

Exodus 28 - 34  
Ritual Instructions  
December 2, 2018

Next Lesson. Exodus 35-40

Proverbs 28:5. “Evil men do not understand justice, but those who seek the Lord understand it fully.”

Wesley's Questions for Class Meetings. #19. “Is there anyone whom I fear, dislike, disown, criticize, hold resentment toward or disregard? If so, what am I going to do about it?”

What does the Bible Mean?

Read. Exodus 28:1-43

Aaron and his sons, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, were set apart as priests. Priests had four duties. They lived holy lives and led others to God. They treated ailments and disease. They judged disputes. They wore the urim and Thummim which gave a medium for God to make choices. They had special garments designed for dignity and honor (splendor) which was appropriate to their office. They had tunics, turbans and sashes and loincloths for entering the sacred areas of the tabernacle. The fact that an entire chapter is devoted to priestly garments show the significance attached to dress. The central focus is given to Aaron's garments.

- The *ephod* was worn only by the high priest. It was linen and held up by shoulder straps. On it were two onyx stones engraved with the names of the twelve sons of Israel in birth order and six to a stone.
- The *breastplate* was a nine inches square linen cloth covering, fastened to the ephod and had twelve stones in four rows of three for the twelve tribes. The stones were ruby, topaz, beryl (blue green, pink or yellow), turquoise, sapphire, emerald, jacinth (reddish orange), agate, amethyst, chrysolite, onyx and jasper. Also, on the breastplate were *urim* and *Thummim* which were sacred lots used to make decisions. By wearing the breastplate Aaron will bear the names of the sons of Israel over his heart and will have the means to make decisions.
- The blue robe was decorated with pomegranates and was worn beneath the ephod. Golden bells were attached to the hem, so the people could hear as the high priest administered in the tabernacle.
- The turban had a rosette of pure gold inscribed with “Holy to the Lord.”

The high priest also wore an ankle length tunic and sashes and headdresses.

Read. Exodus 29:1-46.

This chapter outlines the service of consecration or induction service of the priests to set them apart from the rest of the community. The priests could serve as a liaison between Yahweh and the people. A young bull is sacrificed as a *sin offering*. The offering included laying hands on the head, smearing blood on the horns of the altar to draw off impurity and to prepare the altar for the next sacrifice.

Next a ram is sacrificed as a burnt offering to make the initiates eligible for sanctification.

Finally, a second ram was offered. The blood was smeared on the right earlobe, thumb and big toe of the initiates. The blood again draws off impurities. Blood is then splattered on the vestments as well as on the men who are made holy.

Provisions are made for daily sacrifices in the morning and at twilight when the lamps are tended. The sacrifice is to include two quarts of flour mixed with a quart each of olive oil and wine.

Thus, God will consecrate the tabernacle and the priests. “Then I will dwell among the Israelites and be their God. They will know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them out of Egypt so that I might dwell among them. I am the Lord their God.”

Read. Exodus 30:1-38.

Chapter 30 lists additional directives for the priests. Some details are left out here.

The ritual service involved all five senses. The priests smelled the incense. They tasted the offerings. They felt the blood. They saw the light. They heard the bells on their clothes.

- Exodus 30: 1 -10. The altar of incense. The altar is directly in front of the veil. Daily offerings are to be made morning and evening. The smoke creates a boundary between the priest and God to protect the priest’s life.
- Exodus 30: 11-16. The census payment. Later this would become the Temple tax which Peter pulled from a fish’s mouth to pay for Jesus and himself. The half shekel payment was a ransom to prevent plague in case of ritual impurity.
- Exodus 30: 17-21. The bronze laver. Uncleanness when performing rituals could be fatal. A bronze basin was made for the priests to wash hands and feet. The basin was between the sacrificial altar and the tabernacle.
- Exodus 30: 22-33. The anointing oil. Everything set apart from tabernacle to priests is to be anointed. The oil itself is holy. Anyone who makes oil like it or applies the oil to anyone but a priest is to be cut off from the people.
- Exodus 30: 34-38. The incense. Like the oil it is not to be duplicated or used profanely. The sentence is to be cut off from the people.

Read. Exodus 31: 1-11

From Chapter 24:21 through Chapter 31 is a long account of establishing an apparatus to enable the Israelites to interrelate with their God. The section includes contributions required, furnishings, garments, ordination procedures, oils and incense. Now God provided the craftsmen to make the various furnishings and implements. He choose Bezalel of the tribe of Judah and filled him with divine spirit and all ability, intelligence and knowledge in every craft. God assigned Oholiah of the tribe of Dan and gave him skills to assist Bezalel in all the work. *God provides* both those who lead and those to help with just the right abilities.

Exodus 31: 12-18.

This passage is the climax of the section. Each historical covenant was ratified by a visible token or sign - ie. the rainbow and circumcision. The Sabbath is a lasting sign that Israel may know that "I the Lord sanctify you." All who profane the Sabbath will be put to death and anyone who works will be cut off from the people. The only death sentence recorded in the Bible is in Numbers 15:32-26. The death sentence is to emphasize how severe the offense is. Prager in his book Exodus says that if violating the Sabbath meant death today it would be "auto genocide." "It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed."

God finished speaking with Moses on the mount and he gave Moses two stone tablets of the covenant written by the finger of God.

Exodus 32: 1-6. Moses stayed on the mountain for forty days and nights. The people didn't know he would be gone that long! The people gathered around (not against) Aaron. They didn't know what might have happened to Moses. They sought a new leader. They wanted Aaron to make gods for them. Aaron asked for their jewelry. The people brought it. Aaron took the gold and cast an idol in the shape of a calf and fashioned it with a tool. The people declared that "these" gods brought them out of Egypt. Aaron built an altar and called for a festival to the Lord for the next day. The people sacrificed and made offerings, ate, drank and indulged in revelry.

