

# Cleansed and made Holy

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Date: 16 May 2021

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[ 0 : 00 ] Now, no one would think to serve a MasterChef dish on a dirty plate. So imagine tonight going home and you turn on the TV. It's coming on at 7.30, not a plug.

And you see a contestant pulling a dirty dish from the sink. You know, the last 30 seconds, you know, Melissa's shouting again. And, you know, using that plate to plate up their yummy creation. That just wouldn't do, would it? But neither would it do for them to walk up to the judge with just a clean plate, but nothing on it.

You need both, don't you? The plate needs to be clean in the first place. And then afterwards, you put your beautiful creation on it. Both aspects, clean and perfect, are necessary if you want to win the immunity.

Well, a similar thing happens with God's people. So, in order to dwell with Him, to serve Him and meet with Him, God's people have to be both clean and holy.

[ 1 : 06 ] The first aspect, if you like to think about it like this, gets you from negative to zero. And then the second, making holy, gets you from zero to positive.

Last time that Daniel was, I think it was last week, yes, Daniel worked through the priestly garments with us. And today, we see how the priests, wearing those garments, are consecrated and ordained to their role.

How they are made clean, going from negative to zero, and then holy, zero to positive. But before we begin to look into the passage, let me explain the vocabulary associated with both these concepts.

Because there are specific terms that are used for each. So, you'll see that in your outline under point one. That the words to make clean include things like washing, sin offering, and atonement. Now, washing you all get. Hopefully, some of you do it yourself. But sin offering and atonement are less obvious. These words relate to internal or spiritual cleaning, cleansing.

[ 2 : 11 ] When we sin, we're considered unclean on the inside, spiritually. And the bringing of a sin offering atones for the sin of the person. So, the word atone or atonement turns away God's wrath against sin and makes the otherwise sinful person no longer guilty.

The slate, or the dish, if you like, is wiped clean. Then there are words that relate to making holy. And that's rather like turning that clean plate into a master chef dish.

And the words here are anointing, consecration, or sacred. And both concepts in the text, you'll see, apply not just to the priests, but to the altar as well.

And so, with those things in mind, let's begin in verse 1, where the first step is to outwardly wash the priests. So, verse 1, this is what we are to do to consecrate them so they may serve as priests. Now, this is just an opening statement. And then what follows is a list of things they are together. Take a young bull, two rams without defect, and from the finest wheat flour, make round loaves without yeast, thick loaves without yeast, and olive oil, thin loaves without yeast, brushed with olive oil.

[ 3 : 30 ] Put them in a basket and present them along with the bull and the two rams. Next, the priests and their garments are prepared. But notice that as this is being done, Aaron and his priests are passive.

They're brought or led to the tent. They're washed, and then they're dressed by Moses. So, it says, Take the garments, dress Aaron with the tunic, the robe, the ephod, the breastpiece, fasten the ephod on him, put the turban on his head, attach the sacred emblem to the turban.

Take the anointing oil and anoint him by pouring it over his head. Bring his sons and dress them accordingly. Then tie sashes on Aaron and his sons. The priesthood is theirs by a lasting ordinance.

Now, here, even though the word anointing is used, I don't think he's being made holy just yet. Instead, the act merely designates him for that role. He's being chosen, he and his family are being chosen by God to be the people's priests, Israel's priests, from here on in. And then it's in verse 9 that the ordination process begins improper. There it says, Then, Moses, you shall ordain Aaron and his sons. And step one in that process is that of spiritual cleansing. [ 4 : 51 ] So, we read, Bring the bull to the front of the tent, and Aaron and his sons shall lay hands on it. That's, I think, just to identify them with, you know, to take ownership that what happens to the bull is what's being done for them.

Slaughter it in the Lord's presence at the entrance to the tent of meeting. Take some of the blood, put it on the horns of the altar with a finger, and pour out the rest of it at the base of the altar around. Then take all the fat, fat of the internal organs, the long lobe of the liver, both the kidneys with the fat on it, and burn them on the altar. But burn the bull's flesh and its hide and its intestines outside the camp.

