

Filling the Hands of the Holy Priesthood — December 30, 2023

1 Peter 2:5; Leviticus 8: Seven Things That Fill the Priest's Hands; John 13: The Lord Washing the Disciples' Feet; and Judges 1: Adonai-Bezek and Philippians

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Scripture Reading: 1 Peter 2:5; Leviticus 8; John 13:1–14; Judges 1:4–7; Luke 10:1–18; Philippians 2:1–11

“Ye also as living stones are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”

(1 Peter 2:5)

“He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments, and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet.” (John 13:4–5)

A Holy Priesthood: Seeking the Shadow in Leviticus 8

First Peter 2:5 describes every believer as part of a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. This is not a one-time event but a career, an enduring occupation that we are supposed to be good at. Hebrews 8:4 tells us that Old Testament priests served unto the example and shadow of heavenly things. Leviticus 8 is the chapter of the consecration of the priests — in Hebrew, the filling of the hands. Seven things fill the hands of a priest so that he can offer praise.

Leviticus 8 is notable for a repeated phrase. The words as Jehovah commanded Moses appear at least five times in this one chapter. What casts the shadow in Leviticus 8 is absolute, positive obedience. Not human innovation, not bright

ideas about what ought to be done, not the free expression of artistic talent. The filling of a priest's hands begins and is carried through entirely by obedience to God's command.

Seven Things That Fill the Hands

First: water to wash the hands. Moses washed Aaron and his sons with water. Water in Scripture is the cleansing and refreshing word of God. Clean hands come first in the filling of the priest. Not gloves to keep the hands looking nice — the hands are going to be filled, and the first requirement is that they be washed with the word.

Second: the hands laid on the head of the sin offering. Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the bull's head, and their sins were transferred to the sacrifice. Before any praise can be offered, sins must be dealt with. Hands cannot be filled with praise if they carry guilt. The precious blood of Christ comes up early in the chapter. Moses put the blood on the horns of the altar and then poured the remainder at the bottom of the altar. There was extra blood — enough to satisfy the holy character of God and enough left over to wash away sin, for whosoever will come. If anyone goes away without availing themselves of God's remedy, it is not because there was not enough.

Third: the hands laid on the head of the burnt offering, and the blood sprinkled round about the altar with nothing left over. The burnt offering was wholly to God — nothing taken outside, nothing poured out at the base. To satisfy God's holy nature as the God who is light and the God who is love, it took all the blood of the burnt offering. The infinite worth of Christ's person is what gave that sacrifice its sufficiency.

Fourth: blood put on the tip of Aaron's right ear, the thumb of his right hand, and the great toe of his right foot. What was in his hands? His thumb ought to be red. Every time a priest comes to offer a spiritual sacrifice, there should be a

remembrance of the precious blood of Christ. And the ear: what is heard must be touched by that blood, held in the light of what Christ suffered. The toe: where one walks must be governed by the same remembrance. The blood touches hearing, doing, and walking.

Fifth through seventh: the fat (the internal excellencies of the sacrifice, not visible on the outside), the right shoulder (the muscle of the work, speaking of the great work of atonement accomplished by the Lord Jesus), and the unleavened bread and oiled wafer (a picture of the spotless, perfect humanity of the Lord). These all go into Aaron's hands — and his hands were not big enough. The point is that no one person can hold all the praise. The hands of the entire holy priesthood, offered together, are what is called for.

John 13: The Lord Washes His Disciples' Feet

John 13:1–5 records the Lord Jesus rising from supper, laying aside his garments, girding himself with a towel, and washing the disciples' feet. The washing of the disciples' feet by the Lord himself is the New Testament counterpart of the water in Leviticus 8. But here the question is not only what is done but who does it and from what it flows. Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. The foot-washing flows from love. The water is applied perfectly — the right temperature, the towel clean, every detail as it should be, because he is the one doing it.

Peter's initial refusal — thou shalt never wash my feet — came from a thought that it was beneath the Lord's honor to stoop so low. But the Lord answered him: if I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. The connection between the Lord's cleansing and having part with him is absolute. And the lesson of Hebrews 10:22, that our bodies have been washed with pure water, is a once-for-all thing at new birth; the foot-washing in John 13 is the continual cleansing from the defilements picked up as we walk through this world. Every step in this world gets the feet

dirty. The Lord is willing and able to wash them, perfectly, as long as we are willing.

The second thing from which the foot-washing flows is the Lord's relationship with the Father. Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands and that he had come from God and went to God — he rose and washed their feet. It is from the security of his relationship with the Father that he stooped to serve. The same mind is to be in us: in lowliness of mind each esteeming others better than themselves (Philippians 2:3).

Adonai-Bezek, Thumbs and Toes, and Philippians 2

Judges 1:4–7 records one of the first acts of the conquest of Canaan: Adonai-Bezek, whose name means lord of lightning, was captured, and the children of Israel cut off his thumbs and his great toes. He acknowledged it as a just return: seventy kings with their thumbs and great toes cut off had gleaned under my table; as I have done, so God has requited me. The thumbs and toes speak, as we have seen in Leviticus 8, of what a person does and where a person walks — the service and the walk.

Luke 10:18 records the Lord saying, I beheld Satan as lightning falling from heaven. The lord of lightning — Adonai-Bezek — connects with the adversary. And Luke 10 sends out seventy others, two by two, ahead of the Lord. The chapter speaks of hands (the workman is worthy of his hire), feet (the dust of your city which cleaves to us on the feet), and ears (he that heareth you heareth me). Thumbs, toes, ears: the very things marked with blood in Leviticus 8. The Lord's seventy, sent ahead of him, were marked with his authority in their hearing, their walking, and their working.

What happened to Adonai-Bezek's ears? Judges 1 does not say they were cut off. Philippians 2:9–11 gives the answer: God has highly exalted the Lord Jesus and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every

knee should bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. One day the lord of lightning — the adversary of our souls — will hear that name. Whether he wills it or not, his knee will bow. He still has his ears. And Canaan, which speaks of the believer's rest in Christ, has its adversaries overcome: at the name of Jesus, every adversary in our rest is brought to bow. The first king conquered in the land was this lord of lightning, and every knee will bow at the name of the Lord Jesus.

Ye also as living stones are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.