

Deputised by the High King of Heaven

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[0 : 00] Growing up, boys loved the idea of being knighted on the battlefield. What you would do is kneel as the king takes his sword and rests on each shoulder,! And you hear the words, Rise, Sir Dillon, as a knight of the round table to protect and serve your king.

Oh, very cool. What happens is the knighting ceremony would change you from being a commoner and make you a knight, to turn you into a sir.

A modern culture tends to downplay ceremonies and rituals, but the truth is they have incredible power built into them. We use them to mark hugely important changes in a person's life.

Yesterday, many of us were at Justin and Tara's marriage ceremony, a ceremony that will change Justin and Tara's life forever. Before the wedding, Justin was just Justin.

He was free and happy. And after that, he became a husband. And he's not so free, but he's very, very happy now.

[1 : 08] But this change of status lies at the heart of what makes rituals and ceremonies so powerful. And it's what lies at the heart of biblical and religious ceremonies that God has set up for his people in order to receive from him things that he wants to give them that they couldn't otherwise get if there weren't these ceremonies.

And so God's ceremonies changes something about you when you go through them. And today we're looking at the high priest ordination ceremony of Aaron.

And we'll see that far from being an obscure ancient ceremony, it teaches us a powerful lesson about how God takes people who are otherwise unfit for service and transforms them.

But how is it that God can take unsuitable people, people who are unclean, people who are unholy, and make them fit for purpose?

This ordination ceremony in Leviticus 8 shows us how he does that for Aaron. But more importantly, it shows us how he does that for us as well in the various ceremonies and rituals and religious ceremonies that God has given us in the New Testament.

[2 : 29] What we'll see as we go through Leviticus 8, we'll see that there's a three-fold movement in the ceremony, whereby firstly Aaron receives a new identity from God, and then secondly he decisively rejects his old life through a turning sacrifice, and only after that is he able to receive an abundant supply of blessing to pass on to God's people.

So there's this three-fold movement of receiving from God a new identity, rejecting the sin that stops us from being of service to God, and then after that receiving an abundant supply from God. So there's receiving, there's rejecting, and then there's receiving. So first of all, receiving a new identity, and that's the first 13 verses of the chapter. And we're not going to read them again, but I've got to point out a few of them.

And so we just needed to read it so that you could, so we could reference it in the talk, and you see, oh yes, we've just read that, that's what that's talking about. Well, Aaron receives a new identity through the washing of water, through a uniform of office, and anointing with oil.

And this new identity gives him a new role as the royal high priest of the creator God of the universe. It's the highest position of authority and power and privilege that an Israelite could have had at that stage.

[3 : 56] I'm going to read from verse 6. Moses brought Aaron and his sons forward and washed them with water. That's a ceremonial cleansing.

Then he puts the tunic on Aaron. He ties the sash around him. That's a royal sash. And he clothed him with the robe and put the ephod on him.

He places, I'm going to read from verse 8, He placed the breast piece on him. And then verse 9, He places the turban on Aaron's head. And then he sets this gold plate as a sacred emblem or holy

crown, depending on your translation.

But the Hebrew word there is crown. And on the front of it, there's a crown on the front of it as the Lord commanded Moses. And then in verse 12, He was supposed to use some of the anointing oil on Aaron's head and anointed him to consecrate him.

The uniform, the crown, the anointing with oil all indicate one thing about Aaron. His identity has been changed to that of a royal high priest.

[5 : 04] Aaron's original identity was not that of a holy person. After all, he is the one that led the Israelites into idolatry at the foot of Mount Sinai. And yet God chose him anyway to be his high priest.

And so the ceremony speaks to us of God's grace and mercy that he accepts people into service despite their failings.

It speaks to us of God's grace and mercy that he accepts people into service despite their failings. If there's one person that shouldn't have been chosen to be the high priest, it was Aaron. Because of what he had done back in Exodus at the foot of Mount Sinai, at the start of the covenant, he led the people in idolatry.

And God says, no, I want you to be my high king, my high priest. I wonder if you're a Christian, if you realize that if you've been baptized, that's exactly what's happened to you.

In your baptism, your sins are washed away with water and you receive an anointing by the Holy Spirit. You receive a new identity. I know in our tradition, they go out of their way to tell you what baptism doesn't do.

[6 : 21] But they should really tell you what baptism does do. It symbolically represents these amazing things that God gives us. I'm going to read from Galatians 3 verse 26.

