

Leviticus Chapters 9-10 – John Karmelich

1. I call this lesson “time to begin”. There is always a point in time when a student has to go out in the real world and have their first day on the job. This lesson marks that point in time.
 - a) Leviticus Chapters 1-8 were about training the high priest for service.
 - b) In Chapter 9, service begins. It’s “show-time” for the high priest. No more practicing.
 - c) As I’ve stated in earlier lessons, the emphasis of these studies is on the everyday Christian and their role as priests. The New Testament considers anyone a priest who helps intercede on other’s behalf to God. It may mean praying with another Christian. It may be leading another to God for the first time. It may be helping others in service to God.
2. In these two chapters, the main purpose is for the high priest to intercede between the Israelites and God himself. There are two climatic points in these two chapters:
 - a) Climatic Point #1: “And the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people.” (Lev. 9:23b)
 - i) After all of this training and preparation, the priests go through all the rituals of interceding for sins for themselves and the people. Then, “somehow, someway”, God himself made an appearance and consumed what was on the altar. It was God’s way of putting His stamp of approval on the offering.
 - ii) The average Israelite might have thought, “All these sacrificial offerings are interesting, but how do I know for sure God approves of all of this stuff?” Well, God coming down and consuming the fire would be a good validation!
 - iii) Why doesn’t God manifest Himself to us when we want forgiveness? The basic answer is God wants us to trust Him and walk by faith. One of the purposes of bible reading is to understand that God is the same today as He was back then. If He forgives “then”, He can forgive “now”.
 - b) Climatic Point #2: “So fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them (Two of Aaron’s four sons), and they died before the LORD.” (Leviticus 10:2.)
 - i) A few verses after God put His stamp of approval on Aaron’s rituals, God then came down and “zapped” two of Aaron’s sons for failure to obey instructions.
 - ii) What is important is to learn from both manifestations of God is about obedience.
 - a) God put His stamp of approval on obedience in Chapter 9.
 - b) God put His stamp of “unapproval” on disobedience in Chapter 10.
 - c) Both examples are there for our learning. God doesn’t kill people on the spot for today disobedience just as God doesn’t manifest Himself immediately for obedience. God wants us to learn from history.
 - c) With that said, we have 43 verses to cover in this lesson, so let’s go barbeque! ☺
3. Verse 1: On the eighth day Moses summoned Aaron and his sons and the elders of Israel.
 - a) Let’s talk about the “eighth day”. The last chapter was the preparation for service for the High Priest Aaron and his sons. Aaron’s sons were to be the assistants as they are next in line to be High Priests.
 - b) Near the end of the last chapter, these priests were told to stay in the tabernacle structure for seven days. Some believe that the ritual training procedure was repeated every day for seven days. Now we are on “Day 8”, and it’s time for the priests to actual “do it”.
 - c) In the bible, the eighth day is symbolic of a “new beginning”. If you think about there is nothing logical about a week. A month is based on a lunar cycle. A year is based on the earth’s solar cycle. The seven day week is simply a God ordained period of time so we stop after six days and rest on the 7th day. The Jewish people consider the Sabbath day the 7th day of the week. Today we call Sunday the first day of the week. Just as Jesus rose on a “Sunday”, it is symbolic of a “new beginning”.
 - d) Here in Leviticus, the eighth day is symbolic of a “new day” when the priests were to begin interceding between man and God.

4. Verse 2: He (Moses) said to Aaron, "Take a bull calf for your sin offering and a ram for your burnt offering, both without defect, and present them before the LORD. ³ Then say to the Israelites: `Take a male goat for a sin offering, a calf and a lamb--both a year old and without defect--for a burnt offering, ⁴ and an ox and a ram for a fellowship offering to sacrifice before the LORD, together with a grain offering mixed with oil. For today the LORD will appear to you.' "
- a) For the past seven days, Aaron the high priest and his sons were offering animals and other things for their sins and to show their commitment to God. You would think by now their sins are clean and no more sin offerings are necessary.
 - b) Moses is saying to Aaron and his sons in effect, "OK guys, training time is over. God Himself is going to appear to you today. Today you are going to again do offerings for yourself and then you are going for the first time to do offerings for all of Israel.
 - c) Why does Aaron have to do more sin offerings for himself first?
 - i) The idea is not that he committed some special sin in the past seven days that needs forgiving. The idea is that even though we are forgiven, we still are imperfect people and we need to be reminded of that on a regular basis.
 - ii) The point is we can't help others unless we regularly check ourselves for sin. If we are to be used by God to help others, we first need to do a personal inventory.
 - iii) This is not about being perfect, but being perfectly forgiven. A prayer here might be, "Lord, I want to be used of service for You today. First, help me get out of the way anything that is blocking that relationship. Help me to confess anything and everything that is preventing me from drawing closer to You, Amen."
 - iv) Of all the things I do in my life, I can't think of anything more satisfying than helping others draw closer to God. That is the basic purpose of a priest, to intercede on other's behalf to God. This can include such wide topics as leading someone for the first time to Christ to helping someone in prayer or counseling that is struggling with an issue. In order to be used by God, we first have to be cleansed by God. That is the purpose of the rituals here in these verses.
