

1. “On the Eighth Day” – Aaron Enters His Priestly Service (v1-7)

On the eighth day Moses called Aaron and his sons and the elders of Israel,

“On the eighth day”

It is remarkable how important the eighth day was to Israel.

You might think that the seventh day would be the most important.
After all, God blessed and sanctified the seventh day in Genesis 2.

Yes – but Genesis 2 ends with humanity in the Garden in Eden –
Adam and Eve were walking with God in the cool of the day –
living in fellowship with God.
Every seventh day, they entered God’s rest!

But there is a problem with the seventh day.
Because in Genesis 3 man rebelled against God,
refused to heed his voice –
followed the voice of the serpent –
and were banished from the Garden.
They were exiled from the presence of God –
and thus on every seventh day, they failed to enter God’s rest.

The seventh day is a reminder that things are *not* what they should be.

Listen to the Fourth Commandment from Exodus 20:

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. ¹¹ For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

In Exodus 20, the Sabbath commandment is built on the creation narrative.

The foundation for *our* Sabbath observance is that it is patterned after God’s own pattern.

But when Moses repeats the Ten Commandments in Deuteronomy 5,
he makes some significant changes:

Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. ¹³ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁴ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant, or your ox or your donkey or any of your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. ¹⁵ You shall remember that you were a slave^[c] in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out

from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

The focus here is on the importance of *giving rest* to your servants.

Remember that you were a slave – and the LORD delivered you –
so that he might bring you into his rest!

We started our service today with Psalm 95 –
which recounts the rebellion in the wilderness –
and God’s solemn oath that the rebels would not enter his rest.

Entering the Promised Land is compared with entering the Garden –
returning to Eden!

Israel as the second Adam – redeemed by God’s mighty hand –
returning to the LORD and entering God’s rest!

But Israel rebelled...
as Hebrews 3-4 point out,
if Joshua had brought Israel into God’s rest,
Psalm 95 would not have spoken of *another day*.

Israel’s redemption from Egypt –
which Deuteronomy 5 says is at the heart of the Fourth Commandment –
is all about entering God’s rest.

Who can ascend the hill of the LORD?
Who can enter God’s holy place?!

It’s the same problem that we have seen at the end of Exodus –
there is now a tent of meeting –
but the glory of the LORD fills the tabernacle –
so that no one can *enter* the tent!

How can Israel ascend to dwell with God?

The big picture version is how can humanity return to the LORD?
How can we “return to Eden”?

How can we go back and enter God’s rest.

And God’s answer is that there is no way *back*.

The cherub with the flaming sword still guards the entrance to Eden.

But there is a way *forward*!

You cannot go back to the seventh day.

There must be a new day.

There must be an *eighth day*!

That is why Aaron and his sons must spend seven days in purification and consecration.
It is only on the eighth day – on the first day of the New Creation –
that Aaron and his sons can enter into their New Creation labors
of giving rest to God’s people.

We heard in chapter 8 of the ordination offerings,
the preparation for entrance into the priestly service of God.
Now in chapter 9, we hear of the commencement of that service.
This day–this eighth day–was the dawn of a new creation.
Or from our perspective (on this side of the cross),
the dawn of the shadow of the new creation.

But for Aaron and his sons–and for all Israel–this day was the dawning of a new creation.
The eighth day had come.

² and he said to Aaron, “Take for yourself a bull calf for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering, both without blemish, and offer them before the LORD.

Notice in verse 2 that Aaron must start once again with a sin offering and a burnt offering for himself.

Note particularly that the sin offering for the priest must be a “bull calf” –
and remember that Aaron had made a golden *calf* (same word)
for Israel to worship back in Exodus 32.

It is rather appropriate that Aaron must offer a *calf* as a sin offering for himself!
The priests are not sinless.
That is why they must offer a sin offering for themselves!
Even after seven days of making atonement and purifying themselves –
they still must offer a sin offering on the eighth day!

It might seem absurd:
they have been in the Tent of Meeting for seven days!
They haven’t had a chance to do anything!!
Why do they need to offer *another* sin offering!??

You see, Moses was a Calvinist!
To say it better – this is one of the places
where the Christian doctrine of human sinfulness is clearly expressed.
Why does Aaron need *another* sin offering?
Because when you are preparing to enter the presence of a holy God
you *always* need a sin offering!!
If you recall, the sin offering was prescribed for unintentional sins.

Unintentional sins are also the sort of thing that you might not notice!

So let's say you didn't notice your sin –
and now you are coming into the presence of a holy God...

If the priests are going to intercede for Israel,
then they must first themselves be pure!

