

SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

LEV. 8:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

2 Take Aaron and his sons with him, and the garments, and the anointing oil, and a bullock for the sin offering, and two rams, and a basket of unleavened bread;

3 And gather thou all the congregation together unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

4 And Moses did as the LORD commanded him; and the assembly was gathered together unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

5 And Moses said unto the congregation, This *is* the thing which the LORD commanded to be done.

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

7 And he put upon him the coat, and girded him with the girdle, and clothed him with the robe, and put the ephod upon him, and he girded him with the curious girdle of

the ephod, and bound *it* unto him therewith.

8 And he put the breastplate upon him: also he put in the breastplate the Urim and the Thummim.

9 And he put the mitre upon his head; also upon the mitre, *even* upon his forefront, did he put the golden plate, the holy crown; as the LORD commanded Moses.

10 And Moses took the anointing oil, and anointed the tabernacle and all that was therein, and sanctified them.

11 And he sprinkled thereof upon the altar seven times, and anointed the altar and all his vessels, both the laver and his foot, to sanctify them.

12 And he poured of the anointing oil upon Aaron's head, and anointed him, to sanctify him.

13 And Moses brought Aaron's sons, and put coats upon them, and girded them with girdles, and put bonnets upon them; as the LORD commanded Moses.

NOTES

Ordination of Aaron and His Sons

Lesson Text: Leviticus 8:1-13

Related Scriptures: Exodus 29:1-37; Hebrews 10:19-25; Acts 22:14-16

TIME: about 1445 B.C.

PLACE: Mount Sinai

GOLDEN TEXT—"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Hebrews 10:22).

Lesson Exposition

CALLED BY THE LORD—Lev. 8:1-4

God calls for Aaron and his sons (Lev. 8:1-2). One of the greatest problems humans face is that we are sinful and God is holy. Sinful humans cannot approach a holy God on their own but must have someone to represent them. In order to come to God, we must have a representative to appear before Him on our behalf. God's answer to this predicament for His Old Testament people was the priesthood. Aaron and his sons were to serve as priests under the old covenant established through Moses.

Since Aaron and his sons were also guilty of sin, they had to be cleansed, or ritually made holy, if they were going to serve as priests between the people and God.

God began by telling Moses to call Aaron and his sons together. He then instructed Moses to take certain garments, anointing oil, a bull for a sin offering, two rams, and a basket of unleavened bread. All these elements were necessary to fulfill the require-

ments for the ordination of priests as set forth in Exodus 29.

A public ceremony (Lev. 8:3-4). Moses set Aaron and his sons before the entire assembly at the entrance of the tabernacle. The ceremony was designed to be in a public setting, not a private space. The people were to see who their priests were and that God had designated them for this office. The priesthood was not an office to be aspired to but one for which the individual was chosen. Future priests had to be descendants of Aaron in order to qualify.

Moses did as God had directed, and the people were gathered at the tabernacle for the ordination of their priests.

PREPARED BY THE LORD— Lev. 8:5-9

The commandment of the Lord (Lev. 8:5). When the people had gathered at the entrance of the tabernacle, Moses declared to them that the following ceremony had been commanded by God. Aaron was not chosen by

Moses as a result of nepotism; rather, he was chosen by God.

The washing of the priests (Lev. 8:6). The first act in this ceremony was the washing, or cleansing, of Aaron and his sons. In a very humbling action, Aaron and his sons had their bodies washed by Moses before the gathered assembly. The fact that Moses washed them illustrated that they could not cleanse themselves of their own personal sin but had to be cleansed by another.

The modern significance of this act is that we too cannot cleanse ourselves of our personal sin. We have to be washed by Someone else, namely Christ. We are cleansed not by water but by the perfect blood of Jesus (cf. I Pet. 1:18-19). Our sins have been washed away by the Mediator of the new covenant we now live under, which was ushered in by Christ Himself.

Priestly garments and the ephod (Lev. 8:7). After Aaron and his sons were washed, the next step was to clothe Aaron with the priestly garments (cf. Ex. 28:4-36). The purpose of these garments was not just to cover his nakedness but to invest the worship of the Lord with beauty and to elevate the role and office of the high priest (cf. vs. 2). Additionally, they would clearly identify the high priest to the people.

The high priest's "coat" (Lev. 8:7) was a tunic that was worn next to the skin and reached to the feet. It was tied with a "girdle," or sash, around the waist to hold it close to the body. A robe, an outer garment, was worn over the coat. It was made of a beautiful combination of blue, purple, and scarlet materials with golden bells on the hem.

The "ephod," which was worn over the robe, was a special article of clothing that was similar in appearance to an apron. It was made of two pieces joined at the shoulders and was open

on both sides. The ephod was made of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet threads. These threads were skillfully woven together by craftsmen who were gifted and equipped by God for such a purpose.

The "curious girdle" was made of the same material as the ephod. It was a belt that held the ephod to the body at the waist.

The breastplate (Lev. 8:8-9). The breastplate was then placed upon the high priest, Aaron. The square breastplate was made of woven material and rested on the front of the ephod. Like the other priestly garments, it was to be skillfully made and consisted of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet threads.

Attached to the breastplate were twelve precious stones, each one engraved with the name of a tribe of Israel. God no doubt used precious stones because His people are precious to Him. Similar stones will also be prominent in the New Jerusalem, the future eternal home of every child of God (cf. Rev. 21:19-20).

