

Purpose of the Priesthood 1 - Leviticus 9

I. Introduction

A. This morning we're starting the second section of Leviticus

1. So first, we can recall what Leviticus is about - Leviticus is answering the question, "how can Israel dwell with a holy God?" And, as we apply it to ourselves, "how can we dwell with a holy God?"
- 1 1 2. And, if we put our outline up on the screen, we're still in the first half of the book, Judicial Holiness, dealing with the question, "how do we become holy?"
- 1 1 3. Several weeks ago, we finished the first section that dealt with the sacrifices that would atone for sin, and last week we started the second section that deals with the inauguration of the priesthood
- 1 4. So, last week we saw an ordination ceremony where Aaron and his sons were ordained as priests to mediate the people's interaction with God, especially to bring their offerings before God
- 1 5. And we're picking up this week right at the end of this ceremony - when we left off last week, Aaron and his sons were spending seven days at the entrance of the tent of meeting to finish their ordination - a number that is symbolic, representing perfect or maturity, the ordination of the priests had to be complete before they could serve in their role

B. Leviticus 9 starts, "on the eighth day," as soon as the priests had been fully ordained

1. And this morning, we're going to see the priests in action - Aaron as a priest is going to fulfill his priestly duties, he is going to be a mediator for the people of God
2. So, I've called this passage "the purpose of the priesthood" because this morning we are going to see that the role of the priest is to represent man to God, to take the people's offerings before God so that God's glory could dwell with His people
3. So that's what we're mostly going to see this morning - Aaron is going to stand as a priest and bring the people's offerings to God, he is going to offer a great sacrifice on their behalf

1 C. We'll start in Leviticus 9 - if you have your Bibles turn with me there and we'll read it together

1 1 D. Proposition: For Israel to see God's glory, the perfect priest must offer a perfect sacrifice, which calls us to run and to rest - to run after God's glory and to rest in our perfect Priest.

- 1 1. What did it teach the ancient Israelites about God?
- 1 2. How should this point us to Christ?
- 1 3. How should this be applied to the New Testament believer?

1 II. What did this teach the ancient Israelites about God?

A. As we look at Leviticus 9, like last week we see that it is another narrative section and describes another ceremony that took place - a ceremony to mark the coming of God's glory to dwell with the people

1. So, like last week, I want to start by reviewing what happened and then to consider what was the meaning of the different parts of the ceremony - what was it supposed to teach the Israelites?

1 B. So we'll start with, "What happened?"

1. As we look at our passage this morning, it is roughly broken down into five sections
 - 1 1 a. The passage starts with a command to Aaron and to the people of Israel to bring their offerings to the entrance of the tent of meeting in verses 1-4, then verse 5 records that the people obeyed
 - 1 1 b. Then another command is given to Aaron in verses 6-7 to draw near and to offer the sacrifices to make atonement for himself and for the people and then, again, verse 8-21 record that Aaron obeyed and offered the sacrifices
 - 1 c. The final section, in verses 22-24, records Aaron and Moses entering the tent, and Aaron blessing the people and then the glory of the LORD appears to all the people and consumed the offerings
 - d. So the passage records: command, obedience, command, obedience, glory
2. But the bulk of the passage is in the fourth section, the section recording Aaron's obedience to offer the sacrifices, so we should look at that section a little closer
 - 1 1 a. In our passage, Aaron offers six sacrifices, first he offers two sacrifices for himself and then he offers four sacrifices for the people
 - 1 b. So, first, Aaron offers two sacrifices for himself
 - 1 i. First, Aaron offers a calf for a sin offering - and, if you'll recall, the sin offering was a purification sacrifice, it was meant to remove sin from the offeror and purify the sanctuary so that the pollution of sin would not be an offense to God
 - 1 ii. Second, Aaron offers a ram for a burnt offering - the burnt offering was a propitiatory sacrifice, a sacrifice to turn aside and absorb the wrath of God
 - iii. For Aaron to act in his role as a priest, first he needed to expunge his own sin - his sin would pollute the sanctuary and provoke God's wrath as much as any of the people's, so his mediation as a priest would be useless unless he was pure
 - c. And after his own sacrifices, Aaron offers four sacrifices for the people
 - 1 i. First, he offers a male goat as a sin offering for the people - a sacrifice to remove the people's sin and wash the sanctuary from their corruption
 - 1 ii. Then he offers a calf and a lamb as burnt offerings - a sacrifice to absorb and turn away God's wrath from the people
 - 1 iii. Third, he offers a grain offering - an offering of worship from the people to God
 - 1 iv. And finally, he offers a peace offering - a sacrifice to join the people to God in bonds of fellowship
 - d. And once the sacrifices are complete, then the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people