 - d) Speaking of these verses, I better discuss them a little while I'm in the neighborhood. ☺
 - i) First, Moses tells Aaron to offer a young bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. To recap from the last few chapters. The sin offering is about asking God to forgive one's sins. The burnt offering is about "commitment". Just as the entire animal is burnt on the altar, so God asks for full commitment when one serves as a priest.
 - ii) Next Moses tells Aaron to tell the Israelites to bring some animals for sin offering, a burnt ("commitment") offering and "fellowship" offering. This does not mean every single Israelite is to bring animals. It means one set of animals is to be brought for the entire nation. The fellowship offering is to say in effect, "God has forgiven your sins and now it is time to just enjoy time with God."
 - iii) Moses then tells Aaron to tell the Israelites that God will appear to them today. Moses is teaching Aaron that it is his responsibility to intercede on behalf of the Israelites and his responsibility to tell the Israelites God has forgiven their sins.
 - e) It is important to understand the concept of "group sin and group forgiveness".
 - i) Group sin is tougher to grasp than individual sin. It does not mean that everyone in the group sinned. It means that everyone in the group is held accountable to God and then the whole group is either guilty or innocent of committing a sin.
 - ii) For example, God held the Nation of Israel to a higher standard than the surrounding nations as He revealed Himself directly to them. The Old Testament is full of stories of God punishing all of Israel based on sins of many individuals.
 - iii) A church can also commit a "group sin". Chapters 2-3 of Revelation are God giving a "report card" to seven specific churches. The examples of sin in those chapters show how an entire congregation is held accountable as a single unit.

- iv) The reason I'm bringing this up here is that is the first order of business for Aaron and His sons. They must once again sacrifice for their own sins before they can act as priests for the nation of Israel. They must be cleaned before they can clean others. One goat is then to be offered for all of Israel as a sin offering. One calf and one lamb are then offered for all of Israel as burnt ("commitment") offering.
 - v) There were several million Jewish people at this time surrounding the camp. The leaders were to collectively choose an animal and the leaders were then to get word to the people that these animals represent everyone's sins and everyone's commitment to God.
5. Verse 5: They took the things Moses commanded to the front of the Tent of Meeting, and the entire assembly came near and stood before the LORD. ⁶ Then Moses said, "This is what the LORD has commanded you to do, so that the glory of the LORD may appear to you."
- a) Now we're setting up for show time. Remember for the last seven days, it was just the priests at the tabernacle going through the rituals. Now the entire nation of several million people was gathered around this tent, watching these rituals take place.
 - b) In Verse 6, Moses says, "Then Moses said, "This is what the LORD has commanded you to do". It is not a suggestion. If they want God to forgive their sins and accept their sin offerings, the ritual must be completed in the prescribed manner.
 - i) The idea is we approach God on His terms, not ours. Deviation is not allowed.
 - ii) It is God saying in effect, "Look folks, if you want forgiveness, I promise to give you forgiveness, if you follow my exact instructions."
 - c) Try to picture the "average Israelite" somewhere in the middle of this crowd:
 - i) This same group has watched the 10 plagues on Pharaoh and Egypt. This same group has watched the parting of the Red Sea. They have seen enough miracles to know that God exists and does manifest Himself.
 - ii) Suppose you tell religious Jews or Christians they could ask God only one question. I would suspect the most common questions would be, "Am I ok? Is my life acceptable to You? Am I doing the right thing? Why did You make the mosquito, I can't stand those things." (Ok, I made up the last part. ☺)
 - iii) People want assurance that they are saved and going to heaven. Here, in these verses, is God setting up that opportunity. All of Israel is going to watch the high priest perform a bunch of sacrifices and a promise was given that God Himself would appear as the grand finale. That would get me to show up for the event.
 - iv) This "show" opens with Moses telling everyone that they are to collectively watch the priests perform this ritual on their behalf and then God himself would appear.
6. Verse 7: Moses said to Aaron, "Come to the altar and sacrifice your sin offering and your burnt offering and make atonement for yourself and the people; sacrifice the offering that is for the people and make atonement for them, as the LORD has commanded."
- a) Let's set the scene: Several million Israelites are standing around this tabernacle. Moses announces aloud that Aaron is to sacrifice for himself first and then for the people.
 - b) The "people" understand that Aaron and the priests are no better than they are as they must first complete a sin-sacrifice for themselves before they sacrifice animals on behalf of everyone else. Aaron must first do a burnt sacrifice to show his own commitment before he sacrifices for the commitments of the entire nation.
 - c) Some of you can see where I'm going with this: If we as "priests" are to minister to others, we need to somehow show that we are no better than they are. A priest is not to be up on some pedestal saying they are superior to the layperson in the audience.
 - i) Does this mean we have to confess our sins to everyone we help? No. What it does mean is that we don't act in a superior manner, and we let people know that we are no better than they are. It also means we can't be of service to others unless we can first deal with our own sins and our own commitments to God.

7. Verse 8: So Aaron came to the altar and slaughtered the calf as a sin offering for himself. ⁹ His sons brought the blood to him, and he dipped his finger into the blood and put it on the horns of the altar; the rest of the blood he poured out at the base of the altar. ¹⁰ On the altar he burned the fat, the kidneys and the covering of the liver from the sin offering, as the LORD commanded Moses; ¹¹ the flesh and the hide he burned up outside the camp.
