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LEVITICUS 8:1-10:20

Today, as we look again at the Book of Leviticus, we're going to be looking at the priesthood. Last week, God the Holy Spirit drew our attention to the sacrifices. We saw that sacrifices were demanded by God for man's sin. Animals were to be brought by the people and those animals were killed and the blood of those animals atoned for the sins of the people.

This was the foundation for the doctrine of *substitutionary atonement*.

If you've been in our class very long, you know that occasionally I'll mention to you the importance of knowing the **essentials of the faith**. The reason this is so important is that when you hear a teacher or preacher and they make a point in their teaching that sounds strange to your ears, you need a checklist to see if this person has strayed away from the essentials of the faith.

Well, one of the essentials of our faith is the doctrine of substitutionary atonement.

If you are going to know what the essentials of our faith are, you need to also know what they mean. Since we'll see this again next week, we're not going to labor the point, but I believe this doctrine must be understood if we're going to get the full meaning from Leviticus.

Man is separated from God by sin. God created Adam **without sin**. But God created Adam **with choice**. Adam could choose to obey Him or disobey Him. And we all know that Adam chose to disobey God.

Remember back in Genesis after Adam and Eve sinned against God...and God came calling for them and they had hidden themselves? Why had they hidden themselves? Because when they sinned, they realized their bodies were naked.

So, they came up with the idea of covering themselves with fig leaves. When God found them...hey...they thought they looked pretty good with their new outfits on. After all, they had made them themselves! And, their little aprons of fig leaves covered up their nakedness, didn't they? I mean, they'd figured out a way to cover their sin...all by themselves, hadn't they?

But, this was not acceptable to God. It wasn't then, it wasn't in Abraham's day and it wasn't in the day of Moses, and it isn't acceptable today either.

We know God didn't accept their little garments of fig leaves, because He replaced them, didn't He? God killed an animal and made Adam and Eve garments from that animal to cover their nakedness...and this was the foreshadowing of the sacrifices we saw last week and those sacrifices as we said last week foreshadowed the **sacrifice at Calvary**.

The sacrifices we saw last week showed the people their self-effort would never atone for their sins.

Now, blood sacrifices were nothing new. Blood sacrifices had been a part of this culture down through the years...Abel knew about it...that's why his sacrifice was accepted and Cain's wasn't.

...Abraham knew about it...that's why he was willing to lay his beloved son on an altar and was prepared to kill him until the angel of the Lord stopped him. In fact, if you'll remember, Abraham told Isaac that God would provide a lamb to be sacrificed.

...and we could name numerous other occasions of folks

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offering up sacrifices before this passage of Leviticus.

But, the Levitical sacrifices really spelled out for the people the doctrine of substitutionary atonement...the doctrine that man must have a substitute...that God demands payment for man's sin and that if man is to live and be forgiven, blood must be shed because "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin..."

These sacrifices also spelled out for the people that God would not accept their sacrifices if offered in any way that was not laid down by God Himself! In other words, they must come to God **by way of a priest**. They must bring a blood sacrifice – yes – but, it must be brought to the priest and the priest in turn must present it to God!

Let me ask you...

Could just any man of Israel decide he would be a priest?

Could a man just enter the seminary and become a priest?

Could a little boy say, "You know, I believe I'd look real good in those priestly garments, and I like to spend time playing around with fire...I believe I'll be a priest when I grow up..."?

No, although it **was** God's original plan for the entire nation of Israel to be a kingdom of priests...the matter of the golden calf prevented this and so God chose only one tribe – the tribe of Levi. As we said last week all priests were Levites but not all Levites were priests. So, if this little boy wanted to be a priest when he grew up, he couldn't even consider it if he were not of the tribe Levi.

We're going to look at the blood atonement a little more next week, but now, let's look at the Levitical priesthood for the next few minutes and as we go along, let's draw from this some application for us today...

1) The Cleansing of the Priests (8:1-6)

This all over ceremonial washing of the priests was done only once. From then on, Exodus 30 tells that they washed their hands and feet at the brazen laver before they could serve in the Tabernacle. God wanted the priests to wash away the dirt they had picked up outside the Tabernacle.

When we as sinners trust Christ, we are washed from our sins once and for all. We're not washed in water...No, Revelation 1:5-6 tells us that we are released from our sin by His precious blood and it goes on to tell us that we are made a kingdom of priests.

There are some who say that baptism washes our sins away...but there is nothing in the baptismal waters that takes away sin.

Only the blood of Jesus can wash away your sin and my sin!

You know, there is a lot of good theology contained in the old hymns. There's an old hymn that says,

"Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power?"

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Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?
Are you fully trusting in His grace this hour?
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?"

