

GOD ESTABLISHES THE PRIESTHOOD

Exodus 28:1-29:46
Key Verse 28:41

„After you put these clothes on your brother Aaron and his sons, anoint and ordain them. Consecrate them so they may serve me as priests.”

Thank God for our Exodus Study, through which we are experiencing the process by which God took a slave people, redeemed them, and made them into a kingdom of priests and holy nation according to his promise (Ex 19:4-6). In the past couple of weeks, we have studied God’s blueprint for the tabernacle and its furnishings: the ark of the covenant, the table, the lampstand, the tabernacle curtains and the courtyard, the altar of burnt offering, and the oil for the lampstand. Now, in this passage, God establishes the priesthood as a holy office.

Here is a FS overview of the passage:

Chapter	Verses	Summary
28	1	God calls the priests
28	2-43	God’s commands for the clothing of the priests 2-5: Overview of God’s command regarding the clothing of the priests 6-8: The ephod and its waistband 9-14: the onyx shoulder pieces and its gold chains 15-30: The breastpiece and its attachment to the ephod 31-35: The blue robe of the ephod 36-38: The headpiece of the turban 39: The tunic and turban of fine linen, the sash 40: The tunics, sashes, and caps for Aaron’s sons. 41: Summary of how they were to be made priests 42-3a: The linen undergarments 44b: A lasting ordinance for the priesthood
29	1-37	The instructions for the consecration of the priests 1-3: The offerings to be brought 4-9: The washing and dressing of Aaron and his sons 10-14: The bull for the sin offering 15-18: The ram for the burnt offering 19-34: The ram for the wave offering 35-37: Seven days required for consecration of the priests and the altar
29	38-42a	Instructions for the daily offering
29	42b-46	God’s heart to dwell among his people and be their God

Through this passage we learn that a priest is the one GOD called, clothed, and consecrated. It is my prayer through this message that our next gens and new students personally accept God’s call to live as his royal and holy priests in our generation.

1. Calling (28:1)

Read verse 1: “Have Aaron your brother brought to you from among the Israelites, along with his sons Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, so they may serve me as priests.” God told Moses to bring 5 specific people out from among the Israelites to be his priests. What were their names? Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

Aaron was Moses’ elder brother. According to the family record of Moses & Aaron in Exodus 6:13-27, they were of the Kohathite line of Levi’s descendants: Aaron was the firstborn son of Amram (137 years), the son of Kohath (133 years), the son of Levi (137 years). Moses & Aaron were the fourth generation of the Israelites in Egypt. “Aaron married Elisheba, daughter of Amminadab and sister of Nahshon, and she bore him Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar.” (6:23) “It was this Aaron and Moses to whom the LORD said, ‘Bring the Israelites out of Egypt by their divisions.’ They were the ones who spoke to Pharaoh king of Egypt about bringing the Israelites out of Egypt—this same Moses and Aaron.” (6:26-27)

Aaron was the man who up until now had been Moses’ mouthpiece; he was a well-spoken man. But he was also the man who would later make the golden calf and mislead the Israelites into idolatry. (32) Nadab and Abihu would later be put to death for offering unauthorized fire, that is, contrary to God’s instructions. (Lev 10) Aaron was a man of mistakes, but God appointed him high priest.

What does this story of Aaron and his sons have to do with us? 1 Pe 2:9 says, “But you are a 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.” In Christ Jesus, God also chose and called each of us by name out of all people to be his priests. (Jn 15:16; Eph 1:4; 1 Pe 2:9) I was born into a believing family, and my parents gave me the name “Sara”, which means “mother of many nations”. Before I heard God’s voice personally, I was a slave of my self-centeredness, fear, and craving for control and for human recognition. But God called me to his service with Genesis 1:31a, “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.” Now my life key verse is Ephesians 2:10, “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do.” I thank God for calling me out of my life of sin and bringing me into his service as priest.

These days we are inviting young people to the 2019 GLE-Forum. The GLE-Forum will be a gathering of 50 people for intensive Bible study and spiritual training. We are not inviting them to a one-time event. Nor are we inviting the masses. We are inviting people by name with the prayer to raise priests of God for their nation. May God open the ears and work in the hearts of his chosen priests and send priest candidates from every continent of the world.

2. Clothing (28:2-43)

Let’s read what God commanded in verses 2-5, after having Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar brought to him. “Make sacred garments for your brother Aaron, to give him dignity and honour. Tell all the skilled workers to whom I have given wisdom in such matters that they are to make garments for Aaron, for his consecration, so he may serve me as priest. These are the garments they are to make: a breastpiece, an ephod, a robe, a woven tunic, a turban, and a sash. They are to make these sacred garments for your brother Aaron and his sons, so they may serve me as priests. Have

them use gold, and blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and fine linen” Here we can see that God repeats, “so he may serve me as priest...so they may serve me as priests.” That means that the clothing was very important for making the priests, the priests.

