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C0706 – February 14, 2007 – Ex 29:1-37 – The Priest's Ordination

This chapter is repeated almost verbatim in Leviticus 8. It describes the ordination procedures that Moses had to take Aaron and his sons through so they could be consecrated for the Tabernacle ministry before Him. The NT confirms that everyone who goes into ministry should be ordained. In the OT the Aaronic and Levitical priesthood were the formal ministers to Israel but Israel was also to minister to the world. In the NT there are those who are formally ministers of the word and have the spiritual gifts necessary to carry out that ministry but the people are also given spiritual gifts for the purpose of ministering to the world. All believers are priests in the Church and all are called to minister, that is one of the purposes of spiritual gifts (Eph 4:12).

In the OT the ordination procedures for the priests can be broken down into six steps or stages. So, basically what we are going to do is go through an ordination ceremony.

1. The Preparations were Made (29:1-3)
2. The Priests were Washed (29:4)
3. The Priests were Clothed and Anointed (29:5-9)
4. The Altar and Priests were Atoned For (29:10-18)
5. The Priests were Dedicated (29:19-30)
6. The Priests were Installed (29:31-37)

These procedures all have important analogies to the NT priesthood of the believer as well as to those who are vocational ministers of the word of God. The main message of the section is that “Those who lead the congregation in spiritual service must be fully consecrated to the Lord.”ⁱ Therefore, being a priest is a serious issue.

9. The Ordination Procedures (29:1-37)

a. Preparations (29:1-3)

Exodus 29:1-3 ¹“Now this is what you shall do to them to consecrate them to minister as priests to Me: take one young bull and two rams without blemish, ²and unleavened bread and unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers spread with oil; you shall make them of fine wheat flour. ³“You shall put them in one basket, and present them in the basket along with the bull and the two rams.

This is what Moses **shall do to them**, that is, Aaron and his sons, in order to **consecrate them**, that is, to set them apart for the purpose of ministering **as priests to God**. First, gather these things and present them before Me:

- one young bull
- two unblemished rams
- unleavened bread mixed with oil
- unleavened cakes mixed with oil
- unleavened wafers spread with oil

The young bull will be sacrificed in verses 10-14 to atone for the altar so it will be holy. One unblemished ram will be sacrificed in verses 15-18 to atone for the priests so they will be holy. The other unblemished ram will be sacrificed in verses 19-30 and mixed with the unleavened things to dedicate the priests to the ministry. The entire ordination procedure took seven days. The overall impression of the ordination would be that the priests were entering into a very serious work. Their old lives were over and their new lives as priests began. There was no separation between the secular and the spiritual. Everywhere they went, everything they touched, everything they heard was to be in accordance with a holy lifestyle.

b. Washing (29:4)

Exodus 29:4 ⁴“Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the doorway of the tent of meeting and wash them with water.

After the first step of preparation the second step of washing began. The washing with water was a ceremonial cleansing. The priests had to be cleansed with water each morning before they put on their priestly garments. Water is a cleansing agent in the Bible. We use water to cleanse our physical bodies from impurities. Water is therefore a good agent to use in describing the spiritual parallel. As we must be cleansed physically so we must be cleansed spiritually. The portrait is of the spiritual regeneration of the priests.

PRINCIPLE: These truths point to the fact that if we want to minister we need to be regenerated and in fellowship with God. In the NT Jesus used water in the foot washing episode of John 13 to illustrate these are two cleansings; regeneration and fellowship. First, all believers are regenerated at the moment of faith alone in Christ alone (cf Ezek 36:25; Tit 3:5-7). Jesus equivocated this with taking a bath. In this episode Jesus was not washing their whole bodies, only their feet. He said they were already clean. What Jesus meant was that they had already been regenerated at the moment of faith alone in Christ alone. Once they had been regenerated it was never repeated. As Jesus said, “He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean, and you are clean, but not all of you” (John 13:10). Judas was not regenerated. So, the washing of the priests at the doorway of the tent portrayed regeneration which is once for all. The picture turns when Jesus clarifies why he is washing their feet. He showed that He was illustrating fellowship. Fellowship takes place at the moment of faith alone in Christ alone but must be repeated whenever we sin. The way to enjoy fellowship is to confess your sin. When believers walk through life they accumulate sin because they fail to walk by faith (Rom 14:23). God determined that He would forgive this sin at the moment we confess it. Confess means “to acknowledge” “to say the same thing” about our sin that God says about our sin. “If we acknowledge our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). So, fellowship occurs at the moment of faith alone in Christ alone at which time each Church age believer is made a priest of God but it also needs to occur daily since we sin daily. Restoration of fellowship occurs when we confess our sins. Aaron and his sons would wash their hands and feet at the bronze basin each day.