- a) If you have been following along from the earlier lessons, the specific ritual points are repeated here. Let me remind you of some of the key points:
 - i) A bull-calf was first slaughtered for the priests' sins. The idea of a young bull is "something innocent" has to suffer for our sins. The priest identifies himself with this animal. It is to think or say in effect, "I am guilty of sin and innocent people may (and do) suffer because of my sin. I am letting this innocent animal suffer on my behalf to get forgiveness and realize the gravity of my sins."
 - ii) The blood of the animal was put on the horns of the altar. There were four animal horns on the four corners of this sacrificial fire pit. The horns represent "power" just as animals use their horns for their power. It is symbolic of God's power forgiving sins by covering them in blood. One can see how it ties to the power of God to forgive sins by the "shedding of innocent blood".
 - iii) The rest of the blood was poured out at the base of this altar. The blood itself is never "cooked" with the animal as the blood represents life itself.
 - iv) The fat and several organs were separately placed on the altar. The fat represents the "best" one has to offer being given up. The kidney and livers are the "cleansing" organs within the body.
 - v) The flesh and hide were burned outside the camp. The "flesh" represents our human efforts to please God on our own behalf. The idea is we are not to try to please God based on our efforts. God himself has to be within our lives in order to have forgiveness and minister to others.
 - b) OK, now that I've gotten that of my system, ☺ it's time for the bigger picture:
 - i) The idea we're working up to is, "We can help others seek forgiveness unless we first seek forgiveness ourselves. We need to do our own inventory of giving the best to God (symbolized by offering the fat), and then offer our "cleansing parts" (symbolized by kidney and liver) to God, and put our flesh "outside the camp".
 - ii) In order to be used by God, we first have to be "prepared" by God. Further, it has to be a public witness. It doesn't mean we publicly confess our sins to everyone we meet. At the same time, others need to know we are no better and need forgiveness ourselves.
 - iii) Let me take this to a practical level: Ever notice that when you are arguing with somebody, it goes smoother with humility? If you can say, "I know I am not perfect and I have my faults too, but here are some issues I have to bring up". If you just start telling people what's wrong with them, they go into a defensive mood and an argument starts. Resolution requires humility on the part of both people in a discussion or argument. That idea is also being played out here.
8. Verse 12: Then he slaughtered the burnt offering. His sons handed him the blood, and he sprinkled it against the altar on all sides. ¹³ They handed him the burnt offering piece by piece, including the head, and he burned them on the altar. ¹⁴ He washed the inner parts and the legs and burned them on top of the burnt offering on the altar.
- a) We are still on the rituals for the priest himself. We haven't even gotten to the point where the priest intercedes on behalf of the people. We are now on the priest's burnt offering. Remember that the entire nation of Israel is watching. What the priest is saying by this ritual is, "Hey everybody, I'm about to ask all of you to fully commit your lives to God. I'm not asking you to do anything I'm not willing to do myself. First, watch me make this commitment for my own life, and then I'm going to ask you to do the same."

- b) As to the ritual itself, another animal was killed for this burnt (“commitment”) sacrifice. The animal was cut up, and the blood was sprinkled on all four sides of this altar. Sprinkling the blood on all four sides was so “everyone could see”. It is a public witness.
 - c) Piece-by-piece, the entire animal was burnt on the altar. It is a word-picture of when we commit our lives to God, our lives slowly but surely get completely turned over to God. It is like when Paul says, “Offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship.” (Romans 12:1b, NIV).
 - d) To review from the last lesson, the text specifies how the inner parts and legs were washed prior to having them burned. The word-picture is what is “inside of us” also has to be cleaned and fully given to God. The same idea applies to our “walk” with God, which is why the legs were washed.
9. Verse 15: Aaron then brought the offering that was for the people. He took the goat for the people's sin offering and slaughtered it and offered it for a sin offering as he did with the first one.
- a) We are now ready for “Phase Two” of the offerings: An offering for the Israelite nation.
 - i) Aaron has now completed the ritual of sacrificing for his own sins and making a sacrifice to show his own commitment to God.
 - ii) Now that he “cleansed himself”, Aaron can now work on cleaning others.
 - b) The ritual of sin offering is then repeated, only with the understanding that this sin was for the Nation of Israel and not for himself.
 - c) Why a goat? The answer is to contrast that with the young-bull-calf that was sacrificed for Aaron himself. A goat is worth less than a bull. The idea is God holds the high priest to a greater level of accountability than the “common” Israelite. The High Priest was expected to understand his bible better and understand God’s requirements for Him.
 - i) One of the important things to grasp as a Christian is that knowledge comes with accountability. The price of knowing one’s bible is that one is held to a higher standard of accountability than one who does not know it at all. Don’t get me wrong, it’s still “worth it” to understand one’s bible well as it draws us closer to God. One has to also understand the accountability aspect of this as well.
 - ii) In Chapter 16 are the instructions for the “Day of Atonement” ritual. This is an annual Israelite holiday where one’s sin is “atoned” for. A goat is sacrificed for the sins of the people. This verse is a “preview” of that upcoming ritual.
10. Verse 16: He brought the burnt offering and offered it in the prescribed way.¹⁷ He also brought the grain offering, took a handful of it and burned it on the altar in addition to the morning's burnt offering.
