

The Holiness of God

A Holy Priesthood (Week 2/6) A Holy Priesthood

Small Group Discussion Questions

Connect *This week, what would it look like to delight in God's presence with you?*

Warm-Up

1. How can Christians enjoy the presence of God? What do you most enjoy about God's presence?
2. How do you prepare *to gather* for worship on a Sunday? What could help you prepare better?

Read Leviticus 8:1-4

3. At the beginning of Leviticus, where was Moses when the Lord spoke to him? At the beginning of Numbers (one month later), where is Moses when the Lord speaks to him?
4. How significant is the change in where Moses is when God speaks to him? *What happened in between?*
5. What is an ordination? Who was ordained? What were they *set apart* for?
6. What are all the various elements of the ordination? What is emphasised?
7. Were Aaron and his sons set apart because of their worthiness? *How do you know they were imperfect?*
8. What was the sacrifice needed for Aaron (and the other priest's) sin? What is the significance of this?
9. Do you think you can ever be too casual with your relationship with God? What reminds you of his holiness? *If God is always present with us, how seriously should we take the responsibility for holiness?*

Read Leviticus 9:22-10:3

10. What was the priest's role? Who is our perfect and permanent high priest?
11. How do you see each of these elements of responsibility for a priest: *atone* for people's sins, *bless* God's people, *teach* God's ways? How does this differ to a minister's role today?
12. What happens when the sacrifices are offered? What is the significance of the fire?
13. How do people respond? How do you feel about God's constant presence with you?
14. What happens when two of Aaron's sons approach God in an unauthorised way? *Why did they do this?*
15. What happened to them? What is the relationship between this fire of acceptance and judgement?

Read Hebrews 7:23-28

16. What was the ultimate problem with the human priesthood? In what way were they lacking?
17. How is Jesus — in multiple ways — the ultimate priest and sacrifice?
18. What is the basis of your confidence in coming before God? When are you tempted to look to yourself (or other things) as the basis of approaching God? *What helps you to remember the true basis?*

Apply *How can you grow in your appreciation of God's holiness and your confidence in approaching God?*

Pray *Gracious Lord, help us to fathom the beauty and weight of your holiness by looking to the one who is our perfect and permanent high priest. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

GOING DEEPER

The Holiness of God (Week 2/6) A Holy Priesthood

Small Group Discussion Questions

On Your Frontline this Week

Is there anyone you know in Brisbane, you could invite to the Church Plant (beginning Sunday Oct 26, 9:30am)?

For Families

- *Download:* some of the family resources to use at home: stbartskids.org

Listen, Watch, and Read

- *Listen (sermon):* “Priesthood: Service for God” by Pete Wilkinson:
<https://stebbes.org/sermons/priesthood-service-for-god/#sermons>
- *Listen (sermon):* “Brothers Grim” by Paul Williams:
https://www.allsouls.org/Media/AllMedia.aspx?show_media=49609&show_file=58141
- *Listen (Sermon):* “Jesus as Priest; Still at Work” by Jeff White:
<https://gospelinlife.com/sermon/jesus-as-priest-still-at-work/>
- *Watch (video):* “Jesus the Royal Priest” by the BibleProject:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LBr-blQxIm4>

Series Resources

- *RRead (book):* “Leviticus: A 12-Week Study” by Michael LeFebvre.
- *Read (book):* “Rediscovering Holiness” by J I Packer.
- *Read (book):* “Holiness” by J C Ryle. 
- *Read (commentary):* “Leviticus” by Katy Davis.
- *Watch (website):* “The Book of Leviticus” by the BibleProject:
<https://bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-leviticus/>



[Available to borrow in the Church library](#)

LEVITICUS: THE HOLINESS OF GOD

*Week 2/6 “A Holy Priesthood”
by the Rev’d Adam Lowe (18/10/2025)*

거룩한 제사장직 | 神圣的祭司职任 | பரிசுத்த ஆசாரியத்துவம்

Bible Passage: Leviticus 8-10

*Holy and loving God, please grow our reverence for your glory,
and our trust in your Son. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.*

How can an **unholy people** dwell with a **holy God**? /

- That’s likely not a question that you woke up with this morning *or kept you awake over night.*
- / *Most of us have probably taken it for granted that we can gather for worship.*
It may have felt like a bit of a miracle just to GET UP, GET THE household ready, and GET OUT, let alone do much in terms of preparing to GATHER with God in our midst.
- We probably haven’t spent a week encamped at the door waiting to get in.
We probably haven’t loaded up the car with animals to be sacrificed.
We probably don’t gather with a fear that the glory of God will consume us as fire.
- Yet that simply wasn’t the case for God’s people as we read in Leviticus.
- In fact much of the focus of Leviticus spells out how that question, “*how can an unholy people dwell with a holy God?*”, is resolved. //
- Leviticus is sandwiched between two key events.
- Immediately preceding Leviticus, *at the end of Exodus*
as the tabernacle is completed, the glory of God comes to fill it,
BUT but Moses could not enter. He could not go in...
- *Leviticus 1:1...*

The LORD called to Moses and spoke to him FROM the tent of meeting.