1 C. So, now, I want to consider, "what did this all mean?"

- Like I usually do, I want to make a few propositional statements from this passage, things that this ceremony should have taught the ancient Israelites - so I'll make five statements

- 1 1. First, God desires for His people to see His glory
 - a. This is really a truth that undergirds all of Leviticus, the impetus for the entire book, but it comes to the forefront in our passage this morning, because that goal is explicitly stated several times and is fulfilled by the end of the passage
 - 1 1 b. So, at the end of the first command, a purpose statement is given for the command, Leviticus 9:3-4 - *And say to the people of Israel, 'Take a male goat for a sin offering, and a calf and a lamb, both a year old without blemish, for a burnt offering, and an ox and a ram for peace offerings, to sacrifice before the LORD, and a grain offering mixed with oil, for today the LORD will appear to you.'*
 - 1 1 c. And in the second command, another purpose statement is given, Leviticus 9:6 - *And Moses said, "This is the thing that the LORD commanded you to do, that the glory of the LORD may appear to you."*
 - d. God's goal is to reveal His glory to the people, He wants His glory to dwell in their midst and He wants them to see His glory
 - e. This is God's glorious purpose in calling out a people, to bless them with the vision of His glory and to welcome them to draw near to worship before His glory

- 1 2. But, second, God's people's sin prevents His presence so their sin must be covered and atoned for
 - a. This is the tension that sits at the center of Leviticus - God wants His glory to dwell in the midst of His people, but His people's sin prevents that - His people's sin would provoke His glory to consume them in fire and in wrath
 - 1 ✘ b. So, for God's glory to appear to the people, their sin must be covered by sacrifice, Leviticus 9:3-4 - *And say to the people of Israel, 'Take a male goat for a sin offering, and a calf and a lamb, both a year old without blemish, for a burnt offering, and an ox and a ram for peace offerings, to sacrifice before the LORD, and a grain offering mixed with oil, for today the LORD will appear to you.'*"
 - c. Only when the sin offering, the burnt offering, the peace offering, and the grain offering were offered could God's glory draw near, only then would His glory not destroy them

- 1 3. But offerings were not enough, these offerings must be made by a mediator to represent the people before God
 - a. Notice that there is only one short line in verse 5 recording the people's actions in this passage, the bulk of the passage is not focused on what the people do, but what Aaron does
 - 1 1 b. This is intensely highlighted in Leviticus 9:6-7 when Moses speaks to the people of Israel - *And Moses said, "This is the thing that the LORD commanded you to do, that the glory of the LORD may appear to you." Then Moses said to Aaron, "Draw near to the altar and offer your sin offering and your burnt offering and make atonement for yourself and for the people, and bring the offering of the people and make atonement for them, as the LORD has commanded."*
 - 1 c. Moses speaks to the people of Israel and says, "this is what you need to do for God's glory to appear to you," and then he doesn't say anything - the people don't do anything
 - 1 d. Instead, he turns to Aaron and tells him what to do - for God's glory to appear to the people, the priest needed to act, the people couldn't do anything
 - e. The priest needed to be the mediator, to come an offer to God an acceptable sacrifice on the people's behalf that would cover sin, and we see Aaron do this in verses 15-21
 - f. This was the purpose of the priesthood, to represent the people before God so that God's glory could come and dwell with the people and the priest did this primarily by offering sacrifices on the people's behalf

- 1 4. But, fourth, to do this, the priest needed to be perfect, he needed to be able to approach God
 - a. So, like we saw last week, Aaron needed to offer sacrifices on his own behalf first, because he wasn't clean, he wasn't perfect
 - b. And this is highlighted all the more by the fact that Aaron and his sons have just been through the ordination ceremony, they sat at the entrance of the tent of meeting for eight days, and then Aaron comes to offer the sacrifices - if ever there was a time when Aaron was already clean, it would be now
 - c. But, still, Aaron is not clean, he needs to offer another sin offering and another burnt offering immediately before he offers the people's offering
 - d. The priest needed to be clean, but Aaron wasn't - he needed a sacrifice himself

