

JANUARY 30

Exodus 29 -31

Upon the instructions of God, Moses held an ordination service for the priests. This is the first mention of ordination in the Bible - setting people apart for a specific ministry to which God has called them. It is an elaborate ceremony, and particularly interesting because of the sprinkling of blood. Back in chapter 24 we found Moses sprinkling the blood of a sacrifice on the people. In that instance the sprinkled blood is to formalize the cutting of a covenant between God and the people of Israel.

Now the blood is sprinkled again. This time it is not to ratify a covenant, but to consecrate the men to the exclusive service of God. First the blood is placed on the ear lobes, the thumbs and the big toes of the priests. It sounds strange, I know, but it makes perfect sense. The blood is to consecrate - to set apart for God's exclusive use - so the ear that will listen to God, the hand that will work for God and the foot that will carry the priest wherever God directs, are all set apart for God's special (and exclusive) use.

Then the blood is sprinkled on Aaron and his sons. They have been consecrated for God's special use. A little earlier in the ceremony there was a sin offering and the blood of that offering was sprinkled on the altar - that was for the forgiveness of sins.

God's ultimate purpose in all of this is clearly stated right at the end of chapter 29. It is so that he can dwell among His people and so that they will know that He is the Lord their God. God's purpose for Israel is now God's purpose for the new Israel -- the Church -- to dwell among us and communicate to all of us that He is the Lord our God.

In Chapters 30 & 31, we became acquainted with the last two pieces of furniture which were found in the Tabernacle, and with the skilled workmen whom God prepared for the task of building the tabernacle. Our study of the tabernacle and its furnishings has been instructive and suggestive in its relationship to Christ. Each of these pieces of furniture points in some significant way toward the Lord Jesus Christ, who Himself became the tabernacle in which God dwelt with men.

Firstly, the Altar of Incense, which was in the Holy Place of the tabernacle, just in front of the curtain which covered the entrance to the Holy of Holies. This 18" square by 3' high wood table was covered with gold and it spoke of prayer. Sweet spices were burned on this table each morning and evening. This gave people in the camp a reminder through aroma of the presence of God in their midst. The closer they came, the stronger the aroma would be.

The last piece of furniture was the Bronze Basin, which stood at the back of the courtyard so that Aaron and his sons could wash their hands and feet with water before entering the Tent of Meeting. They had to be clean to approach a Holy God

- or else they would die. There is an incredibly important principle that still has much relevance for us. We come to God as priests whenever we want to on the strength of the final all-sufficient offering of Christ on the cross, but we too must stop and make certain that we have been washed and are clean before Him.

There is more here and we need to recognize it. The building of the Tabernacle and all of the furnishings, the metal work, the carpentry, the production of the curtains, were all according to exact specifications. It was a major project. But God never places a task before His servants without first providing all the resources and all of the people necessary to carry it out. I'm sure that when Moses heard all of the instructions, he was wondering where the materials would come from, (remember they were in the wilderness), where the craftsmen would come from, and where the tools would be found with which to do all the necessary work. But the Tent of Meeting was God's idea, not Moses', and if He called them to do it, then He would provide the resources and the people necessary to get it done.

How about you? Has God given you a task to accomplish and you are wondering how you are going to complete it? Since our God is the same today as he was in Moses' day we can believe that he is a God who will come through for us. He is not limited by the resources needed or the people necessary to fulfill his assignments. If he has called you to it, he will provide.

It is important to remember that the Spirit of God gave the skills and talents to these men. They were given for the purpose of being used in the service of God. The Holy Spirit is still giving spiritual gifts to men and women today for the express purpose of equipping us to do God's work in the way He wants it done. These special craftsmen did not receive their "gifts" so that they could distinguish themselves - the gifts were given so that they could serve God and Israel. Bezalel and Oholiab were undoubtedly highly respected in the nation of Israel, but it was only because they understood that the gifts had been given them so that they could serve the Lord and the people of the Lord! These two can become the heroes of visual and constructive artists everywhere. Do you have these kinds of gifts? Maybe God has great plans for using them for his glory!

One final note:

When God finished giving Moses all these instructions, He handed him one of the most precious things ever given to a man - the two tablets - inscribed by the finger of God himself. Can you imagine how precious these were to Moses? Or how valuable they would be if we had them today? Well watch tomorrow to see what happens to them!

This has been Mark Ashton reminding you that God's Word is solid and unchanging. Peace be with you.