Aaron and his sons were washed with water at the doorway to the tent of meeting when they entered the priesthood but also needed to be washed daily

at the bronze laver before they ministered. The first washing portrayed regeneration which is once for all and the other washing portrayed fellowship which is daily. These truths point to the fact that if we want to minister we need to be regenerated and in fellowship with God.

c. **Clothing and Anointing of Aaron (29:5-9)**

Exodus 29:5-6 ⁵“You shall take the garments, and put on Aaron the tunic and the robe of the ephod and the ephod and the breastpiece, and gird him with the skillfully woven band of the ephod; ⁶and you shall set the turban on his head and put the holy crown on the turban. ⁷“Then you shall take the anointing oil and pour it on his head and anoint him. ⁸“You shall bring his sons and put tunics on them. ⁹“You shall gird them with sashes, Aaron and his sons, and bind caps on them, and they shall have the priesthood by a perpetual statute. So you shall ordain Aaron and his sons.

After they priests were washed clean with water they were clothed in their priestly garments (Ezek 16:9). This was a daily procedure. Their beautiful garments would clearly set them apart for their priestly ministry.ⁱⁱ

PRINCIPLE: Each Church age believer is also a priest and once in fellowship needs to put on the armor of God. This needs to be a daily procedure. The armor of God sets the believer apart for ministry and enables him to stand and resist demonic powers. Priests must be clothed not only for modesty sake but for ministry sake. If we do not have on the proper attire we cannot minister properly. The minister of God must be properly clothed and that clothing is the armor of God.

After the high priest was clothed in his priestly garments he was anointed with oil.ⁱⁱⁱ It was poured on the head of the high priest at his ordination into the priesthood and was a symbol of the Holy Spirit.^{iv} The oil was used as a visible symbol because the unique person and role of the Holy Spirit was not understood. More revelation would be necessary to understand His person and role. The Holy Spirit was given at the time of anointing with oil.^v One who was anointed with oil was specially called by God and enabled by the Spirit of God for his ministry. In the OT the people who were anointed were

prophets (1 Ki 19:16), priests (Exod 28:41; 30:30; 40:13-15) and kings (1 Sam 15:1; 24:6; 1 Sam 16:13; 1 Ki 1:34; Ps 89:20). In the NT, Jesus Christ is the Lord's anointed and He is prophet, priest and king. In fact, the Greek word "Christ" is the equivalent of the Hebrew word "Messiah" which comes from the Hebrew word *masah* and means anointed. Thus, Christ means "the anointed one". By virtue of faith alone in Christ alone all believers in the Church age are anointed with the Spirit of God (1 John 2:20, 27).

