

True and False Fire

– A warning preparation for the coming glory –

A key passage from the early days of Israel's journey through the wilderness ends *in a glorious manner* by “**the glory of the Lord**” appearing “**to all the people**”, fire coming out from His presence and consuming a prepared sacrifice. Whereupon the entire assembly shouts for joy and falls face down (Lev. 9:23f. NIV, also in the following Bible quotations), that means *a fervent enthusiasm* and at the same time *an awesome fear of God* seizes the whole people.

How much do we long for this *also today!* But especially if we have a real, faith based expectation of a *near, powerful move and manifestation of God*, we should ask ourselves regarding this Bible passage:

What *preceded* all of this? And what can *we* learn from it today, who fervently desire to experience God's “fire”, His power and glory likewise in our time?

Listening, obeying and sanctification

It all begins *7 days ahead* with a series of *acts of obedience*, in which the leaders of the people do exactly what Moses had previously received from God in detail and then collectively implement it willingly and faithfully, even though most of them surely may not have yet fully understood the deeper meaning of it all.

The center of it consisted in Moses introducing *Aaron and his sons* into their God-given *priestly ministry*.

For this purpose, they were first washed in front of the whole congregation and dressed magnificently, among others with *a breastplate and a turban with the sacred emblem on the front of it* (Leviticus 8: 1-9), which reflects the dignity and sanctity of the priestly ministry, also for us today, who intercede before God for our people.

Moses then anointed the tabernacle and Aaron himself with oil “**to consecrate him.**” (Lev 8:12) Various *sacrifices* were offered *exactly according to divine instructions*, on which Aaron and his sons had previously placed their hand, as a kind of identification with them.

The altar was sprinkled and atoned for with *the blood of the sin offering*, so that basically the way was only *opened* for their priestly ministry to become possible. (Lev. 8:14ff.)

The *right ear, thumb and big toe* of Aaron and his sons were covered with *the blood of the “ram for the ordination”*, what may also stand symbolically for *redeemed hearing, acting and walking*. (Lev. 8:22ff.)

It reminds of the ram that was offered in place of Isaac, centuries earlier, when Abraham was ready to sacrifice his son (cf. Genesis 22), all of which, of course, foreshadowed *the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ*, Who likewise was sacrificed “**outside the camp**” (Lev. 8:17, cf. Hebr. 13:11ff.), as described here, as “**a pleasing aroma**” to God (Lev. 8:21) and cleared *the true way into the sanctuary*, and thus also to *the true priestly ministry for us all* whom He has freed “**from our sins by his blood**” and has made “**to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father**”. (Rev 1:5f.)

Aaron and his sons furthermore received *pieces of fat, liver and kidneys from the sacrificed animals, along with food offerings* into their hands, in order to *weave* them before God, so to speak, to *present* them.

Similar to how, *exactly on the Feast of First Fruits, when the sheaves were woven before God (Lev. 23:10f.)*, the newly risen *Jesus* presented Himself to the Father in heaven (cf. Joh 20:17), before He spent another 40 days with His disciples. (Cf. Joh 20:26f.)

After Aaron and his sons, including their clothes, had been sprinkled with oil and blood again for *their atonement and sanctification*, Moses commanded them not to leave the tabernacle, *that is, the place of God's presence*, for the next seven days and to be taken care of completely from the outside until the days of their ordination were completed. All of this they fulfilled trustingly and obediently.

On the eighth day, which symbolically stands for *a new beginning*, they *again* offered *sin offerings, burnt offerings and grain offerings*, exactly as prescribed, whereupon *the people who had gathered together once more at the sanctuary that day* were blessed.

Then it says: **“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. 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 face down.”** (Leviticus 9:23f.)

It was a series of *steps of absolute obedience* which the rulers, along with the people, faithfully executed, that finally resulted in God coming *in His glory and awesome power*. All the preceding acts had *deeply prophetic meaning*, which, however, *apart from the general, traditional meaning of an animal sacrificed to God*, may not even have made so much deeper sense to most of the people until then.

Nevertheless, they consistently *did* all that God had earlier instructed Moses to do, held fast to it *step by step*, until finally the LORD revealed Himself in a whole new, breathtaking manner.

A blatant counter-example of this acting in *fear of God, listening to Him and obeying Him*, however, can be found *immediately afterwards* already, when two of Aaron's sons, *inwardly certainly still impressed by this powerful revelation of God*, started to continue their ministry, yet, out of *merely own, soulish drive*:

“Aaron’s sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorised fire before the Lord, contrary to his command. So fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord.” (Lev. 10: 1f.)

Probably still gripped from *all that has gone before*, the young priests Nadab and Abihu presumably wanted to evoke *by themselves, out of carnal impulses*, another, similar manifestation of God.

He, however, reacts *absolutely sharply* and shows that He simply cannot tolerate something like that!

Yes, it is *often* the case that where Almighty God pours out *great mercy* and manifests Himself in His grace, He *at the same time* shows *great severity*, simply because He is ***holy!!!***

(So, for example also with Ananias and Sapphira during the time of *the early church characterized by great signs and wonders!* - cf. Acts 5)

At least *one* understood at that time: **“Moses then said to Aaron, ‘This is what the Lord spoke of when he said: ‘“Among those who approach me I will be proved holy; in the sight of all the people I will be honoured.”’ Aaron remained silent.”** (Lev. 10:3)

This is *a real warning example for all of us* who have been made **“to be a kingdom and priests”** by Jesus (Rev 5:10) and who want to serve God, especially in anticipation of *a broad spiritual awakening in the church and the society* that will follow the steps of obedience of many and *a qualitatively new revelation of God in our nations*, resulting in a great harvest of souls.

May we walk in the way of *Moses*, by *fearing God, continually seeking and obeying Him*, and beware of the way of *Nadab and Abihu*, who, out of carnal zeal, wanted to offer up *their own*, “*strange fire*” to the Most High, which, however, was by no means pleasing to Him, yes, even a real affront to Him!

- Since God does not want us to try to produce anything for Him *in our own, fleshly way*, but to follow and serve Him *in His way*, in intimate relationship and fellowship with Him. Because ultimately *everything perfect, saving and redeeming* comes from Him alone!

He does not want us to act out of *our own accord, zeal and drive, separate from Him*, put on *some show* and play “*games*” with His Holiness, but to *obey Him* and thereby *bring glory to Him!*

As likewise the prophet Samuel spoke to *King Saul*, who had repeatedly despised God’s instructions out of *fear of man* and *his own reasoning*: **“Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.”** (1 Samuel 15:22)

This obedience is sometimes *challenging*, especially when *the way God leads us* does not always make sense to us immediately and it requires *patience*, ever new *trust* and *overcoming* of our ego.

- But *it is worth it*, because in the end God will always stand by us powerfully and *His final end result* will far exceed all our wildest expectations, if, *carried by His grace*, we allow ourselves to be led on this path of *listening and obeying*, out of holy closeness to Him!