

CHAPTER 29

Particular orders are given in this chapter,

- I.** Concerning the consecration of the priests, and the sanctification of the altar (v. 1-37).
- II.** Concerning the daily sacrifice (v. 38-41). To which gracious promises are annexed that God would own and bless them in all their services (v. 42, etc.).

~~291~~ EXODUS 29:1-37

THE CONSECRATION OF THE PRIESTS

Here is,

I. The law concerning the consecration of Aaron and his sons to the priest's office, which was to be done with a great deal of ceremony and solemnity, that they themselves might be duly affected with the greatness of the work to which they were called, and that the people also might learn to magnify the office and none might dare to invade it.

1. The ceremonies wherewith it was to be done were very fully and particularly appointed, because nothing of this kind had been done before, and because it was to be a statute for ever that the high priest should be thus inaugurated. Now,

(1.) The work to be done was the consecrating of the persons whom God had chosen to be priests, by which they devoted and gave up themselves to the service of God and God declared his acceptance of them; and the people were made to know that they *glorified not themselves* to be made priests, but were *called of God*, ~~3884~~ Hebrews 5:4, 5. They were thus distinguished from common men, sequestered from common services, and set apart for God and an immediate attendance on him. Note, All that are to be employed for God are to be sanctified to him. The person must first be accepted, and then the performance. The Hebrew phrase for consecrating is *filling the hand* (v. 9): *Thou shalt fill the hand of Aaron and his sons*, and the *ram of consecration* is the *ram of fillings*, v. 22, 26.

The consecrating of them was the perfecting of them; Christ is said to be *perfect* or *consecrated for evermore*, ^{<3078>}Hebrews 7:28. Probably the phrase here is borrowed from the putting of the sacrifice into their hand, to be waved before the Lord, v. 24. But it intimates,

[1.] That ministers have their hands full; they have no time to trifle, so great, so copious, so constant is their work.

[2.] That they must have their hands filled. Of necessity *they must have something to offer*, and they cannot find it in themselves, it must be given them from above. They cannot fill the people's hearts unless God fill their hands; to him therefore they must go, and *receive from his fulness*.

(2.) The person to do it was Moses, by God's appointment. Though he was *ordained for men*, yet the people were not to consecrate him; Moses the *servant of the Lord*, and his agent herein, must do it. By God's special appointment he now did the priest's work, and therefore that which was the priest's part of the sacrifice was here ordered to be his, v. 26.

(3.) The place was at the *door of the tabernacle of meeting*, v. 4. God was pleased to dwell in the tabernacle, the people attending in the courts, so that the door between the court and the tabernacle was the fittest place for those to be consecrated in who were to mediate between God and man, and to stand between both, and *lay their hands* (as it were) *upon both*. They were consecrated at the door, for they were to be door-keepers.

(4.) It was done with many ceremonies.

[1.] They were to be washed (v. 4), signifying that those must be clean who *bear the vessels of the Lord*, ^{<2511>}Isaiah 52:11. Those that would *perfect holiness must cleanse themselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit*, ^{<001>}2 Corinthians 7:1; ^{<2116>}Isaiah 1:16-18. They were now washed all over; but afterwards, when they went in to minister, they washed only their hands and feet (^{<019>}Exodus 30:19); for *he that is washed needs no more*, ^{<830>}John 13:10.

[2.] They were to be clothed with the holy garments (v. 5, 6, 8, 9), to signify that it was not sufficient for them to put away the pollutions of sin, but they must put on the graces of the Spirit, be *clothed with righteousness*, ^{<109>}Psalms 132:9. They must be girded, as men prepared and strengthened for their work; and they must be robed and crowned, as men that counted their work and office their true honour.

[3.] The high priest was to be anointed with the *holy anointing oil* (v. 7), that the church might be filled and delighted with the sweet savour of his administrations (for *ointment and perfume rejoice the heart*), and in token of the pouring out of the Spirit upon him, to qualify him for his work. Brotherly love is compared to this oil with which Aaron was anointed, ^{<BIB>}Psalm 133:2. The inferior priests are said to be anointed (^{<BIB>}Exodus 30:30), not on their heads, as the high priest (^{<BIB>}Leviticus 21:10), the oil was only mingled with the blood that was sprinkled upon their garments.

[4.] Sacrifices were to be offered for them. The covenant of priesthood, as all other covenants, must be *made by sacrifice*.

First, There must be a sin-offering, to make atonement for them, v. 10-14. The law made those priests that had infirmity, and therefore they must first offer for their own sin, before they could make atonement *for the people*, ^{<BIB>}Hebrews 7:27, 28. They were to put their hand on the head of their sacrifice (v. 10), confessing that they deserved to die for their own sin, and desiring that the killing of the beast might expiate their guilt, and be accepted as a vicarious satisfaction. It was used as other sin-offerings were; only, whereas the flesh of other sin-offerings was eaten by the priests (^{<BIB>}Leviticus 10:18), in token of the priest's taking away the sin of the people, this was appointed to be all burnt without the camp (v. 14), to signify the imperfection of the legal dispensation (as the learned bishop Patrick notes); for the sins of the priests themselves could not be taken away by those sacrifices, but they must expect a better high priest and a better sacrifice.

