



Studies in the Book of Exodus

Text
Exodus 29:1-46

Topic
Aaron's ordination as High Priest begins with him being given a one-time bath, then continues with a slew of animal sacrifices

Title
"It's Not Easy Being Clean"

SyFy writers are obsessed with enhancing humans to produce a 'super' version of man.

It's a plot-point that figures prominently in the Marvel Cinematic Universe with characters like Captain America, the Red Skull, and the Winter Soldier.

Star Trek fans regard Khan Noonien Singh as one of the great villains in their universe. He was a genetically enhanced human who gave Kirk and Spock trouble in the original television series and in two feature films.

Super-humans are not just SyFy characters anymore. Russian strongman Vladimir Putin not too long ago warned of future super-human soldiers more 'destructive than nuclear bombs' who feel no fear or pain.

Back in 2015, Popular Mechanics published a story titled, *Russia and China's "Enhanced Human Operations" Terrify the Pentagon*. One US official was quoted, saying, "We're going to have to have a big, big decision on whether we're comfortable going that way."

Who remembers the *Six Million Dollar Man*? Steve Austin - a man barely alive. Then the eerie narrator said:

Gentlemen, we can rebuild him. We have the technology. We have the capability to make the worlds first bionic man... Better than he was before. Better, stronger, faster.

We look at a human and want to make him or her better, stronger, faster - mostly to be able to kill other weaker, slower humans.

What would a 'better' human being really look like? I think we see one in our text. He's the High Priest of Israel.

He's not better in the usual, SyFy, sense, but in a spiritual sense. He's better because he is brought into fellowship with God.

He is a picture for us of what God intends to do for every fallen man or woman who believes in Him.

I'll organize my comments around two points: #1 You See A Man Brought Into Fellowship With God, #2 You See A Man Bringing Others Into Fellowship With God.

#1 You See A Man Brought Into Fellowship With God

(v1-37)

Over three-hundred thousand books are published annually in the United States. We are #2 on that list. Any guess as to which country publishes the most books?

It's China. After that, the top five is finished out by the UK, Japan, and Russia.

On the bottom of the list, at #127, is Oman. Seven books per year.

With so much to read, the first thing I do when someone asks me to read a book is find out where it's going to take me. I research the author, then the subject. If it's not fiction, I want to know its conclusions before I begin.

The Bible, written by inspiration, has solid authorship. Each of its books ought to be read and re-read. But it can still be a good idea to understand where a passage is taking you; to see the conclusion from the beginning. It keeps you from reaching your own conclusions, and thereby missing the point.

Look at the last three verses of chapter twenty-nine:

Exo 29:44 So I will consecrate the tabernacle of meeting and the altar. I will also consecrate both Aaron and his sons to minister to Me as priests.

Exo 29:45 I will dwell among the children of Israel and will be their God.

Exo 29:46 And they shall know that I *am* the LORD their God, who brought them up out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them. I *am* the LORD their God.

Whatever commentators make of this chapter, God intended us to understand that it was about Him being able to dwell among men.

We phrase that a little differently. Looking at it from our perspective, we say that our purpose as humans is to have fellowship with God.

When we look at Aaron, who was being installed as High Priest, we are looking at God bringing fallen humans back into fellowship with Him. He represents us all.

Exo 29:1 "And this is what you shall do to them to hallow them for ministering to Me as priests...

The word "hallow," or your Bible may read "consecrate," means *to make holy, to make fit, to dedicate or set apart for a special purpose.*

The special purpose is to be brought into fellowship. Since we are, by nature, unholy and out of fellowship, God had to act to bring us back. He began to bring us back immediately after our parents sinned in Eden; and the Bible, from Genesis through the Revelation, reveals the success of God's efforts. In the Revelation, we read, "And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face..." (22:3-4).

Exo 29:1 "And this is what you shall do to them to hallow them for ministering to Me as priests: Take one young bull and two rams without blemish,
Exo 29:2 and unleavened bread, unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers anointed with oil (you shall make them of wheat flour).
Exo 29:3 You shall put them in one basket and bring them in the basket, with the bull and the two rams.
Exo 29:4 "And Aaron and his sons you shall bring to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and you shall wash them with water.

These verses describe the one-time ordination of Aaron as High Priest; and his sons as the regular priests. There was a lot of ceremony and sacrifice before they could serve in the Tabernacle. Everything has symbolism, or is a picture to us of some spiritual truth.

We'll see three major things God did for them in the first nine verses in order to bring them into fellowship with Him. One commentator who likes alliteration pointed out that Aaron was **Absolved**... then he was **Arrayed**... and then he was **Anointed**.