It's a sin offering. And so, that marks to us that this is an act of atonement. Only the fat of the animal is burnt, but the rest is then taken outside to be burnt as well.

But because it's a sin offering, what it's doing is turning away God's anger or wrath against sin. Then we turn to the two rams, and this part of the process moves on to consecration and ordination. [ 6 : 00 ] So it says, Now we know that this is a different sacrifice because of the word burnt offering.

And if you were to read Leviticus, there are still some aspects of the burnt offering which is for atonement. But it's actually different to a sin offering.

How so? First, as the name suggests, it's burnt. So nothing is to be eaten. With the sin offering just happened earlier, we know that everything was burnt with that as well.

But that's because this sin offering was being offered for the atonement of the priest as well. And what is the idea behind this is that those whose sins are being atoned for shouldn't profit from the animal that's by eating of it.

So where the offering is being done on the priest's behalf for their sin, then they shouldn't be allowed to eat of it. But later on, when the priest does the offering, the same sin offering for others, the instruction is that they're actually allowed to retain parts of the animals for themselves to eat of it.

[ 7 : 31 ] So it's as though, you know, in this case, they're standing, you know, in the case where they're offering it on behalf of another, they're standing on God's holy side of the transaction, as it were.

They are now holy. And so therefore, they are able to eat of it. Whereas in the first instance, they are on the unholy side. What's happening here, for example, they're being atoned for.

They're on the unholy side. And therefore, they do not partake of the animal. And therefore, the animal has to be burnt in entirety. The burnt offering, on the other hand, is always burnt.

That is, wholly offered to the Lord, as it says in verse 18, so that it becomes a pleasing aroma to the Lord, a food offering. And so this pleasing aroma, I think, means that it's not turning away God's wrath from sin, but it's actually an act that brings pleasure to God.

And so it seems that the blood of the bull is primarily for atonement for sin, but the blood of the ram is for consecrating the altar and the priest. And the resulting burnt offering is something that is holy and pleasing to God.

[ 8 : 46 ] If you want an analogy, I suppose it's similar to parents. Parents often get angry with their children. For example, they're not studying and wasting time watching Netflix instead.

It happens. So the parent gets angry with the child, right? And as a show of contrition, after they've been told off, the child wanders back to his study and starts to study.

Hits the books and puts a lot of work into it. And so initially, that act by the child, all that does is soothe the anger of the parent. Right? It turns away wrath.

Yeah, well, you don't laugh. You start laughing from experience, probably. But yeah, you parents get it. But let's say the child not only completes the homework, right? But then after that, he does the extra revision assigned as well.

You know, the bit that's optional that teachers say, if you want to do it, just do it. But now, he's studying. He's still studying, doing the same thing. But now, as the parent looks on, he or she looks on with pleasure.

[ 9 : 50 ] Right? He's making the parent proud. The child is no longer atoning for his misbehavior, but bringing a pleasing aroma to his parents.

Right? So I think the same thing is happening here, that both the sin and the burnt offerings are animal sacrifices. Both require blood. Both burn the animal.

But one is for atonement, and the other is for consecration. The latter produces a pleasing aroma to the Lord. Now, with the second ram, so remember this, this is the first ram, the second ram, the consecration then now moves on, and it doesn't just involve a burnt offering, but a third type of offering.

Because some portion of the ram is retained to be used to ordain Aaron and his sons. So let's read on in verse 19. Take the other ram, the second one, Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on its head, slaughter it, take some of its blood, and put it on the lobes of the right ears of Aaron, and his sons on the thumbs of their right hands, and on the big toes of their right feet.

Then splash blood against the sides of the altar. And take some blood from the altar, and some of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it on Aaron and his garments, and on his sons and garments.

[ 11 : 06 ] Then he and his sons and their garments will be consecrated. So here we see that the blood is dabbed straight from the animal onto Aaron's ears, hands and feet.

But notice also that some blood is taken from the altar, so the blood was poured onto the altar, and then it's taken from the altar, and sprinkled on the garments with the anointing oil.

And I think this act not only then consecrates them as priests, but sort of ties them to the altar.

Because if you think about it, the altar for the priests is really their primary tool of trade.