PRINCIPLE: In the NT all believers are priests and all are anointed with the Holy Spirit. This anointing happens one time at the moment the person becomes a priest which is the moment of faith alone in Christ alone. It does not require oil because the person and role of the Holy Spirit have been revealed. Therefore, at that time a person believes he receives spiritual gift(s) and the Holy Spirit to enable him to minister to others (Eph 4:12). It should be emphasized that anointing is not a second work of the Spirit limited to a subset of believers but a single work of the Spirit given to all believers at the moment of faith alone in Christ alone. This work of the Spirit sets believers apart as a priest to minister and the Spirit is the enabler. He also enables the believer to understand the spiritual truths of Scripture (1 John 2:20, 27). So, all believers are anointed at the moment of faith alone in Christ alone. Let me repeat, there are not some ministers of God's word today who have a special anointing that other believers do not have. Some ministers try to claim special authority over other believers by claiming they have an anointing. What they fail to tell you is that you have the same anointing. No believer has an anointing that other believers do not have. Nor can you say that one believer has more of the Spirit or less of the Spirit. All believers have the Spirit and all believers have an equal amount of the Spirit. It's not a matter of how much of the Spirit of God one has. It's a matter of whether one has the Spirit or not (Jude 19). Therefore, the anointing refers to being set apart for ministry by the Spirit of God. This happens at the moment of faith in Christ. At that moment they are set apart for ministry in the body of Christ by the Spirit of God. This does not mean all believers are called into vocational ministry. You may not have the gifts necessary to function in vocational ministry. But all the spiritual gifts are given for the purpose of ministry. Since all believers are priests then all believers are called to minister. To minister you use your spiritual gift(s). These are not natural talents received at physical birth but supernatural abilities received at spiritual birth. Do not confuse natural talent with spiritual gifts. Natural

talents may be coupled with spiritual gifts to produce an effect but the two are distinct. The sixteen spiritual gifts are mentioned in the Bible and these are the only gifts given by Christ through the Spirit to the Church. Anything outside of those sixteen is a natural talent.

The bottom line is that Aaron and his sons were anointed with oil which represented the Spirit of God who set them apart for their priestly ministry and enabled them to do the ministry. In the same way all believers are anointed with the Spirit of God who sets us apart for our priestly ministry and enables us to do ministry. There was nothing mystical about the oil then or today. The oil did not magically cause a transformation of the priest. It did nothing but get them oily. The Holy Spirit was the only one who did anything to them. It is like the water used to baptize a believer. The water does not transform the person or wash away their sins. The water does nothing but get them wet. But the water does represent the washing away of their sins which is caused by the Holy Spirit. In the NT we know more about the person and role of the Holy Spirit and therefore, there is no reason to go around pouring oil on someone for purposes that are other than therapeutic (it is good for dry skin and important during times of fasting). If it is done in a religious context it must be emphasized that the oil is representative of the Holy Spirit and does nothing to the individual (barring therapeutic benefits). People have an inclination to the mystical and magical so the use of any substance like water, oil, bread, or wine need to be clarified so people aren't confused.^{vi}

d. Sacrifices of Atonement (29:10-18)

After they were anointed with oil they were enabled by the Spirit of God for service but they still had to be atoned for. Remember, atonement means “to purify, to cleanse” and the means of atonement is always blood sacrifice. The blood sacrifice would atone for men or objects and forgive sin. These sacrifices functioned in a different sphere than the sacrifice of Christ but did portray the truths of identification and substitution and did look forward to the better sacrifice of Christ. What these sacrifices accomplished was temporal forgiveness for external impurities that defiled the body and objects.

i. For the Altar (29:10-14)

The first sacrifice was for the purpose of purifying the altar so it could be used for Tabernacle worship. The priests laid their hands on it to identify with it since it was their defilement of the altar which rendered it unclean and in need of atonement.

Exodus 29:10-14 ¹⁰“Then you shall bring the bull before the tent of meeting, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the bull. ¹¹“You shall slaughter the bull before the LORD at the doorway of the tent of meeting. ¹²“You shall take some of the blood of the bull and put *it* on the horns of the altar with your finger; and you shall pour out all the blood at the base of the altar. ¹³“You shall take all the fat that covers the entrails and the lobe of the liver, and the two kidneys and the fat that is on them, and offer them up in smoke on the altar. ¹⁴“But the flesh of the bull and its hide and its refuse, you shall burn with fire outside the camp; it is a sin offering.

