



LESSON 29

God establishes the priesthood

LEVITICUS 8:1-10:7



God must be treated as holy.



“Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified” (Lev 10:3).

Supporting Truths

1. God must be treated as holy.
2. Because God is holy, He must be worshiped through a holy mediator.
3. Because God is holy, those who serve Him must be holy.
4. God’s holiness is good but dangerous.
5. Jesus fulfills the priesthood.

Objectives

1. Describe what happened to Nadab and Abihu.
2. Describe how Aaron sacrificed for the people and blessed them.
3. Describe how Moses washed, clothed, anointed, and made sacrifices for Aaron.
4. Compare what happened to Aaron’s sacrifice with what happened to Nadab and Abihu.
5. Compare the roles of the high priest to what Jesus does for believers.

STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

God establishes the priesthood • Leviticus 8:1–10:7



Lesson Summary

With the tabernacle finished and the sacrificial system in place, God established the priesthood. As spiritual leaders of God's people, the priests had to be holy, so they had sacrifices offered for them, and they were washed and given special clothes. Then Aaron offered sacrifices just as God had commanded, and God was pleased and showed His glory to the people. But Nadab and Abihu did not serve as God commanded, so God destroyed them. He showed that those who worship must treat Him as holy.

Spotlight on the Gospel

Jesus is the great High Priest. Like Aaron, he intercedes for His people and provides the way for His people to come into God's presence. But unlike Aaron, he did not need to be cleansed by animal sacrifices. He was already perfect, and the sacrifice He offered was Himself. We can now come to God through faith in Jesus, so that we can serve as priests for God. But we must do so in fear and holiness, because God is holy and a consuming fire.

LAST WEEK



God ordains the sacrificial system

Leviticus 1:1–7:38

THIS WEEK



God establishes the priesthood

Leviticus 8:1–10:7

NEXT WEEK



God Ordains the Day of Atonement

Leviticus 16:1–34

DELIVERANCE

Lesson Commentary

God must be treated as holy.

Israel had the place of worship (the tabernacle) and the means of worship (sacrifices), so now God established the people who would perform the worship—the priests. Like the tabernacle and the sacrifices, the priests were established so that a sinful people could worship their holy God. The priests were to serve as **mediators**, as the ones who go between God and the people. They were to represent the people before God, and speak to man on God's behalf. Because of this, the priests needed to be especially careful to follow God's commands and treat Him as **holy**, since God is perfect, pure, and worthy of reverence.

God set apart Aaron and his sons to serve as priests (8:1–36)

God chose Aaron and his sons to be **priests** for Him, people set apart to serve Him by sacrifices, to live holy lives in His presence, and to speak His words to the people. But Aaron and his sons were sinful just like everyone else. So they had to be forgiven and cleansed of their sin. First Moses washed them with water, illustrating purity from sin (8:6) and showing that purity is essential in order to be useful to God (1 Tim 3:2–6; 2 Tim 2:21).

Then he put special clothes on them, a uniform that visibly marked them as holy to the Lord (Lev 8:7–9). Their clothes were clean and white and beautiful (Exod 28:40), and Aaron's high priestly clothes were especially majestic. He wore a blue robe with a decorated hem, as well as a turban with a gold plate engraved with "Holy to the Lord" (Exod 28:36). He had an ephod of gold, woven with blue, purple, and scarlet threads and decorated with twelve dazzling gems (Exod 28:6–27). These twelve gems represented the twelve tribes, so that when the high priest came into the presence of God, it was as if all Israel entered God's presence with him.

Next, Moses anointed Aaron with oil, a sign of the Holy Spirit empowering someone to special service for God (Lev 8:12; 1 Sam 10:1–6; 16:13). Jesus and the disciples were also anointed by the Holy Spirit before beginning their ministries (Matt 3:16; Acts 1:4–5).

Now all believers have the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:9), but they must beware of trying to serve God by their own strength (Rom 7:18); instead, they must let the Holy Spirit rule and empower their lives (Eph 5:18).