If they want to be able to function as priests, the altar is the thing that they need to be able to do their job. And then it goes on, take from this ram the fat, the fat tail, so the Lord loves the fat, that's the choice portions.

And then the right thigh as well. This is the ram for the ordination. From the basket of bread made without yeast, which is before the Lord, take one round loaf, one thick loaf, and one thin loaf, and put all this in the hands of Aaron and his sons, and have them, wave them before the Lord as a wave offering.

[ 12 : 14 ] So I think there's more things there than two hands, so probably all his sons have to take part, and they have to wave it. That's why it's called a wave offering. And then take them from their hands and put them on the altar, along with the burnt offering, for a pleasing aroma to the Lord, a food offering presented to the Lord.

So again, the first part of it is a burnt offering, which is pleasing to the Lord. But this second ram now is also called the ram for ordination. That is, parts of it are used not just for consecration, but for ordination.

And the idea here is that Aaron and his sons aren't just being made holy, that's what consecration does, but they are being made into holy priests. They have a function to go with their consecration. And here's where the third type of the offering is now used, because the priest takes the offering in his hands, and in verse 25, the wave offering is burnt, but when we get later on to verse 27, the wave offering is used and then retained for cooking.

And so from verse 26, we get to what I feel is the climax of this process, because the meat that is cooked enables the priest to partake in a holy feast.

[ 13 : 32 ] I won't read all the verses again, but what happens here is one breast of the lamb is waved, given to Moses as his share. The other breast is also waved, so the ram has two breasts, and the left thigh, remember the right thigh has already been burnt, the left thigh is used as well for Aaron's share.

And so when we jump to verse 31, it says, take the ram for ordination and cook the meat in a sacred place. At the entrance to the tent of meeting, Aaron and his sons are to eat the meat of the ram and the bread that is in the basket.

They are to eat these offerings by which atonement was made for their ordination and consecration. But no one else may eat them because they are sacred, and if any of the meat of the ordination ram or any bread is left over, burn it up.

It must not be eaten because it is sacred. So this is a holy feast or sacred meal and it reminds us, does it not, of chapter 24 last year or I mentioned it at the start of the series this year, when Moses and Aaron and all the 70 elders ate on Mount Sinai in the Lord's presence.

I think too that the reference, it's interesting that it's called a burnt offering, pleasing aroma, and then it's still a food offering presented to the Lord. It's almost as if symbolically, as it's being burnt, God joins them in this feast.

[14:53] God, of course, does not eat physically, but this burning is symbolic of God eating with them, almost. Particularly when you notice that the things that are being burnt, it's not just the meat, but the bread as well, are the very same things that the priests eat.

So they're all almost sharing in the same feast. But only Aaron and his sons can eat the sacred meal because only they are consecrated and ordained for it.

But when they do, they eat it on the people's behalf because remember, they're wearing the breastplate with all the 12 heavy stones and the ephod with the two stones on the shoulders, representing the whole of Israel as they are eating.

And as we've seen in earlier weeks already, this meal symbolizes communion with God, an act of fellowship and relationship with Him. And this, as I've said before, has always been God's end goal. All this tabernacle and priesthood being set up, God's goal is to dwell with His people, to be in relationship with Him. And so He has to cleanse His people and make them holy before they can do that.

[16:03] They can live in His presence, serve and worship Him. But the whole sacrificial system is critical for Israel to be able to do this.

In order for Israel to be made clean and holy, required the sacrificial system. And so, the priest and the author themselves have to first be cleansed and made holy in order that they can do this job for the people.

And so important is this, that as we read in verse 35, this whole process is being repeated for seven days.

Do for Aaron and his sons everything I've commanded you, taking seven days to ordain them. Sacrifice a bull each day as a sin offering to make atonement. And then here, you see the clear distinction between atonement and consecration.

Purify the altar by making atonement for it and anoint it to consecrate it. For seven days make atonement for the altar and consecrate it.

[17:03] Then the altar will be most holy and whatever touches it will be holy. Now, I don't know why seven days, perhaps to mimic creation, but the effect of this is almost like this is a deep cleansing or deep cleaning of the altar and the priesthood.