- Moses is on the outside.
The tabernacle is complete. God’s glory has filled it. But Moses can’t yet go in.

- Yet by the time we get to Numbers, *the book immediately preceding Leviticus, following it*, it opens with an extraordinary update:

The LORD spoke to Moses **in** the tent of meeting in the Desert of Sinai on the first day of the second month of the second year after the Israelites came out of Egypt. (Numbers 1:1)

- Moses can enter God's presence. /
- In the course of just one month, something monumental has changed. /
- It wasn't that the God *has lowered the standard of his holiness*; OR somehow that God's people have been transformed in their holiness, BUT that God has made a way for his people to approach him *with confidence*.
- Through the offering of sacrifices — *that's what we explored last week*; AND... Through the provision of priests — of mediators — *that's where we find our focus today*.

It's actually the *focus* of three entire chapters of Leviticus, 8 through 10.

And even the name of the book Leviticus, is linked to the Levites who assisted the priestly ministry.

So if you want to understand Leviticus, we need to understand this holy priesthood, but not just that, it's a pointer to knowing how we can approach God with confidence, too.

These priests were:

- **Set Apart; Servants; and Signposts.**

SET APART | LEVITICUS 8:1-4

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First, the priests were **SET APART** at their ordination. / Leviticus 8, *verse 1*...

The LORD said to Moses, "Bring Aaron and his sons, their garments, the anointing oil, the bull for the sin offering, the two rams and the basket containing bread made without yeast, and gather the entire assembly at the entrance to the tent of meeting." Moses did as the LORD commanded him, and the assembly gathered at the entrance to the tent of meeting.

This would have been quite the event!

- The entire assembly is gathered at the entrance of the tent of meeting.
Everyone that happens is public, because Aaron and his sons are to represent the people.
- The tribe of Levi will be their helpers, but there are only five priests to begin with.
- And whilst these four verses are just tiny snippet of the Lord's scrupulous details, there's no shortage of washing, anointing, consecrating, sacrificing, and *blessing*,
- Aaron's sons were:
Washed clean as a symbol of *purification*.
Anointed with oil as a symbol of being *set apart for God and empowered by God*.
Robed with special clothing—Aaron with tunic, sash, robe, ephod, breastpiece, and turban—
as a symbol of God's holiness and as a pointer to their representative role.

- And it wasn't simply that Aaron and his sons had to be readied, but the entirety of the tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting, was also to be set apart.
- That's what's happening in *verse 10* when we read...

Then Moses took the anointing oil and anointed the tabernacle and everything in it, and so consecrated them.

- Note that when we hear of anointing with oil, it doesn't mean that that these things become perfect, or magical, or something like that, but in a very significant way, that they have been *dedicated* to God's service.
- When David and Saul are anointed king, the Spirit of the Lord comes to fill them.
- As Moses — and Aaron — obey what the Lord has commanded, they are participating in the setting apart of this place and people, in glory of God, in service of his purposes, and equipped with his power.

Note that after the *washing*, *anointing*, and *robing*, the very next thing that happens, before the priests can start their job, is that sacrifices on their behalf of them need to be made.

- There's a sin offering for the priests. / Verse 14...

He [Moses] then presented the bull for the sin offering, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on its head.

- The only time that a bull is required for a sin offering on behalf of the priests.
- Can you see what's happening here?
- Back at Mt Sinai, when the ink on the covenant was not yet dried, the people decided to turn their back on God and make a golden calf to worship.
- It wasn't Aaron's idea but he was intimately involved and entirely complicit. He *caved in* quickly and made the suggestion on where they could source the gold. He *cast* the gold into an idol in the shape of a calf. He *constructed* an altar and announced a festival.
- The very thing—the calf—which was a symbol of their rebellion, has now become a symbol of God's grace, *not least for Aaron*.
- For despite his involvement, he has now been set apart as their High Priest.
- Every time the priests made a sacrifice for their sins, it was to be a young bull. Every time Aaron did that his mind would have been transported back to that day, and his heart would have been flooded by an understanding of God's grace.
- *He would have known*: That we are not worthy on our own basis to come before God. That there is no casual approach for they must acknowledge the weight of his glory. And, that we come to God on his terms not our own. /
- The priests were not special in-and-of-themselves, they're not perfect. But they were set apart for a special purpose on behalf of God's people. /

SERVANTS | LEVITICUS 9

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Second, the priests were **SERVANTS** with significant responsibilities.