In Christ Jesus, you are all children of God through faith. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ.

You're children of God. God makes you adopted into the royal family of God because Jesus is royal.

And you get baptized, you are clothed with Christ. In the past, Christians were given new names and new clothes at their baptism. All of this is to indicate that when we become Christian, but more specifically in our baptism, we too become royal priests.

You know, as fallen humans, we often think of ourselves as very broken and not holy and not clean. Our sins bug us.

[7 : 31] But the Bible tells us that we are royalty. We are adopted sons and daughters of the high king of heaven. 1 Peter 2 verse 9 says this, You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

We are a chosen people, a royal priesthood. So we've got this hugely, hugely elevated status that I think we sometimes don't realize that we've got.

But it also means that we need to live up to that high status. When people come into contact with us, they should be able to see something of the royal nobility and majesty of Jesus the high king in heaven.

We need to talk and act and react like royalty. And we've all seen how royalty does this.

[8 : 53] Not here in South Africa, but overseas. They are very calm. They are very measured. They respond with authority and ability.

With wisdom and this sort of settled strength. They don't run around saying, oh no, oh what now? Always in a flap. Always complaining. Always upset.

So as a royal son or daughter of the king, you ought not to behave like a mere scullery servant, but rather as the lord and lady of the manna.

And so, like Aaron, who receives a new identity, we receive a new identity in Jesus.

But what about my past life? What about sin in my life that trips me up and makes me unclean and unfit for the purpose that God wants in my life? Well, that's what the next movement in the ordination process takes care of.

[9 : 58] There's a sacrifice that atones for and helps us make a decisive break from our past mistakes. And so, that's the second movement, rejecting sin through atoning blood.

And that's from verse 14 down to verse 21. In this section of the ceremony, Aaron places his hand on two substitutionary atonement offerings.

The sin offering and the burnt offering. They symbolically bear his guilt and sin away. We've seen this of what the sacrifices have done as we've gone through Leviticus.

Aaron is consciously rejecting his past sins. And the thing about sin is that it does more than disqualify us for service. It actually disfunctions us.

It makes us not able to do the stuff that we're supposed to be able to do. It renders, sin renders us unable to serve God effectively. By forgiving Aaron, God removes what makes him unfit so he can function as his high priest.

[11:07] I'm going to read from verse 14. Moses presented the bull for the sin offering and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on its head.

Moses slaughtered the bull and took some of the blood and with his finger, he put it on all the horns of the altar to purify the altar. He poured out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar.

And so he consecrated it to make atonement for it. Well, the good news for us is that Jesus, as our substitutionary sacrifice, enables us to serve him without staying stuck in the sins of our past.

We again see this symbolized for us in our baptism. We read from Romans 6, verse 4. Paul writes, We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, and here's the consequence, the reason that, just as Christ was raised from the dead, we too might walk in newness of life.

So in baptism, there's an identifying thing that baptism does. It unifies us with Christ in some way that we're not quite sure how it does that.

[12:31] But God says it does that. So that his death becomes our death, but that his life becomes our life. And here Paul is making the point that when we are raised from the dead, just like Christ was, we get to walk in newness of life.

There's a difference to us now. We've been changed. Reading from Revelation 1, there's another quote from Revelation 1.

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, that's the atoning blood of Christ, and what does it do for us?

It makes us a kingdom and priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. It's a bit like walking free from a jail after you've had your sentence commuted.

Once you're outside the jail, once you've been freed and you're outside the jail, you're no longer a convict. You're not a prisoner. You're a free man. But you're expected to live a new life and not go back to your old ways.

[13:44] Being forgiven sets you up for a life of freedom and joy and giving back to God in thankful response to what he's given to you. And so our baptism gives us a new identity.

It anoints us as royal ministers in service of the high king of heaven. It washes away our old sinful nature and gives us a new chance at living life without constantly being tripped up by our past.

But what about being able to do what God wants us to do? If you think about being knighted, that imagery of being knighted, just being knighted doesn't mean necessarily I can do the job of a knight. I need the resources. I need horses. I need armor. I need land. I can't just do it on my own. I need to be given the tools, the equipment, the skills so I can do the job of being a knight properly.

And that's what the last part of the ordination ceremony helps us understand. So we receive a new identity from God. We reject our past identity.

[14:54] We're no longer a slave of sin. We've been freed from that. We free people. We can serve God. But I'm not quite sure how to do that. Do I have the capacity, the ability to do this?

