

# OpenTheo

## April 4th: Leviticus 8 & Mark 3:13-35

April 3, 2020



### Alastair Roberts

Consecration of Aaron, his sons, and the tabernacle. The Twelve and the true family.

Some passages referenced:

Exodus 29 (the instructions for the consecration of the priests); Genesis 3 (Fall); Leviticus 4 (law for the sin/purification offering); Leviticus 7:29-34 (wave offering of the breast and contribution of the thigh).

Luke 9:54 (calling down fire from heaven); 2 Samuel 23:8-12 (David's three core mighty men); Isaiah 49:24-26 (liberation from the tyrant).

Reflections upon the readings from the ACNA Book of Common Prayer (<http://bcp2019.anglicanchurch.net/>).

If you have enjoyed my output, please tell your friends. If you are interested in supporting my videos and podcasts and my research more generally, please consider supporting my work on Patreon (<https://www.patreon.com/zugzwanged>), using my PayPal account (<https://bit.ly/2RLaUcB>), or by buying books for my research on Amazon ([https://www.amazon.co.uk/hz/wishlist/ls/36WVSWCK4X330?ref\\_=wl\\_share](https://www.amazon.co.uk/hz/wishlist/ls/36WVSWCK4X330?ref_=wl_share)).

The audio of all of my videos is available on my Soundcloud account: <https://soundcloud.com/alastairadversaria>. You can also listen to the audio of these episodes on iTunes: <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/podcast/alastairs-adversaria/id1416351035?mt=2>.

## Transcript

Leviticus chapter 8 Leviticus chapter 8 Leviticus chapter 8 Leviticus chapter 8 Leviticus chapter 8 Leviticus chapter 8 Leviticus chapter 8 Leviticus chapter 8 Leviticus chapter 8 Leviticus chapter 8 Leviticus chapter 8 Leviticus chapter 8 Leviticus chapter 8 Aaron and his garments, and his sons and his sons' garments with him. And Moses said to Aaron and his sons, Boil the flesh at the entrance of the tent of meeting,

and there eat it and the bread that is in the basket of ordination offerings, as I commanded, saying, Aaron and his sons shall eat it. And what remains of the flesh and the bread you shall burn up with fire, and you shall not go outside the entrance of the tent of meeting for seven days, until the days of your ordination are completed, for it will take seven days to ordain you.

As has been done today, the Lord has commanded to be done to make atonement for you. At the entrance of the tent of meeting you shall remain day and night for seven days, performing what the Lord has charged, so that you do not die, for so I have been commanded. And Aaron and his sons did all the things that the Lord commanded by Moses.

The first seven chapters of Leviticus are laws concerning the sacrifices. In chapter 8 we reach some narrative concerning the consecration of Aaron, his sons, the tabernacle and its furniture. It's a narrative that corresponds to the instructions of Exodus chapter 29, where Moses was first told to consecrate Aaron and his sons.

Back in Exodus there are various creational seven-day patterns to be observed in the establishment of the tabernacle, and this culminates in the appointment of Aaron and his sons and the appointment of the daily sacrifices. And here there are similar patterns to be observed, although they correspond more to the way that the fall at Sinai with the golden calf follows after the seven-day creational pattern of chapters 25-31. In Leviticus 8-9 there is the consecration of Aaron and his sons, followed by the rest of the completed establishment of Aaron and the tabernacle.

This is then followed by a fall story, though with the sin of Nadab and Abihu. In Genesis chapter 3 the fall is followed by judgment upon the animal, the serpent, then judgment upon the woman concerning her womb, judgment upon the man concerning the sweat of his brow and his work on the earth, and then the making of coverings for them. And here we see something very similar.

There's the establishment of a new humanity within the garden setting, then there is the fall, Nadab and Abihu. That is followed by laws concerning animals, unclean and clean animals and their relationship with the dirt. Then there are laws concerning childbirth, connecting with the judgment upon the woman, and then there are laws concerning skin disease and bodily emissions, connected with the judgment upon the sweat of the brow and the flesh, connected with death.

This is then followed by the day of coverings. God gave coverings to Adam and Eve in the garden, God gives coverings to his people on the Day of Atonement. The Day of Atonement is the Day of Coverings, it's the more literal way of translating it.