Chapter 9 is all about the shape of the priestly ministry. *Let's pick up from chapter 9, verse 22...*

Then Aaron lifted his hands toward the people and blessed them. And having sacrificed the sin offering, the burnt offering and the fellowship offering, he stepped down. Moses and Aaron then went into the tent of meeting. When they came out, they blessed the people; and the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people. Fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat portions on the altar. And when all the people saw it, they shouted for joy and fell facedown.

Aaron and his sons had to wait it out seven days at the entrance to the tent of meeting until they could take up their ministry, but when they did on the eighth day, we witness three key responsibilities as they led the worshipping life of God's people.

- They were to:
 - atone** for people's sin—including their own (*that's what many of the sacrifices were about*);
 - bless** God's people in accordance with his goodness and grace; *and*
 - teach** God's people in accordance with God's ways. / Atone, Bless, and Teach.
 - That last aspect—teaching—is not directly mentioned in those verses in chapter 9, but appears just a few verses later in chapter 10.
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- That they would teach the Israelites *all the decrees of the Lord had given through Moses.* /
 - A modern day minister — or priest — is not the same as one here, *we're not mediators, we offer no sacrifices* but one commonality is that those who are entrusted with this ministry, is that any instructional role of God's people is not on the basis of your own great ideas, or your own spiritual innovations, but the communication of God's will and ways.
 - Not what any individual discerns as God's will or way, but what is contained in his Word. /
 - The emphasis for the Israelites was God's decrees as given from the Lord to Moses. That's what we know as the Pentateuch, or the first five books of our Bible. For Christians, as a people who have been forgiven and blessed by God, *we should long, pray, and strive that our whole lives are brought into line with God's whole Word.*
 - That's the Old Testament and the New Testament.
 - That's not always easy to figure out.
 - When Rory Shiner was asked what parts of Leviticus applies to Christians, he said none of it, some of it, all of it. / We approach it through the lens of Jesus. /
 - *But one of the things we should be discerning of with those who share in a teaching ministry,* is that the authority and source of what they teach is God's Words not their own.
 - But the priests were not only to *teach*, but also to *atone* for sin and bless God's people. /
 - When we look through the details, we see it was a messy and bloody business.

- You couldn't mistake there was a cost for our sin.
You couldn't escape the connection between sin and death. //

Last week we briefly heard of all the types of sacrifices and offerings that had to be made, in order that they would get ready for God to be present with them.

- But right at the centre of that was the need to make the atonement for sin.
- The first offering Aaron makes is a calf, *atonement for his sin in making the golden calf*.
The second offering Aaron makes is a ram, *reminiscent of the offering that Abraham made*.
- There's a repentance for sin as the offering is made.
There's a trust that God will make the ultimate provision of forgiveness.
- We get a glimpse of that as Aaron and sons emerge from the tent and pronounce God's blessing together. It's not that they have the power but they are declaring God's promises.
- Words which then appear to be endorsed by God, as his **glory appears**,
the **sacrifices are consumed**—they are burnt up—and the **people are filled with joy**.
- It isn't just a fiery signal of God's acceptance of the sacrifices,
but of his acceptance of God's people through the sacrifice. /
- This is a glorious moment. The people cry out in joy and fall down in worship. /
- But it doesn't take long, perhaps only hours later, when things go terribly wrong.
- We are in need of a mediator, but these priests were—*ultimately*—only signposts.

SIGNPOSTS | LEVITICUS 10 & HEBREWS 7

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Chapter 10, verse 1...

Aaron's sons Nadab [Nay-dab] and Abihu [A-bye-who] took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorised fire before the LORD, contrary to his command. So fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. Moses then said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD spoke of when he said: "Among those who approach me I will be proved holy; in the sight of all the people I will be honored. " **Aaron remained silent.**

There was about 1 priest for every 400,000 people,
but before the first day on the job is over, they go from 5 to 3.

- From triumph to tragedy.
- They have just experienced one of the most glorious moments in their history.
A whole new era of being able to dwell in God's presence has dawned.
But before the eighth day is over, that was the very first day of their work,
these two of the sons decide to disobey God's commands, go it alone,
and try to approach the Lord on their own terms.
Perhaps they're trying to invoke or reenact more of the same glory they've just witnessed. //
- It's not only foolhardy, it's arrogant.

