

EXODUS 29

INTRODUCTION

One of the great occasions in the life of any church is the ordination and induction service of a new Pastor. If you have been at one and I think most of us will have been; you will know that, in that service the church is calling and setting apart a man for the work of the Pastorate. It is a solemn occasion as both church and Minister make solemn vows before God but it is also a joyful occasion as the church rejoices in God's gift to them in calling a man to the Christian Ministry.

Well that is probably the closest that we ever get to what is happening in this chapter. God is setting aside Aaron and his sons for the task of priesthood. Aaron will be the first high priest and so this must have been a very solemn occasion and a very joyful occasion as well as God ordains Aaron to his role as High Priest.

1. THE ORDINATION OF AARON

The ordination takes place in various steps. God lays down very detailed steps for ordaining and inducting Aaron and his sons into the Priesthood. These detailed instructions must be followed and obeyed right down to the very last detail. You can see from Leviticus chapter 8 that these instructions were indeed adhered to and followed in exact detail.

There are three animals that are to be offered a bull and two rams, all of which must be without defect (v 1). Leviticus 8 calls these the bull of sin offering the ram of burnt offering and the ram of ordination. Three different types of wheat bread are to be made and presented to the Lord (v 2)

The next step in the consecration process is that the priests are to be brought to the doorway of the tabernacle and there they are washed which is a symbol of purification so that the priest can enter into God's presence clean (v 4). After they are washed they are to be clothed first Aaron is to be clothed with his special High Priestly garb followed by his sons in their priestly clothing? The next step in the process is the pouring of oil on Aaron's head.

This is a solemn rite signifying that Aaron is to be set apart to the office of High Priest. The bull that was selected in verse one is now brought to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting to the spot where Aaron and his sons have just been washed and clothed (vs. 10-11). Aaron and his sons are to lay their hands on the head of the bull thus transferring their guilt to the animal that is then sacrificed; thus making atonement for Aaron and his sons.

The blood of the animal is to be placed on the horns of the altar, this was part of the atonement process the horns of the altar signifying a place of refuge. It is a place of refuge because of the blood that was shed to make atonement for Aaron and his sons. Then some parts of the animal are to be burned on the altar (vs. 12-13). All these parts were used in pagan worship of the time so perhaps they are to burn them to stop Israel from using them for the same purposes as their pagan neighbours.

The remains of the animal are to be burned outside the camp of Israel (v 14). This is the first time this expression 'outside the camp' is used in the bible it becomes away of referring to the defiled and unclean and cursed thing. For example the leper is to reside outside the camp all the days he has the infection for he is unclean (Lev. 13:46). Likewise the man who blasphemes the name of God is to be put to death outside the camp (Lev. 24:14).

Now I hope by now you can begin to see how this might apply to us. It all points to the Lord Jesus. Unlike Aaron our High Priest the Lord Jesus knew no sin therefore He could enter the presence of his Father and represent us as our High Priest because He alone is pure. No offering for sin; for

him was made; in fact he became our sin offering. The writer to the Hebrews picks up the idea of destroying the animal carcass outside the camp and applies it to the Lord Jesus (Hebrews 13:11-13).

The picture here is amazing. Jesus because of our sin suffered outside of the camp or gate of Jerusalem he metaphorically went to the place of the unclean defiled and cursed. He took upon himself the curse of God that was upon us because of our sin just think about that for a minute, He was sinless yet he went to the cursed place, the cross for us if we are Christians. Outside the camp or in Jesus case the gate of Jerusalem was the place of rejection; it was the cursed place.

There is a sense in which Jesus through his death was being rejected, He was rejected by the people they saw him as refuge as a criminal as a cursed man yet it was through that rejection that Jesus was dying for the sins of those who actually rejected him. It was a cursed place for Jesus in his death was taking upon himself God's curse but not because of his own sin but because of the sins of his people.

Now isn't this amazing that Jesus who we rejected and saw as cursed and unclean and the one to be rejected became our Saviour by that rejection? He became sin for us so that we can be forgiven and reconciled to God. Now that is amazing that ought to cause a great Hallelujah to well up within us. That should be our motivation Christian for living for him; we ought never to become use to the cross; it always ought to move us in our service for him.

What was Jesus purpose in dying like a cursed man? It was that He might be our Great high Priest and bring us to God? Jesus represents us before our Father, He pleads on our behalf and his sacrifice is presented on our behalf so that we are accepted by God and made a child of the living God. We have constant access to our God now; we no longer are strangers to him but we are now his friends, members of his family.