The text then is playing out a very familiar pattern, one that we've seen before. The ritual for the consecration of Aaron and his sons begins with washing and dressing. And

this is something that's taken up in the New Testament, connecting our appointment through baptism to the house of God with the appointment of the priests in the Old Testament.

We can draw near having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water, in Hebrews 10. Or in Galatians chapter 3, as many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ, dressed themselves with Christ. We are priests in a new temple.

The washing with water is followed by dressing, and they put on the garments that are appointed to them in chapter 28 of Exodus. There are three sacrifices that are stipulated for this particular ordination rite. There's the sin or purification offering, that's concerning purification or expiation, it's a blood rite particularly.

There's the whole burnt offering or ascension offering, the point of that one is that it all goes up to God's presence, and that's a dedication type sacrifice. Then it's followed by the ram of consecration. The ram of consecration is a rather unusual sacrifice, it's one that connects most closely with the logic of the peace offering.

The peace offering is about communion, so if you put all the sacrifices together there is a logic to them. It begins with the trespass offering which gives restitution for crimes done, things taken from God that do not belong to us, boundaries crossed, that sort of thing. That is followed by the purification offering.

The purification offering relates to the expiation or purification of sin and its particular blood rite, it's cleansing things. And then following that there's the dedication offering or the ascension offering where the person in the symbolic substitute of the animal is dedicated wholly to God. With the ascension offering you often have tribute given with that.

It can be an offering of some grain or some grain product or it can be connected with a drink offering and that's about giving a gift or tribute to the Lord. You can think about the offering that Cain gave, that was a sort of gift or tribute offering but it was not the right way to begin, it was not the right way to approach God. Then that's followed by a peace offering and the peace offering is about communion, it's about having fellowship with God and eating a meal with him essentially.

After Aaron and his sons have been washed and dressed they are anointed for their priestly service and that anointing is not just upon Aaron and his sons, it's also upon the elements of the tabernacle. It's a consecration of the priest but it's also a consecration of the tabernacle itself. This is then followed by the sacrifices.

The rite for the offering here is slightly different from the regular rite. So the blood seems to be placed on the bronze altar in the courtyard rather than on the altar of the

incense in the holy place as we see for the typical rite for the sin offering for the high priest in Leviticus chapter 4. Because the priest is not yet a minister in the holy place he can't defile it so the blood isn't taken in there, that doesn't need to be cleansed because it hasn't been defiled yet, it's just been established, it's just been consecrated and the priest has not entered into it and as a result it's just the external altar. The realm in which he has operated at this point is one who has been to that point of the status of a commoner within the land.

There are two realms, there's the realm of the burnt offering and there's the realm of consecration and Aaron and his sons put their hands upon both of these animals but unlike in most sacrifices the person who's doing the sacrifice doesn't do the killing. The whole burnt offering or the ascension offering comes first. In the logic of it you've purified the realm that has been defiled by the priest and the congregation and now you can dedicate the priest and that dedication occurs in the ascension of the animal as his substitute and representative.

The bull represents the high priest or represents the whole congregation and after that, once that has been done, the path is cleared for the peace offering and the peace offering here is the realm of consecration which plays a very similar role. The consecration realm is a sort of initial peace offering for the priests. Aaron and his sons eat part of the realm of consecration but Moses receives the priest's portion.

We should note that Moses is performing all of these things as the priest relative to Aaron and his sons who are not acting as priests yet. That will come in the next chapter when they sacrifice on behalf of the congregation. Blood is placed on both the priest and the altar, the four corners of the human body, the four horns as it were of the human body and then the different parts of the altar.

In placing the blood on these parts of the body and in the wave offering there is the dedication of the person and their service to the Lord and so the ordination rite includes these elements to really set up the fundamental fellowship that the priest will have with the Lord as his servants. Their hands are filled with various elements of their service which they present as a wave offering towards the Lord. The filling of the hands of the priests is that part of the rite that really stands for the whole thing in some ways.

Ordination could be spoken of as the filling of the hands and so this particular part of the rite seems to have an especial importance in terms of the logic of the whole. It's where the service of the priests is really offered to the Lord at this particular point perhaps. In the previous chapter, in Leviticus chapter 7 verses 29 to 34, there's the law of the wave offering of the breast and the thigh and the breast is a wave offering that is then given to the priest while the thigh is a contribution to the priest that's given more directly.

