

For GC Discussion

- What does it mean to us that we have a great High Priest and also that we are intended to be a kingdom of priests?
- What implications do the altar of incense and the basin for washing have for us in our lives?
- Holiness is vital to our Christian lives, but what does it look like in practice to be set apart, living holy lives in a dark world?

Next Week: we will see the immediate failure of the people to obey the law as they worship the Golden Calf.

Notes and Questions

For Worship: Listen to *'Boldly I Approach'* by Rend Collective. You can find it on YouTube, or on the Hill City Church blog on the website.



Week 11: The Priesthood

Exodus Chapters 28-31

This Weeks Summary

In our text this week we see the continuation of God's instructions to His people regarding the priesthood, and also the completion of the remaining items for the tabernacle.

For Study:

The following verses all have to do with the major subject areas symbolised in the tabernacle.

The Priesthood:

Hebrews 4:14-5:10

Hebrews 7:11-28

Hebrews 10:1-18

1 Peter 2:1-12

Prayer as Worship:

Psalms 50:14-15

Psalms 141:1-2

Revelation 8:4

Cleansed in the Word:

1 John 1:5-9

Ephesians 5:25-30

Hebrews 10:19-25

Set apart:

John 17:15-19

2 Corinthians 6:9-20

This week we continued to see God's instructions for worship given to His people - here is a breakdown of some of the main points:

The Symbolism of the Priesthood

The garments that God gave instruction for the High Priest to wear were rich in pictures of big truths related to our worship. Every picture is fulfilled in its entirety in Christ - to be a 'high priest' is not something we aspire to, but we enjoy the blessings of knowing Jesus as our 'Great High Priest'. In two different ways the people of Israel were shown as being carried by the High Priest into the presence of God - both borne on his shoulders in 2 Onyx stones, and resting close to his heart as signified by 12 other precious stones. So too Jesus both bears us into the presence of God by His death on the cross, and shows us off as precious to His Father, because of His purifying work. The plate on the forehead inscribed as 'Holy to the Lord' reminds us that we cannot come and worship God without true holiness, and once again, it is Jesus who was the only One who was truly holy and sets us apart too that we might come into the presence of God.

The pomegranates woven onto the High Priests robe speak of the fruitfulness that God desires that can only be obtained by us by abiding in Jesus, the true vine. Lastly the High Priest carried the Urim and Thummim, about which there is some mystery, but we know they were used by God to show His people His will. True direction for life can only be obtained in the presence of God, and though we can come to God ourselves crying out for the help we need, it is Jesus who is always interceding for us, sanctifying our prayers when they lack wisdom or passion, and ensuring that we are filled with the knowledge of God's will.

The Incense of Prayer

As the chapters continue, God returns to the instructions He began on the construction of the tabernacle itself and instructs Moses to fashion an altar for burning incense that will be put in the holy place with the table of showbread and the lampstand. We find out later in the scriptures that incense is a picture of prayer (Revelation 5:8) and so this communicates the centrality of our communication with God as an act of worship. Once again this shows us the reality that the worship God was instituting wasn't intended just to be about rule-following but He truly desired relationship with His people - He wanted them to come before Him with their thanks and praise, with their prayers and petitions - He wanted not just to lead them and judge them, but to know them

The Basin for Washing

The basin that God commanded to be made for the priests to wash in was to be placed alongside the bronze altar in the court of the tabernacle. To understand its symbolism you are drawn quickly to a verse in Ephesians where Jesus is said to wash His bride the church with the water of the Word. To be saved is to be once and for all set apart for God and made pure inside, but in this life we must be continually washed and cleansed as we read, study and are taught God's Word. To continually put ourselves in position to hear and to learn from the Bible is like taking a shower every day so that the grime that this world will try and infect us with doesn't stick to us but is washed away and we are constantly being made more like Jesus in everything we do.

Set Apart

This is a massive theme in this section of Exodus. As God instructs His people in how they ought to worship Him every last component must be set apart for God's service. Every item that was to be in the tabernacle, in the court, worn by the priests, or even the priests themselves had to be consecrated, or made holy so that they were fit for a God who is complete in His holiness. God gives instruction for a special anointing oil to be made that was used to consecrate the different areas of worship, and this oil is a picture for us of the Holy Spirit. As you read through the instructions God gave His people you'll see that oil is used everywhere - it's a common thread linking so much of this system of worship, and that teaches us a profound lesson - without the empowering of the Holy Spirit, our worship is empty. It is His presence that transforms our worship from something fleshly to that which is set apart for the glory of God. The priests who ministered in the tabernacle day by day, though not clothed in the same glory as the High Priest were clothed simply in a pure white robe - yet another reminder that we, as a kingdom of priests should live lives set apart for God - pure and holy, and different from the world around us.

Gifted to Encourage Worship

At the beginning of chapter 31 there is a great little section that just deals with the men who would be responsible for creating the tabernacle according to God's instructions. God tells Moses that these two men, Bezalel and Oholiab have been gifted with exactly the right skills to do the job. What a great Old Testament picture of how the New Testament church should function - each one of us given exactly the right gifts for our place in the body, and ultimately all with the responsibility to serve and encourage worship in the lives of our brothers and sisters.