Moses then offered the sin, burnt, grain, and fellowship offerings for them (Lev 8:14–32). The sin offering is first in order for sins to be paid for, forgiven, and washed away. The burnt offering, along with

the grain offering, is second in order to dedicate the priests entirely to God. Finally, a special form of the fellowship offering, called the offering of ordination, brought the priest into a new relationship with God as His priests. These same steps have been completed in Christ's sacrifice for the sake of all believers (Matt 26:28; Rom 6:11; 1 Pet 3:18).

During these sacrifices, Moses sprinkled them with blood (Lev 8:30) and put blood on their right ears, right thumbs, and right big toes (8:23–24). This symbolized the cleansing of the entire body, but it also illustrates the priests' holy function: they were to use their ears to listen to God's holy words, their hands to do His holy work, and their feet to walk in His holy way. This whole process shows that there must be mediators between God and man, and these mediators must be holy. Now we have a perfectly holy mediator who never needed to be cleansed, Jesus Christ (1 Tim 2:5).

Aaron did his job as the new high priest (9:1–24)

Now that Aaron had been made high priest, God told him to offer sacrifices (Lev 9:1–7).

First, he had to offer sacrifices for himself, since even as high priest he was still sinful (9:8–14). This is a reminder that God uses imperfect people, who can only serve Him on the basis of Christ's ultimate sacrifice (Rom 12:1). It is also a reminder that leaders of God's people must be diligent

THINK ABOUT IT

Aaron had to first experience God's forgiveness before he could ever seek God's forgiveness for others.



THINK ABOUT IT

Jesus is a perfect High Priest and the perfect mediator to a greater covenant.



STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

God establishes the priesthood • Leviticus 8:1–10:7



to deal with their own sin if they are to lead God's people in holiness (Heb 13:7). Finally, Aaron's sacrifices for his own sin show how much greater Jesus Christ is as the great High Priest, who entered God's presence not by the blood of animals but by His own spotless blood (Heb 9:12).

Next, Aaron obeyed by offering sacrifices for all the people, in the same order as Moses had: sin offering, burnt and grain offerings together, then the fellowship offering (Lev 9:15–22). The goal of these sacrifices was the appearance of the glory of God (9:6), and God's glory did appear, with fire from God burning up the offerings (9:23–24). When the people saw, they shouted for joy (9:24). This illustrates the purpose of worship, which is to see and delight in the glory of God. It also shows that blessing comes after sacrifice. All this is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, who most powerfully displays God's glory and who sacrificed Himself to give believers every spiritual blessing (2 Cor 4:6; Eph 1:3).



THINK ABOUT IT

The worship of God must always be done according to God's requirements and in light of God's holiness.

Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu did not treat God as holy (10:1–7)

Even though they had just seen God's glory consume the offerings, Aaron's two oldest sons Nadab and Abihu did not respect God. They burned incense to the Lord

in a way He had not commanded (Lev 10:1). The incense they offered is called "unauthorized fire," so perhaps they got their coals from somewhere besides the bronze altar. Or perhaps they burned the wrong kind of incense (Exod 30:34–38). They may have come at the wrong time, or tried to enter the Holy of Holies (Lev 16:2). They may have committed several of these violations, and it seems that drunkenness was a part of the problem (10:9). Whatever the exact violation, Nadab and Abihu dishonored God by not offering incense exactly as God had commanded.

So the same fire that burned up Aaron's offerings now killed Nadab and Abihu (10:2). Fire from the LORD is mentioned twelve times in the Old Testament, six times as a blessing and six times as punishment. For example, fire from God was a blessing when it burned up Elijah's offering (1 Kgs 18:38). But it was death for the soldiers who tried to capture Elijah (2 Kgs 1:10). God's holiness is a blessing to those who treat God as holy, but it destroys those who do not. God is a devouring fire (Heb 12:29).

Nadab and Abihu died because they did not treat God as holy (Lev 10:3). No one should worship God carelessly (Eccl 5:1–2). God desires to be honored before all the people, so all who worship must fear Him in holiness (2 Cor 7:1). But "those who are near me"—those who are called to lead God's people—are held to a stricter standard (Jas 3:1; 1 Tim 4:12–16). In fact, Aaron was not even allowed to be involved in the funeral because he still had a holy job to do (Lev 10:4–7). God's holiness takes priority over everything.

