
Dedicated not without Blood

The Priest's Consecration

Exodus 29

Introduction

One of the great times in our church is the ordination of elders. We are always so excited to see what God is doing in the lives of men in our church as they lead their families, grow in grace and develop skill in understanding and communicating the Word of God. We are anticipating the upcoming ordination of Steve Vaughan on May 18th. The Lord willing, the Elders will be ordaining him to the eldership here at the Chapel. I will get to preach the Word to the elders reminding of their responsibilities in the ministry. Steve will preach a message on Sunday evening.

Today, our text brings us to another ordination. What we are reading and studying today are the instructions for the ordination of the priests, just as we have over the last weeks been studying the instructions for the making of the furniture, the tabernacles, the courtyard and the priestly garments. Later, in Exodus, we will get a lot of this detail repeated as these instructions are actually carried out.

We must remember that all of these are real to Israel, they are still shadows and symbols to us. We are not trying to get all the details so that we can reproduce what was here. But we want to get the details correct for they all add up to a greater mosaic than each individual tile.

I fully intend for you to shudder at the gruesome spectacles of slaughtered beasts, cut throats, hot flowing blood, gore splashed altars and burning meat and fat. We have little sense of that today. Most of you have never seen an animal slaughtered for food, much less for sacrifice. But this is what going to worship meant for them. It meant observing and participating in blood soaked rituals that drove deeply home the high cost of sin and the dire straits they were in.

May God give us a deeper understanding of and appreciation for our great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Setting Aside of the Priests (v.1-9)

This is the ceremony you must follow when you consecrate Aaron and his sons to serve me as priests: Take a young bull and two rams with no defects. ² Then, using choice wheat flour and no yeast, make loaves of bread, thin cakes mixed with olive oil, and wafers spread with oil. ³ Place them all in a single basket, and present them at the entrance of the Tabernacle, along with the young bull and the two rams.

⁴ Present Aaron and his sons at the entrance of the Tabernacle, and wash them with water. ⁵ Dress Aaron in his priestly garments—the tunic, the robe worn with the ephod, the ephod itself, and the chestpiece. Then wrap the decorative sash of the ephod around him. ⁶ Place the turban on his head, and fasten the sacred medallion to the turban. ⁷ Then anoint him by pouring the anointing oil over his head. ⁸ Next present his sons, and dress them in their tunics. ⁹ Wrap the sashes around the waists of Aaron and his sons, and put their special head coverings on them. Then the right to the priesthood will be theirs by law forever. In this way, you will ordain Aaron and his sons.

Ordination is a ceremony by which someone is set aside and publicly placed into office. Moses now turns to the ceremonies that will formally install Aaron and his sons into the priesthood.

With the Requirements (v.1-3)

For the week-long ordination, unleavened baked goods (v.1) and unblemished sacrifices (v.2-3) were to be brought. The sacrifices required were a bull from the herd and two unblemished rams. The unleavened baked goods would be bread, cakes mixed with pure oil and wafers covered in oil. They were to be placed in a basket and brought along with the sacrifices.

By their Cleansing (v.4)

The priests who were being ordained had to be brought before the entrance of the tabernacle. There, they were to be bathed. The priests who were entering the office had to be clean before they could put on the priestly garments.

In their Clothing (v.5-6)

The high priest was first clothed in all the special raiment associated with his office. He was to dress in the robe, ephod, breastpiece and coat belting it all around with the sash. He was to have the turban placed on his head and the gold medallion, here referred to as a crown, attached to it as instructed in the previous chapter.

With their Anointing (v.7-8)

Aaron, who served as the first high priest, then had the anointing oil poured over his head. This anointing by oil was used in Israel for the anointing of the kings of Israel and for the priests in the Tabernacle. The oil would run down over the turban, down over Aaron's beard and drip onto the clothes. This anointing symbolized the special office that he was to bear.

Aaron and his sons are ordained into the priesthood as a permanent office. The instructions were to dress the high priest first in his glorious and beautiful garments and to anoint him as high priest first. Following that, each of the sons would be dressed in their lesser but glorious and beautiful garments and anointed with oil as well.

Many years later, as David is going up to worship at this very same tent pitched in the city of Jerusalem, he reflects back on this day and writes this song, Psalm 133.

Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!
It is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard,
on the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes!
It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion!
For there the LORD has commanded the blessing, life forevermore. [Psalm 133 ESV]

The sweet fellowship experienced by God's people is that which is like the anointing oil on Aaron's head. It is the fellowship of the Spirit by their High Priest. But that sweetness is more than just the ministry of Spirit, it is the blessing purchased by our great High Priest, the Lord Jesus. It is the blessing of eternal life, experienced and expressed together beginning today and culminating in the day we stand together around His throne.