We no longer have to offer animal sacrifices we simply plead the sacrifice of Jesus on that cross outside the city gate. But is it possible that there is someone present who as yet has not been reconciled to God? Is it possible that you are still within your heart rejecting Jesus and are still trying to get to God your way the way of religious observance and good works? Well my dear friend you are doing what the Jews and the Romans did on his day of crucifixion.

You are rejecting him and condemning him in your mind to the place outside the camp the place of rejection. But remember it was that place outside the camp that is the place of redemption. The place of rejection became the place of victory the place of curse became the place of blessing. So do not reject him any longer come to him and experience him as your Great High Priest; the one who will represent you before God both now and on that judgement day.

Then we will not face God's wrath or punishment for Jesus our High Priest, our Saviour has faced His wrath and punishment outside the city walls and he did it on our behalf. We have a great Saviour; make sure you tell people this week about the greatness of our Saviour.

Jesus death outside of Jerusalem was also symbolic in the sense that the cross is proclaiming that salvation is found outside of Judaism. This is really the writer's main point in Hebrews 13 when he takes up the idea of Jesus dying in the place of rejection. Judaism had rejected Jesus but the truth is that Jesus had rejected Judaism. Salvation could not be found there; but only via the cross. So today salvation is not found in any religion or in religious activities but only via the cross only in Jesus Christ.

By continuing to think that you can be saved through religious activity you are in fact rejecting Jesus but the good news is that Jesus has died for those who reject him. Therefore you can be

saved but only through faith and trust in Jesus Christ and in his work of atonement for you on that cross outside of Jerusalem.

In the next step of the ordination process Moses is to have one of two rams brought to the place of sacrifice at the entrance to the tent of meeting. Aaron and his sons are to lay their hands on its head as they did with the bull. The ram is to be slaughtered and the blood is to be thrown all over the altar (vs. 15-16). The blood of the bull was only put on the horns of the altar and around its base but now the entire altar is to be sprinkled with blood.

The whole ram is to be sacrificed as a burnt offering to God but the offering is no good unless God accepts it and we are told that he did accept it (v 18). It was a pleasing smell to God even though burning flesh is a horrible smell; it was pleasing to God because it was done in accordance with his word.

Obedience to God always pleases him. It is interesting that in Romans 12:1 Paul encourages his readers to present our bodies as living sacrifices to God. The Greek word Paul uses for 'sacrifice' is the same word that is used in the Septuagint for part of the description of the whole burnt offering in Exodus 29:18. It is the word for an 'offering of fire.' The reason why Paul uses this word is the Christian's entire life is to be consumed by service to God.

Believers are to dedicate themselves wholly to God in whatever they do just as the whole burnt offering was to be consumed. Now this is an important teaching for those of us who are Christians. Whatever we do, it is to be done for the glory and service of God. Whether at work or on holiday all that we do is for the glory of God? We are not to be Sunday Christians who come to church on a Sunday and do our duty but for the rest of the week live for ourselves.

No! All that we do is service for God. We are all in full time Christian work; you are to live for him when you are at your place of employment for that is your mission field. We are to live for him when we are pursuing one of our hobbies or when we are with our families or even on our own.

If we could use the idea of our sacrifice smelling for a moment can I ask is it a pleasing aroma that God smells. Is He pleased with our lives; our service to him because we live according to his word? Do we need to repent of our failure to serve God during this past week, whether at work or home or in the church?

Now the second ram is to be brought to the tent of Meeting (vs. 19-25) – Leviticus 8:23-24 demonstrates that this command is to be carried out in two stages. Aaron is first of all called and daubed with blood and only afterwards are his sons brought in to go through the same routine. This is to underscore the pre-eminence of the High Priest within the priesthood of Israel. The act of smearing blood on the right ear, thumb and big toe (vs. 19-20) is not found anywhere else in the bible except the Leviticus 14:14.

There a Priest daubs blood on a leper as part of the cleansing ritual. That is probably the purpose of it here with Aaron and his sons; it has a purification purpose. The reason the blood is placed on the right side is perhaps because the right side of a person signifies power, standing and authority (Exodus 16:6 & 12).