Just as Jesus fulfills the tabernacle (John 1:14) and the sacrificial system (1 Pet 3:16), so now He fulfills the priesthood as the great High Priest forever (Heb 6:20; 7:26–28). When the high priest went into the Holy of Holies, it was as if he brought all twelve tribes in with him. So now as Jesus stands in the very presence of God, he brings every believer into God's presence (Heb 4:14–16). As the high priest made sacrifices to intercede for the people, so Jesus sacrificed Himself and now intercedes for His people (Rom 8:34). But unlike Aaron, Jesus did not need to be cleansed, for He is already perfect (1 Pet 2:22).

With Jesus as our High Priest, believers now serve as priests to God (1 Pet 2:9). As Aaron was washed, so believers must first be cleansed by the Holy Spirit and by the Word in order to serve God (John 13:8; Eph 5:26; Titus 3:5). If we serve obediently, God's holiness will be a blessing to us. But if we do not respect God's holiness when we worship, then His holiness will destroy us as it destroyed Nadab and Abihu.

Lesson Outline

God must be treated as holy.

AGES 3–5 LESSON OUTLINE



1. God called Aaron and his sons to be holy priests (8:1–9:24).
2. Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu burned incense to the Lord in the wrong way (10:1).
3. God sent fire to destroy Nadab and Abihu (10:2).
4. God must be treated as holy (10:3).

AGES 6–11 LESSON OUTLINE



1. God set apart Aaron and his sons to serve as priests (8:1–36).
 - Aaron and his four sons were washed, clothed, and anointed with oil (8:1–13).
 - Moses offered sin, burnt, fellowship and grain offerings for them (8:14–32).
 - Aaron and his sons were made holy by means of blood (8:23–24, 30).
 - Aaron and his sons stayed in the tabernacle for seven days (8:33–36).
2. Aaron did his job as the new high priest (9:1–24).
 - God gave Aaron instructions to offer sacrifices for himself and all the people (9:1–7).
 - Aaron obeyed and offered sin and burnt offerings for himself (9:8–14).
 - Aaron obeyed and offered sin, burnt, grain, and fellowship offerings for the people (9:15–22).
 - God's glory appeared to all, and fire from God burned up the offerings (9:23–24).
3. Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu did not treat God as holy (10:1–7).
 - Nadab and Abihu burned incense to the Lord in a way He had not commanded (10:1).
 - Fire from God burned them up (10:2).
 - The LORD said He must be treated as holy, especially by those who serve Him (10:3).
 - Aaron was not allowed to grieve because he still had a holy job to do (10:4–7).



TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

God establishes the priesthood • Leviticus 8:1–10:7



Lesson Questions

Use these questions to teach or to review this week's lesson.



Ages 3–5 Lesson Questions

1. **What job did God give to Aaron and his sons?**
God called them to be priests.
2. **When Aaron obeyed God, what happened to Aaron's offerings?**
Fire from God burned them up.
3. **When Nadab and Abihu did not obey God, what happened to them?**
Fire from God burned them up.
4. **Why do we have to be careful when we worship God?**
God is holy.



Ages 6–11 Lesson Questions

1. **What did the twelve stones in the high priest's ephod represent?**
They represented the 12 tribes of Israel. When the high priest went into the Holy of Holies, it was as if all of Israel entered God's presence.
2. **What part of the priests' bodies did Moses put blood on, and why?**
He put blood on their right ears, right thumbs, and right big toes. This showed that the priests were made holy by the blood of sacrifices. They were to serve God by listening to His holy word, doing His holy work, and walking in His holy way.
3. **Who did Aaron offer sacrifices for, and why?**
He offered sacrifices for himself because he could not lead the people in worship until his own sins were forgiven. Then he offered sacrifices for the people because he was their mediator with God.
4. **What happened to Aaron's offerings?**
Fire from God burned them up, showing that God was pleased with his offering.
5. **What did Nadab and Abihu do?**
They burned incense to God in the wrong way. They did not respect God's holiness.
6. **What happened to Nadab and Abihu?**
Fire from God burned them up, showing that God's holiness is very serious.
7. **How is Jesus the great High Priest?**
He offered Himself as a sacrifice. He entered God's holy presence as our holy mediator. He represents us before God and God to us.
8. **How are we to be priests for God?**
We are to worship God carefully because He is holy.