Remember, I'm sure some of you who cook, you know that when you just use the oven, you give it a superficial clean, sort of wipe off some of the oil and stuff, but if you smell it, you still smell, you know, the rose from last week and the baking from two weeks ago, can't you?

But once, so every often, and some of the stains are still there, but once, so every often, don't you? Particularly, you have this new fandangled ones with the paralytic function. You sort of crank it up, don't you?

And give it a good deep clean. And that's to just make sure that it's extra clean, isn't it? And so this seven-day process, I think, has that effect, isn't it?

I mean, it's all symbolic, but what it's saying is that this particular part of the system has to be really holy, really clean, in order for it to do its job.

[18:10] And so after seven days, this entire sacrificial machinery, as it were, you know, it's commissioned. Right? You only do it at the start and you commission it, and then it's ready to go.

Now, hereafter, it starts to receive the offerings that the people will bring. But in verse 38, God also asks that in addition to that, two lambs are to be offered daily on it.

One in the morning, it says, and one in the night. So that it provides a constant aroma that's pleasing to God. And this is matched.

So day and night is matched by that same offering of the fragrance in the holy place on the altar of incense. That's in chapter 13, verse 1 to 10.

We don't have a lot of time to look at that in detail. But if you read it, the morning and night repetition at the same time gives the idea that the pleasing aroma outside the tent is matched by the pleasing and fragrant aroma inside the tent.

[19:16] and both are meant to do the same thing going up to the Lord. So to sum up, what we have here is a process of atonement, consecration, and then finally ordination of the priests.

And the ordination itself is a once-off but done for seven days. And afterwards, we have the ongoing sacrifice of the Lamb as an ongoing act of worship before God. And each step in the process has a specific offering. Sin offering for atonement, burnt offering is holy and pleasing to the Lord, and then the wave offering is to ordain the priest to serve before the Lord.

But step by step, what God is doing is enabling His sinful people, His people who are sinful, to be cleansed and then consecrated and then anointed, the priest firstly, and then the people itself to be cleansed and made holy so that all of them can live and serve in relationship with Him.

That's the picture we're getting. That's the big picture. That's the big story that God is trying to tell with this process. And you might ask, well, that's really interesting, Mark.

[ 20 : 28 ] But what has it got to do with us? Well, if you've been coming along for the past few weeks, then you probably will be able to guess what I'll say next won't you? And that is for us as Christians, all of this points to?

Correct. Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of all these things, right? And so, and I'll say this again, we don't need the physical rituals anymore, right?

We don't need the tabernacles. We don't need to burn incense in this church. We don't need to bring our sacrifices of lamb because Jesus is our tabernacle. Jesus is our high priest.

And he's the true sacrifice that atones for our sin. So, no more earthly priests, no more gory business of slaughtering animals. Our sins are truly forgiven and atoned for once for all in the death and priesthood of Jesus.

And we don't need, incidentally, oil for anointing as well. And I think the New Testament imagery for that is we're made holy instead by the anointing or the pouring of the Holy Spirit.

[ 21 : 34 ] But as some of you may have read my quiz from the newsletter this week, I do say that the New Testament still, however, refers to us as priests, don't we?

Doesn't it? And still calls for us to make and offer sacrifices. So, in that New Testament Romans 12, 1 and 2 reading earlier, it says, 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. And again, in Hebrews chapter 13, verse 15 and 16, it says, Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise, the fruit of lips that openly profess His name.

And do not forget to do good and to share with others for with such sacrifices, God is pleased. And then one more, 1 Peter chapter 2, verse 9, We're called a priesthood of believers, aren't we?

But you are chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.

[ 22 : 50 ] Now, many of these verses are familiar to you and I know sometimes you quote it to each other. But did you realize that actually when the New Testament writers, Paul and others, were writing, that actually they had the Old Testament sacrificial system specifically in mind in the choice of the words that you're using in what they're saying.

Because now that you've read Exodus chapter 29, can you see in Romans chapter 12 that when Paul instructs us to offer our bodies as living sacrifices, he uses the words holy and pleasing to God.

That's exactly how the aroma of the food offering is being described. He's comparing us to that, isn't he? Holy and pleasing to the Lord.

