

Leviticus 8 • The Secret to Becoming a Priest

Introduction

We all know that priests were an essential part of the Old Testament system of sacrifices and the operation of the tabernacle and temple, but do we truly understand how the role of priest continues on in the New Testament?

and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Revelation 1:6

If we, today, are priests, what does that mean? How does the role of Believers as priests compare to that of Aaron, his sons, and the tribe of Levi from which the Old Testament priesthood was derived? Chapter 8 of Leviticus describes how priests were brought into God's service and has many things to teach us about our service and calling in Christ.

¹Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²“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, ³and assemble all the congregation at the doorway of the tent of meeting.”

⁴So Moses did just as the LORD commanded him. When the congregation was assembled at the doorway of the tent of meeting, ⁵Moses said to the congregation, “This is the thing which the LORD has commanded to do.”

[Read v.1-5]

Q: In the case of Aaron and Moses personally, why did these things need to take place under the public scrutiny of all of Israel?

A: Being brothers, there needed to be no hint of impropriety or nepotism but that it was undertaken by a command from the Lord. It came about not by family association but by God's calling.

And no one takes the honor to himself, but receives it when he is called by God, even as Aaron was.

Hebrews 5:4

Q: Is the ordination of the priesthood a closed or secret initiation? Why do you suppose that is?

A: It's very public. There are probably several reasons for this:

1. False religions elevate their priesthood to being above the reach and reproach of the average person; God's priesthood is merely men that have to adhere to the same standards as everyone else.
2. There needs to be accountability that all of God's ways are fully followed. Public ordination insures compliance.
3. The participation of the congregation reinforces the proper role and responsibilities of leadership, that both parties adhere to God's ways and assist each other in their pursuit of fulfilling God's calling and will on each others' behalf.
4. Others?

Q: If we carefully examine the list of things Moses was instructed to bring to this ceremony, what might we find missing that we'd normally expect from someone taking office?

A: There is no oath.

Point: *There is no “higher calling” or additional oath required, only the biblical minimum requirements of spiritual faithfulness.*

Application: *If we are called as priests, do we see that this isn't an additional calling or requirement but a natural extension of our walk and service in Christ? Do you see yourself as publicly called into full-time service? If not, why? Is your interpretation of “full-time” restricted to where you derive your paycheck?*

⁶Then Moses had Aaron and his sons come near and washed them with water. ⁷He put the tunic on him and girded him with the sash, and clothed him with the robe and put the ephod on him; and he girded him with the artistic band of the ephod, with which he tied it to him. ⁸He then placed the breastpiece on him, and in the breastpiece he put the Urim and the Thummim. ⁹He also placed the turban on his head, and on the turban, at its front, he placed the golden plate, the holy crown, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

[Read v.6-9]

Q: What does the washing of water mean? Why is it the very first thing done?

A: It teaches that they should not just be outwardly clean of hands, but pure in heart as well. It symbolizes being holy—separated and devoted exclusively to God while abhorring and rejecting worldly ways.

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Q: How do the clothes build upon this teaching of purity and holiness?

A: They are made from linen, a biblical example of purity and holiness. They were a reminder to always seek and maintain God's righteousness.

Q: What is the New Testament expression equivalent to this? What do we do publicly that testifies of our changed life and commitment going forward for the rest of our life?

A: Baptism. It's the public testimony of what has already taken place within our heart.

For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

Galatians 3:27

Application: Do you see that to be effective in God's service that you must remain pure and spiritually faithful? How is the work of salvation the beginning point of a change for the rest of your life?

¹⁰Moses then took the anointing oil and anointed the tabernacle and all that was in it, and consecrated them. ¹¹He 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. ¹²Then he poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron's head and anointed him, to consecrate him.

¹³Next Moses had Aaron's sons come near and clothed them with tunics, and girded them with sashes and bound caps on them, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

[Read v.10-13]

Q: What does the anointing of oil mean?

A: It signifies being set apart, devoted exclusively to God.

Q: Why were the things of the tabernacle anointed along with Aaron?

A: Everything devoted to the service and worship of God must be holy and set apart to God.

But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know.

1 John 2:20

Point: A true worshiper of God is marked by a spiritual anointing that reveals itself through keeping oneself wholly dedicated and exclusively committed to God and all His ways.

¹⁴Then 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. ¹⁵Next Moses slaughtered it and took the blood and with his finger put some of it around on the horns of the altar, and purified the altar. Then he poured out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar and consecrated it, to make atonement for it. ¹⁶He also took all the fat that was on the entrails and the lobe of the liver, and the two kidneys and their fat; and Moses offered it up in smoke on the altar. ¹⁷But the bull and its hide and its flesh and its refuse he burned in the fire outside the camp, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

[Read v.14-17]

Q: This was alluded to earlier, but how is this a significant departure from how priesthoods are set up under false religions?

A: Under false religions, priesthoods are generally elevated above everyone else and often exempted from the very requirements placed on the general population. In God's kingdom, the priests are in need of the very same things everyone else needs; they are not exempt.

Q: What did the blood do for the things of God (such as the altar) that it also did for the priests?