- a) In one brief sentence, Verse 16 says that Aaron also performed a burnt offering on behalf of the nation of Israel. Verse 17 mentions a “grain offering”. To recall from earlier lessons, to give some grain is a reminder of a “regular commitment”. It would be like agreeing to give some money every week to a church. The idea is that we are to give some of our substance regularly to God to trust that He will provide for us tomorrow.
 - b) Let’s stand back and take all of this in for a moment:
 - i) The Israelites, until very recently were slaves in Egypt.
 - ii) God, through a series of miracles, got everyone out of Egypt.
 - iii) Now God has the Nation of Israel “collectively” making a commitment to God, not only to ask forgiveness of their sins, but for the Israelites to commit their lives fully to serving God and regularly committing part of their substance (think earnings) to God in a way of showing gratitude.
 - iv) The average Israelite watching this ritual is to think, “OK, that’s me. I agree to all of this. I agree to be part of that sin offering, burnt offering and grain (substance) offering. I agree to go along with this in order to draw closer to God.”

- v) How different is that for the Christian? God “got us out” of the sins of the world and calls us to separate ourselves to God. God then asks us, out of gratitude for what He did, to commit ourselves regularly and fully to Him. Just as the Israelites watch these animals being sacrificed, we agree on the necessity of Jesus being sacrificed on our behalf and we agreeing to make this lifelong commitment.
 - vi) I hate to stop when I’m on a roll, but we need to get back to the barbeque pit. ☺
11. Verse 18: He slaughtered the ox and the ram as the fellowship offering for the people. His sons handed him the blood, and he sprinkled it against the altar on all sides.¹⁹ But the fat portions of the ox and the ram--the fat tail, the layer of fat, the kidneys and the covering of the liver--²⁰ these they laid on the breasts, and then Aaron burned the fat on the altar.²¹ Aaron waved the breasts and the right thigh before the LORD as a wave offering, as Moses commanded.
- a) Aaron is still performing the burnt offerings for the people.
 - b) The text goes out of its way to remind us again that the fat is to be separated for God.
 - i) The fat represents the “best” we have to offer. God gives all of us individual talents and gifts we are to use for Him. He wants us to use those talents to glorify God in our lives. That is the word picture of putting the fat on the altar.
 - c) Notice that these parts to be burnt were laid next to the breast (Verse 20).
 - i) The breast is the part of the animal closest to the heart. The idea is giving the best of our lives is also “close to our heart.”
 - d) We also have in Verse 20, as part of this ritual, a “wave offering”.
 - i) The idea is to take something being offered and wave it back and forth. I visualize Aaron taking part of this animal, placing it over the fire, then retrieving back toward Aaron. This back and forth wave motion is to show the identification between the person making the offer and God himself.
 - ii) The breast and right thigh were being waved. As stated, the breast is close to the heart, and it represents giving our hearts to God.
 - iii) To state a debate from earlier lessons, the word “thigh” is also translated “shoulder” in different English translations. If the word is correctly translated shoulder, it represents bearing our sins on our shoulders. If the word is correctly translated “thigh”, my speculation is that it represents giving our strength as the thigh muscle is the strongest muscle in the body.
12. Verse 22: Then Aaron lifted his hands toward the people and blessed them. And having sacrificed the sin offering, the burnt offering and the fellowship offering, he stepped down.²³ Moses and Aaron then went into the Tent of Meeting. When they came out, they blessed the people; and the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people.²⁴ Fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat portions on the altar. And when all the people saw it, they shouted for joy and fell facedown.
- a) Let me set the scene here:
 - i) Aaron finished all of the sacrifice rituals for the people.
 - ii) Aaron then (assumedly waked out of the tabernacle) lifted his hands toward the crowd and gave a blessing.
 - iii) Aaron and his brother Moses then went back inside the tabernacle, specifically into the covered area, which is called the tent of people. Presumably, they stopped and prayed for the people again. Moses is the civil leader of the people and Aaron is the spiritual leader.
 - iv) Both of them went outside and blessed the people.
 - v) Then, somehow, somehow, God himself consumed the animal parts on the fire pit. I visualize a big “whoosh” as the fire lighted up and everything disappeared.
 - b) It is one thing for Aaron and Moses to bless the people. It is another thing for God to make a cameo appearance and consume the fire. ☺

- i) Notice nobody shouted for joy when Aaron and Moses gave a blessing. Only when God made his appearance did everyone shout for joy and fell face down. This is about validation. God “validated” that Aaron and Moses did everything according to plan and God himself accepted the offering.
 - c) This is the climactic moment of the chapter: It is God himself accepting the sacrifice.
 - i) This goes back to what I asked a few pages back: What do people want from God? The basic answer is to know that what we are doing is “right”. It is to know that we are living a life pleasing to Him and we get salvation.
 - ii) So why doesn’t God make guest appearances at our church? ☺ The answer is He’s there, He just does not make dramatic appearances like this because He wants us to come by faith. He gives us the bible and says in effect, “Live a life of obedience to Me, and know by faith, I will be there with you as I was there with the Israelites of that day.”
 - iii) God does greater miracles today. Think about your life before you committed it to God and look at your life now. If you committed as a child, then look around the church at those who changed later in life. Those turn-around miracles are just as awesome to watch (if not more so) than God consuming the fire.
 - d) On this happy climactic note, we can now move on to the tragedy of Chapter 10.
13. Chapter 10: Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, contrary to his command. ² So fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD.
