

January 4, 2015 by Steve Brandon



We Need A Pure Priest

Leviticus 8

1. **Washing (verse 6).**
2. **Dressing (verses 7-9).**
3. **Anointing (verses 10-13).**
4. **Sacrificing (verses 14-22).**
5. **Consecrating (verses 23-24).**
6. **Offering (verses 25-29).**
7. **Sprinkling (verse 30).**
8. **Eating (verses 31-32).**
9. **Waiting (verses 33-36).**

As the light of day dawned on April 30, 1789, a small crowd began to gather around George Washington's home in New York City. At noon, Washington left his house and joined the crowd on the short walk to Federal Hall. George Washington was dressed in "an American-made dark brown suit with white silk stockings and silver shoe buckles; he also wore a steel-hilted sword and dark red overcoat." [\[1\]](#)

Upon his arrival at Federal Hall, Washington was formally introduced to the House and Senate. He then proceeded up the stairs to the second-floor balcony, where he stood in front of the throng who had gathered on the streets below. With him on the balcony was the Chancellor of New York, Robert Livingston, who administered the presidential oath of office. And when Livingston finished administering the oath, he turned to the crowd below and shouted aloud for all to hear, "Long live George Washington, President of the United States." This was followed by cheers. And soon afterwards, there was a 13-gun salute, one rifle for each of the original 13 states.

I don't believe that the magnitude of the moment was lost on any who witnessed the event. Thirteen years earlier, the United States had declared their independence from Great Britain. For seven long years, they fought a bloody battle against the British. When the war was over, it took some time to formally establish the nation. A Constitution had to be written and ratified. Then, a president had to be elected. It took six years, and George Washington became the first president of the United States of America.

The magnitude and importance of the event is a bit similar to what we find in our text this morning, in Leviticus, chapter 8, where we will see the installation of the first priests in Israel. For the past several months, we have been looking at this difficult, but crucial book of the Bible. And this morning, we come to a point of transition in the book.

For the first seven chapters, Moses has been describing the process of the five core sacrifices: the burnt offering, the grain offering, the peace offering, the sin offering, and the guilt offering. The first five chapters are devoted to explaining the worshiper's role in bringing their offering, explaining what type of animals should be brought for what type of sins. Chapters 6 and 7 describe the role of the priests in offering the sacrifices, explaining where to burn them, where to sprinkle the blood, and whether or not they may eat the leftovers.

But now, in chapter 8, attention turns from the sacrifices to the priests. We will see the installation of the first priests: Aaron and his sons. And in the whole process, there is one lesson: we need a pure priest. I say this because the entire ordination ceremony is all about purifying Aaron and his sons. See, the United States, when it began, didn't need a pure leader. Certainly, a man of integrity is always needed in a leader. But, we needed a competent leader, thus Washington was elected as a competent leader of our nation. We needed a leader committed to the task, thus George Washington was installed with an oath.

But, with a priest, it's different. He is going to bring us to God. He must be pure. And so, with the ordination of Aaron and his sons, we don't see an emphasis upon the oath that he takes to fulfill his office. Rather, we see washings and sacrifices and special clothing and anointing oil being applied. It's all to picture purity. That brings us to the title of my message, "We Need A Pure Priest."

Now, we also see another change in chapter 8. For the first time in the book of Leviticus, we will have some narrative. That is, we are going to have a story. The text is not merely telling Israel what to do. We will see Moses and Aaron doing what the LORD commanded. In fact, chapters 8-10 contain the only narrative in the book. The rest of it is laws and instructions. So, enjoy the narrative. Let's begin in verse 1, ...

Leviticus 8:1-4

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Take Aaron and his sons with him, and the garments and the anointing oil and the bull of the sin offering and the two rams and the basket of unleavened bread. And assemble all the congregation at the entrance of the tent of meeting." And Moses did as the LORD commanded him, and the congregation was assembled at the entrance of the tent of meeting.

Here we see the preparation for the ordination ceremony. Moses was to bring Aaron and his sons. Moses was to bring the priestly garments

and the anointing oil. Moses was to bring three animals, a bull and two rams. Moses was to bring a basket of unleavened bread. And, Moses was to bring the entire congregation of Israel at the tent of meeting.

