

## “Consummation of Inauguration” (Lev. 9)

### 1. Aaron’s Atonement (1-14)

- a. A 2<sup>nd</sup> Chance on the 8<sup>th</sup> Day (Intentional Irony?): “Moses took Aaron and his sons to one side and, in the presence of the leaders of Israel (1), instructed them to gather the materials needed for the numerous offerings Aaron was to present that day. He was to offer a sin and a burnt offering for himself (2), and the four major offerings—the sin, burnt, grain and peace offerings—on behalf of the community (3–4). Only one detail begs attention in these otherwise routine instructions. Aaron is instructed to offer *a bull calf* for his own sin offering (2), which is the only time this particular animal is stipulated. Later Jewish commentaries quite rightly explained that the choice of victim was due to the shameful incident of the golden calf in which Aaron had played such a crucial role.<sup>1</sup> With this offering ‘the last stains of that grave sin’ were being removed.”<sup>2</sup> <sup>1</sup>
- b. Another atoning sacrifice is made for Aaron even after the 7 day consecration. Aaron was a fellow sinner (see above) and he was given the official office of priest, Moses transferring said office to Aaron which began in earnest on the 8<sup>th</sup> day when God would appear to all of them (6).
- c. Aaron’s Apostasy is atrocious but not unique. It’s not that because his sin was more egregious than others but that it was certainly no less than others and thus his continued cleansing would be a necessary event.
- d. As we see in v. 24, our 8<sup>th</sup> day worship service ought not to be a mere casual gathering but a divine service. We must lay our lives bare before God sacrificing our agendas and offering our service for His Kingdom because His only Son took on the divine fire of judgment upon Himself! We come to the divine service and presence of God allowing the mirror and light of His Word to expose, exhort, and encourage us.

### 2. Altar of Atonement (focus of the chapter)

- a. The altar is at the heart of the initiation of the Tabernacle. And indeed, it would be there where they would witness God’s terrifying glory which manifested at Mt Sinai.
- b. Milgrom: The technical name for this inauguration is *hanukkah*, “initiation,” or, more precisely, “the initiation of the altar” (this is elucidated in the Theme). The concentration of the entire chapter is upon the altar, as demonstrated by the curtailed description of the sacrificial procedure, which omits nearly every rite that is unrelated to the altar (e.g., the hand-leaning) but includes every rite involving the altar, even the most minute (e.g., the disposition of the suet pieces, vv. 19–20), climaxed by the unique theophany upon the altar (vv. 3–24).<sup>2</sup>
- c. The Tabernacle was a temporary means of atonement and house for God’s presence among the tribes but it was also a picture of what preceded it and what would ultimately fulfill it.
- d. They had experienced the theophany of God at Mt Sinai where God had promised to make them a nation of priests. And now they were about to see a theophany of God come down into the camp!
- e. Mountain Motif includes the Mobile Mount of God. Zion is the holy hill of the LORD. Matthew’s Gospel is structured in one dimension around mountains. And here, the presence of God on Mount Sinai would move to the camp to reside over and in the Tabernacle.

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<sup>1</sup> Exod. 32:1–35.

<sup>2</sup> Hartley, p. 122.

<sup>1</sup> Tidball, D. (2005). *The Message of Leviticus: Free to Be Holy* (A. Motyer & D. Tidball, Eds.; p. 122). Inter-Varsity Press.

<sup>2</sup> Milgrom, J. (2004). *A Continental Commentary: Leviticus: a book of ritual and ethics* (p. 88). Fortress Press.

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- f. The Tabernacle being the earthly palace for the heavenly King is certainly ironic. But here we see the beautiful paradox of incarnation. More subsequently.
- 3. Astounding Appearance (Glory of the LORD vv. 22-24)
  - a. Converging Motifs find their end in Christ. See **Further Study** re: Blessings v. 22.
  - b. The Mount of God
    - i. After atoning for all of our sins, Jesus the Passover Lamb rose on the 8<sup>th</sup> day securing the reality of new creation not unlike Israel experienced a new beginning enabled by the Tabernacle.-->
    - ii. As mentioned, the Tabernacle became the Mobile Mount of God who chose to dwell among His nomadic people in a portable tent! Jn. 1:1, 14.
    - iii. He who descended from heaven’s Zion ascended back to it Ps. 24 cf. Jn. 3:13. →
  - c. Divine Fire
    - i. Moses saw the fire of the burning bush and yet it was not consumed. Jesus.
    - ii. Israel had witnessed the fire in the theophany at Sinai for 40 days. Jesus.
    - iii. Now, the consuming fire at the altar of the Tabernacle was to be perpetual. Jesus.
    - iv. Other future events would involve the consuming fire and approving fire of God e.g. Lev. 10:2 (retribution on sons of Aaron), 2 Chron. 7:1 (Temple inauguration), *1 Kings* 18:38 at Mount Carmel (amazing consumption!).
    - v. Furthermore, *Malachi* 3:2 speaks of the divine fire of judgment pointing to the coming Judge found in Mat. 3:11.
    - vi. The same divine fire which consumes the wicked also purifies His people cf. 1 Cor. 3:15.
    - vii. And what is inseparably linked with this divine fire is God’s glory →
  - d. Glory/Presence of God
    - i. Aaron was told that “the glory of the LORD will appear to you” v. 6.
    - ii. Oh what an appearing! Read vv. 23-24. “The *fire* that came and consumed the sacrifices may have been something like a bolt of lightning. It did not ignite the sacrifices, which were already burning from the day’s offerings, but rather consumed the remains instantly.”<sup>3</sup>
    - iii. Though God’s glory is above the heavens (Pss. 57:5; 108:5; 113:4), It can be perceived in all the earth (Isa. 6:3), and as it filled the Tabernacle and Temple (Exod. 40:34-5; 1 Kin. 8:11), it will fill all creation (Ps. 72:19; Rev. 21:23).
    - iv. It is no *light* matter to be in the presence of God – it is “heavy” the literal meaning of “glory.” And Jesus’ person and work alone could remedy the sin issue which constantly separates us from God. Speaking of Jesus’ accomplishment and our worship today as a congregation (as mentioned above re: 8<sup>th</sup> day service), Nobuyoshi Kiuchi wrote: “the *sanctuary as a whole represents the human heart and soul*. As is indicated in Lev. 4 and 16 it is the self-hiding of the people that defiles not only the Holy Place but also the Holy of Holies. By self-hiding, the people in general defile the Holy of Holies. But self-hiding before the Lord is a matter of the human heart, for the agent of self-hiding is the human *nepes̄* (4:2). Thus the innermost part of the human soul is represented by the Holy of Holies. But this will become clearer as we move into the following chapters.”<sup>4</sup> →