A: It cleansed them, ceremonially cleansing them of this world's pollution.

And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

Hebrews 9:22

For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Hebrews 9:13-14

Point: *Being a priest in God's kingdom does not mean belonging to a special class or exempted in some manner, but identifies us as partaking of those very things. We are first and foremost an example of these things to others.*

¹⁸Then he presented the ram of the burnt offering, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the ram. ¹⁹Moses slaughtered it and sprinkled the blood around on the altar. ²⁰When he had cut the ram into its pieces, Moses offered up the head and the pieces and the suet in smoke. ²¹After he had washed the entrails and the legs with water, Moses offered up the whole ram in smoke on the altar. It was a burnt offering for a soothing aroma; it was an offering by fire to the LORD, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

[Read v.18-21]

Q: What was the purpose of this second offering?

A: It was a token of their entire service of God, an outward testimony of their dedication to God's service.

Point: *We don't just come to God to be washed—that is, saved—but to be forever dedicated to a new master, obedient in service to Him forever going forward.*

²²Then he presented the second ram, the ram of ordination, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the ram. ²³Moses slaughtered it and 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. ²⁴He also had Aaron's sons come near; and Moses put some of the blood on the lobe of their right ear, and on the thumb of their right hand and on the big toe of their right foot. Moses then sprinkled the rest of the blood around on the altar. ²⁵He took the fat, and the fat tail, and all the fat that was on the entrails, and the lobe of the liver and the two kidneys and their fat and the right thigh. ²⁶From the basket of unleavened bread that was before the LORD, he took one unleavened cake and one cake of bread mixed with oil and one wafer, and placed them on the portions of fat and on the right thigh. ²⁷He then put all these on the hands of Aaron and on the hands of his sons and presented them as a wave offering before the LORD. ²⁸Then Moses took them from their hands and offered them up in smoke on the altar with the burnt offering. They were an ordination offering for a soothing aroma; it was an offering by fire to the LORD. ²⁹Moses also took the breast and presented it for a wave offering before the LORD; it was Moses' portion of the ram of ordination, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

[Read v.22-29]

Q: In our day, to be "ordained" is usually associated with a very formal process, one that is very different from the one described here. Another way of translating the word "ordination" is "filling". How might this help explain the biblical definition of "ordination"?

A: Think of it as filling a hand, placing something in it. Having cleansed or purified the "hands" for service—that is, the priests—they are now "filled"—that is, equipped for God's service.

Point: They took no secret oath nor came into office through earthly qualifications such as education or familial station; it is a picture of the complete work of God who calls, saves, and equips.

For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

Romans 8:29-30

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

Ephesians 1:3-6

Application: Have you thought that calling into God's service means having to be specially gifted or qualified? How do you view your calling in view of this lesson? Do you truly see yourself as an emptied, purified hand that is filled by God to do His work?

Summary

Q: What are the basic terms we can use to describe what God commanded for the priesthood of the Old Testament that is still at work in us, His priesthood of the New Testament?

A: Salvation, justification, and sanctification. It's His complete work that begins with this life and extends into eternity.

³⁰So Moses took some of the anointing oil and some of the blood which was on the altar and sprinkled it on Aaron, on his garments, on his sons, and on the garments of his sons with him; and he consecrated Aaron, his garments, and his sons, and the garments of his sons with him.

³¹Then Moses said to Aaron and to his sons, “Boil the flesh at the doorway of the tent of meeting, and eat it there together with the bread which is in the basket of the ordination offering, just as I commanded, saying, ‘Aaron and his sons shall eat it.’” ³²The remainder of the flesh and of the bread you shall burn in the fire.

³³You shall not go outside the doorway of the tent of meeting for seven days, until the day that the period of your ordination is fulfilled; for he will ordain you through seven days. ³⁴The LORD has commanded to do as has been done this day, to make atonement on your behalf. ³⁵At the doorway of the tent of meeting, moreover, you shall remain day and night for seven days and keep the charge of the LORD, so that you will not die, for so I have been commanded.”

³⁶Thus Aaron and his sons did all the things which the LORD had commanded through Moses.

[Read v.30-36]

Application: Apply Peter’s words to this discussion. How does this also reflect the work of the entire Trinity?

*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, **To those** who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are **chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood:** May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.*

1 Peter 1:1-2

Q: What finally comes after the initial works of salvation, justification, and sanctification?

A: Service.

Q: Why is it important to note that service is last, the natural RESULT of these things?

A: Our heart, mind, and soul must come into complete obedience, what the Bible describes as “faithfulness” before proper service can result. Otherwise we would say that our deeds or works made these things happen instead of the other way around.

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

Ephesians 2:8-10

Q: What might the symbolism be of going through the ordination process for 7 days, of serving before God during that time 24 hours a day?

A: That we are, at all times, to remain pure and wholly devoted to God and God alone.

Overall Application

Share how God is impressing on your heart the lesson of being His priest, being wholly devoted first from the heart and then in service to Him.

What does it mean to you that 7 times in this passage (v.5, 13, 17, 18, 29, 31, 36) that they did “just as the Lord commanded”?