And God says, yes. If I'm going to do all these things for you, I'm going to give you more than you need to be able to serve me. Not just well. Not just good, which I think is terrible English.

But better than you can imagine. And so we receive overflowing blessings from God to fulfill our purpose. We see that from verse 22 to 29.

We receive overflowing blessings from God to fulfill our purpose. This is the actual ordination part of the ceremony. Aaron receives these blessings from God.

They take the sacrifice of the ordination ram. And then they sacrifice what's called the ordination ram. And then they fill Aaron's hands with it as a fellowship offering.

[15:56] Let's just see it from verse 22. Just so you've got it. Moses then presents the other ram, the ram for the ordination.

And Aaron and his sons laid their hands on its head. Moses slaughters the ram. Slaughtered the ram and took some of its blood. And put it on the lobe of Aaron's right ear and the thumb of his right hand.

And on the big toe of his right foot. And if you're wondering what that's about, it's so that Aaron is covered from head to toe in realizing that he serves God.

His ear must listen to God first. His hands must serve God first. His feet need to walk in the way of God. But I want to show you what happens to this sacrifice next from verse 25.

After that, Moses takes the fat, the fat tail, all the fat around the internal organs, the long lobe of the liver, both kidneys and their fat and the right thigh.

[17 : 07] He's taken all the insides of this ram. That's a lot of insides. It's the fatty part. And then after that, from the basket of bread, verse 26, the bread without yeast, which was before the Lord.

He took one thick loaf and one thick loaf with olive oil mixed in and then a thin loaf. And he put these on the fat portions and on the right thigh.

So he's piling up all this food. The nice bit of the ram. And what he does next is amazing.

Verse 27, And we know that God likes that because in verse 26, Moses takes them from their hands, burns them on the altar on top of the burnt offering as an ordination offering, a pleasing aroma, a food offering presented to the Lord.

The fat portions, the right thigh, the bread, everything is piled into Aaron's hands until they're overflowing. You can't hold this in your hand and balance it.

[18 : 23] It's meant to just flow out and all over your hands. Now, we think it's gross. But last night we were at this wedding at the reception.

And they bring out this, you could order, we had these beef, braised beef with vegetables. And they come out with their plates. Oh, it's just these plates of meat and food.

And you can only take one plate. But it's just this lovely offering waiting for you to have. What is God doing with this picture?

Well, here's an interesting point about this ordination service. The Hebrew word behind ordination literally means the filling of the hand. The filling of the hand.

And so Aaron's hands are literally overflowing. He can't hold them enough. They're falling out of his hands. His hands are overflowing with the rich blessings of God for the purpose of fulfilling his role.

[19 : 31] He receives from God an overfilling so that he knows he has more than enough from God to fulfill his purpose. I mean, just think what Aaron is thinking when God says, OK, I want you to be my high priest.

In the back of Aaron's mind is, well, there was a thing I did in Exodus. I hope we're going to be OK. At the end of this chapter, at the end of the ordination service, Aaron is to spend seven days in the temple, in the tabernacle precinct, in the tent precinct.

He can't leave it. If he leaves it, did you notice what it says? Verse 35. Verse 35. You must stay at the entrance to the tent of meeting day and night for seven days and do what the Lord requires, so you will not die.

For that is what I have been commanded. That's what they've been commanded. So Aaron is wondering, can he actually do this thing of being the high priest?

Does he have what it takes? And God says, yes, I've called you to this purpose. I'm going to make you able to do what I want you to do. I'm going to, not just give you a little bit, I'm going to over give you what you need.

[20 : 48] Friends, God does exactly the same thing for us when we are baptized into his service. God gives us over abundantly what we need to serve him well.

So in the baptism service, depending on the kind of baptism, but typically you're going to have water poured over your heads. And so there's an outpouring.

That's a washing of your sins and there's an outpouring. It symbolizes the outpouring of God the Holy Spirit into your life. Just washing over you.

So that you've got more than you need of him to do what he wants. God gives us an overabundance of what we need to serve him well. He pours out on us blessing after blessing.

Now these blessings are not for our comfort and our pleasure and our enrichment, but for the comfort and the blessings of others. So I'm just going to give us two verses from the New Testament that show us these amazing blessings that God gives us.

[22 : 01] 2 Corinthians 9 verse 8. God is able to make all grace abound to you. So that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound, abound in every good work.

Can you see how much overflowing God gives his people? So that we can abound, do more than every good work.

