

March 6, 2022

“The Ordination of the Priests”

Leviticus 8:1-36

FCF: Our sense of rejection from God

PROPOSITION: (anchor) The Lord desires relationship with us.

(magnet) We see this in the ordination of the priests.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

Imagine the scenario. You've been invited to a party at which you know you will know hardly anyone. You can't get out of it. You have to go. How will you respond? What will be your posture or approach once you arrive? Some of us will be inclined to shut down, hide in a corner, and wait it out. Others of us will play things up, kick into high gear, and try to wow the crowd. Interestingly, both have something in common. Neither believes people really want to know us. And that can have roots in this - we don't believe God really wants to know us either.

The ordination of the priests in Leviticus 8 speaks to this and that's where we are in this series through the book. Now let me give you a heads up. There are seven sections, seven being symbolic for completion. Each section is marked out by the phrase, “as the LORD commanded.”

SCRIPTURE READING: Leviticus 8:1-36

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON INTRODUCTION:

Ceremonies are meant to heighten and draw our attention. They often bring a change in status for the main parties involved. Think of a graduation or a wedding. That sort of change in status is what we see in our text with this elaborate ordination ceremony for Aaron and his sons.

They are being set apart as priests. What is a priest? What is their job? It's basically to be a mediator, to bring people into the presence of God. Knowing that is helpful but we need to acknowledge our hesitation and resistance. Many of us feel a visceral pushback to a priesthood like this and it might be wise to think about what's behind that. I can think of three things. First, it may simply be foreign and unfamiliar. Second, we have a flawed view of holiness and what it means to speak of a holy priesthood. We tend to think it refers to a morally spiritually superior person. But it really means to be set apart for special service to the Lord. In that sense, a priest is sacred, consecrated, holy. But there's a third point of opposition. And it can be that to speak of the need for a priest seems to put some distance, to create a barrier, between us and God. But it's actually meant to do just the opposite. The Old Testament priesthood wasn't meant to push us away. The Lord designed it to bring us close. In fact, we really can go so far as to say that the Lord desires relationship with us. He truly does. And we see this in the ordination of the priests.

There are two perspectives here - two views, two things gained by seeing the ceremonies and rites in our text. First, the clarity for the people. And, second, the humility for the priests.

I. CLARITY FOR THE PEOPLE

First, clarity for the people. Consider seeing these events through their eyes - an adult or a child in the crowd watching this unfold. What do you see? What in all this stands out to you?

A) Our Deep Need

1. God's great holiness

You would start to get a sense of God's great holiness and our great need. Think of the Leviticus question. "How can a holy God live in the midst of an unholy people?" Apply that to worship. To come into the presence of the most holy King requires sacrifices. We've looked at those.

2. Our great dilemma

But that still presents us with a dilemma. God's holiness destroys sinfulness as surely as light does darkness. How then can we stand before Him? By the work of His priests, His mediators.

B) The Lord's Deep Desire

That would become abundantly clear. As would something else - the Lord's deep desire.

1. To initiate with us

His deep desire to initiate this relationship with us. Think with me. He provided the priests. This was solely His doing that we might have access to Him, a bridge for fellowship with Him.

2. To impress upon us

He is initiating this. And He is impressing some things upon us. Consider the clothes of the high priest ([SHOW image](#)). If you wed together Exodus 28 and Leviticus 8 you get a fuller picture. In Exodus it says such clothes were to give the high priest glory and beauty, dignity and honor. The colors were tied to the tabernacle, all with rich royal overtones - the coat, robe, ephod, and turban. Note these two things and the symbolism. The breastpiece of the ephod had 12 precious stones, representing the 12 tribes. On the shoulders of the ephod were two stones, each with the names of the 12 tribes written on them. The idea being the high priest was the representative of the people of God in the presence of God. And all of this was according to the purpose of God.

So much was communicated here. And it all gave clarity to the people.

Application:

What if we believed it? What if we paid attention to and took to heart what we saw? Our great need and God's provision for our need - that He would be our God and we would be His people, chosen and dearly loved. From the start, He made this clear to us. What if we saw it?

