Consecration of the Priests

Exodus 29:1-30:38

Key Verse: 29:1 “This is what you are to do to consecrate them, so they may serve me as priests: Take a young bull and two rams without defect.”

Romans 12:1 “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God---this is your true and proper worship.”

Last week we studied about the priestly garments. God instructed Moses about the design and the role of the garments so that the priests could serve the Lord with dignity and honor. As Christians today we have to clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ. As we wear, we live. When we clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, we think like him, talk like him, act like him, and live like him. Therefore let us put off our dirty, smelly, and sinful cloths and put on the armor of the Lord Jesus. Amen.

Today we will study about the consecration and ordination of the priests. As the instructions for the priestly garment was detailed, so too were the instructions for the consecration and ordination of the priests. Thank God for Jesus who made it very simple! Through this ceremony we also learn what we have to do as royal priesthood in our generation. May God give us wisdom to understand this passage. Amen.

What does “consecrate” mean? The word ‘consecrate’ comes from the word ‘sacred’ in Latin. ‘Consecrate’ mean 1) make sacred or holy, and 2) devote to God. Why did God consecrate Aaron and his sons? This was because God wanted them to serve Him as priests. Look at verse 1. “***This is what you are to consecrate them, so that they may serve me as priests: Take a young bull and two rams without defect***.” Priests are God’s representatives to his people and the people’s representatives to God. So God provided them with dignified and honorable garments. Above all, priests are mediators between God and men who enter into the Holy Place to atone for the people’s sin. Therefore, they should be holy as God is holy.

How could they consecrate themselves? They had to sacrifice one young bull and two rams along with some loaves at the tent of meeting. (2-4) Before they offered their sacrifice, they had to be ordained first by Moses. Aaron and his four sons had to wash their hands and feet with water. After this Moses had to dress Aaron with the priestly garments staring from the tunic, the robe, the ephod, and the breastpiece. Then Aaron had to put the turban with the golden plate inscribed with “Holy to the Lord.” Finally Moses had to anoint Aaron by pouring the anointing oil on his head. The anointing oil should be sacred and special, so it was made of several chosen mixed materials such as myrrh, fragrant cinnamon, calamus, cassia, and olive oil. (30:22-25,29,33) After Aaron was ordained by Moses, he could start working officially as a priest.

After this ordaining ceremony Aaron should bring a young bull without any defects for a sin offering. Sin offering is done for the atonement for the sins of his people and his own sin. This was the reason why Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the bull’s head.(10) The bull became their sin-bearer. Their sins were cleansed by the shedding of blood because blood represents life. Hebrews 9:22says, “*In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness*.” The priest should slaughter the young bull in the presence of the Lord at the entrance of the tent of meeting. Then he had to put its blood on the four corners of the horn of the altar with his finger and pour out the rest of it at the base of the altar. After this he had to burn the flesh of the bull on the altar and some outside the camp. (14)

After sacrificing the bull for the sin offering, Aaron had to bring one ram without any defects for a burnt offering. (18) The burnt offering is for dedication to the Lord. God wanted Aaron to dedicate himself to the Lord whole-heartedly. This applies today, as God wants us to love Him with all our hearts, with all our souls, and with all our strength. (Deut 6:5) After Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the ram, they had to slaughter it, take its blood, and splash it against the side of the altar. Then, they had to burn the entire ram on the altar (17) As they offered the entire ram on the burning altar, God also wants us to offer ourselves whole-heartedly. Verse 18 says, “***It is a burnt offering to the Lord, a pleasing aroma, a food offering presented to the Lord***.”

The second ram was for a wave offering and for the ordination of the priests. (22,24) The wave does not move from side to side, but moves toward the altar and back. After slaughtering the ram, Aaron and his sons had to take some blood and put it on their ears, thumbs, and toes. Why put the blood on the parts of their bodies? This symbolizes the whole consecration of the priests. Then they had to take some blood from the altar, mix it with the anointing oil, and sprinkle it on the priestly garments of Aaron and his sons. In this way their garments would be also consecrated. (21) After this bloody ceremony, they had to burn the flesh of the ram, except breast and thighs, which they could later eat with bread and wine. (27, 31-34) Verse 28 says that this is always to be the perpetual share from the Israelites for Aaron and his sons. This means that this consecration and ordination ceremony should be passed down for future generation. The priestly garments which were stained with the blood and oil should also be passed down from generation to generation. Look at verses 29-30. “***Aaron’s sacred garments will belong to his descendants so that they can be anointed and ordained in them. The son who succeeds him as priest and comes to the tent of meeting to minister in the Holy Place is to wear them seven days***.” The priesthood was succeeded for future generations through the descendants of Aaron. How can this apply to us? We are not the genetic descendants of Aaron. We don’t have Aaron’s priestly garments, either. But we are the descendants of Abraham, who lived by faith with the covenant of God. We clothe with the Lord Jesus Christ as royal priesthood. We want to pass down our spiritual priesthood to our children. This is because we know that it is more blessed than us becoming successful in this world. This weekend Moscow UBF celebrates their 30 years’ anniversary. They asked us to pray for their children to succeed their parents’ priesthood and spiritual legacy as they remember the work of God in Russia for the last 30 years. To succeed the priesthood to the next generation is not easy. We pray that God may raise many godly men and gospel workers among young people from Moscow UBF and from our children.