For our purposes today, to be **absolved** means your sin is forgiven, along with its guilt and penalty. Washing Aaron and his sons with water is what God wants to do for every human.

He doesn't want to give us a bath; it's a picture. Jesus interpreted this washing for us on the night before He was crucified. At one point during His final evening with the disciples before He died, He stooped to wash their feet. In an exchange with Peter, Jesus said, "a person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean."

He was using physical bathing and subsequent washings to make a spiritual point. One commentator explained it like this:

Jesus is saying, "When you first come to me, you are bathed; you are clean all over." This is what the Bible calls justification by faith. It is a washing away of all the guilt and sin of the entire life - past, present, and future. But as you walk through life, Jesus knows your feet will be defiled during your walk, and that needs to be washed away. Thus He teaches us that not only do we need that initial, never-to-be-repeated cleansing, but we also need the many-times-repeated experience of forgiveness, of coming to Christ for the cleansing away of the defilement of our walk.

Notice Aaron did not bathe himself; he was bathed by others. We cannot cleanse ourselves from sin; as sinners, we can only be declared righteous, and we are the moment we believe in Jesus.

We say that God justifies believing sinners on the basis of their faith in what Jesus has done for them.

Exo 29:5 Then you shall take the garments, put the tunic on Aaron, and the robe of the ephod, the ephod, and the breastplate, and gird him with the intricately woven band of the ephod.

Exo 29:6 You shall put the turban on his head, and put the holy crown on the turban.

We described in some detail the beautiful and unique garments of the High Priest, and of the regular priests. What we are seeing here is that once washed, i.e., saved, God clothes you; you are **arrayed** with a robe.

Now I don't want to belabor the point because we talked about it last week, but your salvation is depicted in the Bible as God giving you a white, fine linen robe - sometimes referred to as a wedding garment. It can't be earned or purchased; it's a gift for those who believe in Jesus.

- With it you can enter Heaven.
- Without it, you stand before God in your own filthy rags, and will ultimately be cast into the Lake of Fire to suffer eternal conscious torment.

The person God brings into fellowship is absolved, arrayed in fine linen - then he or she is **anointed**.

Exo 29:7 And you shall take the anointing oil, pour *it* on his head, and anoint him.

Exo 29:8 Then you shall bring his sons and put tunics on them.

Exo 29:9 And you shall gird them with sashes, Aaron and his sons, and put the hats on them. The priesthood shall be theirs for a perpetual statute. So you shall consecrate Aaron and his sons.

Part of this ordination ceremony was the pouring of oil over their heads. This wasn't a tiny transfer of oil from a wet finger to the forehead. In the Psalms we read, "It is like the precious oil upon the head, Running down on the beard, The beard of Aaron, Running down on the edge of his garments" (133:2).

Jesus interpreted this for us when He quoted from Isaiah 61:1, applying it to Himself, saying, "The **Spirit** of the Lord GOD is upon Me, Because the LORD has **anointed** Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound..."

After being cleansed and clothed, Aaron would be led and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

We'll return to this in a moment. First let's briefly discuss the following verses and see the ceremony unfold.

Exo 29:10 "You shall also have the bull brought before the tabernacle of meeting, and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands on the head of the bull.

Exo 29:11 Then you shall kill the bull before the LORD, *by* the door of the tabernacle of meeting.

Exo 29:12 You shall take *some* of the blood of the bull and put *it* on the horns of the altar with your finger, and pour all the blood beside the base of the altar.

Exo 29:13 And you shall take all the fat that covers the entrails, the fatty lobe *attached* to the liver, and the two kidneys and the fat that *is* on them, and burn *them* on the altar.

Exo 29:14 But the flesh of the bull, with its skin and its offal, you shall burn with fire outside the camp. It *is* a sin offering.

The history of God allowing a substitute as a sacrifice began in the Garden of Eden with the slaying of animals to provide covering for Adam and Eve after they sinned. Every subsequent animal sacrificed was like a place holder pointing to the coming of the promised Savior to once-for-all be our Substitute and sacrifice.

Laying their hands on the animal's head symbolized the transfer of their sin onto the sacrifice. The animal, as a substitute, would take the "punishment" for their sin, and Aaron and his sons would be temporarily ceremonially cleared to worship and serve the Lord in the Tabernacle.

Exo 29:15 "You shall also take one ram, and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands on the head of the ram;

Exo 29:16 and you shall kill the ram, and you shall take its blood and sprinkle *it* all around on the altar.

Exo 29:17 Then you shall cut the ram in pieces, wash its entrails and its legs, and put *them* with its pieces and with its head.

Exo 29:18 And you shall burn the whole ram on the altar. It *is* a burnt offering to the LORD; it *is* a sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to the LORD.