- a) OK, everyone, hold the happiness from the last chapter. ☺ Two of Aaron’s sons were just struck dead by God. Let me set the scene here:
 - i) This event of Verses 1-2 of Chapter 10 probably happened right after or soon after the appearance of God in Chapter 9.
 - ii) Aaron has four sons. (Reference Numbers 3:2). Two of Aaron’s sons took censures, which is a device that holds burning incense.
 - iii) They offered incense to God contrary to what is written in the bible. (More on the violation itself in a moment.) As punishment, God sent fire from heaven and “consumed them” and those two sons died on the spot. In the next set of verses, Aaron’s cousins will remove the bodies from the tabernacle.
 - b) The ritual here ties back to Exodus: Part of the role of the high priest is to take burning incense, which represents the prayers of the people. There is an altar in the inside portion of the tabernacle where this incense is to be burned.
 - c) So what did the two sons of Aaron specifically do wrong?
 - i) The commentaries are full of conjecture on this one. Let’s talk about what the text does say: They offered “strange fire” to God. The basic idea is that they offered incense contrary to a specific formula as described in Exodus Chapter 30.
 - a) “Do not offer on this altar any other incense or any burnt offering or grain offering, and do not pour a drink offering on it.” (Exodus 30:9, NIV).
 - ii) Here comes the conjecture: Was this willful defiance? Was it a case where they wanted to please God and decided to “add their own efforts?” Were they just too casual about approaching God and wanted to test God’s boundaries?
 - a) No one knows for sure, because the text does not say. I believe the text is vague-on-purpose as to their motivation. It is not the motivation that mattered, but the behavior. They failed to follow instructions exactly as God has prescribed. We can have the greatest motivation in the world to violate God’s commands. It doesn’t matter, it is still a violation.
 - b) Again, these two guys may have been sincere. They may have “added” to what God commanded them to do and it cost them their lives.

- iii) Stop and think about the fact that these two sons just spent a week repeating sin offerings and burnt (commitment) offerings over and over again for themselves and finally for the people. They just saw the presence of God consume the fire. They also saw the parting of the Red Sea and Moses getting the law at Mt. Sinai. In other words, these guys saw more proof for the existence of God than any of us will ever see in a lifetime. Despite all of that, they still blew it.
- iv) What's the lesson? Obedience. Remember that the theme of this lesson is called "time to begin". This is the point where the priests have to actually go out and be priests. In one moment, God blesses their obedience. A few moments later, God punishes their disobedience. Don't mess with God and obedience!
- d) Some of you may be thinking, "But I thought Christians live by faith. Are you saying I have to obey the Old Testament laws to make God happy? We don't sacrifice sheep today. The New Testament is our understanding of what God requires as Christians. With that said, God still demands obedience.
 - i) The key is motivation: We don't "have" to be obedient to God's laws, but we should want to be obedient to God's laws. We live a life of obedience to God based on our gratitude. Look at it this way: Study the lives of Christians in the New Testament. Notice the obedience.
- e) This is also a good time to talk about God and "a consuming fire".
 - i) A word-picture of God himself is a "consuming fire". The first visual appearance of God was the burning bush in Exodus Chapter 3. What made the bush special was that the bush itself was not being consumed even though it was on fire.
 - a) Fire can accomplish two basic functions: Heat (burning) and refinement.
 - (1) Most of the time, we think of fire as burning things up. That is the case with the death of Aaron's two sons.
 - (2) It can also be used to "refine" things. Metal is heated in fire and is refined of its impurities. God "refines" people by drawing us close to Him and removing the sin from our lives.
 - ii) In a matter of three verses, God went from the positive image of a consuming fire (by accepting the offering of the people) to the negative image of a consuming fire by "zapping" Aaron's two sons. That's the idea. God is constantly working in our lives refining us and "zapping" the disobedient parts of our lives away.
 - f) Are these two sons of Aaron in hell?
 - i) I would argue no, but we'll have to wait for judgment day on this one. They still trusted in God for their salvation. If everyone who ever displeased God were sent to hell, none of us would be in heaven. The death of Aaron's two sons was not a salvation issue, but was completed to show the other Israelites to take sin seriously. Again, we don't know their motivation. God does not call on us to judge one's salvation, just judge behavior here on earth.
- 14. Verse 3: Moses then said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD spoke of when he said: " `Among those who approach me I will show myself holy; in the sight of all the people I will be honored.' " Aaron remained silent.
 - a) Aaron just lost two of his four sons. The first thing Moses says is not, "Sorry there, bro, better luck with #3 and #4." ☺ Instead, Moses says in effect, "Don't mess with God".
 - b) Verse 3 is Moses quoting God. You can't find a direct cross-reference to this quote. It is more of a paraphrase of principals taught in Exodus. The closest I can cross-reference is in Exodus: "So I (God) will consecrate the Tent of Meeting... and will consecrate Aaron and his sons to serve me as priests...They will know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them out of Egypt so that I might dwell among them... (Exodus 29:44-46 NIV)
 - i) The point is Moses uses God's words to explain why this was done.

- c) Now let's get back to our role as priests: Part of that role is to use Scripture to help others. Verse 10 coming up also verifies that fact. When bad things happen, people look for explanations. Sometimes quoting the attributes and commands of God, as painful as that is, helps to comfort people as they have an explanation for the tragedy.
