

Exodus – Lesson 21

The Consecration of the Priests – Part 2

Read Exodus 29:1-46

1. (a) According to verses 1-3, what *items* were to be brought to the tabernacle as an offering of consecration? What *characteristics* of these items are significant to this process and why?

The consecration of the priests was to be performed using: 1) 1 bull, 2) 2 rams (both without blemish), 3) unleavened bread, 4) unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and 5) unleavened cakes smeared with oil. The bread was all to be made without yeast and of fine wheat flour. The significant characteristic of the bull and rams was their lack of blemish: their “perfection” would be symbolic of the holiness of God to whom the priests were being consecrated and to the holiness of the work that they were set to do. The lack of yeast was symbolic of a lack of sin: the work of the priests would be *primarily* responsible to atone for the sins of the people, removing their sin and making them righteous before the Lord. These sacrifices, like all other sacrifices brought before the Lord, would be figurative of the perfection of *Christ*, who would be a satisfying offering without any sin offered by a perfect priest.

- (b) Link the activities of vv. 4-9 with the statement “*and the priesthood shall be theirs ... forever.*”

The act of clothing the priests and then anointing them with oil would be symbolic of a permanent transfer of responsibility. By placing the robes upon them, the priests would be “taking on” the office of the priest; up to this point, Aaron was just a man. But now, because of his clothing and anointing, Aaron has become more; he has become a priest and this “title” will stay with him for the rest of his life. There is no “resignation” from the priesthood; once Aaron agrees to be consecrated and is robed, he becomes a priest forever. However, this priesthood would also transfer automatically to all of those who would follow Aaron. The family of Aaron would become a line of priests just as he is (the consecration of his sons makes this point). This is *similar* to the priesthood of Jesus spoken about in Hebrews 5:6 and 7:17: just as Jesus was “anointed” by the Father to serve as a priest, his priesthood would remain in effect forever. And, like Aaron’s sons, those who follow Christ would also become a “*royal priesthood*” (see 1 Peter 2:9), following in the responsibilities and duties of their high priest forever. It is also represents the dichotomy of the Fall: just as Adam’s sin and guilt was transferred from him to all humanity that followed as his heirs, so would the “righteous office” of Aaron transfers from him to all of his descendants. The same is true of Christ, who comes as the perfect priest to transfer to his “heirs” the perfect righteousness that he has obtained through his obedience.

2. (a) What is the purpose of anointing Aaron with *oil* (compare v. 7 with 1 Sam. 16:13)?

Anointing a priest (or a king) with oil is symbolic of the *direct* presence of God through the person of the Holy Spirit. The “power” of God would come upon the anointed one in order that the work done by the priest (or the king) would be pleasing and acceptable to God and in accordance with the will of God. In Acts 10:38, Peter describes Jesus as having been “anointed” by the Holy Spirit and in power. However, the anointing of Jesus is symbolic of *both* roles that he has, both as priest *and* as king.

- (b) List some other *symbolisms* of anointing oil gleaned from Psalm 23:5; Micah 6:15; Luke 7:46-47; and James 5:14.

Other symbolisms for oil in Scripture include 1) from Psalm 23:5, oil represents the *protection* and *security* of the Lord, 2) from Micah 6:15, oil represents the natural *provision* of God, his blessings that come from obedience and loyalty to the Lord, 3) from Luke 7:46f, oil represents the love of God that procures *forgiveness*, an anointing of the Lord himself as the one who is able to forgive, and 4) from James 5:14, oil represents the *healing* power of God administered through his agents to the sick.

3. (a) Using a dictionary, define the word “*ordain*.” From 1 Timothy 3 and 4:14, *who* is to be ordained?

To ordain is to invest someone with ministerial or sacerdotal functions or to confer upon them a holy office. In the New Testament, ordination is associated with “setting apart” someone to the office of preaching the gospel, while in the Old Testament ordination is associated with placing someone in a special, divine office, such as the priesthood or to the role of a king. According to 1 Timothy 3, *elders* are to be ordained, since they are set apart to the special office of preaching the gospel, teaching, and ministering to others. Timothy, as an elder (see 4:14), was ordained to the preaching office when the church “*laid hands*” on him. There is some debate amongst Baptists as to whether *deacons* are to be ordained, given that they do not hold the function of teaching. However, some argue that they should be ordained, given that their office is unique and “set apart.” It is *historical* for Baptists to ordain deacons; throughout its history, Baptist churches have chosen to ordain deacons by setting them apart to this special work. The process of ordination allows the church to properly educate the deacon on his role, and to educate the church on what a deacon is and is not to do. All of this is relevant to the office of the priest: the process of ordination would clearly signify to *both* the priest *and* the people what was expected of them, with the priest understanding the *gravity* of what they are now set apart to do.

