

Exodus pt. 52
Exodus 29:31 - 46
Feeding the Priests

I. Introduction

- A. As we continue our study of the book of Exodus, we have come to several chapters that focus on the levitical priesthood. Today we will examine this text with three different perspectives: First, we will look at this text historically as it teaches about the levitical priests. Secondly, we will see how this applies to all Christians who are called to be a nation of priests. Lastly, we will see how this passage applies to the ultimate High Priest, Jesus.

II. God's Provision

A. God Provides Food

1. "You shall take the ram of ordination and boil its flesh in a holy place. Aaron and his sons shall eat the flesh of the ram and the bread that is in the basket, at the doorway of the tent of meeting." (Exodus 29:31 - 32)
2. The Levitical priests were not allowed to own their own land and they worked in the tabernacle, and later the temple, full time. They were to be cared for, in part, by the tithes given by the people and they ate from the sacrifices.
 - a) Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple, and those who attend regularly to the altar have their share from the altar? So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel. (1 Corinthians 9:13 - 14)
 - b) The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages." (1 Timothy 5:17 - 18)
3. Also notice that again there is an emphasis on the doorway of the tent of meeting. This is where the sacrifices were slaughtered and this is where they were anointed. Now they are to eat this meal at the doorway. All of this imagery is to remind them that they belong to the Lord for His purpose. They cannot come into God's presence without a sacrifice. They cannot serve God without His anointing. And it is because of God's goodness that they have food to eat. Their life is found at the doorway into God's presence from start to finish.
 - a)
4. Christians
 - a) "Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' Or 'What will we drink?' Or 'What will we wear for clothing?' For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." (Matthew 6:31 - 34)

- b) Our daily food is often used in the Bible to depict our needs of any kind. For example, Jesus teaches us to pray asking God to “give us our daily bread.” Of course we need food and water but this concept extends beyond that. God is able to provide everything that His children need: resources, opportunities, friendships, healing, hope, comfort, strength, etc.
 - c) But I wonder how many of us feel torn here. Publicly we know we should affirm God’s goodness and provision to us so we sing songs and act as if everything is great. But inside we feel as if God has withheld good things from our lives: things that we need.
 - d) I want to tell you that we should not be embarrassed when we find ourselves in that place of asking God why. In fact, I think that anyone who has ever walked with God in faith has had to wrestle with this question, this tension. The Bible tells us that God provides for all His children’s needs but so often, in a fallen world, we don’t see that - at least for seasons of our lives.
 - (1) Some answer this question by saying that God either can’t or doesn’t care to take care of His children. This would obviously be the view that atheists hold but even in Christian thought there are views that say essentially God just created a universe and He is no longer involved in it. He just lets it run its course. Obviously, this is not the view that the Bible teaches.
 - (2) We might say that God has given you what you need. What you have is all you need. But I find this answer disingenuous. The Bible commands us to pray. Paul says, “let your requests be made known to God.” James says that anyone who “needs wisdom” should ask for it and God gives it graciously. If we never have seasons where we do not have needs we reduce prayer to merely asking God for things we want.
 - (3) The option left to us is perhaps the most painful one. God cares about what His children need, He is able to give it to them, and yet sometimes He temporarily makes us wait to have what we need. God temporarily allows His children to go without things they need for a purpose. I believe that God does things for so many purposes that we cannot comprehend them all with our finite minds. But certainly, when God withholds temporarily the things we need it causes us to grow in our faith and reliance upon Him. In the same way, that we as parents will allow our children to face obstacles and hardships (under our protection) so that they learn, God is a good Father and He can let us go through difficult seasons so that we grow.
 - (a) Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:11 - 13)
5. Christ
- a) The gospel of John describes Jesus both as “the living water” and “the bread of life.” Just as it is true that we can only access the Father through Jesus, it is also true that every good thing comes to us through Jesus.
- B. God Provides Forgiveness