The **bull** was brought **before the tent of meeting**, called this because it was the place God met with Moses. **Aaron and his sons** were to **lay their hands on the head of the bull**. This signified two things: identification and substitution (cf Lev 1:4). The priests identified with the bull which became a substitute for them. They realized their sinfulness and that it was transferred to the bull who then died for them. After they laid their hands on the head of the bull it was **slaughtered**. Then **some of the blood** was taken and **put on the horns of the altar** and the rest was poured **out...at the base of the altar**. According to Lev 8:15 this made atonement for the **altar**. The altar had to be purified before sacrifices could be offered that would please the Lord. Then they took the **fat portions** along with the **lobe of liver and the two kidneys and the fat on them** and offered **them up in smoke on the altar**, that is, the bronze altar in the Tabernacle court. The fat portions were the choicest portions but the rest of the bull was unfit for sacrificing before the Lord so it was taken **outside the camp**.

ii. For the Priests (29:15-18)

The second sacrifice was for the purpose of purifying the priests so they could be used in Tabernacle worship.

Exodus 29:15-18 ¹⁵“You shall also take the one ram, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the ram; ¹⁶and you shall slaughter the ram and shall take its blood and sprinkle it around on the altar. ¹⁷“Then you shall cut the ram into its pieces, and wash its entrails and its legs, and put *them* with its pieces and its head. ¹⁸“You shall offer up in smoke the whole ram on the altar; it is a burnt offering to the LORD: it is a soothing aroma, an offering by fire to the LORD.

The **ram** was taken and **Aaron and his sons** were to **lay their hands on the head of the ram**. Again, this signified two things: identification and substitution. The priests identified with the bull which became a substitute for them. They realized their sinfulness and that it was transferred to the ram who then died for them. After they laid their hands on the head of the ram it was **slaughtered**. Its **blood** was taken and **sprinkled around the altar**. Then the **ram** was cut **into pieces** and washed. Then all the pieces were placed on the bronze altar and burned. The **whole ram** was burned **on the altar** to signify complete atonement. The pre-requisite for serving in the priesthood was complete atonement. They had to operate in the Tabernacle in a state of purity. This ram provided that atonement. The **burnt offering** was a **soothing aroma** to the Lord because He is pleased when the priests enter to serve Him in a state of purity.

e. **Sacrifice of Dedication (29:19-30)**

The third sacrifice was for the purpose of dedicating them to the priesthood. This is the third time they will lay their hands on the head of an animal to be slaughtered. At this time it is vital to understand the importance of dedication. They would dedicate their whole lives to the priesthood. They were not priests from 9-5. They were priests 24 hours a day. Wherever they went, whatever they heard, whatever they did, their whole life was to be dedicated to the priestly office and its ministry.

Exodus 29:19-30 ¹⁹“Then you shall take the other ram, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the ram. ²⁰“You shall slaughter the ram, and take some of its blood and put *it* on the lobe of Aaron’s right ear and on the lobes of his sons’ right ears and on the thumbs of their right hands and on

the big toes of their right feet, and sprinkle the *rest of the* blood around on the altar. ²¹“Then you shall take some of the blood that is on the altar and some of the anointing oil, and sprinkle *it* on Aaron and on his garments and on his sons and on his sons’ garments with him; so he and his garments shall be consecrated, as well as his sons and his sons’ garments with him. ²²“You shall also take the fat from the ram and the fat tail, and the fat that covers the entrails and the lobe of the liver, and the two kidneys and the fat that is on them and the right thigh (for it is a ram of ordination), ²³and one cake of bread and one cake of bread *mixed with* oil and one wafer from the basket of unleavened bread which is *set* before the LORD; ²⁴and you shall put all these in the hands of Aaron and in the hands of his sons, and shall wave them as a wave offering before the LORD. ²⁵“You shall take them from their hands, and offer them up in smoke on the altar on the burnt offering for a soothing aroma before the LORD; it is an offering by fire to the LORD. ²⁶“Then you shall take the breast of Aaron’s ram of ordination, and wave it as a wave offering before the LORD; and it shall be your portion. ²⁷“You shall consecrate the breast of the wave offering and the thigh of the heave offering which was waved and which was offered from the ram of ordination, from the one which was for Aaron and from the one which was for his sons. ²⁸“It shall be for Aaron and his sons as *their* portion forever from the sons of Israel, for it is a heave offering; and it shall be a heave offering from the sons of Israel from the sacrifices of their peace offerings, *even* their heave offering to the LORD. ²⁹“The holy garments of Aaron shall be for his sons after him, that in them they may be anointed and ordained. ³⁰“For seven days the one of his sons who is priest in his stead shall put them on when he enters the tent of meeting to minister in the holy place.

