

I Know A Guy, Lev.8...10

Ancient Access Codes #2

◆**Intro:** I was in eighth grade, Princeton New Jersey. My father was on hiatus from the military for a year completing an educational degree. He mentioned that after he received the degree he might like to buy a hood. I remember thinking that was kinda silly. He's gonna buy a sweatshirt to celebrate a Masters of Theology! As many of you know, he meant something else. If you've ever been to a university graduation you know that the professors arrive wearing black robes, with long colorful stoles draped around their necks and flowing down their backs. Apparently those are called hoods even though I've never seen one on anybody's head! The different colors represent various disciplines or fields of study. The higher the degree, generally the more colorful the hood. Many of the spectators would need a key card to decode all the meaning in all those colors!



◆It's a uniform and the designs have meaning attached. When my father wore his "navy whites", my mother sometimes affectionately referred to it as his "ice cream suit."



◆The Levites, priests in Israel, also dressed in all "white", so you knew a Levite when you saw one coming. We've noted already that Leviticus is a book of codes about holiness, and these codes contain eternal principles even if the cultural practices have passed away. Today we'll look at the priests in

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Leviticus 8-10, and the meaning they represented in Israel.

Here's one...

◆**1. I need to take my sinning seriously. My obedience is a serious factor in my earthly and heavenly life.**

◆A. The Israelites recognized the reality of sin and darkness.

White represented clean and holy. There are two extremes that modern God-followers often take when it comes to recognizing their sinfulness, if they do recognize it at all.

◆1) What Dallas Willard calls the "miserable sinner" attitude. This person has written off positive spiritual transformation as necessarily impossible this side of heaven. He or she has tried to improve their behavior by will power and found it discouraging. They still do the same things as before. While they assent that Jesus is the Savior of the world, this knowledge alone does not seem to have changed their lives much. So they stop believing it's possible and figure "I just have to live the miserable sinner life until I die, and then Jesus will fix me."

◆2) The other attitude we'll call the "no worries" attitude. I'm thinking of the one who says to him/herself, "It just doesn't matter if I sin. Jesus paid for all my sins with his precious blood, so party on!" This person believes that because Jesus has made him right in the eyes of God through faith in his substitutionary death, he (the sinner)

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needn't be concerned at all with how he lives, whether like a gangster or a missionary.

◆B. I don't think I need to tell you that these folks are both terribly misguided. We saw last time that the Hebrew sacrificial system was a daily reminder of the *need* for holiness, and a very *tangible* reminder at that. What I want us to see from Leviticus 8 is that this process of ordaining Aaron and his sons as priests emphasizes the beauty of holiness, as well as our desperate need for a holy mediator to keep us in fellowship with the beauty of God. Lets take a look.

◆Almost every verse in chapter 8 is an exact quotation or adaptation of the commands given in Exodus 29 where God told them how it was to be done. (It always helps to read all of scripture to understand parts.) By this point in time the objects and uniforms are already prepared and waiting. In other words, at this point Moses is strictly following God's instructions he already had. Next, in chapter 9 Aaron and his sons take up their duties as newly ordained priests and they do for the people all the same sacrifices that Moses did for them! And what was the hoped for result? Check out ...

◆9:4 for today the Lord will appear to you.

◆9:6 This is what the Lord commanded you to do so that the glory of the Lord may appear to you.

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◆9:23 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...

◆Following God carefully allows us to see and experience the glory of the Lord and not die! We get to know God. The converse is also true of course, and we began to see this last time too: when we don't obey him, we are killing ourselves off, even when we don't know it, and we do not enjoy the graces and blessings of God. As an illustration, look what happens in Chapter 10. In contrast to chapter 8-9 where strict obedience to commands results in seeing the glory of God, we get the famous account of Nadab and Abihu, Aaron's priest sons, who don't follow God's commands.

◆"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. So fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD." Leviticus 10:1, 2, NIV.

◆Which is a graphic way of saying, obedience matters. Author and pastor **John MacArthur** recalls this story: "I was flying down to El Paso to do a men's conference. I was working on some thoughts and had my Bible open. I was sitting next to an Arab. He kept glancing over and looking at what I was doing. Finally he said, "May I ask you a question? I am from Iran, and I am new in America. I see you have a Bible. I don't understand American

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religion. What is the difference between a Catholic, a Protestant, and a Baptist?" I gave him a little explanation. Then I said, "Could I ask you a question? Do Muslims have sins?" (Of course I know they do; I just wanted to hear him say it).

He said, "Oh we have so many sins; I don't even know all the sins."

"Really?" I asked, "Can I ask you another question? Do you do those sins?"

"All the time I do those sins," he said. "In fact, I will be honest with you. I am going to El Paso to do some sins."

"Do you mind if I ask what sins you're going to do in El Paso?"

He said, "Well, I was immigrating. El Paso is a big immigration location and I met this girl; I am going to El Paso to do some sins with her."

I said, "How does God, as you understand God, feel about your sins?"

"It's very bad," he said. "It's very bad."

"How bad is it?" I inquired.

He said, "I could go to hell."

I said, "You don't want to go there, do you?"

"No!" he exclaimed.

"Then why do you keep doing these sins?" I prodded.

"I can't help it," he confessed.

I asked, "Well, is there any hope for you?"

He said, "I hope God will forgive me."

I said, "Why are you so special that he should do that? Why should he forgive you?"

"I don't know, I just hope," he responded.

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I said, "Well, I know him personally, and he won't." That blew his mind. He said, "You know God personally! What do you mean you know God personally?"