Exodus 32: 7-10.

The setting moves to the mountain. God told Moses all that the people had done. He said to Moses, "I have seen these people, how stiff-necked (don't listen? stubborn?) they are. Now let me alone, so that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; and *of you* I will make a great nation."

Exodus 32: 11-14.

Moses sought God's favor. Why are you angry with these people you delivered? Why should Egypt say that God delivered the people only to wipe them off the face of the earth? Change your mind. Don't bring disaster on your people.

"Remember your servants, Abraham, Isaac and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self: 'I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance forever.' "

God relented. He did not bring the disaster had threatened.

Exodus 32: 15-20.

Moses went down the mountain with the two tablets which were inscribed front and back. Joshua heard the noise and said it was the sound of war. Moses replied,

"It is not the sound of victory,

it is not the sound of defeat;  
it is the sound of singing that I hear.”

But when Moses saw the calf and dancing he was very angry. He smashed the tablets. He burned the calf in the fire. He ground it up and he spread the powder on the water. He made the people drink it.

Exodus 32: 21-29.

Moses challenged Aaron and asked why he had led the people to sin. Aaron said Moses shouldn't be angry. The people are prone to sin. He told how the incident had happened (but he says that he threw the gold into the fire and it came out a calf. He failed to add that he had cast the calf and had fashioned it with a tool). Then Moses took control. He called, “Whoever is for the Lord” to come to him. The Levites came and he told them to take their swords and to kill their brother, friend and neighbor. They killed about 3,000. Moses declared that the Levites were set apart and blessed by God that day.

Exodus 32: 30-35.

The next day Moses told the people that they had committed a great sin, but he would go up and seek atonement. Moses asked the Lord to forgive, but if not, to blot him from the book God has written – collective guilt. God will blot those who sinned. God told Moses to lead the people and an angel will lead him. God will punish when the time comes, and he struck the people with a plague.

Exodus 33: 1-6. Read.

God tells Moses to leave and go to the Promised Land. He will send an angel but God will not go along because they are a stiff-necked people. The people are distressed that God will not accompany them. They strip off their ornaments (repent from worshiping the calf made from their jewelry and even pointing back to the plunder of Egyptian jewelry as a sign of liberation from Egypt). Now the people plunder themselves.

Exodus 33: 7-11.

Moses would pitch a tent outside the camp and called it the “tent of the meeting.” When Moses went inside the people watched and the pillar cloud came and covered the entrance while the Lord spoke to Moses face to face. Joshua assisted Moses and stayed in the tent.

Exodus 33: 12-23.

God had told Moses that he knows his name, but Moses asked God for a better knowledge of him and his own mission. He uses three prayers.

- ♣ 33:12-14. What is the angel's name? He asked God to “teach me your ways” so he will know him better. Remember your people.
- ♣ 33:15-17. If you don't go, don't send us. How will people know we are a people favored by you? What else will distinguish us from other people?
- ♣ 33:18-23. Show me (let me see) your glory.

God answered. He will pass by and proclaim his name. I will have mercy and compassion on whom I choose. But, you cannot see my face and he covered Moses' eyes, so Moses could only see God's back.

In Chapter 34, God reveals his central character to Moses as he climbs the mountain for two freshly cut tablets.

Read. Exodus 34:1-28

- 34: 5. God came in the cloud and proclaimed his name – The Lord.
- 34. 6. God is many things but here he revealed special divine attributes – mercy, grace and covenant loyalty – that are core to his being.
- 34: 10-28.
  - a. 34:10-12. God will do wonders never done before. All will see the awesome work of the Lord. Obey, and I will drive out the peoples of the land.
  - b. 34:13. Break down their altars. Asherah poles (sacred poles) were sacred to the Canaanites. Violence is only against inanimate objects.
  - c. 34:14. Worship no other gods. God is a jealous God. To worship other gods would be to nullify the purpose of the Exodus and their nation.
  - d. 34:15. Don't treaty with people of the Promised Land. When they worship their gods and you will, actually in the Hebrew "lust" after their ways and eat their sacrifices (join in their services).
  - e. 34:19, 20. The first offspring belongs to God. "No one is to appear before me empty handed." Giving is an essential part of our relationship with God.
  - f. V 24. God will drive out (cast out, dispossess) nations before you. He will enlarge the borders. No one will covet the land when they (Israelites) go up (to Jerusalem) for the festivals – even though the land is largely unprotected with the people away worshiping.

Read. Exodus 34: 29-35

As a result of Moses' dialogue with God his face shone. Moses was touched with part of God's glory. Much ancient art portrays that glory. Jesus' face shone "like the sun" on the Mount of Transfiguration. The radiance caused the people to be afraid to go near Moses, so he used a veil to cover his face. He didn't want the people to be afraid of him. The word for veil that is used in the original text is not found elsewhere in the Bible. No one knows exactly what the veil was.

What does the Bible mean to me?

⤴ What does the dress of the minister or choir or ushers really mean to me?

Do we have a way to remember those who have been important in our faith?

⤴ How do we determine the will of God in particular situations?

⤴ What makes our gifts "holy to the Lord."

⤴ Is ritual consecration of ministers important?

⤴ Do we appear to others to be Christians?

- ⤴ How do we see the Sabbath rest?
- ⤴ Does God ever seem to stop talking to us?
- ⤴ Where do I meet with God?