This time, the “whole” animal was burned on the altar. It pictured total dedication on the part of the priests. And God noted that their total dedication would be pleasing to Him - like a sweet aroma.

Exo 29:19 "You shall also take the other ram, and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands on the head of the ram.

Exo 29:20 Then you shall kill the ram, and take some of its blood and put *it* on the tip of the right ear of Aaron and on the tip of the right ear of his sons, on the thumb of their right hand and on the big toe of their right foot, and sprinkle the blood all around on the altar.

Exo 29:21 And 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, on his sons and on the garments of his sons with him; and he and his garments shall be hallowed, and his sons and his sons' garments with him.

Nothing hard to see in this picture:

- The priests needed ears consecrated to hear God’s voice.
- They needed hands consecrated to serve Him.
- They needed feet consecrated to walk in His will.

If you remember how beautiful the garments were, it's kind of shocking that they would be sprinkled with blood mixed with oil. As we continue, we'll see there was blood everywhere - not just at the ordination, but every day. Lots and lots of it.

As a point of interest, we might wonder how they dealt with all the blood from the numerous sacrifices. We know in the future Temple, there was a drainage system that channeled the blood out into the Kidron Valley. Not sure if they dug temporary canals each time the Tabernacle was set up.

I couldn't find anything about the laundering of the garments of the High Priest - except that if they became stained beyond cleaning, they would be hidden away and replaced.

Exo 29:22 "Also you shall take the fat of the ram, the fat tail, the fat that covers the entrails, the fatty lobe *attached to* the liver, the two kidneys and the fat on them, the right thigh (for it *is* a ram of consecration),

Exo 29:23 one loaf of bread, one cake *made with* oil, and one wafer from the basket of the unleavened bread that *is* before the LORD;

Exo 29:24 and you shall put all these in the hands of Aaron and in the hands of his sons, and you shall wave them *as* a wave offering before the LORD.

Exo 29:25 You shall receive them back from their hands and burn *them* on the altar as a burnt offering, as a sweet aroma before the LORD. It *is* an offering made by fire to the LORD.

Exo 29:26 "Then you shall take the breast of the ram of Aaron's consecration and wave it *as* a wave offering before the LORD; and it shall be your portion.

Exo 29:27 And from the ram of the consecration you shall consecrate the breast of the wave offering which is waved, and the thigh of the heave offering which is raised, of *that* which is for Aaron and of *that* which is for his sons.

Exo 29:28 It shall be from the children of Israel *for* Aaron and his sons by a statute forever. For it is a heave offering; it shall be a heave offering from the children of Israel from the sacrifices of their peace offerings, *that is*, their heave offering to the LORD.

There had been no central place of worship for the Israelites - not ever. Now there would be. God would dwell among them in the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle. These and many other offerings would become regular daily occurrences.

Exo 29:29 "And the holy garments of Aaron shall be his sons' after him, to be anointed in them and to be consecrated in them.

Exo 29:30 That son who becomes priest in his place shall put them on for seven days, when he enters the tabernacle of meeting to minister in the holy *place*.

You couldn't keep the High Priest's garments after you were through; they were passed down to the next High Priest.

He was unique, but the High Priest also pictured what God intended for *every* Israelite. Back in Exodus 19:6 God stated His desire that Israel be "a kingdom of priests."

Jesus was unique, but He also pictured what God intends for *every* believer. He promises to make us like Jesus; we are predestined to be conformed into His image (Romans 8:29).

Since that word, “predestined,” can be confusing, let me say this. A person is not predestined - they are not ‘predetermined’ - to either be saved or to perish.

The Holy Spirit by God’s grace frees a person’s will to believe Christ. Those that do believe and are saved person are then destined to become like Jesus. The good work of salvation God begins in you, He will bring to completion.

Exo 29:31 "And you shall take the ram of the consecration and boil its flesh in the holy place.

Exo 29:32 Then Aaron and his sons shall eat the flesh of the ram, and the bread that *is* in the basket, *by* the door of the tabernacle of meeting.

Exo 29:33 They shall eat those things with which the atonement was made, to consecrate *and* to sanctify them; but an outsider shall not eat *them*, because they *are* holy.

Exo 29:34 And if any of the flesh of the consecration offerings, or of the bread, remains until the morning, then you shall burn the remainder with fire. It shall not be eaten, because it *is* holy.

This meal could only be eaten by a select few - Aaron and his sons. Even so, it pictured what God wanted for every Israelite - to share fellowship with them.

Jesus ate with a select few disciples. It pictured what He promised all future disciples - to share fellowship with us.