What would it do to our ceaseless striving to impress and prove ourselves? What would happen to our fears for tomorrow, as though He was going to lead us out and dump us off? What would it do to our low expectations and prayerless days, as if He was not there and did not care?

The Lord clearly desires relationship with us. We see this in the ordination of the priests.

II. HUMILITY FOR THE PRIESTS

Now shifting focus from the people to the priests, try to see these events through the eyes of Aaron and his sons. Now what do you see? What stands out and really lands upon you?

A) His Personal History

1. A glaring example

Let's start with Aaron's personal history. Go back to Exodus 32 and the golden calf incident. Moses was on Mt. Sinai, receiving the Ten Commandments and the plans for the tabernacle. The people got restless. So Aaron took it upon himself to make this idol and led the people in worshipping the LORD through this thing, a direct violation of His commands. This was an act of covenant infidelity, spiritual adultery, cosmic treason. And who was behind it? Aaron.

2. A glorious principle

This is a glaring example bearing out a glorious principle. The Lord, in His grace, does not wait for or insist on perfection in His servants before He will work through them. That is quite clear.

B) A Significant Calling

1. The weight of the ceremony

Which then brings us to this significant calling. You get a sense of that with the weight of the ceremony - the washing, anointing, offerings, eating, waiting for seven days. Imagine all of this.

2. The obvious necessity

You couldn't escape the obvious necessity. You need atonement - cleansing and sacrifices not just for the people but for you. And all the more so because of your position and the great stakes.

C) The Historic Longing

Aaron's personal history and significant calling press the need for humility. And then all the more so if you consider the long record of the priesthood and the historic longing it created.

1. Leading up to this point

Leading up to this point, what do you see? At the beginning, Adam and Eve were proto-priests in the Garden. But with the Fall, all creation was dragged into a state in which blood would have to be shed. With the patriarchs, we see glimmers of this office. And with Moses, its formation.

2. Flowing from this point

But flowing from even this moment, we quickly see deformation and things go awry. Which then brought promises from the Lord of a reformation to come, another and far far greater Priest.

Pulling all this together - what you saw and experienced, what you would see if you knew how events to come would unfold - this was cause for great humility, a deep inner grounding.

Application:

As a priest on the receiving end of all this, what if you believed it? What if you paid attention and took to heart what you saw? If you are prone to think, "I'm God's gift to Israel" in a foolish and conceited fashion, then this would undercut all that. For the Lord has raised you up as a living demonstration of His grace to all His people and an expression of His grace to you.

But if you are prone to think, "I'm nothing. I have nothing to offer" in a sad despondent fashion, then this undercuts that as well. Look at the glory and beauty, the dignity and honor that the Lord has gladly bestowed upon you. This speaks to how He feels of you and all His people.

It is humbling. But it's how the relationship begins. Even in the ordination of the priests.

CONCLUSION:

Ken Sande noted in a *Relational Wisdom 360* blog there are two things we were never meant to experience - death and rejection. They utterly contradict our design. That's why they feel so foreign and hurt so much. We all know something of that, some of us quite painfully.

Which brings us to Jesus, the ultimate fulfillment of Leviticus 8 and this ceremony. He is the Priest of priests, “our great High Priest.” ([READ Hebrews 9:11-15](#)) Jesus is far superior to every other priest in every way. And this is signified and sealed for us here at the Lord’s Table.

Our Lord Jesus has no need to make atonement for a sinful life. It’s just the opposite. He lived the life we all should have lived. He made atonement by His sinless, perfect, holy life, giving and offering Himself as the final sacrifice for us. He died the death we all deserved to die.

So death has been robbed of its power and its sting. The only rejection that ultimately matters has fully fallen upon Him. How the Lord desires relationship with us. We see this so clearly at the Lord’s Table, in the celebration of communion. And in the ordination of the priests.

PROPOSITION: (anchor) The Lord desires relationship with us.
(magnet) We see this in the ordination of the priests.