The wave offering here of the breast is given to Moses because he plays the role of the officiating priest whereas the thigh is for Aaron and his sons. The consecration takes

seven days and it works up towards the eighth day. Why the eighth day? Animals couldn't be sacrificed until the eighth day.

Circumcision happened on the eighth day. The eighth day is also the day when we move from God's week of creation to the week of man's activity within the creation. Man's work starts on the eighth day and so it seems fitting here that the work of the priest begins on the eighth day.

In addition to the transition from the work of God as it were in establishing these things to the work of man as priest, there is another transition here. There's the transition from Moses to Aaron. There's a seven-fold use of the expression, as the Lord commanded within this chapter but there's a transition at the very end from Moses to Aaron.

And Aaron and his sons did all the things that the Lord commanded by Moses. There's a shift there from Moses' work where he is doing all that the Lord commanded to Aaron doing everything that God commanded through Moses. And in the next chapter we see that more fully as Aaron officiates as priest and acts on behalf of Israel.

A question to consider. What do you think is the difference between the parts of the bull for the sin offering burnt outside of the camp in verse 17 and the parts that were burnt on the brazen altar? Why the different locations for burning? Mark chapter 3 verses 13 to 35. And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him.

And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, so that they might be with him, and he might send them out to preach and have authority to cast out demons. He appointed the twelve, Simon, to whom he gave the name Peter, James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James, to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, sons of thunder, Andrew and Philip and Bartholomew and Matthew and Thomas and James the son of Alpheus and Thaddeus and Simon the zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again so that they could not even eat.

When his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, He is out of his mind. And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, He is possessed by Beelzebul, and by the prince of demons he casts out the demons. And he called them to him and said to them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end. But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man.

Then indeed he may plunder his house. Truly I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter. But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin.

For they were saying, He has an unclean spirit. And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, Your mother and your brothers are outside seeking you.

And he answered them, Who are my mother and my brothers? And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother. In the latter half of Mark chapter 3, the company of disciples around Jesus starts to assume a greater prominence in the narrative.

They've been present to this point, but now they are more directly considered. The account of the choice of the twelve has some particular details that aren't found in either Luke or in Matthew. It begins with Jesus going up on the mountain and calling to him a particular selection of the disciples.

Perhaps we should recall Exodus 24 at this point, where Israel is constituted around Mount Sinai, with Moses, the priests and the elders going up on the side of the mountain, Moses going up to the very top, and then the rest of Israel gathered around. We might also connect the twelve with the patriarchs and Israel, the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve sons of Jacob. They don't just happen to be twelve people, it's important that they are twelve.

They were called the twelve, and when Judas betrayed Christ and was dropped from their number, they had to choose a replacement, because they had to have the full complement of the twelve present. They're appointed by Christ so that they might be with him, so that they might be sent out to preach, and also that they might have authority to cast out demons. And the importance of proximity to a witnessing to Christ's life and hearing his teaching is paramount.

They need to be around Christ and with him and see the way he lives, see the way he prays, hear what he teaches and learn his explanation of his teaching. They're chosen also for a commission, that they might be sent out as his representatives to preach and to proclaim the gospel to the cities and towns of Israel. And they're granted authority to cast out demons, to continue Jesus' own ministry against the demons and the demonic forces at work in Israel.

The twelve are listed, beginning with Simon and James and John. They're the three core disciples. Simon is the first disciple in each list that we have of the disciples.

He's the leader of the twelve. Peter is the one who will speak as the natural

spokesperson of the group. He's the one that will pioneer the mission on the day of Pentecost.

He will authorise the mission to Samaria and he will also break the new ground of mission to the Gentiles. Judas is the last in every list of the disciples. He's occupying the position of the least honour.

And we're told that he betrays Christ as well at this point. So it explains in part why he is occupying the position that he is. We should observe that Jesus gives each of the three core disciples a new name, presumably declaring the sort of people that they will become.

They're privileged in other ways. They accompany him up the Mount of Transfiguration and also in Gethsemane. Why are they given the names that they're given? Well, Peter would become the rock.

He would be an essential part of the foundation of the church. The church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets and particularly the apostles. The apostles are the foundation stones in different ways.

And Peter is the key foundation stone of the apostles. He's the leading apostle. He's an essential part of the foundation of the church.

James and John are often said to be sons of thunder because they wanted to call down fire from heaven in Luke chapter 9 verse 54. Thunder, however, generally has more positive connotations in scripture, being associated with God's powerful voice. God is generally the one who is associated with thunder.