So you see, Jesus' sacrifice as a sin offering is to turn for our sins. We don't do that. So I want to be clear that even though the New Testament talks about us as living sacrifices, we are not an atoning sacrifice.

Alright? Jesus is the only one whose blood shed for us, atones for our sins, and makes us holy. We don't do any of that. We're anointed by the Holy Spirit.

[ 24 : 07 ] All of that is done for us and we make and claim no credit for it whatsoever. But afterwards, after we've been made holy, as God's holy people, we still do, in one sense, what Aaron and his sons did as priests.

That is, offer sacrifices of ourselves that are holy and pleasing to the Lord. We don't do it to make ourselves right before God. We are already holy, so I need to make that clear again and again. It's not to make us righteous or holy, but rather, it's our response as God's holy people to live in such a way as to be a fragrant offering to the Lord.

And I want to pause here just for you to just consider this for a moment because this is one of the most amazing things that we are called to do. See, we are sinners and we're not righteous in our own right.

And yet, God has allowed us to be able to live in such a way that when He looks on us and sees us doing His will, what it does is gives Him pleasure and delight.

[ 25 : 25 ] You know, I know that a lot of times they always say, oh, you know, you Christians only talk about sin and anger before a holy God and all that, you know, like with a child trying to make up for our Netflix watching and all that.

And that's true. Sin needs to be dealt with, but that's not dealt with by us, but by Jesus. But after that's been done and it has been done on the cross, we're now like the children giving God His delight.

Whenever we do His will, we bring a smile to the face of God. Now, you might ask, what are these sacrifices that this Bible speaks of?

Well, it's there, isn't it? In Hebrews chapter 13, verse 15 and 16, they are sacrifices of praise, sacrifices of doing good and sharing with others. So they're good works, yes.

And also, there's another verse in Revelation chapter 5, verse 8, which sort of ties in the bowls of incense because there, our prayers are being compared to bowls of incense.

[ 26 : 29 ] And when the New Testament writers say these things, these are not sacrifices of praise as though, you know, you have to come to church, sing the four songs that we sing and these are our sacrifices of praise.

No, it's much bigger than that, isn't it? It's the attitude of praise that we take into our lives. Every time we have the opportunity to bring praise to God and use opportunities of things that are happening in our lives to bear witness and give thanks and praise to God, that is a sacrifice of praise.

Every time we serve one another, we do good, however small it may be, those are sacrifices of doing good and sharing with others.

So the team that was here yesterday doing their working bee, they were doing it for the Lord, they were doing it for us, but doing it for the Lord. Those are things that bring a pleasing aroma to the Lord. You may not think that as you're pulling out the weeds, but that's pleasing to the Lord because you're doing it for Him.

And each time we do something like that, whatever we do through the rest of the day, it's holy and pleasing to the Lord. What an encouragement, don't you think, that simple acts like that, simple acts of kindness and praise, I even joked this morning at cleaning your toilet for the sake of others, is a wafting up a pleasing aroma to the Lord, even though it might not be wafting up pleasing aroma to you.

[ 28 : 01 ] And that's why the Bible talks about it as a priesthood of all believers, not just the pastors, because all of us as Christians have the joy and privilege of being living sacrifices for Him, living in a way that pleases the Lord.

And so for us, for those of us who are believers in Jesus, the challenge isn't so much that, oh, you know, today I'll do one or two little pleasing, discreet acts for the Lord.

But rather, the challenge is to have our whole life, every minute of every day, every thought and every word, be that pleasing sacrifice to Him.

That our entire lives, our bodies, all of our bodies, is offered up to Him as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to the Lord. And we do that as a response to what Christ has already done for us.

He is the atoning sacrifice, made us, made us, made us holy, and it's in our response that we become that pleasing aroma to the Lord.

[ 29 : 06 ] Let's pray. Father, again, we thank You for Jesus, whose blood has made us clean and holy before Your sight. Help us to offer our bodies as living sacrifices to You, to live all our lives in a way that is holy and pleasing to You, offering sacrifices of praise, doing good to others, and being a light to the world.

We pray this in Jesus' holy name. Amen.