Secondly, There must be a burnt-offering, a ram wholly burnt, to the honour of God, in token of the dedication of themselves wholly to God and to his service, as living sacrifices, kindled with the fire and ascending in the flame of holy love, v. 15-18. The sin-offering must first be offered and then the burnt-offering; for, till guilt be removed, no acceptable service can be performed, ^{<BIB>}Isaiah 6:7.

Thirdly, There must be a peace-offering; it is called *the ram of consecration*, because there was more in this peculiar to the occasion than in the other two. In the burnt-offering God had the glory of their priesthood, in this they had the comfort of it; and, in token of a mutual covenant between God and them,

1. The blood of the sacrifice was divided between God and them (v. 20, 21); part of the blood was *sprinkled upon the altar round about*, and part put upon them, upon their bodies (v. 20), and upon their garments, v. 21. Thus the benefit of the expiation made by the sacrifice was applied and assured to them, and their whole selves from head to foot sanctified to the service of God. The blood was put upon the extreme parts of the body, to signify that it was all, as it were, enclosed and taken in for God, the tip of the ear and the great toe not excepted. We reckon that the blood and oil sprinkled upon garments spot and stain them; yet the holy oil, and the blood of the sacrifice, sprinkled upon their garments, must be looked upon as the greatest adorning imaginable to them, for they signified the blood of Christ, and the graces of the Spirit, which constitute and complete the beauty of holiness, and recommend us to God; we read of robes *made white with the blood of the Lamb*.

2. The *flesh of the sacrifice*, with the meat-offering annexed to it, was likewise divided between God and them, that (to speak with reverence) God and they might feast together, in token of friendship and fellowship.

(1.) Part of it was to be first waved before the Lord, and then burnt upon the altar; part of the *flesh* (v. 22), part of the *bread*, for bread and flesh must go together (v. 23); these were first put into the hands of Aaron to be waved to and fro, in token of their being offered to God (who, though unseen, yet compasses us round on every side), and then they were to be burnt upon the altar (v. 24, 25), for the altar was to devour God's part of the sacrifice. Thus God admitted Aaron and his sons to be his servants, and wait at his table, taking the mat of his altar from their hands. Here, in a parenthesis, as it were, comes in the law concerning the priests' part of the peace-offerings afterwards, the breast and shoulder, which were now divided; Moses had the breast, and the shoulder was burnt on the altar with God's part, v. 26-28.

(2.) The other part, both of the flesh of the ram and of the bread, Aaron and his sons were to eat at the door of the tabernacle (v. 31-33), to signify that he called them not only *servants* but *friends*, ^{<BIBS>}John 15:15. He *supped with them*, and *they with him*. Their eating of the things wherewith *the atonement was made* signified their *receiving the atonement*, as the expression is (^{<BIBI>}Romans 5:11), their thankful acceptance of the benefit of it, and their joyful communion with God thereupon, which was the true intent and meaning of a feast upon a sacrifice. If any of it was left, it must

be burnt, that it might not be in any danger of putrefying, and to show that it was an extraordinary peace-offering.

2. The time that was to be spent in this consecration: *Seven days shalt thou consecrate them*, v. 35. Though all the ceremonies were performed on the first day, yet,

(1.) They were not to look upon their consecration as completed till the seven days' end, which put a solemnity upon their admission, and a distance between this and their former state, and obliged them to enter upon their work with a pause, giving them time to consider the weight and seriousness of it. This was to be observed in after-ages, v. 30. He that was to succeed Aaron in the high-priesthood must put on the holy garments seven days together, in token of a deliberate and gradual advance into his office, and that one sabbath might pass over him in his consecration.

(2.) Every day of the seven, in this first consecration, a bullock was to be offered for a sin-offering (v. 36), which was to intimate to them,

[1.] That it was of very great concern to them to get their sins pardoned, and that though atonement was made, and they had the comfort of it, yet they must still keep up a penitent sense of sin and often repeat the confession of it.

[2.] That those sacrifices which were thus offered day by day to make atonement could not make the *comers thereunto perfect*, for then they would have ceased to be offered, as the apostle argues, ^{<300>}Hebrews 10:1, 2. They must therefore expect the *bringing in of a better hope*.

3. This consecration of the priests was a *shadow of good things to come*.

(1.) Our Lord Jesus is the great high-priest of our profession, called of God to be so, consecrated for evermore, anointed with the Spirit above his fellows (whence he is called *Messiah*, the *Christ*), clothed with the holy garments, even with glory and beauty, sanctified by his own blood, not that of bullocks and rams (^{<300>}Hebrews 9:12), *made perfect*, or consecrated, *through sufferings*, ^{<300>}Hebrews 2:10. Thus in him this was a perpetual statute, v. 9.