And James and John will become strong and powerful witnesses, bearing the thunder of God. Now, just as Peter the rock could become like the stumbling block for Christ as he sought to persuade him not to go to Jerusalem and to crucifixion, so the sons of thunder could fall into the trap of in trying to call down fire from heaven, twisting the true significance of their name. In the Old Testament, there are a few key people who have their names changed, like Abraham and Sarai and Jacob.

And James, John and Peter should be included in this select group of persons who have their names changed by the Lord. The twelve are a band of brothers with Jesus. And perhaps we should see in the background of this David's mighty men.

Jesus is the Davidic king in Mark. He's the man of action. He's going from place to place, straightway, immediately.

And in the same way as David, he's surrounded by his mighty men. Like David, he has a larger group of mighty men. And then he has a core group within that larger group.

David has three mighty men who are particularly close to him. The core group of mighty men in 2 Samuel chapter 23, verses 8 to 12. Although Jesus has many female followers, including a number who are seemingly more prominent in the narrative than certain members of the twelve, the twelve are all male.

They're like a military company. And they're prepared for doing battle against the demons, for scoping out the land, proclaiming the message of the kingdom, and also acting as the guardians of the church and the foundation of the church in the future. Jesus goes back home to Capernaum and is once again completely mobbed by a crowd.

And it's making it very difficult for him to do anything. And his own family go out from Nazareth to seize him. They believe that he's lost his mind.

Presumably they've been hearing strange reports from Capernaum and elsewhere. And it's troubling to hear that his very own family was so disbelieving of his ministry. But this is followed by conflict with scribes from Jerusalem.

So there's people coming from Nazareth, his own family, and there are people coming from Jerusalem. Once again, Jesus' ministry of exorcism is front and centre. And it's important to see how central it is in Mark.

Jesus is the exorcist in Mark. He's going around and he's having these power confrontations with Satan and his demons. This is a conflict.

It's a battle that's being waged. Jesus is not just a teacher. Jesus is not just a prophet.

Jesus is the man of action engaged in conflict and battle with Satan and his minions. They accuse Jesus of casting out demons by the prince of the demons. But then Jesus gives a parable that explains he's the one entering into the house of Satan, the strong man, and plundering it.

And he could not do that unless he had bound Satan. Christ has come to deliver them from their oppression by Satan. In the background of Jesus' teaching here, we should probably hear Isaiah chapter 49 verses 24 to 26.

And the prey of the tyrant be rescued, for I will contend with those who contend with you, and I will save your children. I will make your oppressors eat their own flesh, and they shall be drunk with their own blood as with wine. Then all flesh shall know that I am the Lord your Saviour, and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.

While all other sorts of slander might be forgiven people, blaspheming against the Holy Spirit will not. When people attribute the work of the Holy Spirit to an evil spirit, they are maligning God himself. The point of Jesus here is to challenge those who are attributing the manifest work of the Holy Spirit of God to Satan himself.



While many people of tender conscience have struggled with this text, wondering whether they have committed the unforgivable sin, if you actually look at the context, it seems to be dealing with a very specific type of situation that involves direct and willful opposition and maligning of the work of Christ and the Spirit. Not only disbelieving, but presenting that work of the Spirit as if it were the work of Satan himself. As we look through the rest of the New Testament, we see people like Saul of Tarsus being converted, someone who persecuted the Church, who was murderously opposed to Christ and all that he stood for.

And if Christ can save such a person as an example, then what we're dealing with here is a very extreme case of willful and persistent rejection of the Spirit of God, an attribution of that which is most holy to that which is most evil, unclean and perverse. Who are the insiders and who are the outsiders? It's a key question throughout this passage. Jesus has just chosen his disciples, the insiders, who will be the core group around him.

Then his own family prove themselves to be outsiders. They don't believe him. They believe he's mad and they try and take him away by force.

Then he is challenged by the scribes as hostile outsiders. And finally, we see this contrast between the natural family and his disciples. And Jesus speaks about those around him as his brothers, sister, mother.

Jesus isn't just an independent teacher, an exorcist. He's forming a family around him, a group of people who are not just followers, but people who are sharing in a community of life with him. A question to consider.

Why do you think that Jesus discriminated among his wider group of committed disciples and followers, choosing 12 to be especially close to him and three of them to be even closer?