Now Aaron and his sons are sprinkled with blood and with oil (v 21) they are being consecrated to the priesthood. The whole scene is covered with blood the altar, the horns of the altar and now the people themselves are set apart by blood. You cannot help but notice the lesson that is being taught here; it is the importance of the blood. Every aspect of the ceremony has blood at the heart; blood was absolutely essential for consecration purification and atonement in this process.

Blood is everywhere it is on the priests it is on every part of the altar including its horns. The entire sacrificial system of Israel was bloody we are told by Josephus a Jewish Historian that during the reign of Nero at the Passover some 256,000 sacrifices were made. Blood must literally have

flowed everywhere. It teaches us what the writer of Hebrews teaches us that 'without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness' (Hebrews 9:22).

There is no hope without the shedding of blood and we are thankful that God sent his Son the Lord Jesus to shed his blood for his people. Again the writer to the Hebrews puts it better than anyone else (Hebrews 9:13-14). We no longer need the bloody sacrifices of the Old Testament or the Old Testament Priesthood for Jesus Christ has come once for all to shed his blood for forgiveness and purification.

But just as the blood cleanses us it also sets us apart as his people to serve and worship him. We are all priests today that is, if you are a believer in Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:9).

The blood of Jesus has set us apart for his service therefore we like every priest have access to God. We also offer sacrifices to him but not animal sacrifices but spiritual sacrifices. Sacrifices like our praise to him (Hebrews 13:15) and of course our whole lives are to be a sacrifice to him (Romans 12:1). We are indeed very privileged people we have been saved by the blood of the Lamb and are set apart for his service. Do our lives reflect that we are his priests that we belong to him and are set apart from his service?

It is sad when the only apparent difference between a believer and an unbeliever is that the believer goes to church. There should be so much more than that that marks us out, our whole lives should be living sacrifices pleasing and acceptable to God. Perhaps this is something that we all need to repent off.

But we are saved to serve; just as the Priests served God before the tabernacle so we are saved to serve God within his temple, which is the church of Jesus Christ. So let us be people who reflect God's salvation by serving wholeheartedly the one whom has saved us for his glory?

Now I don't have much time left so let me just outline the verses that remain in this chapter. The verses that we have covered so far deal primarily with the first instalment of the High Priest and the establishment of priests within Israel. But in verses 26-30 God gives a few commands regarding the future of the priesthood it was important that the priesthood was carried on after Aaron and his sons.

This is done by passing on Aaron Priestly clothing and that of his sons to the next generations of priests. The transference of the priestly garments is symbolic of handing on the priesthood. You see God not only cares for religion at this moment of history in the book of Exodus but he is preparing and introducing laws and regulations for the future, so that the nation will continue to be his people and carry out his commands in the years to come.

The same must be true of the church today. We must not only be concerned about the state of the church for our day and generation but we must be concerned for the church's future. We show our concern by praying for and preparing men for leadership in the church for the next generation; so that they will continue to obey God and follow after Christ. Therefore we must be looking for future leaders of the church now; so that we can train them and equip them.

So that when we have died there are others who will uphold biblical doctrine and who will seek out future leaders of the church so that one generation after another will pass on the gospel so that future generations will have the opportunity to hear the gospel.

We must never become so preoccupied with the here and now that we neglect the future generations by failing to pray, train and equip future leaders of God's church. God is concerned for the church's future are we?

The ceremony ends with a meal as so many Old Testament ceremonies' do (vs. 31-34). The whole ceremony last seven days (vs. 35-37) and the purpose of God setting up his tabernacle and his priesthood are given for us in verse 45. God will dwell with his people and they will then know that God is their God and has saved them and delivered them (v 45).

The church is God's dwelling place today and we are all priests although Jesus is our great High Priest. God promises to dwell in his church not the building but the people and when we know God with us then we also will remember these two truths. That this God is our God and that he has saved and delivered us.

So let us remember when dealing with the tabernacle and the priesthood and with all its details; that the God who gave all these instructions is our God today. He is with us as He was with his Old Testament people and that He has saved and delivered us as He saved and delivered them.

Let's us remember that the Old Testament is the shadow but we now know the reality, we are not worst off than the Old Testament believers because we don't have altars and High Priests and tabernacles.

We are better off for we have the reality, to which all these things point, for we have Christ who is our High Priest and presents us before our gracious and glorious holy God. God is with us and has saved us from sin and delivered us from hell. So let us praise him and bring glory to him

Amen