- i) It doesn't make this tragedy any easier for those who are hurting like Aaron, but it does give some comfort to understand that God has a purpose for all of this.
15. Verse 4: Moses summoned Mishael and Elzaphan, sons of Aaron's uncle Uzziel, and said to them, "Come here; carry your cousins outside the camp, away from the front of the sanctuary."⁵ So they came and carried them, still in their tunics, outside the camp, as Moses ordered.
- a) In these two verses, Moses called his (and Aaron's) cousins. Moses had these two cousins carry the dead bodies out of the sanctuary.
- b) When God struck dead Aaron's two sons, it wasn't as if they just totally disappeared. The bodies remained there in the sanctuary. If the bodies had just disappeared like when God took the sacrifice, people wouldn't understand that a judgment had occurred.
- c) Why have the cousins remove the body as opposed to Aaron or his other sons? The answer is because Aaron and his sons as priests were not allowed to touch any dead bodies. This was implied back in Leviticus 5:2 when it states that the priest shall not touch anything "ceremonial unclean". Since judgment was pronounced on Aaron's two sons, the other priests were not allowed to touch them. We'll get more into "clean things" and "unclean things" beginning in the next lesson.
16. Verse 6: Then Moses said to Aaron and his sons Eleazar and Ithamar, "Do not let your hair become unkempt, and do not tear your clothes, or you will die and the LORD will be angry with the whole community. But your relatives, all the house of Israel, may mourn for those the LORD has destroyed by fire.⁷ Do not leave the entrance to the Tent of Meeting or you will die, because the LORD's anointing oil is on you." So they did as Moses said.
- a) Let me paraphrase Moses instructions to Aaron and his two sons, "You three guys are not to do anything, and I mean anything to mourn for your loss. They will get a proper funeral and burial. It's ok for all other relatives to mourn for them, but not you three."
- b) Why would Moses not allow Aaron and his other two sons to mourn?
- i) The answer is that their duties as priest must take priority over sympathy in terms of judgment. If they showed sorrow for these two guys, the Israelites around them would feel sorry for their death and "blame God" for this judgment.
- ii) This gets back to our role as priests: What God judges, we must accept it, period. Our job as Christians is to do God's will and accept God's will. That must take priority over the sympathy of the loss of a human being.
- iii) Let me give a practical example: Let's suppose someone committed murder. They were given a fair trial and there was enough evidence to convict that person. Should we then feel sorry for the murderer and let them go free out of pity? The point is sometimes "duty" has to take precedence over sympathy.
- c) Getting back to the text, how do we know when God judges someone? Let's face it, we don't see many people getting "zapped" by God followed by a verbal message from God saying that He just judged them. It doesn't work that way. All we can do is judge behavior and judge the situation the best we can.
- d) Getting back to our role as priests, the point here is our duty as priests takes priority over our personal feelings. It doesn't mean we can't cry or hold someone that is hurting. If anything, we are to do the opposite. It does mean God gets priority in our life over our family and over our friends. If it comes between choosing sides between standing for God or standing for say, our family, God must come first.

- i) A practical example might be a loved one that asks you to reject God for their sake. A line might be, "If you really love me, you would agree to go do (sin of the moment) with me." That is an example of choosing God over a family member. That is what Moses asked Aaron and his two sons to do at this moment.
 - a) This is what Jesus meant by the line: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters – yes, even his own life – he cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:26 NIV).
 - b) Jesus was exaggerating in order to make a point. He doesn't want you to hate family members. He wants us to make God a priority over family members. Sometimes that can mean choosing between God and family.
 - e) The good news so far in this chapter is the last sentence: "So they did as Moses said."
 - i) Grant it, these three priests now had a clear picture of God's incentive plan. ☺ They were in no hurry to go join their dead family members.
 - f) I should also add that in many Jewish denominations, the rabbi never goes to the cemetery for a burial ritual. The idea is the rabbi focuses on "life" and interceding for man to God. As the priests were not allowed to leave the tabernacle in Leviticus, so the rabbi's act the same way today in funeral services.
17. Verse 8: Then the LORD said to Aaron,⁹ "You and your sons are not to drink wine or other fermented drink whenever you go into the Tent of Meeting, or you will die. This is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come.
- a) Before I discuss the alcohol issue of this verse, notice the first words of Verse 8. It says, "Then the LORD said to Aaron."
 - i) This is the first time that God spoke directly to Aaron (without Moses) since prior to the plagues in Egypt. The last time God spoke directly to Aaron was in Exodus Chapter 4 when God told Aaron to go meet his long lost brother so they could begin hassling the Pharaoh. ☺
 - ii) Why did God talk to Aaron directly now? The most painful thing a parent can experience is the loss of their children. It doesn't matter the age. Here God is talking to Aaron directly. Grant it, God is giving new do's and don'ts to Aaron, but at least they are speaking. God is revealing himself to Aaron in a time of mourning and suffering.
 - iii) When life is rough is usually when God makes His presence known to us as well.
 - b) Onto the text itself: The basic idea is God saying to Aaron, "A priest must remain sober at all times on duty. You must not put anything in your body that clouds your judgment."
 - i) One of Aaron's duties was to teach his sons the duties of the High Priest. The same way we "priests" are to train our children. This issue is important enough for God to speak directly to Aaron right after the death of his oldest two sons.