What are some examples of offices that have special clothing? Police officers, bus drivers, soldiers... Usually we think that clothing is the final sign of an office. For example, a police officer wears the uniform of police officer only after going through training. There is an exception: In North America, medical school students begin their studies with a “white coat ceremony”. They are clothed in the white coat of a doctor even before they have learned anything about medicine. The clothing is not a reward, but a trust and a commitment.

Similarly, God founded the office of the priesthood by commanding the making of priestly garments to clothe Aaron and his sons so that they might serve him as priests. He commanded them to be clothed in these sacred garments immediately after he called them out. Let’s take a closer look at the garments for Aaron, the high priest: the ephod and its waistband (6-8), the shoulder pieces (9-14), the breastpiece (15-30), the robe (31-35), the headpiece and turban (36-38), the woven tunic (39), and the undergarments (42). Seven separate elements in total.

First was the ephod with its waistband. It was an apron-like garment made of gold, and blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen. The two shoulder pieces, which were 2 onyx stones each engraved with 6 names of the tribes of Israel, were attached with gold chains. The breastpiece, a square of gold and of blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen, was mounted with 4 rows of 3 precious stones each. Each stone on the breastpiece was engraved with one of the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. The breastpiece was attached with gold chains to the shoulder pieces, and to the ephod with a blue cord. There was also to be a blue robe with a woven collar, and with pomegranates and golden bells alternating along the hem. The tinkling of the bells indicated that the high priest, who, once a year, would be serving alone in the Most Holy Place, was still alive. On the turban of finely twisted linen was to be a gold plate, engraved with the words, “HOLY TO THE LORD.” And there was also to be a tunic of finely twisted linen. Aaron’s sons were also given tunics, sashes, and caps (40), and all were commanded to wear linen undergarments (42).

Let’s take another look at the two heaviest elements of the high priest’s outfit: the breastpiece and the shoulder pieces. Both were made of gold with precious stones engraved with the names of the tribes of Israel. In the priest’s clothing we can therefore see the priest’s mission. The priest was called out of the people to serve the people, especially by praying for them before God and giving them God’s word. The priest was set apart not to live for himself but for the people. He was to have the people on his shoulders and in his heart

Sadhu Sundahr Singh was an Indian Christian born in 1889. He wrote about an experience he had in the Himalayan mountains during the freezing winter. I want to share an excerpt with you.

“Once when traveling in Tibet, I was crossing a high mountain pass with my Tibetan guide. The weather had suddenly turned bitterly cold, and my companion and I feared that we might not make it to the next village — still several miles away — before succumbing to the frost.

Suddenly, we stumbled upon a man who had slipped from the path and was lying in the snow. Looking more closely, I discovered that the man was still alive, though barely. 'Come,' I said to my companion, 'help me try to bring this unfortunate man to safety.' But my companion was upset and frightened for his life. He answered: 'If we try to carry that man, none of us will ever reach the village. We will all freeze. Our only hope is to go on as quickly as possible, and that is what I intend to do. You will come with me if you value your life.' Without another word and without looking back, he set off down the path.

I could not bring myself to abandon the helpless traveler while life remained in him, so I lifted him on my back and threw my blanket around us both as best I could. Slowly and painstakingly, I picked my way along the steep, slippery path with my heavy load. Soon it began to snow, and I could make out the way forward only with great difficulty. How we made it, I do not know. But just as daylight was beginning to fade, the snow cleared and I could see houses a few hundred yards ahead. Near me, on the ground, I saw the frozen body of my guide. Nearly within shouting distance of the village, he had succumbed to the cold and died, while the unfortunate traveler and I made it to safety. The exertion of carrying him and the contact of our bodies had created enough heat to save us both. This is the way of service."

Carrying the burden of one person, praying for them, serving them, and giving them God's word, is God's blessed way of eternal life.

What was Aaron wearing before? He was wearing slaves clothing, because the Israelites had been slaves. They had lived to work, eat, and sleep, groveling for their own benefit. The beautiful holy garments were unimaginably fantastic. They were clothes of God's glory and God's righteousness. God wanted to make a kingdom of priests out of a slave people.

The high priest's sacred clothes contains God's vision for his people in Christ Jesus. God gives us not only new clothes but a new self. (Col 3:9-10; Eph 4:22-24) God changed us from slaves to our desires and thoughts who were objects of his wrath (Eph 2:3) to his priests for all people (Eph 2:4-10). God called us by name out from among the crowds of our schools, workplaces, and nations, to be God's priests for them.

I know one woman who came from Korea and not long after enrolled in a Masters of Communication class at the University of Bonn. All her peers were native Germans and excellent communicators. She had to stumble through in broken German. But she is not there as a slave. She is not a slave to human judgment, performance, or money. God has a hope and a vision for her to be his priest for German students and for all young people in Europe and even in the Muslim world, and he is already using her.