- 1 5. When the perfect priest obeys and presents an acceptable sacrifice, then God's glory will be with His people
 - a. Obedience is strongly highlighted in this passage, a fact that we'll contrast with next week, but the obedience of Aaron to the command is how God's glory comes to dwell among the people
 - b. God's goal is accomplished through the obedience of the perfect priest - so Aaron offers the sacrifices and Aaron blesses the people and then God's glory comes and appears to the people
 - c. The mediation of the priest was effective, he accomplished his purpose because he obeyed the command

1 D. Kid's Question

- 1 1. What is God's goal in Leviticus?
- 1 2. To show His people His glory

1 III. How should this point us to Christ?

1 A. Jesus is God's glory revealed to us

1. God's purpose in Leviticus 9 was to reveal His glory to His people without destroying them, to have His glory dwell in their midst - and that goal was accomplished in Leviticus 9, but it was a temporary, a fleeting glimpse that was quickly hidden from the people and over centuries of rebellion was eventually removed from even the Holy Place as we read in Ezekiel 10-11 - God's glory came, but it did not stay
- 1 2. But Ezekiel also foretold a day when the glory of the LORD would again dwell in the midst of His people, the sanctuary would be filled again in a greater way, Ezekiel 43:2-5 - *And behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the east. And the sound of his coming was like the sound of many waters, and the earth shone with his glory. And the vision I saw was just like the vision that I had seen when he came to destroy the city, and just like the vision that I had seen by the Chebar canal. And I fell on my face. As the glory of the LORD entered the temple by the gate facing east, the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple.*
3. So Leviticus 9 was an important start, but not the final act of God's glory coming to dwell in the midst of His people, so we need to look forward and see a greater glory, a glory that was ultimately fulfilled in Jesus
- 1 4. So we see in John 1:14 - *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*
- 1 5. Or again, in Colossians 1:15 - *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.*
- 1 6. And Hebrews, the great exposition of Leviticus, records, Hebrews 1:3 - *He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.*
7. Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of the glory that was revealed to the people in Leviticus 9 - He is God's glory revealed to us, dwelling in our midst, and He will never leave His people

1 B. Jesus is the offering that covers and atones for sin

1. In Leviticus 9, God's glory only came when the people's sins had been covered by an atoning sacrifice
2. But the sacrifice offered was incomplete and as we go through the Old Testament, we see that the sacrifices were offered day after day, year after year, century after century, and none of them fulfilled their purpose because eventually the glory of the LORD departed from His people
- 1 3. A greater sacrifice needed to be made, a sacrifice worth more than the blood of bulls and goats, so Hebrews tells us, Hebrews 9:6-14 - *These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties, but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people... But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.*
4. To have the glory of God dwell among His people forever, a greater sacrifice needed to be made and that sacrifice was the very blood of Jesus, the perfect Lamb of God
5. His sacrifice satisfied the wrath and the justice of God forever so that His glory can remain with us for eternity

1 C. Jesus is the perfect priest that offers an acceptable sacrifice

1. In Leviticus 9, the atoning sacrifice had to be offered by a perfect priest, one who was able to approach God on the people's behalf - but Aaron wasn't the perfect priest and His priesthood failed in the end because God's glory was hidden and eventually God's glory departed
- 1 2. So a greater high priest was needed, a priest that did not need to offer sacrifices for himself but could walk into God's presence unafraid, so Hebrews tells us, Hebrews 7:26-28 - *For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself. For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.*
3. Jesus was the perfect high priest, He could mediate the perfect sacrifice and can stand before God forever
4. So we have no need to fear that the glory of God will ever depart again, because we have a perfect priest and a perfect sacrifice in Jesus and He is the perfect representation of God's glory to us

1 D. Jesus is the priest who reveals God's glory to His people on the eighth day

1. Aaron waited seven days, finishing his appointment to the priesthood, and then on the eighth day completed the sacrifice, entered the tabernacle and then came back before the people as the glory of God was revealed
2. So it is no surprise that Jesus, being the very glory of God, having been appointed the perfect high priest and having offered the perfect sacrifice came back to his people on the eighth day to reveal the glory of God
- 1 3. *Matthew 28:1-6 - Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay.*
- 1 4. It was on the eighth day, the first day of the week after, that Jesus came back from the dead, He came back from having presented His sacrifice to God and He revealed the glory of God to us