- (b) Briefly describe the *sacrifices* of ordination outlined in vv. 10-34.

The bull was to be killed before the entrance to the tent of meeting (i.e. the tabernacle) and some of the blood was to be put on the horns of the altar with the rest being spilled out around the altar. The internal organs of the bull were to be burned on the altar, the rest to be burned outside the camp. One of the rams was to be killed, its blood thrown against the altar, and then burned completely on the altar. The other ram (the “*ram of ordination*”) was to be killed and some of its blood was to be put on the tip of the priests right ear, their right thumb, and the great toes of their right foot. The rest of the blood was to be thrown against the altar. The priests would “wave” before the Lord some of the entrails of the ram along with one loaf of bread, one cake of bread, and one wafer, which would all be burned on the altar afterwards. The breast of the ram would be waved by the priests before the Lord and then, afterward, boil the remaining flesh and eat it in the entrance to the tabernacle.

- (c) Why do Aaron and his sons “*lay their hands*” (vv. 10, 15, 19) on these animals before they are sacrificed?

The concept of “*laying on of hands*” is symbolic of a *transfer* of something from one person to another object. It can be symbolic of a transfer of *sin* or *sinfulness* from the priest to the scapegoat, or it can be symbolic of a transfer of power or healing (e.g. James 5:14). In this case, it is 1) symbolic of a transfer of the *unworthiness* of Aaron and his sons to the animals, which were then sacrificed, eliminating this unworthiness and making them fit to serve the Living God as mediators, and 2) it is symbolic of the sin of the priests that needed to be atoned for before they could enter into this sacred role. This is similar to what is symbolically presented in New Testament ordination: the “*laying on of hands*” represents a transfer of the power of gospel to the individual being ordained with his unworthiness being cast away and his sins being forgiven in order for the work of preaching to commence.

4. (a) Why is the blood of the *ordination ram* (see vv. 19-21) sprinkled on Aaron and his sons (see v. 33)?

The blood of the ordination ram is an *atonement* for their sins. Aaron and his sons, like all other human beings, are sinful and in need of atonement and forgiveness. The blood of the animals is sprinkled *on them* in order that they might be “covered” and protected from the wrath of God. Like the blood sprinkled on the mercy seat, the blood sprinkled on the priests covers their sinfulness before a holy God and atones for their sin.

(b) Why do Aaron and his sons *wave* the parts of the ordination ram before the Lord (see v. 24)?

The *wave offering* is also known as a *peace offering*, to wave before the Lord something that would appease his judgment and bring peace and favor between the sinner and God. The priests would wave these parts before God and then burn them on the altar as a food offering, all with the purpose of “surrendering” themselves to the Lord and making peace with him. It is symbolically similar to the modern concept of waving a white flag before an enemy in the hopes of suing for peace.

5. How *long* was this ordination process to take, according to vv. 35-37? Why did it take this long?

This ordination process was to take seven (7) days, with a bull offered each of the seven days. The entire process was to make the *altar* holy; the altar would be the place where atonement would be made on a regular basis (see 6a below), and it needed to be purified of *everything* that was sinful and tainted. The length of the ceremony would communicate the *significance* of this holiness and of the need for the people to be holy. It was not to be treated lightly, and the length of the ceremony would plant the idea of the holiness of the priests firmly in the mind of all of the Israelites.

6. (a) How was the *altar* to be consecrated, according to vv. 37-41?

The altar was to be consecrated by two offerings: a morning offering of a year-old lamb, along with a tenth measure of fine flour mingled with a fourth of a hin of beaten oil and a fourth of a hin of wine as a drink offering; and an evening offering of the same items and quantities. These would then become regular burnt offerings at the entrance of the tabernacle.

(b) How *long* were these offerings to last? What was their *purpose*, over time?

The morning and evening offerings were to be made daily *into perpetuity*; they would sanctify the tabernacle, where God would meet with his people. This ritual would be started as Aaron and his sons were ordained, and would continue indefinitely as a reminder that the Yahweh had brought forth the people of Israel from the land of Egypt. It would also serve as a perpetual reminder that Yahweh was *Lord*; the constant and consistent sacrifice, day-by-day, morning and evening on into their history would be a visible reminder that God was God.