Aaron had four sons: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. So, there were five men to be ordained on this day.

The garments consisted of a white tunic (i.e. undergarment), a robe placed over the tunic, a sash pulled around the waist, and a turban that would be placed upon the head of the high priest. You can read about these in Exodus 28.

Further, the anointing oil was brought. In Exodus 30:23-24, we are told of the ingredients to this oil. Made of myrrh, cinnamon, aromatic cane, cassia and olive oil. This was used to pour upon the head of Aaron and Aaron's sons during the cleansing ceremony.

There were three animals brought for sacrifice: a bull for the sin offering, one ram for a burnt offering, and one other ram for a special ordination offering.

Finally, a basket of unleavened bread was brought. If you remember our study in Leviticus 3, you will remember that these would have been made of flour, oil, and salt. This was given as a food offering to the LORD.

On that day the tent of meeting was packed with observers. When George Washington was installed as president, there was a crowd below the balcony. The same was true here. The place would have been absolutely packed, as Israel numbered in the millions at this time. Now, with everything prepared and all the people assembled, ...

Leviticus 8:5

And Moses said to the congregation, "This is the thing that the LORD has commanded to be done."

Moses is referring to what was written in Exodus 29. In fact, if you read Exodus 29, you will see how closely Moses followed the LORD's instructions in this whole ceremony. About the only difference is that the LORD instructs Moses in Exodus 29, while in Leviticus, chapter 8, we see Moses carrying out these instructions. You can see the emphasis upon Moses' obedience throughout this chapter. [\[2\]](#)

The first thing we see is...

1. Washing (verse 6).

Leviticus 8:6

And Moses brought Aaron and his sons and washed them with water.

This was a symbolic cleansing. This was a sign that Aaron and his sons needed cleansing. Now, of course, when you think of Aaron, you know that he needed cleansing. The last time we saw Aaron in the Pentateuch was in Exodus 32, when he was leading Israel in their idolatry. Remember, Moses was up on Mount Sinai, and was delaying in his return (Exodus 32:1). And so, the people of Israel were anxious. Their leader was gone. So, they approached Aaron and said, "Up, make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him" (Exodus 32:1).

And rather than protesting against the people and telling them of the errors of idolatry, Aaron succumbed to the pressure. He gathered the gold from the congregation, from their rings on their fingers and the rings in their ears. And he, himself, fashioned a golden calf, and said, "This is your God, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt" (Exodus 32:4). It's one thing for a man to be involved with sin. It's worse if he leads others into sin.

And God was ready to destroy Israel on the spot (Exodus 32:10). But, "Moses implored the LORD" to stay His hand (Exodus 32:11). And God didn't destroy Israel. And by God's grace, the chief perpetrator of idolatry becomes the first priest in Israel. It's a picture of God's grace. Such grace is ready to come to the aid of all who call upon the LORD.

Peter failed the Lord greatly, but, he too, was restored by the Lord. We simply need to be cleansed through the blood of Christ.

And this washing of Aaron was a symbol that they were, indeed, cleansed and ready to serve as priests. But, not only do we see, Washing (verse 6). But, we also see, ...

2. Dressing (verses 7-9).

Leviticus 8:7-9

And [Moses] put the coat on him and tied the sash around his waist and clothed him with the robe and put the ephod on him and tied the skillfully woven band of the ephod around him, binding it to him with the band. And he placed the breastpiece on him, and in the breastpiece he put the Urim and the Thummim. And he set the turban on his head, and on the turban, in front, he set the golden plate, the holy crown, as the LORD commanded Moses.

Such fancy clothes signified the dignity and honor of the office of high priest. Notice here in verse 7 that Aaron was the one to receive these special clothes, his sons did not. Moses was instructed, in Exodus 29:8, that the sons were to receive the "coat," or "tunic" (NASB), a sash, and a cap. But, only Aaron was to receive the outer robe and the ephod and the breastpiece, and the turban. Only Aaron wore the

breastpiece, containing 12 colorful stones on his breast. Each of these stones are of different kinds. The first row contains sardius, topaz, and carbuncle (Exodus 28:17). The second row contains emerald, sapphire, and diamond (Exodus 28:18). The third row contains jacinth, agate, and amethyst (Exodus 28:19). And the fourth row contains beryl, onyx and jasper stones (Exodus 28:20).

