

EXODUS 29 THE CLEANSING FROM SIN

The purpose of the Exodus was not to free slaves but to bring God's people into a covenant relationship with Him through the law, Tabernacle, and priesthood.

We are in an extended section of Exodus that deals with worship. God desired to dwell in the presence of His people by setting up a tabernacle with sacrifices and priests. Through all the elements involved, God shows how He is to be approached upon His terms. The worship is to be carried out the way God prescribes. He shows them how to give glory to Him. In chapter 28 we saw the garments of the priests and how they were to illustrate the beauty and the glory of the Lord. For the priests to enter into worship and service, they must be robed in the character of God. The priests point to the ultimate Great High Priest, Jesus Christ. He is the One of glory, holiness, and beauty. The priests also show us that *we* need glory, holiness, and beauty to reflect the glory of God in our own lives, since we are now the priests who offer up spiritual sacrifices. The only way we can do that, is to be robed in His righteousness. But more is needed than just being clothed with the holiness of God. The clothes do not make the man. This is where the message of chapter 29 comes in. The priests were to be removed from the ordinary way of life to belong Exclusively to God for His service. They were called holy as were the objects of the Tabernacle.

God is radically different from them and their fallen world and God had to make special provision for them for God to dwell in their midst. Before the priest is clothed in God's righteousness, he must be cleansed of his own unrighteousness. The priests must be prepared before they put on those robes. Even though they are priests, they need a mediator too. To be clothed with righteousness, they need to be cleansed of unrighteousness. They need a sacrifice for atonement. After that, they would be dunked in the water, completely washed, before they were girded. This is the climax of what has gone before. Let's look at this ritual and see how it relates to our own cleansing and purification.

1. THE NEED FOR CLEANSING

VV 1-9

God directs that the priests be consecrated and ordained by a ritual that emphasized the need for cleansing. It is God who does the ordaining and setting his priests apart.

Aaron and his sons must be cleansed before serving as priests.

That is the meaning of the ceremony.

There are different kinds of offerings. One animal to be sacrificed is a bull, then a ram, and then another ram.

The bull is for sin offering. The ram is for burnt offering and the other ram is for consecrating.

The washing found in verse 4 is a symbol of cleansing of the priest at the bronze laver. In order to serve in the presence of a holy God, we must be cleansed. Our baptism enters us into a new covenant priesthood. This emphasizes the need for cleansing.

The have sin. Sin is pictured with many different images in the Bible.

Disease in Isa 1:4-6, darkness in 1 Jn 1:5-10, drowning in Ps 130: 1-4
Death in Eph 2:1, but also as dirt and defilement in Isa 1:16, 18,
Jere 4:14. When Aaron and his sons were washed all over, it was
Symbolic of complete cleansing from the Lord. They didn't have to
be bathed all over again, all they had to do was clean their hands and
feet in the laver. A person who has a bath needs only to wash his feet,
his whole body is clean—Jn 13:10

In verse 7, an anointing of oil is mentioned. Anointing is associated
with messiah. The Messiah was anointed as prophet, priest, and king.
Aaron's sons were anointed as a visible marker God has chosen.
When prophets, priests, and kings were anointed, it was a symbol that
God had granted them the Holy Spirit for power and service. Isa 61:1-3

2. THE NEED OF A REPRESENTATIVE VV 10-14

Even the priests needed a representative before God, because of their
sin. They were human and just like everybody in the camp, needed to
have their sin atoned for.

If we had any animal rights activists here, it would be a good time to
leave, because it gets a little ugly here. There is a killing of animals
just so they can benefit man. There will be blood shed.

The one who brings the sacrifice has to **identify** himself with the bull.
By putting his hands on the head of the bull, he was symbolically
transferring his sins to the innocent animal. The bull was a perfect and
innocent sacrifice, yet took the sin of the priest. That is identification.

Substitution also is involved. The animal that takes the sin is sacrificed
in the place of the priest. The bull was the substitute. All through Exodus,
priests can't go into the tent of meeting until the sacrifice is made, until
the washing, until the purification of blood.

The bull was to be slaughtered and the blood applied. This was done for
purification and setting apart. The bull was slaughtered for atonement
for the priest and the purification of the altar. The priest needed forgiveness
and the altar needed to be consecrated.

The burnt offering required that all be burnt up. The liver and kidneys
were to be burnt up. Pagans used these organs for divination to determine the
future. So God was telling them, when you sacrifice, go ahead and burn
those up. Don't be like the pagans.

Verse 14 is the waste parts. The flesh and the skin was to be taken outside
the camp. This represented what it means to violate the covenant.

Lev 13:4,6 deals with the leper. Nadab and Abihu violated what God told
them specifically. They were taken outside the camp. They deserved
being cut off. Because Christ took our sin, He was taken outside Heb 13:10-ff
We place our hands on Christ's head and He suffers in our place.