But then note the responsibility of the people:

³ And say to the people of Israel, 'Take a male goat for a sin offering, and a calf and a lamb, both a year old without blemish, for a burnt offering, ⁴ and an ox and a ram for peace offerings, to sacrifice before the LORD, and a grain offering mixed with oil, for today the LORD will appear to you.'"

We'll see in the book of Numbers
that they often divided up these responsibilities among the tribes.
Here there is a single male goat for a sin offering –
and a calf and a lamb for the burnt offering –
and an ox and a ram for peace offerings –
along with the grain offering mixed with oil.

In Exodus 24, there were 70 elders who represented Israel.
It is likely that something similar happened here.
After all, an ox and a ram would feed many –
but by no means *all* Israel!

⁵ And they brought what Moses commanded in front of the tent of meeting, and all the congregation drew near and stood before the LORD. ⁶ And Moses said, "This is the thing that the LORD commanded you to do, that the glory of the LORD may appear to you."

And so Israel brought the offerings –
and all the congregation drew near and stood before the LORD –
this is the moment that they have been waiting for!

The glory of the LORD will appear to them!
Now – for the first time since Eden –
there is a place where man can meet with God!

And so, in verse 7, Moses instructs Aaron:

⁷ Then Moses said to Aaron, "Draw near to the altar and offer your sin offering and your burnt offering and make atonement for yourself and for the people, and bring the offering of the people and make atonement for them, as the LORD has commanded."

And so Aaron drew near!

2. “Aaron Drew Near” – Aaron and the Offerings for Himself (v8-14)

a. The Sin Offering for Himself – Burned Outside the Camp (v8-11)

⁸ So Aaron drew near to the altar and killed the calf of the sin offering, which was for himself.

⁹ And the sons of Aaron presented the blood to him, and he dipped his finger in the blood and put it on the horns of the altar and poured out the blood at the base of the altar. ¹⁰ But the fat and the kidneys and the long lobe of the liver from the sin offering he burned on the altar, as the LORD commanded Moses. ¹¹ The flesh and the skin he burned up with fire outside the camp.

First he offered the sin offering for himself (v8-11)

The priests must be in a right relation to God before they can mediate for the people.
Even after seven days of consecration,
they must continue to offer sin offerings and burnt offerings for themselves.

As a sin offering, only the fat, the liver, and the kidneys is burned on the altar.
The rest is burned outside the camp.

Sin cannot remain in the camp!

Sin must be put outside the camp!

And so Aaron and his sons remove their sin –
and transfer it outside the camp.

b. The Burnt Offering for Himself – Ascending to God (v12-14)

¹² Then he killed the burnt offering, and Aaron's sons handed him the blood, and he threw it against the sides of the altar. ¹³ And they handed the burnt offering to him, piece by piece, and the head, and he burned them on the altar. ¹⁴ And he washed the entrails and the legs and burned them with the burnt offering on the altar.

Then in verse 12-14 we hear of the burnt offering – the “ascension offering” –
whereby Aaron and his sons ascend the hill of the Lord in the smoke of the animal.

Their sin was transferred to the sin offering,

so that they might be justified – reckoned as righteous and holy in God’s sight.

(Hebrews will point out that these offerings could not *actually* make them clean.

But then again, the need for daily and weekly and monthly and annual offerings
demonstrated this to any thoughtful Israelite!)

Having performed the purifying rituals for himself and his sons,
now Aaron turns to the offerings for the people.

3. “Then He Presented...” – Aaron and the Offerings of the People (v15-21)

a. The Sin Offering, the Ascension Offering, and the Tribute Offering (v15-17)

¹⁵ Then he presented the people's offering and took the goat of the sin offering that was for the

people and killed it and offered it as a sin offering, like the first one. ¹⁶ And he presented the burnt offering and offered it according to the rule. ¹⁷ And he presented the grain offering, took a handful of it, and burned it on the altar, besides the burnt offering of the morning.

After being purified themselves, the priests could now make atonement for the people.
Once again, they start with the goat of the sin offering.

The use of male goat seems odd at first.

After all, the sin offering for the whole congregation is supposed to be a bull (4:14)

But the sin offering for the priests is also a bull –
and so it appears that the priest's bull
suffices to reduce the price for the people to a goat!

So – if a priest's bull is able to reduce the price for the people –
I got one for you –
how much is a papal bull worth?!

(A papal bull is not worth the paper it's written on!!!)

(When the pope issues a decree, it is called a “bull”)

But Luther had the right idea.

When the pope issued a bull calling for his arrest,
Luther had it burned in the fire (as a burnt offering?!)