The Sanctification of the Priests

(v.10-18)

God has instructed Moses on the cleansing and the ordination of the priests. But sin must still be dealt with. The sacrifices that are offered by and on behalf of the priests are a microcosm of the those that would be offered by the priests on behalf of the nation.

With a Sin Offering

(v.10-14)

¹⁰Bring the young bull to the entrance of the Tabernacle, where Aaron and his sons will lay their hands on its head. ¹¹Then slaughter the bull in the LORD'S presence at the entrance of the Tabernacle. ¹²Put some of its blood on the horns of the altar with your finger, and pour out the rest at the base of the altar. ¹³Take all the fat around the internal organs, the long lobe of the liver, and the two kidneys and the fat around them, and burn it all on the altar. ¹⁴Then take the rest of the bull, including its hide, meat, and dung, and burn it outside the camp as a sin offering.

First, the priests will be consecrated or sanctified through a sin offering. The bull was to be brought as the sin offering. The priests were to lay their hands on the head of the bull. This "leaning" on the bull symbolizes the substitution of the bull for the priest. He identifies himself with the sacrifice. He does so in this act of laying his hands on the bull which is also an act of faith, of trust, of "leaning" on the sacrifice.

The bull is then killed before the Lord at the entry to the Tabernacle. His blood is poured out at the base of the altar and some is smeared on the horns of the altar by the finger of the priest. So a life is poured out as a sin offering, as a sacrifice on the altar as a substitute for the priest.

The body of the bull is then to be burned. The parts of the body that are associated with waste and offal are harvested from the body. The fat around the intestines, (later) the intestines, the liver and the kidneys are removed from the carcass and placed on the altar and burned. The remainder of the carcass is taken outside the camp and is burned there. This symbolizes the full and final judgment on the sin bearer. Jesus, our sin bearer, also suffered outside the camp bearing our sins for us (Hebrews 13:11-12).

With a Burnt Offering**(v.15-18)**

¹⁵Next Aaron and his sons must lay their hands on the head of one of the rams. ¹⁶Then slaughter the ram, and splatter its blood against all sides of the altar. ¹⁷Cut the ram into pieces, and wash off the internal organs and the legs. Set them alongside the head and the other pieces of the body, ¹⁸then burn the entire animal on the altar. This is a burnt offering to the LORD; it is a pleasing aroma, a special gift presented to the LORD.

The priests will also be consecrated or sanctified through a burnt offering. One of the two rams was to be brought as the burnt offering. Again, the priests are to identify themselves with the offering by laying their hands on its head. Then the ram was to be slaughtered, its life poured out and its blood caught. The blood was then thrown against the sides of the altar in a splash of gore.

The ram was then cut into pieces and its inward parts washed. All the pieces were laid on the altar. They were burned before the Lord as the burnt offering. The sizzling aroma of the burning meat and fat rose up to the Lord as a pleasing aroma.

With a Peace Offering**(v.19-28)**

Finally, the priests will be sanctified through the third sacrifice. The second ram is brought as a food or peace offering.

Applied to the Priests**(v.19-21)**

¹⁹Now take the other ram, and have Aaron and his sons lay their hands on its head. ²⁰Then slaughter it, and apply some of its blood to the right earlobes of Aaron and his sons. Also put it on the thumbs of their right hands and the big toes of their right feet. Splatter the rest of the blood against all sides of the altar. ²¹Then take some of the blood from the altar and some of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it on Aaron and his sons and on their garments. In this way, they and their garments will be set apart as holy.

The priests must identify themselves with this third offering. It is slaughtered and its blood caught. Some of the blood was to be applied to them by smearing it on their bodies (v.19-20). It was to be applied to their right ear lobe, right hand thumb and right big toe. It speaks of the application of the blood to the priest's whole life: to what he hears, what he does and where he goes. In a final stop of consecration, the blood and anointing oil are sprinkled on their clothing (v.21). The blood shed satisfies God's judgment so the He is just and His holiness is upheld. The blood applied sanctifies the God's people so that they are holy in all their lives.

Waved before the Lord**(v.22-26)**

²²Since this is the ram for the ordination of Aaron and his sons, take the fat of the ram, including the fat of the broad tail, the fat around the internal organs, the long lobe of the liver, and the two kidneys and the fat around them, along with the right thigh. ²³Then take one round loaf of bread, one thin cake mixed with olive oil, and one wafer from the basket of bread without yeast that was placed in the LORD's presence. ²⁴Put all these in the hands of Aaron and his sons to be lifted up as a special offering to the LORD. ²⁵Afterward take the various breads from their hands, and burn them on the altar along with the burnt offering. It is a pleasing aroma to the LORD, a special gift for him. ²⁶Then take the breast of Aaron's ordination ram, and lift it up in the LORD's presence as a special offering to him. Then keep it as your own portion.