<sup>3</sup> Wright, C. J. H. (1994). [Leviticus](#). In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., p. 135). InterVarsity Press.

<sup>4</sup> Kiuchi, N. (2007). [Leviticus](#) (D. W. Baker & G. J. Wenham, Eds.; Vol. 3, p. 175). Apollos; InterVarsity Press.

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- v. When we hide our sin, He hides from us (Isa. 59:2; Prov. 28:13; Jn. 9:39-41). When we confess our sins we can be cleansed (1 Jn. 1:9).
- vi. God’s glory is synonymous with His presence and work hence Jesus is inseparably linked to the glory of God. “We read of the glory of God appearing: at Christ’s birth (Luke 2:9) and transfiguration (Luke 9:31), in his miracles (John 2:11), and at his second coming (Matt. 16:27; 25:31). Christ himself is described as the glory of God (1 Cor. 2:8; John 1:14). Christ is present where two or three meet in his name (Matt. 18:20). Worship must be in Spirit and Truth (John 4:24). When the Spirit came at Pentecost he was in the form of fire; under his inspiration the believers spoke of “the mighty works of God” (Acts 2:11).”<sup>5</sup>
- vii. Pulling this all together we see Jesus at the nucleus.
  - 1. Holiness from on high comes to dwell with us (Jn. 1:1, 14).
  - 2. His glory was/is revealed Jn. 12:23; 17:1; foreshadowed in the person Israel (Isa. 49:3).
  - 3. He will baptize with fire (Mat. 3:11).
  - 4. He is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:28-9).
  - 5. He was the perfect offering who was slain yet not consumed!
  - 6. Though He ascended, He left us with the Helper who would empower us (Jn. 16:7 cf. Acts. 2:3-4 yet like those who shouted (cheered) for joy as the CL accepted the sacrifices, they were also in awe Lev. 9:24 cf. Acts 2:43).
- viii. Again, we ought to never cavalierly stroll into a worship service with irreverence even though we in Christ need not fear the presence of God in and among us. Steve Brown for Key Life has got down pat that we are saved by grace and cannot contribute a thing to our justification, but we do our sanctification! He is preaching as if the number one problem facing the Church today is legalism. It is not. It is cheap grace. Much of the visible church is libertine (a kind of spiritual Libertarianism). We need the balance of fear and praise / security and vulnerability.
- ix. Many see the divine service as primarily a time and place to display emotions of praise and gratitude. But God’s holiness is heaviness and thus we need not lightly approach it! The Spirit of fire also moves to convict, teach, reprove, rebuke, and exhort.

### Further Study:

Blessings v. 22. The motif of blessings begin at creation and end at the New Creation due to Christ’s work of redemption. Consider Gen. 1:22, 28; 2:3 re: creation, Gen. 12:1-3 re: call, Gen. 5:2; 9:1 re: commission, Gen. 14:18 re: Christ (order of Melchizedek), and Mat. 5:3-12 re: consecration. Also see Nu. 6:24-6 re: Aaron’s blessing over Israel.

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If you are curious why that after seven days of consecration there still needed to be another inaugural sacrifice for Aaron’s and the priests’ sins, the seriousness of sin and our proclivity to commit it is seen, unfortunately, in the very next verse after they fell on their faces and worshiped the revealed Covenant LORD (CL). In this chapter of the Tabernacle’s inauguration we see that the altar is at the heart of it all because it is the place of mediation where heavenly Mt Zion meets an earthly mobile tent, where the divine fire from the CL consumes the sacrifice rather than the sinner, and where the glory of the CL

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<sup>5</sup> Wenham, G. J. (1979). *The Book of Leviticus* (p. 151). Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

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invades a sinful camp. If this doesn't astound you then neither will Jesus' incarnation. Sin is not comfortable with purity. Darkness cannot overcome the light. Sinners cannot stand in the presence of the holy CL. And yet because of the altar, a place has been provided that wretched sinners may cling to the Provision of God – that what has been sacrificed on the altar has endured God's consuming fire rather than us being consumed by it. Understanding these motifs, which find their end in Christ can offer us real application in our contemporary worship services.