- They've failed to truly grasp God's holiness.
They've missed the weight of the one whom they worship.
- God is not there for our convenience or our entertainment.
We cannot dictate or control God like we're pulling a string on a puppet.
- After so much waiting. Preparation. Intricate details pointing to the significance of what was happening. Provision of God's gracious ways, it's no wonder that Aaron remains silent.
- God's glory brings both blessing and judgement.
- The same fire which consumed the sacrifices and was received as blessing with shouting; now consumes the disobedient priests as judgement and is received with silence. /
- God's holiness cannot be taken lightly.
Nor can the responsibility of his people,
not least the priests who were entrusted with so much responsibility.

But it exposes a much bigger issue.

- That just as the sacrifices were never able to fully account for our sin,
The priests as mediators would always come up lacking, too. //
- As modern people, we might think yes — I don't need a mediator!
I can go it alone. I'm enough. I can chart my own way.
- But this account—and where it points—don't dismiss the need for a mediator,
but the point to our desperate need for a better one.

- God is not going to lower his standard of holiness.
And we're unable to attain holiness on our own.
- We need a priest who is perfect. / We need a priest who is permanent.
- And the author to the letter to the Hebrews tells us that this priest is Jesus. *Heb 7, v.23...*

Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office [some of them very quickly]; but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. Such a high priest truly meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself

The author of the letter to the Hebrews spells out the problem clearly.

- Whilst the priests were a provision from God, *they were inadequate on at least three grounds.*
They were temporary: *for death prevented them from continuing in office.* Death does that!
They were imperfect: *they first had to make offering for their own sins.*
They were shadows: *for even their sacrifices needed to be made over-and-over again.*
- But Jesus is different.
- Because death could not hold him down: *he is our permanent priest.*
Because he is holy, blameless, and pure: *he is our perfect priest.*
Because he offered himself: *he became the once-and-for-all sacrifice.*

- That's why we don't need to *make any more sacrifices*.
That's why we don't need another mediator, *because Christ is the only one*.
That's why we can approach the throne of grace, with confidence.
- That's what the author of the letter of the Hebrews says in chapter 4!
- Because of Jesus, *let us approach the throne of God with confidence.* /
- This is both *invitation* and *direction*.
- **Invitation:** to approach God; & **Direction:** that the only way that you can is through Jesus.
- The one who was washed: *not because he needed to but to identify with us*.
The one who was anointed: *with the very power of the Holy Spirit*.
The one who was robed: *not with splendid garments but on the cross with a crown of thorns*.
- The one who was enthroned: at the very right hand of the father.
And intercedes for us. He's our advocate.

When it comes to approaching God confidently, *there are two equal, yet opposite errors*.

- **At one end of the spectrum we can just be all-too-casual about it.**
We can fail to recognise the weight of God's holiness and the depth of our unworthiness.
We might even think that God owes us or that we have the right, on our own, to be in his midst.
If that's the way we approach God, we're unlikely to take his demands for holiness seriously.
We're unlikely to have the gratitude for God which he deserves.
Nor will we express the reverence that his holiness demands.

- But at the other end of the spectrum is to be so fearful that we never come to him.
We can be too scared to come to God because of the depth of our unworthiness.
That we simply never do.
- But can you see, both of those approaches are essentially the same mistake?
- They're *just* looking for confidence based on your own worth.
One view asserts that we are worthy, therefore I should have confidence.
The other view thinks I don't have enough worth, therefore I have no confidence.
- But the invitation to approach God is not through ourselves. //
The only way that we can ever have confidence to approach God,
has nothing to do with our worth, nor the need to make ourselves worthy,
but by trusting in the one of infinite worth who has made us worthy.
The one who is our advocate *always interceding for us*.

That word advocate has legal overtones. We can kind of think that Jesus is with the Father, pleading with him over-and-over again — every time we sin — to say, uh-oh, there he goes again. Would you please have mercy. Would you just overlook this sin again? What sort of confidence would that give us?! But Jesus isn't advocating for us on a whim. He's advocating with a case. And the case is plain: we are guilty, we are completely unworthy, BUT he has already paid the price. *Forgiveness can be declared, we can approach God with confidence, because justice has been done on the cross. We go to God through HIM.* /

- If you want confidence to approach God, then you need a mediator. You need a priest.
- But it's not me. Nor yourself. It's Jesus. He's our perfect and permanent one.