 - ii) Many commentators speculate that the two sons of Aaron that died were drunk when they did this ritual. That is why God tells Aaron directly to avoid drinking when on duty. It is possible and maybe probable, but it is still speculation.
 - c) Which leads to the classic discussion: Can Christians drink alcohol?
 - i) The short answer is yes, but why would we want to? The New Testament never forbids drinking alcohol, but does condemn drunkards as among those going to hell. (Ref.: 1st Corinthians 6:10 et.al.). We Christians are free to drink all the alcohol we want. The question is, how much should we want? If our desire is to please God and be priests to those around us, do we want our judgment clouded?
 - ii) Do I have a problem with a Christian couple going out, say on their anniversary and having a glass of wine? No. Do I have a problem with beer and wine served at a bible study? Big time! In situations where Christians are to act as priests, who are to be on "call" all of the time, one must have good judgment. Getting drunk clouds that judgment. Enough said.

18. Verse 10: You must distinguish between the holy and the common, between the unclean and the clean,¹¹ and you must teach the Israelites all the decrees the LORD has given them through Moses."
- a) If I had to pick the two most important verses in this text, these are it. In the introduction, I stated the two climatic verses were God's two appearances: One to "accept" the sacrifices (Leviticus 9:23) and one to judge Aaron's two sons (Leviticus 10:2).
 - b) The two most important verses are here. These verses describe the duties of the priest. Since we don't want to be "zapped" by God, we had better discuss them. ☺
 - c) Verse 10 says the priests must distinguish between the holy and the common.
 - i) Anything "dedicated" to God belongs to God. God gave specific instructions on types of animals to be killed, the methodologies of the sacrifices, the oil to be used, etc. Once something is separated for God's use, it becomes "holy".
 - a) God wants us to separate our lives for him and become "holy" (See 1st Peter 2:9). We shouldn't make ourselves "unholy" once we are holy.
 - ii) One of the jobs of the priest is to separate what is for God and what is not for God. That is the idea of Verse 10.
 - iii) Now let's get back to the role of Christians as priests. We don't have to worry about whether or not a sheep or goat meets God's requirements for a sacrifice. We are to be concerned that we plead the blood of Jesus for forgiveness and not try to do an end-run around God's payment for our sins. In that sense, we are to distinguish what is "clean" (i.e., God's perfect payment for sins) versus "unclean".
 - d) Verse 11 stated the priest must teach the Israelites all the decrees the Lord has given...
 - i) In other words, a priest is more than just a barbeque chef. ☺ He is also a teacher.
 - ii) Our job as priests is not just say to intercede to God with people. It is more than just praying with Christians and comforting them. Our "bigger role" is helping people draw closer to God. Doing that includes teaching Scripture.
 - iii) Does that mean every Christian should be a bible teacher? Not in the formal sense of leading classes. Paul says that "some" are called to be teachers. (See Eph. 4:11.)
 - iv) The point is all Christians are called to be priests. All are called to understand God's word and apply it in situations where we can help others. This applies even more so to "professional" ministers at the pulpit, but I will argue it applies to all Christians in our role as priests. As priests, we are to help people draw closer to God. Teaching them appropriate bible principals at the right time counts.
 - e) Again, notice that these decrees were given to Aaron right after the death of his two sons.
 - i) It is usually during times of tragedies that people reflect, "What did I do wrong? What could I have done differently? In other words, Aaron was "open" to listen to God at this time. The reason these laws are given now as opposed to during earlier chapters is that Aaron is open to listening to God.
19. Verse 12: Moses said to Aaron and his remaining sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, "Take the grain offering left over from the offerings made to the LORD by fire and eat it prepared without yeast beside the altar, for it is most holy.¹³ Eat it in a holy place, because it is your share and your sons' share of the offerings made to the LORD by fire; for so I have been commanded.
- a) Well, we can't make it through a Leviticus lesson without some more sacrifices, and here we are again. ☺ Moses is telling Aaron and his two sons to go eat their share of the sacrifices made to God as commanded by God.
 - b) The basic idea is Moses telling Aaron and his other sons to "get back to work".
 - c) If you recall from earlier lessons, the way the high priest is paid for service is that they get to eat part of the animal (or grain in some cases) being sacrificed.
 - i) Eating part of the sacrifice was also a way of showing the average Israelite that their sacrifice was accepted. They think, "well, if the priest is eating part of the sacrifice, I must have done it right. They are accepting my payment."

- ii) In this culture, to eat with someone is to “become one” with them. By the priest eating a sacrifice, they are “identifying” both with God accepting the sacrifice as well as the person making it. As Christian “priests” when we help others, we also “become one with them” in helping others deal with situations of the moment.
20. Verse 14: But you and your sons and your daughters may eat the breast that was waved and the thigh that was presented. Eat them in a ceremonially clean place; they have been given to you and your children as your share of the Israelites' fellowship offerings. ¹⁵ The thigh that was presented and the breast that was waved must be brought with the fat portions of the offerings made by fire, to be waved before the LORD as a wave offering. This will be the regular share for you and your children, as the LORD has commanded."
- a) Notice in Verse 14 it says, “your sons and daughters may eat”. Only the sons were priests. One may wonder how does Aaron and his two sons support their family. Here God is reminding them that part of the food being offered is for them and their families.
