

Teaching Plan  
EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Date: November 12, 2017  
Lesson Title: "Set Apart"  
Lesson Passage: Leviticus 9:15-24, 10:1-3

ABOUT THIS LESSON

In Leviticus 8, the writer has described the installation of Aaron and his sons as priests. In chapter 9, Moses calls upon the new priests to assume their duties. After offering a sin offering and a burnt offering on behalf of their priestly family, Aaron then presides over an offering for the people (Lev. 9:15-21), and ends the service with a blessing of the people before the Lord responds with a manifestation of his glory (Lev. 9:23-24). The lesson ends on a sad note (10:1-3) as two of Aaron's four sons are destroyed by divine action for their sin of offering "unholy fire."

TEACHING/LEARNING GOALS

(1) Explain the relationship of the priesthood to the nation as a whole. (2) Describe the functions of the Levites, priests and high priest.

BEGINNING THE LESSON

*Begin by commenting on the development of the priesthood in ancient Israel:* (1) Under the Mosaic covenant the whole nation of Israel was to be a "kingdom of priests," a holy people (Exodus 19:6). (2) But this holiness (this likeness to God) was lacking in the people as a whole, so this responsibility was delegated to the Levitical priesthood, which represented the whole nation as a kingdom of priests. (3) The Levitical priesthood was divided into a threefold hierarchy: [a] On the lowest level were the Levites, who were set apart for the service of the sanctuary. They were regarded as substitutes for the first-born sons, who belonged to God (*read Numbers 3:12-13, 41, 45*). [b] Above the Levites were the sons of Aaron, who were consecrated for the specific office of priest, and who alone represented the nation in the sacrificial rites of the altar. [c] At the highest level was the high priest, whose breastplate bore the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, signifying that he represented the people as a whole when he went into the sanctuary (Exod. 28:29). He alone could enter the holy of holies, once a year, to make atonement for the nation's sin.

TEACHING PROCEDURES

1. *Suggest that the events recorded in Leviticus 9 should be understood as a sequel to chapter 8, which described the ordination of Aaron and his sons as priests (read Lev. 8:1-3).* Prior to this time, Moses himself has undertaken all the priestly duties. But now, one week after Aaron and his sons have been installed as priests ("on the eighth day," 9:1) Moses calls upon them to perform the priestly functions (*refer to Lev. 9:1-5*). NOTE: At this point, even the high priest is subject to

Moses, who is still the prophetic mediator between God and man. (Moses tells Aaron and the congregation what should be done five times in seven verses--9:1,2,5,6,7).

2. *Observe that as Aaron and his sons perform the rituals described in Lev. 9:7-21, they are actually assuming the role of the supplicant, the donor of the sacrifices, whose actions were described in last week's lesson, as he presented a burnt offering and a cereal offering:* (1) Their actions in carrying out these sacrifices served as a public admission of their own sinfulness and their need for forgiveness. (2) But, in the four sacrifices described in vv. 15-21, they were acting in behalf of the whole nation ("Then he presented the people's offering," v. 15).

3. *Refer to Lev. 9:22a:* Using the altar of burnt offering as a platform, Aaron turned to the people and pronounced God's blessing. NOTE: Some interpretations believe he might have used the words of blessing found in Numbers 6:23-26, since the Lord had told Moses that these words were to be used for this purpose (Num. 6:22): **"The Lord bless you and keep you: The Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace."**

4. In Lev. 9:23, we are told that Moses and Aaron then entered the "tent of meeting," the place where God usually spoke to Moses (Lev. 1:1). Probably they went in at this time to commune with God, in anticipation of His promised appearance in glory (Lev. 9:4,6).

5. *Comment on the awesome response of the Lord (Lev. 9: 23:b-9:24:* On three other occasions God showed his approval of a burnt offering by sending heavenly fire to burn it up (Judges 13:15f., 2 Chron. 7:1f., 1 Kings 18:38ff.). Each time, this dramatic demonstration of God's reality caused the worshipers to fall to the ground and praise God. (Lev. 9:24 says they fell to the ground and shouted for joy.)

6. *Refer briefly to Lev. 10:1-3:* Nadab and Abihu were the two eldest of Aarons' four sons, who had just been ordained as priests. No one knows for sure what is meant by "strange fire" (or "unholy fire") in 10:1. What mattered was that it was "fire which he had not commanded them," and "they died before the Lord."

#### CLOSING THE LESSON

*Conclude with this New Testament application:* In keeping with His declaration that he had come to "fulfill the law" (Mt. 5:17), Jesus became our "high priest forever" (Hebrews 6:20). As believers in Him, we have been "built into a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God "through Jesus Christ." Our task is to "declare the wonderful deeds of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). And, like the Aaronic priesthood, we are to strive to "be holy as He who called us is holy" (1 Pet. 1:15).

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