Now this is the daily duty of the priests according to the Scriptures. They had to offer two lambs as a burnt offering every day: one in the morning and the other in the evening. (38-41) It should be regular and consistent. (38-42) Every morning the priests should also burn fragrant incense on the altar in the Holy Place when he tends the lamp. (30:7) Every evening he must burn incense again when he lights the lamp, so incense may burn regularly before the Lord and so the lamp also be kept burning all the time. (27:20) In the Bible offering incense and burning the lamp symbolizes persistent prayer in the presence of God. The priestly duty was not only for atoning sins, but also for mediating his people toward God through their prayer.

Today we studied the complicated, bloody, consecrating ceremony for the priests. We get a few lessons from the consecration of the priests. First, we must give thanks to Jesus, who completed this ceremony by himself for our eternal salvation. Since the age of Aaron from generation to generation the descendants of Aaron repeated this bloody sacrifice for the atonement of their sins and their peoples’ sin. The priests should wear the bloody, oily, and smelly garments all the time when they ministered. But today we don’t have to because Jesus did it all. As our high priest Jesus took his own blood and entered the Most Holy Place and finished our salvation once for all. Amen! Second, we must remember that God is holy and that he wants to be with us. Why did God command priests to follow these complicated instructions for garments and for consecration? This was because God is holy and he wants to dwell among his people. Look at verses 29:42-43. “***For the generations to come this burnt offering is to be made regularly at the entrance to the tent of meeting before the Lord. There I will meet you and speak to you; there also I will meet with the Israelites, and the place will be consecrated by my glory***.” In verses 44-46 the Lord repeatedly said that he would dwell among the Israelites and be their God. God eagerly wants to be with his people just as a father wants to be with his children. But God is holy and his people are sinful, so he can’t dwell among them because of his holy character. The holy God cannot be changed into a sinful one. Men should be changed to be holy in order to meet God. It is amazing that God appeared as a human form. Jesus appeared as a man. This must be a shocking message to all of us. So, John the Apostle said, “*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*” (Jn 1:14) Indeed, Jesus changed human history. In the past priests had to consecrate themselves to meet God through the bloody atoning ceremony. But now God changed and incarnated himself to be with us. It must be full of grace to sinners like us. Third, therefore, we must offer our bodies as a living sacrifice- holy and pleasing to God. Since Jesus terminated the bloody sacrifice system and completed our salvation, what should we do? We must offer our bodies as a living sacrifice- holy and pleasing to God.(Ro 12:1) How can we offer our bodies as a living sacrifice? Should we jump into the fire until we burn to die? No! We must be holy. Being holy means making us different from this world and setting us apart for God. Paul explained it in Romans 12:2, “*Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will*.” Every day temptation comes to lead us astray from our faith and turn away from the Lord. Satan seems to give us things we desire if we listen to him. People who follow this world look smart and we who follow God looks outdated and foolish. But, as Paul said, we must not follow the pattern of this world, but be transformed by renewing our mind. We have to renew our mind through repentance. We must stand firm in the promise of God. Recently Kit memorizes 1 Corinthians 15, the entire chapter, to dedicate himself to the Lord. He wants to be holy and to stand firm on resurrection faith. Michael, Hershey, and our young leaders finished the book reading program this summer by reading the biography of the American missionary Jim Eliot and his four friends, who gave their lives for the Lord in Ecuador. Jim and the four missionaries offered their lives as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God. Michael believes that our young leaders must have been encouraged by their sacrificial lives.

In this pandemic crisis we are tempted to compromise with social distance. Our outdoor activities are restricted. We are not free to contact people for Bible study and for worship. Some may give up the lives of faith during this pandemic. Others may spend more time searching the internet and watching YouTube. Still, we have something to do as a royal priesthood and a holy nation. We can pray for God’s kingdom and for his people. We can spend more time for intercessory prayer and Bible reading. One recent UBF prayer topic is to overcome the pandemic crisis by deepening our personal relationship with the Lord. Through morning devotion, eating daily bread, reading the Bible regularly, and praying for others, we can offer our bodies as a living sacrifice. May God consecrate us by the blood of Jesus and sanctify us with the Holy Spirit and mobilize us to find out the lost sheep and lead them to Christ Jesus even during this pandemic crisis. Amen!

**The Consecration of Priests**

* One young bull : Sin offering Atonement Heb 9:22
* Two rams: first ram Burnt offering Dedication Deut 6:5

Second ram Wave offering Ordination Ex 29:22

**Daily duty of priests**

* Offer two lambs as burnt offerings: one in the morning, the other in the evening
* Burn fragrant incense twice: morning and evening
* Tend the lamps: morning and evening