1. “Thus they shall eat those things by which atonement was made at their ordination and consecration; but a layman shall not eat them, because they are holy. If any of the flesh of ordination or any of the bread remains until morning, then you shall burn the remainder with fire; it shall not be eaten, because it is holy. Thus you shall do to Aaron and to his sons, according to all that I have commanded you; you shall ordain them through seven days. Each day you shall offer a bull as a sin offering for atonement, and you shall purify the altar when you make atonement for it, and you shall anoint it to consecrate it. For seven days you shall make atonement for the altar and consecrate it; then the altar shall be most holy, and whatever touches the altar shall be holy.” (Exodus 29:33 - 37)
 - a) What a beautiful picture. The priests were to eat of the sacrifices that were given for their atonement. The sacrifices were given on the altar before God but they had to take that into themselves.
 - b) Notice that for the priests to be consecrated they had to offer seven sin sacrifices. Seven is the number of perfection in the Bible. These priests needed a perfect sacrifice to serve God.
2. Christians
 - a) Just like the priests had to take in the meat from the sacrifices, so to do we have to take in Christ for His atonement to apply to us. I believe that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son and that Jesus died for the world. I believe that Jesus’ death is sufficient to save every person and that God desires all men to be saved and that none should perish. However, we do not believe that everyone is saved. We are not universalists who say “all roads lead to God or to Heaven.” So how can we understand this?
 - b) “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which comes down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh.” Then the Jews began to argue with one another, saying, “How can this man give us His flesh to eat?” So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him upon the last day. For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever.” (John 6:47 - 58)
 - (1) Jesus uses this graphic metaphor of needing to eat His flesh and drink His blood to be saved. If you follow Jesus’ logic in this passage He is not talking about cannibalism or transubstantiation. To eat and drink is to believe in Jesus. Jesus’ sacrifice is given for the world but it is only those who partake of that sacrifice by faith who are saved. So even though Jesus’ death and resurrection are sufficient for all they are only efficacious for those who believe.

- c) As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. So Jesus said to the twelve, “You do not want to go away also, do you?” Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.” (John 6:66 - 69)

(1) What is the difference between those in heaven and those in Hell? The people in heaven are there only because they have taken Jesus’ atonement into themselves through faith. Here we see lots of people leave Jesus. They cannot believe in Him. They won’t take His atonement upon themselves and therefore must pay the penalty of their sins. But then we see the twelve. Peter says, “where else can we go? We have believed in you.”

3. Christ

- a) The priests had to offer seven days of sacrifices, a picture of perfect sacrifice. Jesus fulfills this in His death and resurrection. His sacrifice was perfectly pleasing to God so that now “He is able to save once and for all” those who have trusted in Him.
- b) There is a beautiful reminder that we need God’s grace daily here as well. The gospel is not something that only lets us in the family of God. It is God’s grace that keeps us in the family and finishes the good thing that God has begun in us.

C.

III. God’s Purpose

- A. “Now this is what you shall offer on the altar: two one year old lambs each day, continuously. The one lamb you shall offer in the morning and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight; and there shall be one tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with one-fourth of a tin of beaten oil, and one-fourth of a tin of wine for a drink offering with one lamb. The other lamb you shall offer at twilight, and shall offer with it the same grain offering and the same drink offering as in the morning, for a soothing aroma, an offering by fire to the Lord. It shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the doorway of the tent of meeting before the Lord, where I will meet with you, to speak to you there.” (Exodus 29:38 - 42)
 - 1. Notice that these offerings were given twice a day: at morning and at twilight everyday. The day was to begin and end with these sacrifices.
 - 2. This offering was to be given through the generations at the door of the tent of meeting.
 - 3. “These daily sacrifices, which were combined with grain, oil, and wine, were a sign of Israel’s devotion to God. As the sacrifices burned, their smoke wafted up to Heaven. Thus every day began and ended with an aroma pleasing to God.” (*Preaching the Word: Exodus*, pg. 869)
- B. Christians
 - 1. Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:1 - 2)

C. Christ

1. Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. (Ephesians 5:1 - 2)

IV. God's Presence

- A. "I will dwell among the sons of Israel and will be their God. They shall know that I am the Lord their God who brought them out of the land of Egypt, that I might dwell among them; I am the Lord their God." (Exodus 29:45 - 46)

B. Christians

1. Every Christian is sealed by the Holy Spirit. So wherever we go, we are taking God with us. Into the darkness, into sorrow, into times of trouble. The church is one way God is present in the world today.

C. Christ

1. Jesus is our Emmanuel our "God with us."
2. As we have seen in our study of the Exodus, John says of Jesus "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)

V. Conclusion and Application