Exo 29:35 "Thus you shall do to Aaron and his sons, according to all that I have commanded you. Seven days you shall consecrate them.

Exo 29:36 And you shall offer a bull every day as a sin offering for atonement. You shall cleanse the altar when you make atonement for it, and you shall anoint it to sanctify it.

Exo 29:37 Seven days you shall make atonement for the altar and sanctify it. And the altar shall be most holy. Whatever touches the altar must be holy.

“It’s not easy being clean.” This meticulous set of initial rituals emphasized that mankind was separated from God by sin.

But it also preached that God was working tirelessly to redeem mankind from sin and to restore men and women to fellowship with Him - both on earth and in eternity.

Take another spiritual look at the ground we’ve just covered:

1. The blood of substituted sacrifices was the necessary prerequisite for being restored to fellowship with God. All animal sacrifices from the original one in the Garden of Eden forward were a temporary fix until Jesus died on Passover as the final Lamb of God taking away the sins of the world.
2. Jesus’ sacrifice enables God the Father to justify believing sinners - in effect, cleansing them once-for-all from the penalty of past, present, and future sins
3. Jesus took upon Himself mankind’s sin - our filthy garments - and now offers the fine white linen robe a person must have as the wedding garment in order to enter Heaven.
4. God the Holy Spirit is given to believers, to indwell us and to empower us.

The saved man - He is the ‘better man.’ The man (or woman) who is saved once-for-all; who is being sanctified day-by-day; whose body is the Temple of God on earth; who will one day inherit eternity in a glorified physical body incapable of sin.

It's hard to say how much of this an Israelite would have seen in the picture language of the Tabernacle. Even if most of it was a mystery to them, God told them outright it was all so He could "dwell among them" - and that is something precious.

We see it more clearly, having the benefit of God's complete revelation, through both the written and the living Word of God.

#2 You See A Man Bringing Others Into Fellowship With God (v38-46)

A lot of work goes on behind the scenes on Sunday morning in order for us to be ready for services:

- There is a procedure that needs to be followed to power-up the sound systems all over campus; and to enable the slides; and to broadcast on the InterWeb.
- Meanwhile we have guys on a rotation who show-up to open the facility.
- Cafe crew needs to prep everything.
- Usher and Security teams need to be in place.

It all results in us being 'Open for God's Business.'

The Old Testament Tabernacle had morning and evening procedures. Until it was done, no worshipper could bring his or her sacrifice, and no ministry could take place.

Exo 29:38 "Now this *is* what you shall offer on the altar: two lambs of the first year, day by day continually.

Exo 29:39 One lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight.

Exo 29:40 With the one lamb shall be one-tenth *of an ephah* of flour mixed with one-fourth of a hin of pressed oil, and one-fourth of a hin of wine as a drink offering.

Exo 29:41 And the other lamb you shall offer at twilight; and you shall offer with it the grain offering and the drink offering, as in the morning, for a sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to the LORD.

After this week of ordination was finished, Aaron and sons would get down to the daily God business. Every day, twice a day, they would offer this burnt offering.

Exo 29:42 This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations *at* the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the LORD, where I will meet you to speak with you.

Exo 29:43 And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and *the tabernacle* shall be sanctified by My glory.

The faithfulness of the priests in this matter translated into the Israelites being able to come to the Tabernacle and worship.

They thus were bringing others to God. They were making it possible for other Israelites to approach God.

Likewise, as we follow the leading of the Spirit, we are promoting fellowship with God - either through the evangelism of nonbelievers, or through the edification of believers.

Exo 29:44 So I will consecrate the tabernacle of meeting and the altar. I will also consecrate both Aaron and his sons to minister to Me as priests.

Exo 29:45 I will dwell among the children of Israel and will be their God.

Exo 29:46 And they shall know that I *am* the LORD their God, who brought them up out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them. I *am* the LORD their God.

God took the initiative. The Tabernacle was His idea. The priesthood was His idea.

Everything He demanded for the consecration of both the Tabernacle and the priesthood communicated that although God is perfect in holiness, He can nevertheless restore sinners to fellowship with Himself.

He would “dwell among them.” It was His great desire, and their great joy.

The better man isn't a faster, stronger super-soldier. He is a believer. He is “in Christ.”

I'll close with a quote from A.W. Tozer:

If man had his way, the plan of redemption would be an endless and bloody conflict. In reality, salvation was bought not by Jesus' fist, but by His nail-pierced hands; not by muscle but by love; not by vengeance but by forgiveness; not by force but by sacrifice. Jesus Christ our Lord surrendered in order that He might win; He destroyed His enemies by dying for them and conquered death by allowing death to conquer Him.