Lesson Activities

Choose from the following ideas to introduce, illustrate, and apply this week's lesson.

AGES 3–5



BRIDGING THE GAP

Tell the children that we need something to bridge the gap between us and God. This is because God is holy and we are sinful. Put two tape lines on the floor far enough apart that the children cannot jump across. Pull out a board to bridge the gap between the two tape lines. Allow the children to walk across the gap on the board. Explain that God made a group of men to bridge the distance between the sinful people and holy God. These men were called priests. A big word we use for this is *mediator*. A mediator is someone who helps us come to God. In today's lesson, we will learn how God started a priesthood to help the Israelites come to Him. Jesus is now every Christian's high priest. He stands between God and man.

HOT LAVA

Lay out pieces of colored paper on the ground. Choose one color to make a path across the room. The stepping stones are like the specific instructions that God gave Israel about how to approach Him. Have the children walk the path. If they step on the wrong color, or off the paper, they are out.



HIGH-PRIEST CLOTHES

Before class, make a child-sized vest out of a brown paper bag. Cut a neck hole in the bottom and armholes in the sides. Cut the bag in the middle of one of the wide sides, from the top of the bag to the neck hole. This will make the shape of a vest. See Exodus 28 for decorating the vest. Explain that this vest is like what the high priest would wear into the tabernacle. Allow a child to put on the vest during the lesson to show the children what it looks like. Tell that children that before going into the tabernacle, Aaron first had to take a bath. Then he had oil put on his head. After that, he had a drop of blood put on his right earlobe, his right thumb, and his right big toe.

PRIESTLY JOB

Help children understand the job of a priest with the following actions. Priests were set apart to serve God by 1) offering sacrifices (hands out and palms facing up), 2) living a holy life (two fingers walking straight line across palm), and 3) speaking God's words to His people (touch fingers to lips and move fingers away).



JESUS THE HIGH PRIEST

See Year 1 Craft Book, Book 2.

Materials: Craft sheet, construction paper, crayons, scissors, and glue.

Directions: Pre-cut the pictures, rectangle, and verse from the craft sheet. Make and arrow from construction paper. Have the children color a picture of themselves in the white rectangle and glue it to the left side of the page. Glue the arrow and the cross in the middle of the page and glue the "God is Holy" circle on the right side. Decorate the "God is Holy" circle with shiny types of glitter glue to represent the splendor of God's holiness. Glue on the verse to the bottom of the page.

Jesus the High Priest
See Year 1 Craft Book, Book 2.



TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

God establishes the priesthood • Leviticus 8:1–10:7



AGES 6–8



INTRODUCE

ORDER IN THE COURT

Materials: black robe, gavels

Directions: Dress up as a judge. Explain that when someone commits a crime, he has to go to court and be punished. Explain that when we sin, we are committing a crime against God. So we must go to God's court to be judged. The good news is that if we are believers, Jesus is our defender and mediator. Explain that Jesus takes our punishment, and we take His innocence. In today's lesson, we will learn about the priests, who were the mediators between God and men before Jesus died on the cross.

FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS

Create a set of verbal instructions. For example: (1) Remain perfectly quiet; (2) Stand up; (3) Lift up your left hand, palm facing upwards; (4) Say the first five books of the Old Testament; (5) Sit down. Read them and tell the children to listen carefully, trying to remember them in exact detail. After reading the instructions, allow the children to try to act out the instructions. Explain that the priests needed to be especially careful to follow God's commands and treat Him as holy, since God is perfect, pure, and worthy of reverence.