The Lord's portion of the food offering is waved before Him. Several portions of the ram some of which were prized as food in their culture, were cut away from the carcass. Along with unleavened and oil soaked loaf, cake and wafer, they were to be placed into the hands of the Aaron and his sons. These were then lifted up or waved before the Lord showing that they had been set aside as the Lord's portion. Then they were burned on the altar and their aroma and smoke was sweet to the Lord. In verse 26, Moses also has a portion. He is to take the breast of the ram and wave it before the Lord for Aaron. This portion is then for him to partake of.

Partaken by the Priests

(v.27-28)

²⁷ Set aside the portions of the ordination ram that belong to Aaron and his sons. This includes the breast and the thigh that were lifted up before the LORD as a special offering.

²⁸ In the future, whenever the people of Israel lift up a peace offering, a portion of it must be set aside for Aaron and his descendants. This is their permanent right, and it is a sacred offering from the Israelites to the LORD.

The priests were instructed to take the best of the portions that were not burned and eat them as a meal. These portions were set aside for them, not only of the sacrifices offered by them, but also from all the peace or food sacrifices offered by the people. Because these were sacred offerings, this portion was a perpetual right of the priests.

The Sacredness of the Priests

(v.29-37)

While this next section is more difficult to see how it is connected, the sacredness of the priests is a recurring theme. They have been set aside, sanctified, consecrated, dedicated for their service as priests. This "being set aside as holy" was then reflected in their clothing, their meal and their altar.

In Their Holy Clothing

(v.29-30)

²⁹ Aaron's sacred garments must be preserved for his descendants who succeed him, and they will wear them when they are anointed and ordained. ³⁰ The descendant who succeeds him as high priest will wear these clothes for seven days as he ministers in the Tabernacle and the Holy Place.

The holy garments that Aaron was to wear at his ordination were to be carefully preserved. At each succeeding ordination of a high priest, these clothes were to be worn for the whole seven day ordination period. These garments were to uniquely mark Aaron out as sanctified and consecrated to the Lord.

With their Holy Meal

(v.31-34)

³¹ Take the ram used in the ordination ceremony, and boil its meat in a sacred place. ³² Then Aaron and his sons will eat this meat, along with the bread in the basket, at the Tabernacle entrance. ³³ They alone may eat the meat and bread used for their purification in the ordination ceremony. No one else may eat them, for these things are set apart and holy. ³⁴ If any of the ordination meat or bread remains until the morning, it must be burned. It may not be eaten, for it is holy.

The portion of the ram that was for Aaron and his sons was to be cooked and eaten. At each ordination and whenever a peace offering was brought, they could sit and fellowship around a meal of the best portions. The meat was to be boiled

and they were to eat it along with the remnants of the bread that had been brought by the people.

By their Holy Altar

(v.35-37)

³⁵This is how you will ordain Aaron and his sons to their offices, just as I have commanded you. The ordination ceremony will go on for seven days. ³⁶Each day you must sacrifice a young bull as a sin offering to purify them, making them right with the LORD. Afterward, cleanse the altar by purifying it; make it holy by anointing it with oil. ³⁷Purify the altar, and consecrate it every day for seven days. After that, the altar will be absolutely holy, and whatever touches it will become holy.

As we have noted before, the ordination celebration was to last seven days. On each day, they were to sacrifice a bull. Seven days – seven bulls – seven sin offerings. After the bull was sacrificed, the altar was to be cleansed by bathing it in oil. This was to demonstrate that the altar also must be holy. It was set aside and sanctified; it is consecrated and cleansed so that the sacrifices offered on it would be acceptable to the Lord.

The Service of the Priests

(v.38-46)

The priests served in the Tabernacle in order for three important things to happen. These were why the priests were ordained. This is primarily what their office was for.

To Sacrifice to the Lord

(v.38-41)

³⁸These are the sacrifices you are to offer regularly on the altar. Each day, offer two lambs that are a year old, ³⁹one in the morning and the other in the evening. ⁴⁰With one of them, offer two quarts of choice flour mixed with one quart of pure oil of pressed olives; also, offer one quart of wine as a liquid offering. ⁴¹Offer the other lamb in the evening, along with the same offerings of flour and wine as in the morning. It will be a pleasing aroma, a special gift presented to the LORD.

The priests served in order to sacrifice to the Lord. Moses instructed Aaron and his sons on the regular morning and evening sacrifices. These were not just for the ordination period. These daily sacrifices pleased the Lord. They were to bring two lambs, one for the morning sacrifice and one for the evening sacrifice. 730 lambs every year were sacrificed. Along with the lambs, a dough made of two quarts of flour mixed with one quart of pure pressed olive oil along with one quart of wine were to be offered. Every morning; every evening; without fail.

To Meet with the Lord

(v.42-43)

⁴²These burnt offerings are to be made each day from generation to generation. Offer them in the LORD's presence at the Tabernacle entrance; there I will meet with you and speak with you. ⁴³I will meet the people of Israel there, in the place made holy by my glorious presence.

The priests were to meet with the Lord and receive the Word of the Lord. They were to actually mediate the presence of God for the people. What a wonderful privilege was to be theirs. They were ordained by God as holy to Him so that they could hear His voice out from the Tabernacle. They were then to meet with God's people and in teaching them what God had revealed God was meeting with them.

To Dwell with His People

(v.44-46)

⁴⁴ Yes, I will consecrate the Tabernacle and the altar, and I will consecrate Aaron and his sons to serve me as priests. ⁴⁵ Then I will live among the people of Israel and be their God, ⁴⁶ and they will know that I am the LORD their God. I am the one who brought them out of the land of Egypt so that I could live among them. I am the LORD their God.

From the perspective of these instructions, all that God was going to do would enable Him to live among His people. He would dwell with them. This is one of the great themes of the Bible. Since the ouster from the garden east of Eden, God has been working in redemptive history to reach the final consummation when He will say, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men." (Revelation 21:3). The great work of Jesus our High Priest who is Himself the tabernacle of God is make possible the dwelling of God in and among His people.

Conclusion From this text in Exodus the Bible has several arcing trajectories.

First, there is a line from here through Zechariah 3.

Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. ² And the LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, O Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?" ³ Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments. ⁴ And the angel said to those who were standing before him, "Remove the filthy garments from him." And to him he said, "Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure vestments." ⁵ And I said, "Let them put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the LORD was standing by.

⁶ And the angel of the LORD solemnly assured Joshua, ⁷ "Thus says the LORD of hosts: If you will walk in my ways and keep my charge, then you shall rule my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you the right of access among those who are standing here. ⁸ Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who sit before you, for they are men who are a sign: behold, I will bring my servant the Branch. ⁹ For behold, on the stone that I have set before Joshua, on a single stone with seven eyes, I will engrave its inscription, declares the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of this land in a single day. ¹⁰ In that day, declares the LORD of hosts, every one of you will invite his neighbor to come under his vine and under his fig tree."

There, Joshua, the High Priest after the Babylonian exile, stands to be ordained into the priesthood. Yet, his garments are dirty. He is unfit for service and is accused before God by Satan. Yet, God commands that his dirty clothing be removed and new garments be placed on him and a new turban on his head. All of this is possible because God's servant, the Branch will come. In one day, all iniquity will be dealt with. What Isaiah promised the Branch will do, Zechariah sees as coming to pass with the effect that God's people are saved and in fellowship with one another.

The ordination of the High Priest teaches us the insufficiency of the Old Covenant system. Day after day, week after week, weary year after year, a stream of people brought beasts that died in a long slaughter and river of blood. But their sins were merely covered. God was waiting for a future day to be satisfied with one final sacrifice, the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

We as Christians are the priests before God. Hebrews 10:19-22

And so, dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven's Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. ²⁰By his death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place. ²¹And since we have a great High Priest who rules over God's house, ²²let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting him. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water. [NLT]

The ordination of the High Priest teaches us what Jesus has done for us in our salvation. They were cleansed, clothed, anointed while there were the sacrifices of shed blood and burned bodies culminating in a fellowship meal. Each step in the ordination highlights a different facet of our salvation.

We have been *cleansed* by the washing of regeneration (Titus 3:5). We have been *clothed* in the righteousness of Christ (Philippians 3:9). We have the *anointing* of the Holy Spirit who dwells within us (Romans 8:10-11). The price and penalty for our sins have been paid by Jesus' outpoured life in His *blood* so that we are forgiven (Ephesians 1:7). The punishment of our sins was meted out on Jesus who bore our sins in His *body* on the tree (Hebrews 10:10-12). We join in a communion *meal* where we celebrate the work of Christ for us (1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 11:23-34).

Christ, our redeemer was sacrificed outside the gate as our sin bearer and sin offering. Listen to Hebrews 13:8-16.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. ⁹So do not be attracted by strange, new ideas. Your strength comes from God's grace, not from rules about food, which don't help those who follow them.

¹⁰We have an altar from which the priests in the Tabernacle have no right to eat. ¹¹Under the old system, the high priest brought the blood of animals into the Holy Place as a sacrifice for sin, and the bodies of the animals were burned outside the camp. ¹²So also Jesus suffered and died outside the city gates to make his people holy by means of his own blood. ¹³So let us go out to him, outside the camp, and bear the disgrace he bore. ¹⁴For this world is not our permanent home; we are looking forward to a home yet to come.

¹⁵Therefore, let us offer through Jesus a continual sacrifice of praise to God, proclaiming our allegiance to his name. ¹⁶And don't forget to do good and to share with those in need. These are the sacrifices that please God. [NLT]