Philippians 4. Paul writes and says, My God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

Not according to the little bit. He's not skimp. He's not... What is that? Stingy. He lavishes his abundant blessings on us.

Well, as a Christian, this means that you've been deputized. A deputy is a person who's given the power to do something in the stead of or the place of another person.

[23 : 23] Just think about this. If you've been baptized, if you're a Christian, living a Christian life, you are one of the elect few in world history that can save people, that can bless people, that can help people with the abundant resources of heaven at your disposal.

Isn't that amazing? You get to do that. Non-Christians can't do that. You become this key portal between the amazing resources of heaven and a world that needs God and grace and forgiveness and love and mercy.

I want to play a short video that will illustrate this for us. Whatever you're going through, man, you can get through it.

Now listen, man, listen. Listen, you can get through this. Come on, let's talk about it for a minute.

Can I at least have a prayer with you? You believe in prayer, I know that.

Can I at least have a prayer with you? You mind if I just hold your hand and pray with you? Come on, man, touch my hand. Touch from this side. Look at my hand.

[24 : 51] Just touch my hand. Just touch my hand, man. I'm praying with you. You're hurting, but if you jump, you're going to hurt other people. And they're going to be hurting just like you're hurting now. The cycle got to stop of hurt.

The sight of hurt got to stop. I know you got a lot going on. You do. But if you make that jump, it is going to be a hundred times worse for everyone you care about. I know you don't want to do that to them.

We're ruining them. Right there. Come on, man. Come on, please. There you go, man. Come on, man. Come on, bruh.

Come on, man. Come on. It's all right. It's all right. It's all right. I love you. We all love you. We wear this badge for many reasons. This is the main reason.

To reach those whom the devil thinks he got. Negative. He ain't got you. We got you. We got you. And that's what we've got to give to the world.

[25 : 57] Isn't that cool? It's a video of a policeman saving a guy from ending his life.

But did you notice what he said at the end about his badge? He wears the badge to reach those who the devil thinks he's got. But he ain't got you. We got you. And that's what we've got to give to the world.

Our one hand is holding on to God. Rather, he is holding on to us. And our other hand is reaching out. We've been deputized. We've got this authority. We've got this resources. We've got this power and these abilities that no one else has.

And people are dying. Killing themselves. And we're holding on to God who secures us. We've been baptized.

We've been received all this authority and power. And we... Hey, man, give me your hand, dude. I've been given this authority and power to save you. To pull people back from the brink.

[27 : 01] You think the devil has got you. He doesn't. God has got you. And I've got you. And I've been trained. And I've been given these things to help you. Give me your hand. Let me save you.

If you've been baptized and if you're a Christian, you've been deputized by the high king of heaven, Jesus himself, to carry out his work of saving, of praising, of praying, of blessing the world.

And it's like you're the new deputy in town. And you need to be that priestly deputy in your home, in your work, at your school.

If you're not yet a Christian, I want you to realize that through these ceremonies, God is telling us that he loves taking things that don't work.

And he's putting them through a process of change. And through that, to make people more amazing than they could ever have been on their own. When you become a Christian and receive

baptism, you get to live as the new you that you were created to be.

[28 : 11] You're no longer just a broken person. You're a broken person that has been fixed and in the process of being fixed. You're no longer just a weak person.

You're a weak person that has been given strength and power. You're no longer lost. You've been given purpose. You're no longer just worried, just scared, just anxious, just overwhelmed.

You've been given protection and courage and hope. Let me end with this quote from Hebrews chapter 4, which I think sums it up.

Since then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens. Jesus, the Son of God. Let us hold fast our confession to the stuff that we believe.

To having received from God. To a new identity. Rejecting the sin in our life. And then receiving an overabundant supply. Hold on to that confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses.

[29 : 19] But one who is in every respect has been tempted as we are. And yet he was without sin. And so, let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace.

That we may receive mercy and find grace to help in times of need. Let me pray for us.

Well, Lord Jesus, we are so thankful that you are our high priest. And that through this ordination ceremony of Aaron, Lord, we see that you have given us a new identity.

You've paid for our sins. We don't have to live in the past. And you give us an overabundant supply of blessing to live a life that can make a difference in the world.

And Lord, that these ceremonies, our baptism, the Lord's Supper, the things that you've given us to do that remind us of you. Thank you for them, Lord. And help them to speak to us about these truths.

[30 : 21] And so hold on to them and be confident in our new identity as royal priests. Amen. Amen. Amen.