ILLUSTRATE

LINKING GOD AND MAN

Create two rings out of construction paper: one white and one dark. Hold up the dark ring and tell the children this represents us, sinful man. Hold up the white ring and tell the children this represents holy God. Explain that these two rings are separated because holy God cannot be near sinful man. Using a strip of red construction paper, connect the two rings and fasten the red paper so that it becomes a third ring between the white and dark rings. Explain that this red ring represents Jesus, our mediator, who shed His blood to allow sinful man to come near holy God.

HOLINESS OF GOD

We are sinful and can never reach the heights of God's holiness. Before class, pin something to the ceiling or high on one of the walls. Ask the children if they are able to reach the item. Tell them that we need a mediator, something to stand between us and the item to help us reach it. Pull out a step ladder so that you are able to reach it. Explain that the priests stood between God and the people, representing them before God.



APPLY

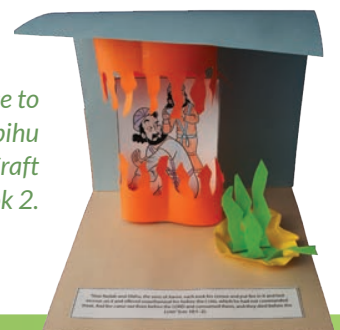
GOD'S RESPONSE TO NADAB AND ABIHU

See Year 1 Craft Book, Book 2.

Materials: Craft sheet, tan and blue cardstock, orange and green and yellow paper, crayons, scissors, and glue.

Directions: Instruct children to fold both the tan and blue cardstock into a third lengthwise. With the tan cardstock as the base, glue the larger portion of blue cardstock to the small portion of the tan cardstock as pictured below. Form a cylinder with orange paper and cut flames into the center portion. Color and cut out the picture of Nadab and Abihu from the craft sheet and place them inside the fire cylinder. Glue the cylinder to the tan cardstock. Create a small censor from yellow paper with green flames inside to represent the "strange fire." Glue the censor and verse to the tan cardstock.

God's Response to Nadab and Abihu
See Year 1 Craft Book, Book 2.



AGES 9–11



INTRODUCE

APPOINTMENT WITH THE PRESIDENT

In preparation to teach about the need for a mediator (the priests and eventually Jesus), discuss what it would take to enter the White House and talk to the president. You could not just go up to the gate and say, “I would like to talk to the president.” They do not know who you are or why you want to talk with him. It would require a mediator. You would have to talk with someone who would schedule an appointment and clear you through security. In the same way, the priests were mediators between God and man.

SPLITTING THE VEIL

Bring a large piece of butcher paper to class. Have two children hold it up. Explain that in the tabernacle only the High Priest (and only once a year) could go beyond the veil separating the holy place from the most holy place. He did this to represent the people before God. But Jesus permanently removes the separation between God and man (cut the butcher paper in two) through His once-for-all sacrifice for sin.



ILLUSTRATE

MOCK TRIAL

Materials: gavel, large piece of red cloth, guilty verdict (paper that says “guilty”)

Directions: Select volunteers to be the judge (God), the lawyer (Jesus), and the guilty defendant (man). The judge holds the gavel and the guilty verdict, the defendant sits in a chair, and the lawyer holds the red cloth. The judge should ask if the defendant has committed any crimes. The defendant should give an honest answer (yes). Then the judge gives a guilty verdict with a penalty of death, but the lawyer steps up to the defendant’s rescue. He says that he will take the punishment for the guilty man. The lawyer then gives the red cloth to the defendant (Jesus’ blood and righteousness). The judge should then change the verdict of the man to innocent and give the guilty verdict to the lawyer.

TREATED AS HOLY

Ask the children how people usually behave at an important event like a wedding or funeral (respectful, somber, etc.). Then ask them why (they understand the significance of the event). Explain that God gave the priests very specific instructions concerning their behavior because they were near to His presence. Nadab and Abihu didn’t treat God’s presence as holy.



APPLY

CLASS DISCUSSION: REMEMBER TO BE HOLY!

Write the acronym “HOLY” vertically on the board. During the application portion of the lesson, fill in the following reminders for children to live holy lives. Encourage the children to take notes during the discussion. Give specific examples of how they can honor, obey, listen, and show that they desire to be holy.

Honor God

Obey God

Listen to God’s commands

Yearn to be holy