. 2 Sam. 6:6-8.
      - □ c. Unauthorized fire is burned in the holy place. Lev. 10:1.
    - □ 2. While these errors might seem small in our estimation, this is not God's estimation -- their errors turn what was a place of salvation into a place of judgment.

## Chapters 8 - 10

- □ a. Many calamities have fallen on the house of the Lord in the shape of apostasies, false doctrines, unholy living, and reckless usurpation.
- □ b. Lev. 10 is the report of just such a mistake.
- □ 3. At the very beginning of Aaron's new ministry his two sons brought strange fire into the tent in their censers -- something the Lord had commanded them not to do.
  - □ a. Immediately the fire of the Lord destroyed them for their disobedience; the Lord's judgment was immediate and final.
  - □ b. It had to be so because this violation of the sanctuary and the priesthood came at the very beginning of the Israelite ritual of worship.
- □ 4. Leviticus 10 is about divine judgment, not on wicked people in the world, but on disobedient priests within the household of faith; holiness is dangerous unless it is approached by the proper persons and according to the proper rules.
- □ B. God Insists that ministers follow his precepts in matters of service and discipline. 10:1-7.
  - □ 1. Ministers must not tamper with the holiness of the Lord. 10:1-2.
    - □ a. The fire brought into the tent for incense was supposed to be taken from the high altar (Lev. 16:12), which had the fire that the Lord supernaturally provided just a short time before this.
    - □ b. Nadab and Abihu took their own censers and brought in "strange fire."
    - □ c. The scripture does not say where they got the fire or why they did what they did; apparently such matters were not relevant.
    - □ d. The only relevant matters was that they did not do what God had said to do in the way that God said to do it.
    - □ e. When scripture prescribes what should be done or prohibits what should not be done there is no room for innovation or alteration.
    - □ f. Nadab and Abihu probably had no malice or wickedness when they disobeyed.
      - □ 1. They may have sincerely prepared for the service as they understood it.
      - □ 2. But all such claims are worthless before God; they are vain and weak to defend against God's wrath for setting aside his plan.
  - □ 2. God requires ministers to safeguard their ability to make clear distinction between holy and unholy. 10:8-11.
    - □ a. This section contains two separate but related instructions from Moses, the first concerning alcohol and the second about making clear decisions when instructing people.
    - □ b. The law here prohibits wine and strong drink for the priests when they went into the tent of meeting.
      - □ 1. Wine we know, though we know distilled or fortified wine which is much stronger than what existed in Israel; strong drink was barley beer and not mixed drinks or stronger alcohol, which were not used to ancient Israel.
      - □ 2. Some suppose that the reason for the inclusion of these instructions here was because alcohol was likely involved in the conduct of Nadab and Abihu.
    - □ c. Wine and strong drink were not acceptable for Israel's priests during their service in the sanctuary.
    - □ d. The principle given in this passage is that God must be glorified and sanctified by those who come into his presence.

## Chapters 8 - 10

- □ 1. It makes no sense to pray that God's name be hallowed and then live in such a manner as to make his name or his service common or profane.
- □ 2. The priests had the responsibility to make clear decisions about the laws of holiness and to teach the people accordingly.
- □ C. God expects ministers to treat their privileges and responsibilities as holy. 10:12-20.
  - □ 1. There probably was a great deal of concern in the priesthood after this event, perhaps even an extraordinary degree of caution or fear.
    - □ a. The following verses instruct the priests to eat the sacrifices according to the laws of the sanctuary.
    - □ b. It was just as wrong to omit eating these as it was for the priests to commit sin with the strange fire.
    - □ c. The priests had to carry on with their prescribed duties ; they could not hold back because of the punishment of Nadab and Abihu.
  - □ 2. But they did not comply and the situation called for an explanation.
    - □ a. Aaron's reason for not complying made sense and was accepted by Moses.
    - □ b. Since priestly sin was involved it did not seem right in this situation to eat the meal.
    - □ c. Aaron wondered if the Lord would have been pleased if they ate; Moses was pleased with the explanation, and he was the spokesman for the Lord.
    - □ d. Aaron was reinstated in the eyes of God.
- □ D. The fire from the altar reminds us that the wrath of God is appeased in the death of Christ our sacrifice -- the only sacrifice that God will receive. Gal. 1:8-9.
  - □ 1. People are prone to think that their way, their fire, their ideas, are better than God's primitive or unpopular ways.
  - □ 2. The temptation does not remain with the unessentials, but soon strikes at the heart of the faith.
  - □ 3. Paul reminds Timothy that Satan inspires false teachers who are seducing spirits. 1 Tim. 4:1.
  - □ 4. Rather than believe and obey, some spiritual leaders try to improve and innovate, to make new procedures and rulings -- but too often sacrifice the basic elements of the faith for something more pleasing to them and more in harmony with other religions.
  - □ 5. The judgment on Nadab and Abihu provides a warning for all time: ministers of God must conduct matters of faith and worship according to God's revealed instructions and purposes.