But after Aaron offered the sin offering for the people,
he then offered the burnt offering –
so that the people might draw near –
so that they could ascend the hill of the LORD.

And he offered the grain offering – the tribute offering –
with a handful burned on the altar – and the rest given to the priests.

b. The Sacrifice of the Peace Offering (v18-21)

¹⁸ Then he killed the ox and the ram, the sacrifice of peace offerings for the people. And Aaron's sons handed him the blood, and he threw it against the sides of the altar. ¹⁹ But the fat pieces of the ox and of the ram, the fat tail and that which covers the entrails and the kidneys and the long lobe of the liver—²⁰ they put the fat pieces on the breasts, and he burned the fat pieces on the altar, ²¹ but the breasts and the right thigh Aaron waved for a wave offering before the LORD, as Moses commanded.

Then came the ox and the ram – the sacrifice of peace offerings!

Note that the term “sacrifice” is used.

In the OT, sacrifice means *peace offering*.

The blood is thrown against the sides of the altar –
by now there would be quite a little river of blood flowing down from the altar!
The fat and the liver and the kidneys is burned on the altar –
upon the mountain of flesh that has been burning for hours...
with just a little incense in the grain offering
to counteract the smell of burning flesh!

But the breast and the right thigh
Aaron waved for a wave offering before the LORD –
a demonstration of submission before God.

The breast and the right thigh would now be cooked for Aaron and his sons –
and the rest of the meat of the ox and the ram
would be for the people –
or, at least, their representatives on this special day!

4. “And the Glory of the LORD Appeared” – the Aaronic Blessing (v22-24)

²² Then Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people and blessed them, and he came down from offering the sin offering and the burnt offering and the peace offerings.

After offering the sin offering and the ascension offering and the peace offerings,
v22, then Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people and blessed them.

Later, in Numbers 6, we will hear the Aaronic blessing.
On that occasion he may have said something different –
but it would have been something like this:

“The LORD bless you and keep you,
the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;
the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.”

As the LORD put it,
“So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them.”

The priestly blessing is not simply a wish – or even a prayer!
The priestly blessing is a declaration of God’s own blessing!
When I bless you at the end of the worship service,
it is not a mere wish that you be blessed –
nor is it a prayer that God would bless you.

I am placing the name of God upon you.
I am declaring *his blessing*.

Having received God’s blessing, Aaron now mediates that to the people.

This is a central theme of the priesthood throughout the OT.

They are set apart to serve in the tabernacle – and later the temple.

But not for their own benefit!

The priests serve as mediators – to mediate the blessings of God to Israel.

Now watch!

Until this day, we are told that *Moses* went into the tent of meeting.

Sometimes Joshua went with him –

but here – for the first time – Aaron joins Moses in the Tabernacle!

There is a high priest!

There is a high priest who is like his brothers –

who knows their frailty – because he himself is a sinner like them!

Hebrews 5:1-4 says:

For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. ² He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. ³ Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people. ⁴ And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was.

Aaron could deal gently with the ignorant and wayward –
after all, Aaron had offered the golden calf!

When a sinner came to Aaron, he knew that this was not a man to cast the first stone!

We seem to like our heroes to be flawed – like us!

It makes us feel better to know that they are “real people.”

But there is a problem!

If all of our heroes are flawed like us –

then we will never get out of this never-ending cycle!

We need a better high priest!

Hebrews had just said at the end of chapter 4:

¹⁴ Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

This is what Aaron could never do!
The cycle of offerings in the OT would never end –
the cycle of sin and death would always continue!
When will it end?

When will humanity be able to return to fellowship with God?
When will the eighth day come –
so that we might enter God's rest!?

²³ And Moses and Aaron went into the tent of meeting, and when they came out they blessed the people, and the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people. ²⁴ And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the pieces of fat on the altar, and when all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces.

You see a picture of this in verse 23 –
when Moses and Aaron came out of the tent of meeting,
“they blessed the people, and the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people”!

Fire came out from the presence of the Lord, and it consumed the burnt offering
and the fat of the peace offering.
God had accepted their offering.
More precisely, God had accepted Aaron's priesthood.

A new day has dawned.
The new creation has come –
a new Adam – a new man – has entered the holy place,
and God did not destroy him!

Fire came out from the presence of the LORD
and consumed the ascension offering and the fat of the sin and peace offerings!
That means that God has accepted the death of the animals
in the place of the death of Aaron – and the death of Israel –
and so now Israel has peace with God through our High Priest Aaron!

It's not nearly as good as Romans 5:1,
“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith,
we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ!”

But it is pointing to exactly the same reality!
How can we be right with God?

Only through the blood of the lamb!
Nothing but the blood of Jesus!