Then you shall take **the other ram** from verse 1. On this **ram Aaron and his sons** did the same thing, **they laid their hands on the head**. This signified identification and substitution. After they did this the ram was **slaughtered**. Then, some of the **blood** was taken and **put *it* on the lobe of Aaron’s right ear, on the lobes of his sons’ right ears, on the thumbs of their right hands and on the big toes of their right feet**. This spoke

of the sanctification of their ears to hear His word, their hands to do His work, and their feet to walk His ways.^{vii} Whatever they heard, whatever they did, and wherever they went, all was to be dedicated to the Lord. They were on the job as God's representatives 24 hours a day, 360 days a year. Then the rest of the blood was sprinkled on the altar.

Verse 21. After the blood was sprinkled some blood was taken from the altar and mixed with the anointing oil and sprinkled on Aaron and his garments and his sons and their garments. This was necessary to consecrate the garments.

PRINCIPLE: The NT parallel for the Church age believer is that he too is a priest and to minister effectively he has to realize that he is identified with his substitute Jesus Christ. This means the believer is dead to sin and alive to God. Therefore, he should present his body as a living sacrifice. Sin no longer has power over the believer because the believer is no longer enslaved to sin. As long as a believer does not reckon this to be true he cannot minister effectively.

Then came the heart of the ordination service. A complex mixture of the three unleavened articles were combined with the fat portions of the ram and placed in the **hands of Aaron and his sons**. This was to impress upon them that their hands were full. Literally the word **ordain** in the Hebrew means "filling" (*millu*). They would have their hands full working for the Lord. It was a full-time task since the people were full-time sinners. After their hands were filled with this mixture they waved it as a **wave offering before the Lord**. The **wave offering** signified that the offering was being given to God. Usually it was waved from over the head toward the altar. After this it was placed on the altar and burned providing a **soothing aroma before the Lord**.

PRINCIPLE: The NT believer is a priest and has his hands full. Christian ministry is a full-time job. No matter where you go, no matter what you do, no matter what you hear you are a minister. And remember that the ministry is not for you, it's for God. You are to be a living sacrifice for Him. Ministry doesn't start at church but in your own personal life; on the job, at school, in the supermarket, at the coffee shop, in your home. Anywhere and anytime God presents an opportunity to minister you have to be ready. You have your

hands full with the ministry opportunities all around you. When we realize this and live this way before Him it is pleasing to Him.

Verse 26. They were to take the **breast** from the wave offering for Aaron and the **thigh** from the heave offering for his sons. They would **wave** it before the Lord. This was their portion given to them by God because they did not have any land promised as an inheritance. Thus they could grow no food or raise animals. Thus, the other eleven tribes provided food for them through their offerings.

PRINCIPLE: The NT believer who serves in vocational ministry can be supported by the church of God just as the priests of the OT were supported by the Israel of God.

f. Installation into Priesthood (29:31-37)

Exodus 29:31-37 ³¹“You shall take the ram of ordination and boil its flesh in a holy place. ³²“Aaron and his sons shall eat the flesh of the ram and the bread that is in the basket, at the doorway of the tent of meeting. ³³“Thus they shall eat those things by which atonement was made at their ordination *and* consecration; but a layman shall not eat *them*, because they are holy. ³⁴“If any of the flesh of ordination or any of the bread remains until morning, then you shall burn the remainder with fire; it shall not be eaten, because it is holy. ³⁵“Thus you shall do to Aaron and to his sons, according to all that I have commanded you; you shall ordain them through seven days. ³⁶“Each day you shall offer a bull as a sin offering for atonement, and you shall purify the altar when you make atonement for it, and you shall anoint it to consecrate it. ³⁷“For seven days you shall make atonement for the altar and consecrate it; then the altar shall be most holy, *and* whatever touches the altar shall be holy.

the ram of ordination, that is, the second ram, or third sacrifice. They were to **boil its flesh in a holy place** and then **eat the flesh and the bread that is in the basket** which was unleavened **bread**. The **atonement** was made by those things and they were to eat **those things**. That would really

stress identification. It would teach them that their physical lives would be sustained by that which died for them.