I said, "I do know him personally, and I can tell you he will not forgive your sin. He can't look on iniquity; he's angry with the wicked every day, and he's going to cast them into eternal hell. But would you like to hear some good news about your sin?"

"Yes, I would," he answered. So I explained the gospel to him.

♦ I'm guessing that there are plenty of people who call themselves Christians who think the same ways as this Arab: doing sins is normal and forgiveness is a unsure hope. The Gospel message is that we stack up sins by the minute. We are far more evil that we have ever imagined. And not a single demerit we earn ourselves before God is OK with God. But we are also far more loved than we ever hoped. Therefore God came in the person of his Son to pay our sin debt and die for us. It sounds simple to say it, but we're talking about mountains of debt and darkness higher than Everest and deeper than the Mariana Trench and as long as history!

♦ Now if sin is that serious, then obedience matters. Holiness is what I need! If Jesus died to make us holy (last weeks message) then why would we think at being unholy is somehow ok? Oh Yes, when God tells us to be holy it is not a whim. He is giving us the access code to full life; to Good life; to Him! God is supremely happy. God is the source of everything good (Jms1:17). It stands to reason that being holy, like him, will let

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us live in that goodness and happiness too. Jesus told us to store up treasures in heaven. Jesus said even giving a cup of cold water to someone would be rewarded in heaven. So every time we disobey, we are virtually throwing away heavenly wealth.

What's more, we are throwing it away here in this life!

◆ In his clever book *The Screwtape Letters*, a senior demon is teaching a novice and he advises, "The only thing that matters is the extent to which you (demon) separate the man for the Enemy (God). It does not matter how small the sins are, provided that their cumulative effect is to edge the man away from the Light and out into the Nothing. Murder is no better than cards if cards can do the trick. Indeed the *safest* road to Hell is the gradual one."

◆ Now we don't always see it clearly. By God's grace alone we don't always see a 1:1 corresponding death to every disobedient act we do. But Leviticus is showing us it's there and it's got consequences.

◆ So it's a bigger deal than you thought when you feed on horror for entertainment. Or when we go to bed angry. Or when we "borrow" something in secret. Or when we avoid looking at someone because we're mad, or offended. Maybe it's not murder, but if it can "do the trick" of edging us toward Hell, well, that would make it a pretty big deal.

◆ **2. My calling is the same as my priests!**

◆ **A.** If we want to experience the joy and power of God today, we are going to have to edge closer to God. And that means we

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will need a mediator to atone for us, that is, we need to “know a guy” who can get us in, close! We need a priest. A priest is a go-between. A priest needs to be holy to meet God, and human to represent us.

◆I’d like to remind us that while in pagan cultures sacrifices to the deities were thought to appease them and get them to leave us alone, the sacrifices in Israel were clearly substitutionary for punishment the people deserved, and with the purpose of allowing *people* to live closely with *God*. This is theology unique to Israel.

◆*“there also I will meet with the Israelites, and the place will be consecrated by my glory. “So I will consecrate the Tent of Meeting and the altar and will consecrate Aaron and his sons to serve me as priests. Then I will dwell among the Israelites and be their God. They will know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them out of Egypt so that I might dwell among them. I am the LORD their God.” Exodus 29:43-46, NIV.*

◆God’s purpose for forming Israel was to live with them and through them with the world. The purpose for the priesthood was to enable interaction and conversation between a holy God and sinful humans. In fact bringing God’s instruction to the people was a primary task of the priesthood. Unlike the priests of other nations who kept the secret knowledge among themselves, the priests of Israel were tasked with constantly teaching God’s words to the people.

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◆**B.** Now I'd like to suggest to you that, as Israel knew and the Early Church knew, all God's people are called to bring God and the people together. We call this the priesthood of all believers.

Israel knew it at the foot of Sinai: what the priest was to the people, the people were to the nations. Its symbolized in 8:23-24. Blood on the ear/thumb/big toe meant the whole man is God's priest; what you listen to, what you do, everywhere you go. This was to be true of the nation!

◆"Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation..." Exodus 19:5, 6, NIV.

◆Followers of Jesus knew it: Jesus is the High Priest. We are the Levites. The nations are the people.

◆*"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."*
1Pet.2:9

◆What does this mean? You and I need holiness. Holiness is what we need also for the sake of those who don't know God yet!
We cannot do the job of priesthood well without also living a clean life. We cannot just do as we please. We cannot go to El Paso to do some sins, and still expect to be effective priests for God in our dying world.

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◆**Conclusion:** So here are the access codes of Leviticus 8-10 and the ordination of priests. 1) all sin, every sin is a much bigger deal than I thought. 2) A holy priest is necessary between God and man. 3) As one of God's I too am a priest! Put it another way; Lost people matter to God. And little things matter to God too. Search your life? Are there any lost people God is calling to you about? Are there any little sins God is calling to you about? Do not be discouraged however! God has made a way!

◆*"Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." Hebrews 4:14-16, NIV.*

◆Worship Jesus here today! Love him for he is the true High Priest. If you return his love he will take your place so you can live with God.

Children's message:

You probably noticed I'm dressed kinda different today. Any idea why? Do you know any workers who wear all white? (doctors, nurses, storm troopers from Star Wars)

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How about other workers who wear clothes that tell you what they do? (Firemen, policemen, soldiers, stewardesses, waitresses, karate fighters, school teams.)

Did you know in Bible days the preachers had to
-take bath

-put on clean white clothes

before they could go in the church? Why? Because God is holy and clean in every way.

-Why do you think God wants his people to be clean? Healthy!

Do you know how to clean your hearten this inside? Ask Jesus to be your priest and pay God for you sin.