We are told in Exodus 28:21 that each of these stones had the names of the tribes of Israel engraved upon them. If anything, they represent, how near and dear the people of Israel are to the LORD. They are on the breastpiece of the high priest. These stones go in with him when he offers up the sacrifice. And you can think of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is our great high priest. When he pleads before the Father on our behalf, we too are near and dear to His heart. According to Hebrews 4:15, our great high priest sympathizes with us. It's as if our name is written right on His chest.

Hidden in the breastpiece are the Urim and the Thummim (Exodus 28:30). Much mystery surrounds the Urim and the Thummim, as they are mentioned in the Bible less than ten times. Somehow, they were able to be used to discern the will of the LORD, when people would come to the priest. This would have set the high priest apart from all of the other priests as the one to offer the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement. And we will get to this when we come to Leviticus 16. But, for now, we simply need to see that the priests are clothed with special clothes.

Aaron was decked out in the colorful garments of the high priest, while his four sons (Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar) had simple, white tunics and sashes and caps (per, verse 11).

Anyway, let's continue on. Let's look at the ...

3. Anointing (verses 10-13).

Leviticus 8:10-13

Then Moses took the anointing oil and anointed the tabernacle and all that was in it, and consecrated them. And he sprinkled some of it on the altar seven times, and anointed the altar and all its utensils and the basin and its stand, to consecrate them. And he poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron's head and anointed him to consecrate him. And Moses brought Aaron's sons and clothed them with coats and tied sashes around their waists and bound caps on them, as the LORD commanded Moses.

Moses applied the oil upon Aaron's head. This event would have been witnessed by Aaron's sons as well as the people who had come into the tabernacle to witness the event. To Israel, this was a very special and memorable occasion. David would write some four hundred years later in Psalm 133, ...

Psalm 133:1-2

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!

David is remembering this day by picturing the oil upon the head, running down the beard and onto his holy garments. And he says, "What a pleasant memory." It's as pleasant as unity among brothers. And in those days, such an anointing would have been a very pleasant experience, as they had little by way of showers and baths. This oil would have made Aaron smell very nice.

But, beyond the smell, this oil had a special significance. It was sanctifying. Notice, in verse 11 how Moses poured out the blood on the altar and the utensils and the basin and its stand. It was "to consecrate them" (verse 11).

I can't help but to think of the precious scene in the Bible when Mary came up to Jesus "with an alabaster flask of very expensive ointment, and she poured it on his head as he reclined at [the] table [with his disciples]" (Matthew 26:6). Jesus said, "In pouring this ointment on my body, she has done it to prepare me for burial" (Matthew 26:12). And in the same way, Moses pouring this oil upon the altar and upon the head of Aaron, was to prepare them for service. That's the significance of the oil.

Let's move on. Let's turn our attention to the sacrificing.

4. Sacrificing (verses 14-22).

And it's right here that we see the benefit of having worked through the first five chapters of Leviticus. Here, we see the bull of the sin offering being slaughtered (as described in Leviticus, chapter 4).

Leviticus 8:14-17

Then he brought the bull of the sin offering, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the bull of the sin offering. And he killed it, and Moses took the blood, and with his finger put it on the horns of the altar around it and purified the altar and poured out the blood at the base of the altar and consecrated it to make atonement for it. And he took all the fat that was on the entrails and the long lobe of the liver and the two kidneys with their fat, and Moses burned them on the altar. But the bull and its skin and its flesh and its dung he burned up with fire outside the camp, as the LORD commanded Moses.

The five priests being anointed that day (Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar) set their hands upon the head of the bull, identifying with the bull and his upcoming death. Soon afterwards, the bull was to be slaughtered as an atonement for their sins. Again, we see the acknowledgement that Aaron and his sons were sinners who needed cleansing before they would be able to serve as priests. I can't help but to think of the contrast with our Lord, Jesus Christ.