Our first missionaries came from Korea without knowing the language or the culture. Some were at the bottom of society. But when they put on the robes as priests for the German people, they could live not as self-conscious immigrants trying to climb up the social ladder, but as life-changing Bible teachers and shepherds, that is, priests, for the German people.

Thank God who gave us his sacred clothes through his vision and direction to serve 10,000 1:1 Bible Studies in this year, with each of us serving 12 weekly Bible studies, and leading 2 students to SWS each week. Let us not remain stuck in ourselves and

just like everyone else, but receive God's vision, put on the clothes of Jesus by faith and live as priests for our fellow students, friends, colleagues. (Romans 13:14, Gal 3:27, Col 3:12)

3. Consecration (29:1-46)

There was one more thing must be done to ordain the priests: consecration through sacrifice. In chapter 29, we see that this took several steps, and that the whole process lasted 7 days.

Aaron and his sons were to be washed and clothed in the sacred garments at the entrance to the tent of meeting. Then the offering for the consecration was to be brought: a bull and two rams without defect, and a basket full of 3 kinds of bread made without yeast (round loaves, thick loaves with olive oil mixed in, and thin loaves brushed with olive oil).

The 3 animals were to be offered as 3 different kinds of offerings. The bull was to be the sin offering. (29:10-14) Aaron and his sons were to lay their hands on it, slaughter it, smear some of the blood with their fingers on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and pour the rest of the blood at the base of the altar. Then they were to burn all the fat of the bull (fat from internal organs, liver, kidneys) on the altar. The flesh, hide, and intestines were to be burned outside the camp.

The first ram was to be the burnt offering. (29:15-18) Aaron and his sons were to lay their hands on it, slaughter it, and splash its blood against the sides of the altar. They were to cut the ram into pieces and wash the internal organs and legs. Then all the pieces of the ram were to be burned on the altar.

The second ram was a wave offering, from which Moses' share and the priest's share was to come. (29:19-34) Aaron and his sons were to lay their hands on it and slaughter it. Then they were to put some of the blood on their right earlobe, right thumb, and right toe. They were to splash the blood against the sides of the altar, then take some of that blood and mix it with anointing oil and sprinkle the blood-oil mixture on Aaron and his sons and their garments. Verse 21 b says, "Then he and his sons and their garments will be consecrated."

Then they were to take the fat from this ram, and one of each of the 3 kinds of loaves (round, thick with olive oil mixed in, and thin with olive oil brushed on top), wave them before the LORD as a wave offering and burn all of this on the altar as a burnt offering. Then, they were to take the breast of the ram, wave it before the LORD, and cook it along with a thigh. They were to eat this in a sacred place, that is, at the entrance to the tent of meeting. (31-34)

The ordination did not end there. They needed 7 days, and on each day, a bull was to be sacrificed. 35-36a say, "Do for Aaron and his sons everything I have commanded you, taking seven days to ordain them. Sacrifice a bull each day as a sin offering to make atonement." We see here that the sacrifices had to be made not only to set Aaron and his sons apart from the other people, but also to make atonement for their sins. Even the altar had to be purified, made atonement for, and consecrated. (37) The consecration of the priests was very bloody and costly.

In addition, one of the main tasks of the priests was to offer 2 lambs daily, one in the morning, and one at twilight, with its grain offerings and drink offerings. (28-29a)

The blood of the animals is a shadow of the blood of Jesus. Hebrews 9:13,14 say, "The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!" When we come to God in deep repentance, the blood of Jesus makes us clean not only outwardly, but inwardly in our spirits and consciences. The blood of Jesus cleanses our inner person so that we can be his holy priests.

The blood of Jesus consecrated a playboy who chased after women, fun, and materials, to be a man who loves God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength, and who lives as a priest for young people. The blood of Jesus cleanses me from my self-reliance, self-protection, and fear of people and makes me a mother of many nations. Let us come to Jesus daily to be cleansed of our self-centeredness, self-love, fear, and unbelief so that we can be made into priests of God like Jesus for others. Thank God for this priesthood which is given to us at the cost of his son.

In verses 42b-46 we see God's heart in setting up the tabernacle, the sacrifices, and the priests. Let's read these verses together: "There I will meet with the Israelites, and the place will be consecrated by my glory. So I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar and will consecrate Aaron and his sons to serve me as 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." God wanted to dwell among the complaining slave people and be their God. He wanted to make them, through the priesthood, into a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

Thank God for teaching us through this passage how he makes us his priests: he calls us, clothes us, and consecrates us in Jesus. Praise God who calls sinners to be his priests in Christ. May God help us to practically live by faith in Jesus, coming to him daily in repentance and living as Bible teachers and shepherds with his vision of spiritual revival in Germany, Europe, in the Muslim world, and to the ends of the earth.