PRINCIPLE: The NT parallel is the spiritual truth that our spiritual sustenance comes from the one who died for us, Jesus Christ! We receive eternal life from Him and our eternal life is sustained by Him.

Verse 35. It was a seven-day ordination ceremony. Each day they offered a bull to atone for the altar so it would be purified and holy, ready for the sacrifices of the people to be brought to the priests and offered up to God. The seven day ordination ceremony really impressed upon them the seriousness of their ministry.

In conclusion, the ordination ceremony of the OT priests signified several truths for the NT priest. First, as the OT priests were washed with water each day so the NT priest needs fellowship forgiveness by confession of sin each day. As the OT priests clothed themselves with special garments the NT priest needs to be clothed with the armor of God to be effective in ministry. As the OT priests were anointed with oil the NT priests are anointed with the Holy Spirit to enable them to minister. The OT priests had to be atoned for by blood sacrifice in order to be acceptable to God so NT priests have to have been redeemed by the blood of Christ in order to be acceptable to God. The OT priests had to identify with their substitute in order to dedicate their whole lives to the ministry. Wherever they went, whatever they did, whatever they heard all was a part of their ministry. The NT priest must also identify with his substitute Jesus Christ. Wherever he goes, whatever he does, whatever he hears, all must be a part of his ministry. There is no separation of the secular and the sacred.

ⁱ Ross, Allen, Holiness to the Lord, 214.

ⁱⁱ These garments set the high priest apart from the people and the other priests. Thus, they looked portray the holiness of Jesus Christ our great high priest who was “holy, innocent, undefiled”.

ⁱⁱⁱ The oil was received from the contributions of the people (Exod 25:6) and mixed with the finest spices (Exod 30:22-33). It was used only for consecrating the Tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant, the table of showbread, the golden altar of incense, the menorah, the bronze altar, the bronze laver and the priests. The purpose of this oil was to set apart people and objects used in Tabernacle ministry.

^{iv} Although it does not state it here in Exodus there are sufficient passages to support the idea that the oil represents the Holy Spirit (cf 1 Sam 10:1; 16:13; Isa 61:1; Zech 4:1-6).

^v When Aaron was anointed the oil was poured on his head (Lev 8:12; 21:10; Ps 23:5). After Aaron and his sons were anointed only the high priest was anointed. The high priest who had been

anointed with oil was not to leave the tent of meeting even if his father or mother died (Lev 10:7; 21:12).

^{vi} Why was there a special anointing with oil for the priests in the OT? “In the ancient world, olive oil mixed with perfumes was used to welcome guests into the home. In hot and arid Eastern countries, where clothing is necessarily thin and exposure to heat and sand is great, the application of oil relieves skin dryness and irritation. When visitors came to the house, it was proper for the host to supply a box of ointment to anoint them and to give them water with which to wash. A generous host tried to make guests as welcome and comfortable as possible. The Bible reflects this with the expression *oil of gladness* (Ps. 45:7 [MT 45:8]; 23:5; Prov. 21:17).

It is not surprising that out of this custom grew the custom of anointing priests and kings. When a priest was anointed, it indicated to the people that he was recognized by the Lord of the temple and should be treated with the special consideration and welcome customary for people to bestow on such persons and things they sought to honor and exalt. God was in a way welcoming the priest into his house (the temple) and showering honor and affection upon him as someone welcomed into the divine presence. The one anointed was identified with God’s dwelling by having been made fit for his presence. This ancient custom also symbolized God’s often choosing this occasion as the time to manifest the giving of his Spirit to the one being anointed.” Ross, Allen, *Holiness to the Lord*, 211.

^{vii} KJV Bible commentary. 1997, c1994 (170). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

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