Jesus is our sin offering and through Him alone we find forgiveness.
Isa 53:4-6,12, Mt 26:28, 2 Cor 5:21

3. THE ENTREATING FOR MERCY VV 15-18

The sacrifice of the ram was the next thing. This is the burnt offering. The bull in the sin offering was not burnt totally. Some of the waste parts were taken out. In this case the whole ram is sacrificed. All is burnt in the burnt offering. Paul drew from this consecration ceremony when he wrote the great verse of Romans 12:1. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." God wants us to present everything to God. Of course we are not a sacrifice to be killed, but a living sacrifice. He wants our bodies and minds and spirit, everything about us. This is done by the extravagant grace and mercy of God. We can give all, for He gave His Son. He bought us and owns us, so we give all to Him as a spiritual service of worship. This is what the priests were expected to do in devoting themselves wholeheartedly to the work of the ministry and to make it the utmost concern of their hearts.----1 Tim 4:15

4. BRANDED IN BLOOD IN ORDINATION VV 19-25

The blood of the second ram, after it was killed, then was to be put on the ear, the thumb and big toe, symbolizing that the priest would hear God, do the work of God, and walk in the way of God. After hearing the Word of God, the hands and feet are to be swift to obey. In Exodus 21:6, the bond slave who decides he wants to stay with the master is in an ear piercing ceremony. That is where he gives himself voluntarily to the master for life. He will be a slave for the rest of his life. In our text the priest will give perpetual service to God. The principle of necessity is still here, in that there has to be blood shed even for this. Heb 9:22 says without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin. This of course foreshadows forgiveness of sin, even in this branding of blood.

5. WAVE OFFERING

VV 26-28

These were symbolic acts indicating the offering was for the Lord. The breast of the ram and the thigh was to be this wave offering along with bread, cake, and oil are to be waved before the Lord.

6. ANOINTING

VV 29-30

The anointing is given to the priests. The sacrificial rituals dealt with the Negative side, the removal of sin, while anointing dealt with the positive, the imparting of holiness.

7. COVENANT MEAL OF COMMUNION VV 31-34

After the ordaining ceremony, the ram and the bread was to be eaten. This was to be shared with God. This is a fellowship meal in which they have communion with God. We relate to this in the Lord's Supper or Communion. After there has been the sacrifice and there is purification such as symbolic baptism, which

represents our cleansing, then we fellowship with God and other believers by the taking of the Lord's Supper. Those two ordinances of baptism and communion can be seen right here. Those ordinances of the OT were pictures of what was to come in our time.

8. ALTAR ATONED AND PRIESTS

VV 35-37

The altar was not only to be purified but also to be atoned for. Why would this be? The answer is that the altar was made with sinful hands. It serves as the perfect Place of atonement for the people. Because Jesus is our sacrifice and altar, we are made holy through atonement.

There had to be a seven day consecration, which probably means a completeness.

9. I WILL BE YOUR GOD

VV 38-46

This is the very heart of the covenant in that God is with us. It was by His own good pleasure that He meet with His people.

These lamb sacrifices are descriptions of daily sacrifices. The sacrifices were to be perpetually and continually offered up to God. To be in the presence of God there had to be sacrifice acceptable to God and the only way was that they continually do this until the permanent sacrifice of Christ. Daily sacrifice was seen as heart of the law. The interruption of the sacrifice would be one of the most devastating things to the people of Israel. Daniel prophesied of the sacrifice being taken away by Antiochus Epiphanes. That would have been terrifying. The question then, would be, how do I get my sin taken care of. In 70 A.D. this happened again, only that time was permanent. Where do the Jews get their sins forgiven today? That is what one little boy asked a rabbi. The rabbi could not answer.

There has to be atoning sacrifice or there is no forgiveness of sin and no fellowship. Atonement needs to take place to cover the sins of the priests.

There was no time for vacation or a day off. In their work they had to follow a daily, weekly, monthly, yearly schedule. Each day began with the sacrifice of a lamb as a burnt offering, signifying the dedication of the people to God and the day ended with the sacrifice of another lamb as a burnt offering.

The priests had to be dedicated to serve. They had to be cleansed from sin. That is the emphasis of this chapter.

In chapter 28 we saw that priests need to be clothed with the holiness of God. In chapter 29 we saw that priests need to be cleansed from sin. That is the only way that the priests could represent the beauty and glory of God. But there are no sets of clothes that can do this. No one can enter the presence of God. No animal sacrifice can cleanse sin. I need to be clothed with God's holiness and need to be cleansed. What hope do I have? I am corrupt. Where do I go? Zechariah 3 gives a great picture of what was to happen. That is our hope.

We are priests because the Great High Priest has done the finished work. Because of the atoning blood of the perfect sacrifice, we can now see ourselves clean by the blood of Christ. We are now priests who stand before the Lord, cleansed and ready to serve Him. He finds delight in us as He dwells with us and blesses us.

We need to be clothed with Christ's righteousness and we need to be cleansed from our unrighteousness.