1 IV. How should this be applied to us?

1 A. Our great passion should be to see God's glory

1. Our passage this morning teaches us that God's great desire is for His people to see His glory and to come and worship - because the magnification of His glory is His people's greatest good - and He will open a way to make that possible
2. If that's true, then that ought to be our great desire, our great passion as well - if God wants to show us His glory, our great passion should be to see God's glory
 - 1 a. This was Moses' great passion, as we see Him plead with God on the mountain, Exodus 33:18-19 - *Moses said, "Please show me your glory." And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.*
 - 1 b. And, more generally, this was the heart of the Old Testament saint, Psalm 26:8 - *O LORD, I love the habitation of your house and the place where your glory dwells.*
 - 1 c. Or again, Psalm 42:1-2 - *As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?*
 - 1 d. And one of the great promises of the New Covenant was that the glory of God would be truly seen, Isaiah 35:1-2 - *The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus; it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God.*
 - 1 e. So, it is no surprise that this was Jesus' desire for His followers as He prayed, John 17:24 - *Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.*
3. This is the goal of God's work in this world, to display His glory to a worshipping people - so if we claim to be His people, then that ought to be our great passion as well, the overarching desire that guides our life
 - a. Our very purpose in life ought to be oriented around seeing the glory of God revealed in Christ - so my first question to you this morning is, "do you desire to see God's glory? Is that the driving force of your life?"

1 B. Our sure confidence should be in our perfect Mediator

1. A great passion without any hope is an infinite disappointment, but fortunately in God's glorious grace, our passage teaches us that there is a great hope: that God's people will see His glory because God will provide a mediator so that His glory can be seen
2. If that's true, then our hope of seeing God's glory should rest in the work of Christ because that is our only hope of seeing God's glory- I think this perhaps is the greatest application of this passage, that we would have confidence in the mediation of our great high priest, Jesus Christ
 - 1 a. So, it should be a great joy and assurance to us that our High Priest is interceding for us, John 17:24 - *Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.*
 - 1 b. And it should be a great joy and assurance to us that God has already been revealing His glory to us in Christ, II Corinthians 4:6 - *For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*
 - 1 c. And be a great joy and assurance to us that God will present us in the end before the presence of His glory in Christ, Jude 24 - *Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.*
3. The work of Christ on our behalf should root our passion to see God's glory - He is the hope and the source of our desire and the fulfillment of our desire

1 C. Our one pursuit should be God's glory revealed in Christ

1. We have a great passion and a sure confidence in which we can rest, but that does not mean that we take no action in response to our passage this morning - instead our sure confidence should spur us to an ever more intense pursuit of God's glory
 - a. We even see that in our passage this morning, so far this morning, I've emphasized that the people stood back as Aaron performed the sacrifices for them and looked at how that pointed at Christ
 - b. But the people didn't do exactly nothing, in fact the first recorded obedience in the passage is the people's obedience - they left whatever they were doing and they came to see the glory of God
2. And that's our imperative this morning - if we have a great passion and a sure confidence, then we should leave all other things to go see the glory of God revealed in Christ
 - 1 a. So Paul tells us, Philippians 3:7-8 - *But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him...* - All other things should be set aside in favor of our passion to see Christ's glory
 - 1 b. So Hebrews holds up the example of Moses, Hebrews 11:24-26- *By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.* - Moses set aside all treasures of the world so He could stand on the mountain and cry out, "show me Your glory!"
 - 1 c. And Jesus says that this will be the pursuit of every one of His disciples, Luke 14:33 - *So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.*
3. So our great passion should first find rest in our mediator, but it should be worked out in action as well, our passion should lead to an intense pursuit
 - a. We should be organizing our lives to help us to see God's glory revealed in Christ - we'll be analyzing our activities, the things that take up our time and our effort and determine whether this is truly helping me to see Christ's glory or is this distracting me from seeing Christ's glory
 - b. And if something isn't helping you to see Christ's glory as it's revealed in Scripture, then we'll cut those things out of our lives, we'll consider them loss, we'll renounce it in favor of Christ
 - c. So my last question to you this morning is: "have you and are you willing to renounce anything and everything in this world that does not help you to 'taste and see that the Lord is good'?"
 - d. Unfortunately, it's all too easy to ignore these commands and to go about our life in much the same way as the world, but Scripture consistently teaches that we will be a radical people, a people whose sole pursuit is seeing the glory of God revealed in Christ
 - e. So let's go out with great confidence in our Mediator to pursue God's glory