The breastplate was identified with judgment (cf. Ex. 28:15). The high priest wore the breastplate as he entered God's presence and sought deliverance from God's judgment on behalf of the people.

The Urim and Thummim were then placed inside the breastplate. The text in Leviticus does not reveal their size, shape, number, or even function, so they have engendered much speculation and debate. They are often thought to have been dice-like stones, but they were somehow used on occasion to determine the will of God in certain situations.

The "mitre" (Lev. 8:9), or turban, that was placed on the head of the high priest was similar to a crown. Fastened to the front of it was a plate of pure gold that had the words "Holiness to the Lord" engraved on it (Ex. 28:36).

ORDAINED BY THE LORD—

Lev. 8:10-13

Anointing of objects (Lev. 8:10-11). While the ordination of Israel's first priests might bear some similarities to the modern ordination of individuals to pastoral ministry, there is also much in Leviticus 8 that was unique. Contemporary ordination services focus on the person being ordained. The ordination of Aaron and his sons, however, also included the consecration of the tabernacle, the altar, and all the utensils and instruments the priests would be using.

The anointing with oil showed the people that these items had been set apart for service to the Lord, or "sanctified."

Anointing of the priests (Lev. 8:12-13). After anointing the tabernacle and the items in it, Moses then poured oil on Aaron's head to anoint him for service as high priest. Oil is sometimes a symbol of the Holy Spirit in Scripture, and the anointing here likely pictures the Holy Spirit being poured upon Aaron, empowering him for his high priestly service.

That the oil was poured on Aaron's head and allowed to run down shows that the Spirit is given without measure. There was no concern for wasting oil here. Objects such as the altar were sprinkled with oil, but God's chosen servant had oil poured on him.

God gives us His Spirit without measure to empower, equip, guide, instruct, and convict us.

Moses then called for Aaron's sons to come forward, and he clothed them with their priestly garments. The garments worn by the priests were simpler than that of the high priest and were all white (cf. Ex. 28:40-43). Their clothing also made them easily identifiable as priests.

Throughout the ordination process, Moses did what he was commanded

by God. At no point did God consult with Moses, and at no point did Moses challenge God or try to give his input. As great a leader as Moses was, he was still a mere human being. He was not divine or even semi-divine. He was just a man who had been called by God for a specific purpose.

God cares about you and the details of your life. He has called you into a particular realm of service and wants to equip you for that role. He has anointed you with His Holy Spirit to accomplish His will in your life. Have you surrendered to this calling? The only way to do anything of eternal value is to yield to the will of God.

—Robert Ferguson, Jr.

QUESTIONS

1. What did God instruct Moses to do with Aaron and his sons?
2. Why was it important for this ceremony to be public?
3. What was the significance of the washing of Aaron and his sons?
4. How are we cleansed under the new covenant?
5. What colors were used in the priestly garments?
6. What was the ephod, and what was included in its composition?
7. What was attached to the breastplate of the high priest, and with what was the breastplate associated?
8. What purpose did the Urim and Thummim serve?
9. What does oil sometimes represent in Scripture?
10. How did the consecration of the tabernacle utensils differ from how Aaron was anointed?

—Robert Ferguson, Jr.

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. We should never be irreverent when we speak to God; we should fear and obey Him (Lev. 8:1-2).
2. Always try to display the Lord's attributes to others (vss. 3-4).
3. We should always be able to point to the Lord's authority over whatever we do. If we cannot, it is not worth doing (Lev. 8:5; Rom. 14:23).
4. As Christians, we should clothe ourselves in righteousness as representatives of God's holiness (vss. 6-10).
5. God purposes even material things for service to Him, so we should be good stewards of His gifts (vs. 11).
6. We should always respect our leaders; they are put in place by God (vss. 12-13).

—Megan Hickman.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. Why do you think God appointed priests instead of just approaching the people directly?
2. In what ways do some churches belittle God's holiness?
3. Why did God want Israel to see the anointing of the priests (Lev. 8:3)?
4. Outer holiness should reflect inner holiness. How can we maintain integrity as believers (Matt. 23:27-28; I John 1:7; Rev. 4:17)?
5. Even though we have been made righteous by the blood of Jesus (Heb. 10:19), why is it still crucial for us to pursue holiness (9:14)?
6. How can we encourage others not to waver on God's Word?

—Megan Hickman.

Golden Text Illuminated

“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” (Hebrews 10:22).

Whereas Aaron's priesthood was one of temporary appeasement of God's wrath toward the people's sins through animal sacrifices that had to be repeated regularly, Jesus' sacrifice provides permanent atonement.

This is the background of our golden text's admonition to “draw near.” In the context of the epistle to the Hebrews, what we are encouraged to draw near to is the “holiest” (10:19). This is a reference to the holiest place in Yahweh's temple in the heavenly realm.

In contrast to Aaron and his sons, we have been sprinkled not with mere oil but with the Holy Spirit, who has cleared our consciences once and for all from the guilt of our sins. We have been washed not by mere water but with the pure, living water of the Holy Spirit.

These things are meant to give us full assurance of faith, enabling us to boldly approach God's throne. As the writer of Hebrews wrote, “Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (4:14-16).

—John Lody.