The only cleansing power available to sinners is the cleansing power of Jesus' blood. And, I want to ask you today...**have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?**

Let me ask you this...if you've been washed in the blood of Jesus, what happens when you get your feet and hands dirty? I mean...the priests were to wash their dirty hands and feet at the brazen laver...but what gets **our** hands and feet clean when we've been walking around in the world...when the things of the world get **our** hands and feet dirty? Do we have a brazen laver? Paul tells us in Ephesians that we are **sanctified and cleansed by the washing of water with the Word.**

You see, in the Bible, water for washing is a picture of God's Word.

Now, I know you probably get tired of my telling you to get into God's Word, but I do it because that's what will keep your hands and feet clean...that's what will keep you close to Jesus. It is the Word of God that tells us that if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Do you want to be clean? The psalmist says cleansing comes when we take heed to God's Word.

Do you want to build your faith? "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God..."

Do you want to walk a holy walk before God? "Thy Word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against Thee..."

Beloved, it is the Word of God that will keep you from stumbling.

As the child of God looks into the Word of God, the Spirit of God uses the Word of God to make the child of God more like the Son of God.

When we apply it to our lives, we become more like Jesus. God uses **clean** vessels. That's why the priests had to wash their hands and feet whenever they were to serve in the Tabernacle. God won't use us if you have dirty hands and feet. Do you want to be used by God? Then, be a clean vessel. Get into the Word, confess your sins, dear Christian. The only way we can be used in His service is to be cleansed.

Well, we've seen the cleansing of the priests, and how that applies to us today, let's look at

2) The Clothing of the Priests (7-9)

Now, the clothing given here was clothing that was worn by the High Priest. Aaron was the High Priest, and his sons were the priests. We would have to go back to Exodus 28 to see exactly what the priests were to wear but all these garments were special, and everyone who saw these men would know they had been set apart for God's service.

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Exodus 28 tells us that these were **holy garments** and they were for **glory** and for **beauty**. They were made by folks who were skilled in weaving and embroidery and engraving and metalwork (filigree) and stonemasonry.

But, what I want **us** to see today, is this...

Believers have special garments, too!! Scripture tells us that our righteousness is as filthy rags (lepers' bandages, menstrual cloths) to our Heavenly Father...

But, once we're washed in the blood of Jesus, Scripture says then, "we are clothed in the garments of salvation and we are wrapped in a robe of righteousness."

Aren't you glad God sees the righteousness of Jesus when He looks at us and not the filthy rags of our own righteousness?

Aren't you glad that

"we're dressed in His righteousness alone
faultless to stand before the Throne"?

That hymn we quoted a few minutes ago goes on to say,
"Lay aside the garments that are stained with sin
and be washed in the blood of the Lamb;
There's a fountain flowing for the soul unclean,
O be washed in the blood of the Lamb."

I want to ask you...are **you** washed in the blood of the Lamb today? If you died today and were to stand before God, when He looked at you, would He see **your** righteousness, or the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Well, we've looked briefly at the cleansing of the priests and the clothing of the priests and how this applies to us, let's look at

3) The Consecration of the Priests

Verses 10-22 tell us how Moses anointed the Tabernacle and the altar and all the utensils and the basin and its stand. He also poured anointing oil on Aaron's head and he put priestly garments on Aaron's sons. He also slaughtered a bull and placed its blood on the horns of the altar. He offered up the inner parts of that bull as a burnt offering and the other parts he burned outside the camp.

Then, he did much the same thing with a ram. In each case, Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the bull and on the head of the ram. **WHY?**

They were transferring their own sins to the animals. These men were sinners, and before they could serve God, **their sins had to be atoned for...they had to be consecrated.**

Beloved, you'll find all through Scripture, that God's servants were conscious of the fact that they were sinners.

I want to ask you...have you ever been conscious of the fact that you were a sinner? Was there ever a time in your life that you knew all that old sin in your life was a real burden? Have you ever transferred your sin to Jesus?

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Well, if you've never laid your burden down at Calvary, why don't you do it today? Jesus said, "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

How pointless to drag around all that old sin when we don't have!!

Let's look at one more ritual in this ceremonial setting aside of these priests.

8:23 and 24...

Everything the priests were to hear...

Everything the priests were to touch...

Everywhere the priests were to go...

was to be consecrated and sacred and dedicated to God!

When you and I were washed by the blood of Jesus, we were washed all over...from our head to our toes.

The blood-tipped ear symbolizes the ear that will hear the voice of God.

The Bible tells us that natural man does not receive the things of God...so I want to ask you...have your ears been blood washed?

The blood-tipped hand is essential for service.

If you're trying to serve God and your hands haven't been washed in the blood of Jesus...you're spinning your wheels...your service is unacceptable.

The blood-tipped foot is essential for our walk before God.

Don't try to walk before God if your feet haven't been washed in the blood of Jesus.

All of this symbolizes for us that every aspect of a man should be dedicated to God!

The blood-washed child of God shouldn't **hear things** or **touch things** or **go places** that would be offensive to the One whose blood cleansed him.

Now, before we go on...I know you're probably saying, "Why doesn't she tell us how the priesthood parallels with the Lord Jesus?" Well, I'm going to do that next week...so be sure and come!!