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.

Jesus is our perfect high priest. He was holy and innocent and unstained, unlike Aaron and his sons. He was separated from sinners, unlike Aaron and his sons, who were fellow sinners. He had no need for a sacrifice to be offered on His behalf, unlike Aaron and his sons. He was the Son "made perfect forever," unlike Aaron's sons, who needed to be cleansed through sacrifice on this day, and who would need further sacrifices in future days.

And they required several sacrifices. Verses 14-17 mention the sin offering. Verses 18-21 mention the burnt offering.

Leviticus 8:18-21

Then he presented the ram of the burnt offering, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the ram. And he killed it, and Moses threw the blood against the sides of the altar. He cut the ram into pieces, and Moses burned the head and the pieces and the fat. He washed the entrails and the legs with water, and Moses burned the whole ram on the altar. It was a burnt offering with a pleasing aroma, a food offering for the LORD, as the LORD commanded Moses.

And then, beginning in verse 22, we have this "ordination offering."

Leviticus 8:22-24

Then he presented the other ram, the ram of ordination, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the ram. And he killed it, and Moses took some of its blood and put it on the lobe of Aaron's right ear and on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot. Then he presented Aaron's sons, and Moses put some of the blood on the lobes of their right ears and on the thumbs of their right hands and on the big toes of their right feet. And Moses threw the blood against the sides of the altar.

I'm calling this, ...

5. Consecrating (verses 23-24).

It seems as if this is the purpose of this strange ritual. Did you catch what Moses did?

He took the blood of the ordination offering and smeared it on Aaron's right ear, his right thumb, and his right big toe. He did the same with the sons. Normally, the blood was sprinkled upon the altar and poured out along the base of the altar. But not here. Here, it is applied directly to the priests. It was a confirmation of their calling as priests.

In some vivid way, it brings the sacrifice to these priests individually. In this act, they have personal, physical contact with the blood. The blood came upon the right ear; they were to listen to the LORD. The blood came upon the right thumb; they were to obey the LORD. The blood came upon the right toe; they were to walk in the ways of the LORD.

Lest you think that this is just for the priests, a similar ritual was to take place for a leper who was cleansed (Leviticus 14:14). It was a confirmation of their cleansing. They were now free to mingle again with the people of God.

Which means that this application of the blood wasn't only for the priests, it was for all who know the cleansing touch of God upon their lives. How about you? Do you know His forgiveness? Do you know His grace? Has the blood of Jesus been applied to you? Has it touched your ear, so that you are ever listening to the Lord? Has it touched your thumb, so that you are living in obedience to the Lord? Has it touched your big toe, so that you are walking in the ways of the Lord? Praise the Lord that our great high priest did let us follow in His steps.

Let's move on. Let's look at the ...

6. Offering (verses 25-29).

By this, I mean, the "wave offering." This isn't one of the five core sacrifices, but this is something that is done with the sacrifices. A portion of the burnt offering was combined with a portion of the food offering, and it was waved before the LORD, much like a sparkler on the Fourth of July.

This smoky substance was passed around from Moses to Aaron to his sons. And they all waved it before the LORD. In other words, they

were all into it. And so was the LORD, as the aroma of the smoke was pleasing to Him. Let's read about it, ...

Leviticus 8:25-29

Then he took the fat and the fat tail and all the fat that was on the entrails and the long lobe of the liver and the two kidneys with their fat and the right thigh, and out of the basket of unleavened bread that was before the Lord he took one unleavened loaf and one loaf of bread with oil and one wafer and placed them on the pieces of fat and on the right thigh. And he put all these in the hands of Aaron and in the hands of his sons and waved them as a wave offering before the LORD. Then Moses took them from their hands and burned them on the altar with the burnt offering. This was an ordination offering with a pleasing aroma, a food offering to the LORD. And Moses took the breast and waved it for a wave offering before the LORD. It was Moses' portion of the ram of ordination, as the LORD commanded Moses.

In many ways, this was an opportunity for the priests to get involved with the sacrifice. It wasn't merely Moses doing his thing to Aaron and his sons. It was an opportunity for Aaron and his sons to respond. It was an opportunity for all to be involved.

Let's move on to #7.

7. Sprinkling (verse 30).

This comes in verse 30.

Leviticus 8:30

Then Moses took some of the anointing oil and of the blood that was on the altar and sprinkled it on Aaron and his garments, and also on his sons and his sons' garments. So he consecrated Aaron and his garments, and his sons and his sons' garments with him.

Aaron and his sons all lined up. And Moses dirties their robes with the anointing oil and with the blood from the altar. Their robes would soon look like a painter's smock, covered with paint. At this point, I can do no better than Nancy Ganz, who wrote a helpful commentary on Leviticus for children. She writes, ...

Their beautiful robes would be stained with the blood, ... but those spots were an adornment more precious and more beautiful than the bright jewels that sparkled or the gold bells that tinkled on their robes. Those blood stains did not soil their clothes, but cleansed them. The blood stains signified the mercies of Christ and the oil stains signified the graces of the Spirit. Thus the sacrifice of Christ and the baptism of the Spirit were 'written' (in a sort of secret sign language) on the priests' garments. [\[3\]](#)

Again, this is a consecrating ritual. It is a confirming ritual. Surely, they were cleansed and forgiven!

I'm reminded of what took place when the law was initially confirmed with the people of Israel. He read the words of the law (Exodus 20-23) to the whole congregation. And they said, "All the words that the LORD has spoken we will do" (Exodus 24:3, 8). And he sprinkled half the blood upon the altar. And then, "Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, 'Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words'" (Exodus 24:8).

When the writer to the Hebrews comments on this event, he writes, ...

Hebrews 9:19-22

For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, "This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you." And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

And so, the priests were sprinkled with the blood from the altar as a sign of their forgiveness. So also do we need to be sprinkled with the blood of Christ, if we would ever know forgiveness of sins. Has the blood of Christ been sprinkled onto your soul?

Let's move on. In verses 31 and 32, we see, ...

8. Eating (verses 31-32).

Leviticus 8:31-32

And Moses said to Aaron and his sons, "Boil the flesh at the entrance of the tent of meeting, and there eat it and the bread that is in the basket of ordination offerings, as I commanded, saying, 'Aaron and his sons shall eat it.' And what remains of the flesh and the bread you shall burn up with fire.

This was typical of the grain offering. A portion was given to the LORD. In this case, the smoke of the offering was waved before the LORD

as it was burning. And the other portion was eaten by the priests. It was a sign of celebration and thanksgiving. They had offered to the LORD. And now, they took their share as well.

They were joined in covenant at the table. This is a bit like what we do at the Lord's Supper. We offer up our lives, and we eat in fellowship with Him. We remember what cleansed us from our sins, the sacrifice of Christ.

Finally, we have, ...

9. Waiting (verses 33-36).

Washing (verse 6); Dressing (verses 7-9); Anointing (verses 10-13); Sacrificing (verses 14-22); Consecrating (verses 23-24); Offering (verses 25-29); Sprinkling (verse 30); Eating (verses 31-32); Waiting (verses 33-36).

Leviticus 8:33-36

And you shall not go outside the entrance of the tent of meeting for seven days, until the days of your ordination are completed, for it will take seven days to ordain you. As has been done today, the Lord has commanded to be done to make atonement for you. At the entrance of the tent of meeting you shall remain day and night for seven days, performing what the Lord has charged, so that you do not die, for so I have been commanded." And Aaron and his sons did all the things that the LORD commanded by Moses.

Moses instructed Aaron and his sons to wait in the tabernacle for seven days. And after seven days, the priests will offer up their first sacrifices. This is recorded in Leviticus, chapter 9.

And I thought as I prepared this I thought of how natural it would be for us to wait seven days until we find out what happened. I've been looking forward to preaching chapter 10. I guarantee you, you want to come back next week to see what happened.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on January 4, 2015 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_inauguration_of_George_Washington

[2] Leviticus 8:9, 13, 17, 21, 29, 34, 36

[3] "Leviticus: A Commentary for Children," Nancy E. Ganz, p. 10