(2.) All believers are spiritual priests, to offer spiritual sacrifices (^{<602>}1 Peter 2:5), washed in the blood of Christ, and so *made to our God priests*, ^{<602>}Revelation 1:5, 6. They also are clothed with the beauty of holiness,

and have received the anointing, ^{<127>}1 John 2:27. Their hands are filled with work, to which they must continually attend; and it is through Christ, the great sacrifice, that they are dedicated to this service. His blood *sprinkled upon the conscience purges it from dead works, that they may, as priests, serve the living God.* The Spirit of God (as Ainsworth notes) is called the *finger of God* (^{<117>}Luke 11:20, compared with ^{<128>}Matthew 12:28), and by him the merit of Christ is effectually applied to our souls, as here Moses with his finger was to put the blood upon Aaron. It is likewise intimated that gospel ministers are to be solemnly set apart to the work of the ministry with great deliberation and seriousness both in the ordainers and in the ordained, as those that are to be employed in a great work and entrusted with a great charge.

II. The consecration of the altar, which seems to have been coincident with that of the priests, and the sin-offerings which were offered every day for seven days together had reference to the altar as well as the priests, v. 36, 37. *An atonement was made for the altar.* Though that was not a subject capable of sin, nor, having never yet been used, could it be said to be polluted with the sins of the people, yet, since the fall, there can be no sanctification to God but there must first be *an atonement for sin*, which renders us both unworthy and unfit to be employed for God. The altar was also *sanctified*, not only set apart itself to a sacred use, but made so holy as to *sanctify the gifts* that were offered upon it, ^{<129>}Matthew 23:19. Christ is our altar; for our sakes he sanctified himself, that we and our performances might be sanctified and recommended to God, ^{<179>}John 17:19.

^{<128>}EXODUS 29:38-46

THE CONSECRATION OF THE PRIESTS

In this paragraph we have,

I. The daily service appointed. A lamb was to be offered upon the altar every morning, and a lamb every evening, each with a meat-offering, both made by fire, as a *continual burnt-offering throughout their generations*, v. 38-41. Whether there were any other sacrifices to be offered or not, these were sure to be offered, at the public charge, for the benefit and

comfort of all Israel, to make atonement for their daily sins, and to be an acknowledgement to God of their daily mercies. This was that which *the duty of every day required*. The taking away of this daily sacrifice by Antiochus, for so many evenings and mornings, was that great calamity of the church which was foretold, ^{271B}Daniel 8:11. Note,

1. This typified the continual intercession which Christ ever lives to make, in virtue of his satisfaction, for the continual sanctification of his church: though he offered himself *once for all*, yet that one offering thus becomes a continual offering.

2. This teaches us to offer up to God the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise every day, morning and evening, in humble acknowledgement of our dependence upon him and our obligations to him. Our daily devotions must be looked upon as the most needful of our daily works and the most pleasant of our daily comforts. Whatever business we have, this must never be omitted, either morning or evening; prayer-time must be kept up as duly as meat-time. The daily sacrifices were as the daily meals in God's house, and therefore they were always attended with bread and wine. Those starve their own souls that keep not up a constant attendance on the throne of grace.

II. Great and precious promises made of God's favour to Israel, and the tokens of his special presence with them, while they thus kept up his institutions among them. He speaks as one well pleased with the appointment of the daily sacrifice; for, before he proceeds to the other appointments that follow, he interposes these promises. It is constancy in religion that brings in the comfort of it. He promises,

1. That he would keep up communion with them; that he would not only meet Moses, and speak to him, but that he would *meet the children of Israel*, (v. 43), to accept the daily sacrifices offered up on their behalf. Note, God will not fail to give those the meeting who diligently and conscientiously attend upon him in the ordinances of his own appointment.

2. That he would own his own institutions, the tabernacle, the altar, the priesthood (v. 43, 44); he would take possession of that which was consecrated to him. Note, What is sanctified to the glory of God shall be sanctified by his glory. If we do our part, God will do his, and will mark and fit that for himself which is in sincerity given up to him.

3. That he would reside among them as God in covenant with them, and would give them sure and comfortable tokens of his peculiar favour to them, and his special presence with them (v. 45, 45): *I will dwell among the children of Israel.* Note, Where God sets up the tabernacle of his ordinances he will himself dwell. *Lo, I am with you always,* ~~4830~~ Matthew 28:20. Those that abide in God's house shall have God to abide with them. *I will be their God, and they shall know that I am so.* Note, Those are truly happy that have a covenant-interest in God as theirs and the comfortable evidence of that interest. If we have this, we have enough, and need no more to make us happy.