

Lesson 10 – Exodus 25-40, Leviticus 1-10 (Priesthood)

Text: Exodus 28-29, Leviticus 1-10

Main Characters: God, Moses, Aaron, Aaron's sons (Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar)

Key Passages:

- Exodus 28:1 – God names Aaron and his sons to be priests for Israel.
- Leviticus 10:3 – Above all, God must be glorified; Aaron was not to mourn his disobedient sons.

Main Storyline:

In addition to receiving instruction for the construction of the tabernacle, Moses was also instructed regarding the priesthood who would minister to God on behalf of the people. God chose Aaron, his sons, and their future descendants to be the priests for Israel. Aaron was to be the first “high priest” who had special responsibilities (though the office is not specifically called this until Leviticus 21). He gave special instructions to Moses regarding the clothing that the priests would need to wear as they served. The high priest had additional clothing that he was to wear, notably the breastplate of judgment, which was to hold the Urim and the Thummim, special artifacts that would allow the high priest to receive a decision directly from God.

Before the priests could serve, they needed to be consecrated through a complex series of sacrifices and observances. The high priest, Aaron, was to be anointed with oil (the only other office to involve anointing was the king's office). Blood also featured prominently in these consecration rituals, most likely relating to the spiritual cleansing from sin.

God also described the many different sacrifices and offerings that the Israelites would need to make. The priests, as God's ministers, were required to assist the people in each of these offerings. There were five main types of offerings described by God: burnt, grain, peace, sin, and trespass. The burnt offering was typically associated with atonement or dedication to God, but was given in a variety of circumstances and could be composed of a number of different animals. The one offering was to place his hands on the animal when it was on the altar and to kill it, perhaps to emphasize the fact that the animal was dying in his place. The grain (and drink) offering was generally given in conjunction with another type of sacrifice. A small part of it was burned, while most of it was given to the priest to eat. The peace offering was often connected with a praise/thanksgiving to God and celebration of the good relationship between God and man. The sin and trespass offerings were both offered as a request for forgiveness of some sin that the one offering had committed. God outlined specific circumstances where each was appropriate to be offered.

After receiving all of this instruction and the tabernacle was assembled, God commanded Moses to begin the consecration process for Aaron and his sons. They performed the sacrifices and offerings just as God had commanded them. At the end of the ritual, the glory of God appeared to all of the people and instantly consumed the burnt offering that was on the altar, prompting all of the people to shout and fall on their faces. Unfortunately, perhaps caught up in the moment, two of Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, offered “strange fire,” something not commanded by the Lord. God instantly struck them both dead for their disobedience. Their bodies were dragged outside of the camp by their tunics.

Lessons/Applications:

- 1.) Sin always demands death, specifically the shedding of blood (Ezekiel 18:4).
- 2.) A life of true service to God is a life full of daily sacrifices (Luke 9:23, Romans 12:1).
- 3.) God demands that His instructions are followed exactly as He gives them. When they are not followed in this way, God punishes the offender.