Chapter 9 tells us of the very first performance of duties by the priests. God had gone into great detail, instructing Aaron and his sons how they were to perform their duties and in this chapter, they finally get down to work.

They had been **cleansed, clothed and consecrated**, and Chapter 9 ends with the **fire of God coming down and consuming the offering**, but I want us to see that in Chapter 10, **the fire of God consumed the offerers**.

Wouldn't it be nice if Chapter 10 were not necessary? But God included it in His precious Word for our instruction and I truly believe it has a special word for us today.

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Chapter 10:1-7...

We said at the outset last week that the theme of the Book of Leviticus is holiness. We also said that God has a certain way that He expects to be worshiped. We must come to God **one way...His way!!**

Here we have two of Aaron's four sons...Nadab and Abihu. The Bible says they offered "strange fire". What does that mean?

Well, several views of exactly what happened have been set forth by different Bible scholars. Let me just give them to you briefly...

Some say they were the **wrong people**...that they weren't even supposed to be lighting the fire.

Some say they were permitted to light the fire, but they used the **wrong utensil** to light the fire.

Some say they did it at the **wrong time**.

Some say they used the **wrong source** of fire.

Some say they did it in the **wrong place**.

Some say they were **drunk**...(verse 9)

Maybe it was a combination of some or all of the above. The bottom line is this: **Whatever they did, God didn't like it and He struck them dead!!**

Now, if that doesn't meet with your approval...may I say to you...it doesn't have to! God gave man life and God has the right to take that life away!!

We need to understand that God's ways are higher than ours and His thoughts are higher than ours and whatever He does is right and just. "He does all things well"!!! God obviously has certain boundaries man cannot cross.

One theologian said the holiness of God is set forth at the beginning of the age of Law by this incident just as the holiness of God is set forth at the beginning of the age of Grace by the incident of Ananias and Sapphira.

We could spend a lot of time speculating on exactly what made God so angry with these men, but I'm determined to let you out earlier this week than I did last week...so let me just sort of cut to the chase...

These men came to God **on their own**. They were willful and stubborn and what they did was contrary to what God had instructed them to do.

Let me ask you this...is it possible to offer "strange fire" to God today?

I believe it is...and I believe there are many different ways for folks to offer up strange fire to God.

All we have to do is look on over in the Old Testament when God's people had gone into disobedience and idolatry and see that God told the people of Israel that He would not accept their sacrifices, He considered them an abomination in His sight, and He rejected their festivals.

Bear in mind, God had instituted these sacrifices and festivals, but their hearts were not right before Him!

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God wants our worship to be pure, free from wrong motives, free from pride, free from self-promotion. God wants our hearts pure when we worship. God wants our worship to exalt and lift high the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. **God wants our worship to center on Him and Him alone.**

And, we better be thankful that God is operating out of **love and mercy and grace** today or it's very likely that all of us would be in the same shape as Nadab and Abihu. Because if we were truly honest with each other this morning, most of us in this room at some time or other have been guilty of **hypocrisy at worst** and **mediocrity at best** in our worship.

Having said all that...I believe that in the day in which we live, folks more and more are offering God "strange fire."

Beloved, Paul told Timothy that in the last days folks would want their ears tickled. He said the time would come when folks would not endure sound doctrine and they would turn their ears away from the truth.

In other words, in these last days, folks will offer the Lord not true worship, based upon the sound doctrine of God's precious Word...but "strange fire..." – false worship based upon their own ideas of how worship should be.

Many churches today are claiming the fires of revival have fallen but they are actually offering up "strange fire."

See, Nadab and Abihu were supposed to light their censers from the fire that God had sent down in chapter 9, but they somehow made for themselves "strange fire." And, by the same token, believers today are not to manufacture, they are not to conjure up their own revival...not through **emotion** or being **slain in the spirit** or **holy laughter** or **speaking in gibberish**, or **writhing on the floor** or **howling like dogs!**

Revival and true worship come from Almighty God! Revival and true worship aren't picked up and carried around the country by Benny Hinn or Kenneth Copeland or Rod Parsley or the folks from Toronto or Pensacola!!

Folks, God is holy!! I hope if we don't learn anything else from the Book of Leviticus we learn that **God is holy and He has called us to be holy!!**

God has called us to be a **holy nation** and a **royal priesthood**.

cleansed us with the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.
the robes of the righteousness of the Lord Jesus.

He has **consecrated us** to the service of the Lord Jesus.

He has
He has **clothed us in**

We didn't save ourselves, God saved us! We're not making the rules, God is!

My prayer is that we will determine to be the priests that God has called us to be. May we walk in purity and holiness before Him. May our worship be worship that God is truly pleased with!!

Now, as we mentioned a few minutes ago...this week we

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compared and paralleled **the priesthood with the believer.**

Next Sunday, we'll see how it compares and contrasts with
our great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ!