

The Book of Leviticus, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 5: Aaron and His Sons Ordained

Leviticus 8:1–36

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Doctrinally, Leviticus 8 establishes the Aaronic priesthood and, in doing so, teaches that no one may simply walk into God's presence on his own terms. A mediator was required, and even that mediator had to be cleansed, clothed, anointed, atoned for, and consecrated over seven careful days, all 'as the LORD commanded.' The chapter underscores the holiness of God, the seriousness of approaching Him, and the principle that worship and service follow God's revealed pattern, not human preference. Keep the spotlight on God's holiness and God's authority over how He is approached.

Handle the priesthood as Hebrews does, as a shadow fulfilled in Christ. We must not bind the Aaronic priesthood on Christians, nor revive its rituals, vestments, or sacrifices. Jesus is the great High Priest, sinless, needing no cleansing, offering Himself once for all, holding His priesthood permanently because He lives forever. At the same time, teach the glorious New Covenant truth that all Christians are now a royal and holy priesthood (1 Peter 2:5,9), called to offer spiritual sacrifices. Avoid any clergy/laity scheme foreign to the New Testament; every Christian is consecrated to God.

The lesson aims at the student's consecration. The blood on ear, thumb, and toe, the washing, the anointing, and the seven days of waiting all press one question: are you wholly set apart to God? The student should leave seeing both the beauty of Christ our High Priest and the call to be a living sacrifice, cleansed, clothed in Christ's righteousness, surrendered in hearing, doing, and walking. Aim the heart toward full, unhurried, joyful consecration.

Question 1

Student Question:

Leviticus 8:1–5 stresses that Moses did 'as the LORD commanded him' and gathered the whole congregation. What does the repeated emphasis on doing exactly as God commanded teach us about authority in worship and in approaching God?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Leviticus 8 is saturated with a single refrain: Moses did 'as the LORD commanded.' It appears again and again through the chapter, like a drumbeat. The whole congregation is gathered, and before their eyes Moses carries out, step by step, exactly what God had prescribed back in Exodus 29 and 40. Not one element is invented, adjusted, or improved by human ingenuity. The ordination of the priesthood is an exercise in precise obedience to the revealed will of God.

This emphasis is not incidental; it is the theological backbone of the chapter. The lesson is that God determines how God is approached. The priesthood, the very institution charged with mediating between heaven and earth, did not get to design its own installation. If even the manner of consecrating priests was wholly dictated by God, how much more must all worship and service flow from His revealed will rather than from human preference?

This principle runs through the whole of Scripture. God told Moses to make everything according to the pattern shown him on the mountain. He struck Uzzah for handling the ark in a way He had not authorized. Jesus rebuked those who worshiped Him in vain by teaching the commandments of men. Over and over God insists that He, not we, sets the terms of acceptable approach. Leviticus 8 is one more witness to that consistent truth.

For the Lord's church, this is a foundational conviction. We seek to do Bible things in Bible ways, to follow the apostolic pattern rather than human innovation. We ask not 'what do we prefer?' but 'what has God authorized?' This is not legalism; it is reverence. It is the humble recognition that the Creator has the right to be approached as He directs. The whole congregation watching Aaron's ordination was being taught that God is to be served on His terms.

Help the class feel both the weight and the freedom of this. The weight: we are not free to invent our own religion. The freedom: we are not left guessing, for God has revealed how He desires to be approached. The same God who specified every detail of Aaron's ordination has, in Christ and through the apostles, made plain how He is to be worshiped today. We need only listen and obey.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The refrain 'as the LORD commanded' is the theological backbone of the chapter.
- God, not man, determines how God is acceptably approached.
- This principle runs throughout Scripture (Exodus 25:40; Matthew 15:9).
- The Lord's church seeks God's authority, not human preference, in worship.
- God has revealed how He is to be approached; we need only listen and obey.

Discussion Prompts

- Why do you think God left nothing in the ordination to human invention?
- What does 'as the LORD commanded' teach us about the source of authority in worship?
- How do we tell the difference between reverent obedience and mere legalism?

Question 2

Student Question:

Moses obeyed God's instructions to the letter rather than improvising. Where in your own walk with God are you tempted to do what seems right to you rather than what God has actually said?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Moses obeyed God to the letter, and that confronts a tendency in all of us: the pull to do what seems right to us rather than what God has actually said. The book of Proverbs warns that there is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death. Our hearts are wonderfully creative at justifying the path we prefer and labeling it God's will.

This shows up in subtle ways. We can know what Scripture teaches and quietly set it aside because our own reasoning seems more compassionate, more reasonable, more modern. We can substitute sincerity for obedience, telling ourselves that God surely accepts a heartfelt effort even when it departs from His word. But Leviticus 8 reminds us that good intentions never replaced God's instructions for Aaron, and they do not replace them for us.

The remedy is not less thinking but more submission. We bring our reasoning under God's revealed will rather than over it. We ask honestly: have I shaped my convictions around what God said, or around what I find easiest to accept? The consecrated life begins with a settled willingness to let God, not self, define what is right.

Invite the class to be specific. Perhaps there is a clear teaching of Scripture they have softened to fit their preference. Perhaps there is an area where 'it seems right to me' has quietly overruled 'thus saith the Lord.' Naming it honestly is the path back to the kind of glad obedience that marked Moses on the day he ordained his brother.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- We are pulled to do what seems right to us rather than what God said (Proverbs 14:12).
- Sincerity is no substitute for obedience to God's revealed will.
- We bring our reasoning under God's word, not over it.
- The consecrated life lets God, not self, define what is right.

Discussion Prompts

- Where are you tempted to let 'it seems right to me' overrule what God has said?
- How can sincerity become a subtle excuse for not obeying?
- What teaching of Scripture might you be softening to fit your own preference?

Question 3

Student Question:

Leviticus 8:6 begins the ceremony with Moses washing Aaron and his sons with water. Why must cleansing come first for those who would serve God, and how does this point forward to the washing we receive in Christ (Titus 3:5; Hebrews 10:22)?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The very first act of the ordination is washing. Before any garment is put on, before any oil is poured, before any sacrifice is made, Moses brings Aaron and his sons and washes them with water at the door of the tabernacle. The order is deliberate. Cleansing comes first. No one enters God's service uncleansed, and the ceremony makes that visible from its opening moment.

This is a vivid object lesson in a permanent spiritual truth: the unclean cannot serve the holy God until they are made clean. The priests were sinful men like everyone else. Before they could stand between God and the people, the defilement had to be dealt with. The water at the tabernacle door declared, before all Israel, that purity precedes priesthood.

The New Testament picks up this imagery and fills it with gospel meaning. Titus 3:5 says God saved us 'by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.' Hebrews 10:22 urges us to draw near 'having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.' The outward washing of the priests pointed forward to the cleansing God gives in Christ, by which sinners are made fit to draw near and to serve.

We should be careful not to read New Testament baptism back into Aaron's ceremony as though Leviticus were teaching it directly; that would be anachronistic. Rather, the priestly washing belongs to a long line of cleansings in Scripture, all of which find their meaning and fulfillment in the cleansing God provides through Christ. The principle is timeless: cleansing precedes acceptable service.

The implication is humbling and hopeful at once. Humbling, because it means none of us comes to God on the basis of our own purity; we all need washing. Hopeful, because God Himself provides the cleansing. He did not tell Aaron to wash himself worthy by his own efforts; Moses washed him. So too, we do not cleanse ourselves; God cleanses us in Christ, and only then are we fit to serve.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Cleansing is the deliberate first act; purity precedes priesthood.
- The unclean cannot serve the holy God until they are made clean.
- The washing points forward to the cleansing God gives in Christ (Titus 3:5; Hebrews 10:22).
- We should not read NT baptism anachronistically into the ceremony, but draw the timeless principle.
- God provides the cleansing; we do not make ourselves worthy.

Discussion Prompts

- Why is it significant that washing comes first, before any garment or sacrifice?
- What does the priestly washing teach about our need before we can serve God?
- How does it humble and encourage you that God Himself provides the cleansing?

Question 4

Student Question:

Cleansing came before service for the priests. What does it mean for you that you cannot serve God acceptably out of an unwashed, unrepentant heart, and how does that drive you to Christ?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

If cleansing came first for the priests, then we must reckon with a sobering truth: we cannot serve God acceptably out of an unwashed, unrepentant heart. It is possible to be busy in religious activity while inwardly clinging to sin, to teach, to give, to serve, all while the heart remains unclean. Leviticus 8 reminds us that God begins with cleansing, not with activity.

This guards us against a subtle trap. We can try to earn God's favor by piling up service, hoping our usefulness will outweigh our sin. But God does not want our service instead of our repentance; He wants service that flows from a cleansed heart. The doing is meant to come after the washing, not as a substitute for it.

This drives us straight to Christ. We cannot scrub our own hearts clean. Try as we might, we cannot wash away the guilt of our sin by good works or sheer effort. Only the blood of Christ cleanses the conscience. So the recognition of our uncleanness is not meant to crush us but to send us running to the One who washes us and makes us fit to serve.

Encourage the class to examine their motives. Am I serving from a clean heart, or am I using service to avoid dealing with my sin? The call is not to stop serving but to let God cleanse the heart first, so that all the serving flows from a right relationship with Him rather than an attempt to manufacture one.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- We cannot serve God acceptably out of an unwashed, unrepentant heart.
- Service is not a substitute for repentance and cleansing.
- Only the blood of Christ can cleanse the conscience for service.
- Recognizing our uncleanness should drive us to Christ, not crush us.

Discussion Prompts

- Have you ever tried to use service as a substitute for dealing with your own sin?
- Why can't busy religious activity make up for an unclean heart?
- How does your need for cleansing drive you to Christ rather than to despair?

Question 5**Student Question:**

Leviticus 8:7–13 describes the holy garments and the anointing oil placed on Aaron and the tabernacle. What do the garments and the oil teach about the priest being clothed in holiness

and set apart by God rather than by his own merit, and how does the oil point to consecration by God's Spirit?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Once the priests are washed, Moses clothes them. Aaron receives the full high priestly regalia: the coat, the robe, the ephod, the breastplate with its twelve stones for the twelve tribes, and the mitre with its golden plate engraved 'Holiness to the LORD.' These were not ordinary clothes. Exodus 28 says they were made 'for glory and for beauty,' and every element carried meaning. The priest did not appear before God in his own everyday garments but was clothed in holiness.

This is deeply significant. The garments were given to Aaron; he did not weave them himself or earn them. He was clothed in a holiness provided for him, draped in symbols of his sacred office that came from God's design. The man underneath was an ordinary, sinful Israelite, but he stood before God covered in garments that declared 'Holiness to the LORD.' The clothing spoke of a holiness not native to the wearer.

Then comes the anointing oil. Moses pours it on the tabernacle, the altar, and Aaron's head, consecrating them, setting them apart for holy use. Oil throughout Scripture is associated with the Spirit and with God's setting apart of His servants; kings and priests were anointed. The oil declared that Aaron was now consecrated, claimed by God, dedicated entirely to His service. He was not self-appointed but God-appointed and God-anointed.

The gospel parallel shines through. We who are in Christ are 'clothed' with Him; we put on Christ, and we are robed in a righteousness not our own. As Aaron stood holy before God in garments provided for him, so the believer stands accepted before God clothed in the righteousness of Christ. And as Aaron was consecrated by anointing oil, so Christians have received an anointing, the gift of the Spirit who sets us apart for God.

Press the lesson home. None of us has a holiness of our own to wear into God's presence. Like Aaron, we must be clothed in a holiness given to us, and consecrated by a Spirit we did not summon. The garments and the oil together teach that acceptable standing before God is God's gift, not our achievement. We come dressed in what He provides, set apart by His Spirit, not by our own merit.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The garments were given to Aaron, not earned; he was clothed in holiness provided for him.
- The plate 'Holiness to the LORD' marked the priest as set apart, though the man was an ordinary sinner.
- The anointing oil consecrated Aaron, claiming him wholly for God's service.
- Believers are clothed with Christ's righteousness, not their own (compare Galatians 3:27).
- Acceptable standing before God is His gift, not our achievement.

Discussion Prompts

- What is the significance of Aaron being clothed in garments he did not make for himself?
- How does the anointing oil picture being set apart by God's Spirit?
- In what ways are you tempted to wear your own merit rather than the holiness God provides?

Question 6

Student Question:

Aaron was clothed in a holiness he did not manufacture for himself. In what ways are you tempted to rely on your own merit before God rather than being clothed in the righteousness Christ provides?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Aaron's borrowed holiness exposes a deep tendency in the human heart: the urge to stand before God in our own merit. We like to think we have earned our place, that our goodness, our record, our religious diligence makes us acceptable. But Leviticus 8 dresses Aaron in a righteousness provided for him, and the New Testament dresses us the same way.

Relying on our own merit is exhausting and dishonest. It is exhausting because the standard is perfection and we never measure up. It is dishonest because it quietly denies our need for grace. The Pharisee in Jesus' parable trusted in himself that he was righteous and went home unjustified, while the tax collector who pleaded for mercy went home right with God.

The freedom of the gospel is that we do not have to manufacture our own holiness. We are clothed with Christ. When God looks at the believer, He sees us covered in the righteousness of His Son, just as He saw Aaron robed in 'Holiness to the LORD.' This does not make us passive; it makes us grateful, and gratitude fuels far better obedience than pride ever could.

Invite the class to examine where they are still trying to wear their own merit. Perhaps in comparing themselves to others, perhaps in keeping a private scorecard of their goodness, perhaps in subtle pride about their faithfulness. The call is to lay down the threadbare garment of self-righteousness and put on Christ, who alone makes us fit to stand before God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The human heart wants to stand before God in its own merit.
- Relying on self is exhausting and quietly denies our need for grace.
- Like the tax collector, we are made right by mercy, not by our record (Luke 18:9-14).
- Being clothed with Christ produces grateful obedience, not passivity.

Discussion Prompts

- In what ways do you find yourself relying on your own merit before God?
- Why is trusting in our own righteousness both exhausting and dishonest?
- How does being clothed in Christ's righteousness change the way you obey?

Question 7

Student Question:

Leviticus 8:14–30 records the sin offering, the burnt offering, and the ram of consecration, with blood placed on the priests' ear, thumb, and toe. What does this sequence of sacrifices and the marking with blood teach about what is required before a sinful man may mediate between God and the people?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The heart of the ordination is the sacrifices. Moses offers a sin offering, dealing with the priests' guilt and cleansing the altar. Then comes the burnt offering, signifying total dedication to God. Finally the ram of consecration, the ram of 'filling,' marks the priests' hands as filled with their sacred service. Before Aaron and his sons could mediate for others, atonement had to be made for themselves. Even the mediators needed a sacrifice.

Then comes one of the most striking moments in the chapter. Moses takes the blood of the ram of consecration and puts it on the tip of the right ear, the thumb of the right hand, and the great toe of the right foot of Aaron and each of his sons. The blood claims the whole man. The ear, that he might hear God's word and obey it. The hand, that all his work might be done for God. The foot, that everywhere he walked might be in God's service. From head to toe, the priest belonged to the Lord.

This vivid marking teaches that serving as a mediator before God requires total consecration. It is not enough to dedicate part of oneself. The blood on ear, thumb, and toe declares that the whole person, listening, working, walking, is given over to God. There is no compartment of the priest's life left for himself. He belongs entirely to the One he serves.

And underneath it all is blood. The priests could not be consecrated without sacrifice. Even those set apart to bring others near to God had first to be brought near themselves through atoning blood. This is precisely where the chapter exposes the limitation of the Aaronic priesthood, for these were sinful men who needed atonement before they could serve. The contrast with Christ, our sinless High Priest who needed no sacrifice for Himself, is profound.

Help the class hold both truths. First, the requirement: a sinful man may mediate before God only after atonement and total consecration. Second, the foreshadowing: every drop of that blood pointed to a better sacrifice and a better Priest. Christ did not need blood placed on Him; He poured out His own blood, once for all, to consecrate us. The ram of consecration was a shadow; Jesus is the substance.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Even the mediators needed atonement before they could serve (sin offering first).
- The burnt offering signified total dedication to God.
- Blood on ear, thumb, and toe claimed the whole man: hearing, working, walking.
- Total consecration was required; no part of the priest was kept for himself.
- The priests' need for atonement exposes the limits of the Aaronic priesthood, fulfilled in the sinless Christ.

Discussion Prompts

- Why did the priests themselves need a sin offering before they could mediate for others?
- What does the blood on ear, thumb, and toe teach about the totality of consecration?
- How does the priests' need for atonement highlight the superiority of Christ our High Priest?

Question 8

Student Question:

The blood claimed Aaron's ears, hands, and feet for God. As you examine your own life, which parts have you held back from God's full ownership, and what would it look like to surrender them?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The blood on ear, thumb, and toe presses a personal question: which parts of your life have you held back from God's full ownership? The priest was claimed entirely, his hearing, his hands, his walk. The Christian, who is part of a royal priesthood, is called to the same total surrender. Yet most of us are tempted to keep a few compartments for ourselves.

Consider the ear. Have we truly surrendered our hearing, what we listen to, what voices we let shape us, our willingness to hear and obey God's word even when it is hard? Consider the hands, our work, our use of money, what we do with our time and strength. Consider the feet, where we go, the places and paths we choose, whether our walk is set toward God's purposes or our own.

Total consecration is not achieved in a single dramatic moment but offered daily. Paul urges us to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is our reasonable service. The marking of the priests reminds us that God is not content with a portion. He asks for all of us, every faculty, every member, every step.

Encourage the class to name a specific area they have been slow to surrender. The point is not guilt but glad, deliberate consecration. When we recognize a compartment we have kept for ourselves, we can offer it to God in prayer today, asking Him to claim our ears, our hands, and our feet wholly for His service.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God claims the whole person, but we tend to keep compartments for ourselves.
- Consider what you hear, what you do with your hands, and where you walk.
- Total consecration is offered daily, as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1).
- The goal is glad surrender of every faculty, not guilt.

Discussion Prompts

- Which area, your hearing, your hands, or your walk, have you been slowest to surrender?
- Why does God ask for all of us rather than a portion?
- What would it look like to consciously offer that held-back area to God today?

Question 9

Student Question:

Leviticus 8:31–36 describes seven days of consecration in which the priests remained at the tabernacle so they would not die. How does this prolonged, costly consecration of the Aaronic priesthood point us to the superior and permanent priesthood of Christ (Hebrews 7:23–28), and what does it mean that all Christians are now a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:5,9)?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The chapter closes with seven days of consecration. Aaron and his sons must remain at the door of the tabernacle day and night for a full week, keeping the charge of the LORD, repeating the sacrifices, so that they would not die. This was no quick installation. Consecration was prolonged, costly, and deadly serious. The repeated phrase 'that ye die not' underscores how perilous it was for sinful men to draw near to a holy God, even as His appointed priests.

This prolonged, repeated consecration quietly exposes the weakness of the whole Aaronic system. The priests had to be consecrated again and again. They were mortal; they would grow old and die, and others would have to be ordained in their place. The sacrifices for their own sins had to be repeated. The entire arrangement was provisional, a shadow that could never finally and permanently bring people to God.

Hebrews 7 draws out the contrast with breathtaking clarity. The Aaronic priests were many in number, 'because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death,' but Christ, 'because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.' He needs no successor, for He lives forever. He needs no daily sacrifice for His own sins, for He had none. 'For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.' Every limitation of Aaron's seven-day ordination magnifies the perfection of Christ.

And here is the New Covenant glory: through Christ, the priesthood is no longer confined to one family. Peter tells the whole church, 'Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.' And again, 'Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people.' Every Christian, cleansed and consecrated in Christ, now has access to God and a priestly calling to offer spiritual sacrifices of praise, service, and a holy life.

Be careful to keep the lines straight. We do not revive the Aaronic priesthood, its vestments, or its sacrifices; those were shadows fulfilled and removed in Christ. Nor do we set up a special priestly class within the church, for the New Testament knows no clergy/laity division of that kind. Instead, every believer is a priest, and Christ alone is our great High Priest. The seven days of Aaron's consecration point us to the One whose consecration is perfect and permanent, and who has made all His people priests unto God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Consecration took seven days, prolonged and deadly serious ('that ye die not').
- The repeated, mortal priesthood exposes the limits of the whole Aaronic system.
- Christ holds His priesthood permanently because He lives forever (Hebrews 7:23-28).
- Christ is holy and sinless, offering Himself once for all, needing no sacrifice for Himself.
- All Christians are now a royal and holy priesthood (1 Peter 2:5,9).
- We do not revive the Aaronic priesthood nor set up a clergy/laity priestly class.

Discussion Prompts

- How does the prolonged, repeated consecration of Aaron highlight the perfection of Christ's priesthood?
- Why is it good news that Christ holds His priesthood permanently and needs no successor?
- What does it mean for your daily life that you are part of a royal priesthood?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back over the whole ceremony of washing, vesting, anointing, sacrifice, and consecration. Name one specific way the Lord is using this picture to form you into a consecrated follower of Jesus, your great High Priest, who is teaching you what it means to belong wholly to God.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Step back and take in the whole day. Aaron and his sons were washed, clothed in holy garments, anointed with sacred oil, atoned for by blood placed on ear, thumb, and toe, and consecrated over seven careful days, all exactly as the LORD commanded. It was a slow, deliberate, costly setting apart of men wholly to God. And every part of it points beyond itself to Christ and to the consecrated life He calls us to live.

Jesus is the great High Priest the whole ceremony anticipated. He needed no washing, for He was sinless. He was clothed in His own perfect holiness. He offered Himself rather than another sacrifice. He holds His priesthood forever. And through Him, every believer is now washed, clothed in His righteousness, anointed with His Spirit, and consecrated to God. What Aaron received in shadow, we receive in substance through our High Priest.

So the capstone question is searching and personal. How is the Lord using this picture to form you? Perhaps toward deeper cleansing, owning your need to be washed by Christ. Perhaps toward humility, laying down your own merit to be clothed in His righteousness. Perhaps toward total surrender, offering your ears, hands, and feet wholly to God. Name the one specific way Jesus is consecrating you, and yield to His work.

The point of Leviticus 8 is not to make us nostalgic for ancient rituals but to make us consecrated people. We are a royal priesthood, set apart to offer spiritual sacrifices and to belong entirely to God. Let this chapter do its work: send you to Christ our High Priest, and send you out as a living sacrifice, washed, clothed, anointed, and wholly the Lord's.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The whole ceremony, washing, vesting, anointing, sacrifice, consecration, points to Christ.
- Jesus is the great High Priest the ceremony anticipated, perfect and permanent.
- In Christ we are washed, clothed, anointed, and consecrated to God.
- The aim is real consecration: a royal priesthood wholly the Lord's.

Discussion Prompts

- Which part of the ordination ceremony spoke most directly to your own heart?
- Name one specific way Jesus is consecrating you through this passage.
- How will you live this week as a member of the royal priesthood, wholly set apart to God?