

Explore the Bible: February 9

Separation • Leviticus 9:15–10:3

By Wayne VanHorn



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Separated (Lev. 9:15-21)

To understand the types and significance of the offerings Aaron made for the people, please read Lev. 1-7). He made a sin offering (Lev. 9:15), a burnt offering (Lev. 9:16), a

grain offering (9:17), a fellowship offering (Lev. 9:18), and a presentation offering (Lev. 9:19-21). This series of offerings addresses the question, "How can sinful people enter the presence of a holy God?" The offerings provided covering of sin, worship of God, restoration of fellowship, and the presentation of sanctified people to God.

Several emphases are embedded in these verses. First, Aaron, the High Priest, presented the people's offering; one offering for all the people. This act is indicative of the role of the priest to represent sinful people to a holy God (Lev. 9:15). Second, Aaron sacrificed "according to the regulation." He followed the Lord's instructions (Lev. 9:16). Third, Aaron sprinkled blood from the sacrifices on all four sides of the altar of sacrifice. The four-sided altar meant one side faced each of the four directions wherein were camped the tribes of Israel about the tabernacle. The efficacy of the offerings was extended to all the people. Finally, Aaron concluded the series of offerings having done "as Moses had commanded" (Lev. 9:21).

Sin separates people from God. Sin disrupts prayer life, discourages worship, breaks fellowship with God, and weakens relations with other believers. To overcome the separation caused by sin, God's people must separate themselves to Him.

Offering accepted (Lev. 9:22-24)

Having one's sins forgiven by God is the most profound human experience. The sacrifices prescribed in Leviticus 1-7 prefigured the perfect sacrifice afforded to humanity in the death of Jesus Christ on Calvary's cross. Believers praise God because they are accepted into His presence precisely because Jesus is the Lamb who takes away the world's sins. Having finished the offerings, Aaron lifted his hands and blessed the people. He descended the altar and accompanied Moses into the tent of meeting (Lev. 9:22-23a). Once Moses and Aaron came out, they blessed the people a second time. As a result, "the

glory of the LORD appeared to all the people" (Lev. 9:23b). With their sins covered by the blood of the sacrifices, the people experienced God's glory.

To underscore the importance of the sacrifices for removing of the people's sins, "fire came out from the Lord and consumed the burnt offering and the fat portions on the altar" (Lev. 9:24). The people observed, shouted, and bowed face down on the ground. No longer did their sin stand between them and God. Their offering was accepted.

Holiness seen (Lev. 10:1-3)

We saw in last week's lesson how Moses did all the Lord commanded him in regard to building the tabernacle. The result of his obedience was the presence of God dwelling in the tabernacle. In the two prior sections of today's lesson, we have seen Aaron's compliance to God's regulation as Moses commanded him. The result was the return of God's glory and presence.

Leviticus 10:1-3 reveals a stark contrast. Aaron's sons did the opposite of their father and their uncle Moses. They offered "unauthorized fire before the Lord" (Lev. 10:1). Instead of following God's instruction, they offered incense according to their own way. The KJV and NASB render the phrase "strange fire," a respectable rendering of the Hebrew *'esh zarah*. Both "strange fire" and "unauthorized fire" are defined by the final clause, "which He had not commanded them" (Lev. 10:1b).

Their disobedience resulted in flames that leapt "from the LORD's presence and burned them to death before the LORD" (Lev. 10:2). This punishment might seem harsh to some, but God often exacted righteous judgment at key junctures in Scripture to emphasize the need for total obedience: the flood in Noah's day, the death of Uzzah for steadying the ark, or the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira for lying to the Holy Spirit.

Believers can experience God's presence and glory today as they walk in accord with His Word.

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