 - b) A reason for stating this text is to reassure Aaron and His sons that their role will continue. Let’s face it, two of the kids just were killed. The other two sons are probably checking up on their life insurance at this point. ☺ Moses is reassuring them that their job will continue, and that God has made provisions for them as well as their families.
 - c) To put this in modern terms, being a “priest” is stressful, painful, difficult, very time consuming and very “worth it”. There are going to be bad days when stuff like this happens and the priests have to deal with it. Occasionally, we all need to be reassured that living the Christian life is “worth it”. We see tragedy happen and we want to quit. Sometimes the Scripture is just there to reassure us that God does provide for us even during the worse of times.
 - d) The text is stating some of the specific duties the priests must perform such as giving God the fat portions and performing the “wave offering”. At the same time, God is stating how part of these sacrifices are to be financial provisions for the family of the priests.
 - e) God is also implying to Aaron and his two sons: It is ok to have families. It is ok to marry and have children. Yes, you are on duty and yes, you are separated to be priests. You guys won’t live forever and I need more priests down the road. ☺ This goes back to the idea that a priest is always a priest (like a doctor is always a doctor), but sometimes they are on “duty” more than other times.
21. Verse 16: When Moses inquired about the goat of the sin offering and found that it had been burned up, he was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's remaining sons, and asked, ¹⁷ "Why didn't you eat the sin offering in the sanctuary area? It is most holy; it was given to you to take away the guilt of the community by making atonement for them before the LORD. ¹⁸ Since its blood was not taken into the Holy Place, you should have eaten the goat in the sanctuary area, as I commanded."
- a) This chapter is going to end on a technical violation of the sin ritual. Part of the ritual for the goat offering was that the drained blood should have been removed from the tabernacle area. Part of the goat needed to be eaten by Aaron and the priests.
 - b) Let me add the next set of verses and then comment on the whole section.
22. Verse 19: Aaron replied to Moses, "Today they sacrificed their sin offering and their burnt offering before the LORD, but such things as this have happened to me. Would the LORD have been pleased if I had eaten the sin offering today?" ²⁰ When Moses heard this, he was satisfied.
- a) Let me paraphrase Aaron: “Moses, I’m still hurting because of the loss of my sons. I’m in no mood to eat food. I decided to fast and let the entire goat burn up as opposed to me eating part of that sacrifice.” I know it’s a violation, but I just need a break right now.”
 - b) Verse 20 says, “When Moses heard this, he was satisfied.”
 - i) In other words, Moses had compassion instead of being judgmental. Yes, the animal was fully burnt up instead of being partially eaten.

- ii) Moses knew his brother was hurting and dropped the complaint. At the same time, Moses pointed out what should have been done. It is a good balance of explaining the necessity of obedience and at the same time having compassion for the hurting. It is a reminder that priests need to have a good balance of love and compassion when dealing with sin issues.
23. This would be a good time to tie these last verses to the whole lesson, since I'm running long. ☺
- a) This whole lesson focuses on the first time Aaron and his sons perform the duty of the priests in public. Chapters 1-8 were all about preparation. Chapters 9-10 actually begin the time when Aaron and his sons actually perform the duties.
 - b) I suspect before Chapter 9 got started, Aaron and his sons thought they would go through the ritual motions of the sacrifices and "that was that". They spent seven days repeating the rituals over, and over again. Now on the 8th day, when it was time for the first public performance, I suspect Aaron thought it was going to be the same as practice.
 - i) Instead, Aaron saw God himself "swoosh down" and take up the offering. That was a high moment.
 - ii) Soon afterwards, Aaron saw God "swoosh down" and take up the life of his two sons. That was a low moment.
 - iii) Soon afterwards, Aaron makes a technical violation of the sin ritual. Moses chews out Aaron for this, and then Moses has compassion on Aaron and lets the issue go.
 - c) How different are those high and low moments from our roles as priests? One thing to learn as Christians: Our lives never go as expected. I love the quote that says, "Life is what happens to you in between your plans."
 - d) God calls all Christians to serve as priests. That means we are all to help other Christians draw closer to God. Sometimes it is by prayer, sometimes by helping, sometimes by encouraging, and sometimes by teaching. The point is we are involved in the service of putting other's needs in front of our own. We are always "on call" to be priests.
 - i) During such moments, the only thing I can guarantee is that life will never go as expected. Sometimes God will get involved in a wonderful way. Sometimes we have to deal with the consequences of sins. Sometimes obedience to God has to be a priority over compassion for the lost. Sometimes, love and compassion has to rule over violations. It changes moment to moment as it does here in this text.
 - ii) That's why our role as priests is never boring. ☺ It's difficult at times and it has its highs and lows, but what choice do we have? We as Christians have made that life long commitment. We are all called to serve as priests go God, and are all called to obedience. The rewards far outweigh the consequences. We walk by faith that we are doing God's will and work as a team to remind ourselves that all of this is "worth it".
24. Let's pray: Father, Help us in our role as priests. Sometimes it goes wonderfully and we praise You for that. Sometimes it is so painful we can barely go on. During those trying times, help us to learn the lessons You want us to learn and give us the discernment so we can be good witnesses to others around us. Help us to take inventory of our own lives and our own commitment so that we can be used by You to minister to others. May You be glorified in all that we do. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.