



God Establishes the Priesthood

Leviticus 9:22–10:7



LESSON GOAL

Students will understand that man needs a mediator to come to a holy God.

BIBLE TRUTHS

- Sinful people cannot go directly to God.
- God made priests, who would make offerings to God for the people.
- The priests had to obey God's laws.
- Nadab and Abihu did not obey God and were killed.
- Jesus was the sinless priest who can help sinners come to God.

KEY VERSE

"By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; And before all the people I must be glorified" (Leviticus 10:3b).

APPLICATION

- Trust only Jesus to bring you to God.
- Confess your sins to God and ask Jesus to help you.
- Worship God with the right attitudes and actions.

NEXT WEEK

God Ordains the Day of Atonement
Read Leviticus 11–16.

Symbol Key



Craft



Memory Verse



Object Lesson



Game



Visual Aid



Activity



Q & A



Work Sheet



2 Grade Level

Teacher Planning Sheet

PREPARE

Objectives/Truths to cover this week

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Personal Application

As a result of my study in this passage, God wants me to

- _____
- _____
- _____

Three ways students need to apply this passage are

- _____
- _____
- _____

POINT

Choose from various ideas to point students to the coming Bible lesson.

- _____
- _____

PROCLAIM

Choose from various ideas to proclaim the Bible lesson.

Presentation Ideas

- _____
- _____

Praise/Music Ideas

- _____
- _____
- _____

PRACTICE

Choose ideas to help review and apply today's lesson.

- _____
- _____

**Materials
Needed**

PREPARE WITH THE TRUTH

“Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul.... You shall teach them to your children” (Deuteronomy 11:18–19).

Please take time to prepare your mind and heart to accurately handle the truths of God’s Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Read through the Bible background and study the truths contained in this lesson. Crucial background information is included here to aid you in understanding the Scripture.

Bible Background

In Leviticus 1–7, God regulated the sacrifices that the Israelites would bring to satisfy His holiness. The Israelites demonstrated their faith in God by approaching His presence through the blood of animals. Sacrifices were not new to the Israelites; godly men had always come to God through sacrifices. What was new was the role that priests played in offering sacrifices. Before God gave the law, priests rarely were mentioned. When God appeared on Mount Sinai, the Lord commanded that “the priests who come near the LORD consecrate themselves” (Ex. 19:22). These priests probably were the firstborn heads of Israelite families. Noah, Abraham, and Jacob had functioned as the priests in their families by being the ones who offered the sacrifices. Job also fits this pattern of patriarchal priesthood.

God changed the way people worshiped when He established the tabernacle. He emphasized His holiness by regulating the people’s worship. Throughout Leviticus, God commanded the Israelites, “You shall be holy; for I am holy” (Lev. 11:44). The Israelites reflected God’s holiness by obediently submitting to His laws concerning the tabernacle. New to tabernacle worship was the establishment of the priesthood. By establishing the priesthood, God taught the people about His holiness. God protected the sinful people from His holy presence by allowing Aaron and his sons to serve as mediators between the Israelites and Himself.

Leviticus 8: God Chooses the Priesthood

In Exodus 28:1, God announced to Moses that Aaron, Moses’ brother, and Aaron’s four sons (Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar) would serve as priests. Israel’s future priests would come from this family, particularly from the descendants of Eleazar (Num. 25:10–13). The consecration of Aaron and his sons for the priesthood is first described in Exodus 29. The actual consecration does not occur until Leviticus 8.

Leviticus describes how the Israelites gathered for the consecration of Aaron and his sons. After Aaron and his sons were washed with water, they put on the priestly clothes (Lev. 8:6–9,13). (The priestly clothes are described in more detail in Exodus 28.) They also were anointed with oil (Lev. 8:12). While the washing and clothing were practical and necessary actions, they also had obvious symbolism. Like a stethoscope given to a doctor or a badge given to a policeman, the washing and clothing demonstrated the priests’ initiation into their new position.

Aaron and his sons were set apart for a special job, but they still were like the Israelites in their sinfulness. They offered both a sin offering (which cleansed the tabernacle from their sinfulness) and a burnt offering (which established their pleasing communion with God) (Lev. 8:14–21). They laid their hands on both offerings, identifying with the sacrifices, and then Moses actually offered the sacrifices. Another special sacrifice, called the ram of consecration, was offered as well (8:22). Blood from the offering was not only sprinkled on the altar but also daubed on the

Additional Reference Materials

*The MacArthur Study
Bible* by John MacArthur
Holiness to the Lord
by Allen P. Ross

right ears, right thumbs, and right big toes of Aaron and his sons (8:23–24). Aaron and his sons were visibly consecrated to the ministry of the tabernacle as priests. Their previous lives had ended; they had a new identity as the priests of Israel before God. To emphasize their solidarity with the tabernacle, the newly initiated priests spent seven days and nights at the entrance to the tent of meeting (8:33–35). They were learning the seriousness of being set apart for God’s task (8:35–36).

The entire consecration process emphasized the holiness of God. The priests entered their role with a sober ceremony, which would instill in both themselves and the people the gravity of serving God. The separation of the priests was visible; they were consecrated with blood. God took priests from among the people and made them completely His. The priests were to reflect God’s holiness both inside and outside the tabernacle.

Leviticus 9: God Blesses the Priesthood

On the eighth day, when the consecration was complete, the Israelites gathered again and stood before the tabernacle. Moses promised the people that they would see the glory of the Lord (Lev. 9:6). Aaron first offered a sin offering and a burnt offering for himself and then a sin offering, a burnt offering, and peace offerings for the people (9:8–21). The peace offering was a sign of thanksgiving for God’s special work, perhaps pointing to God’s grace in establishing the priesthood. After offering the sacrifices, Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle. When they came out, Aaron blessed the people. Although the words of the blessing have not been recorded, the fact that God allowed Aaron to speak on His behalf to the people was momentous; God was pleased with the sacrifice and the new priesthood. Aaron was not simply presenting his wish that God would bless the people; rather, he was actually blessing the people on God’s behalf. God further demonstrated His acceptance of the newly consecrated priesthood. “The glory of the LORD appeared to all the people, and fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering” (9:23–24). The glory of God, which normally was hidden in the Holy of Holies, was visible above the tabernacle. Fire came from the Lord and consumed the burnt offering. God was pleased and approved of the mediation of Aaron. In His grace, God had provided mediation between the sinful people and Himself. The people appreciated the benevolence of God. In praise, they shouted and fell on their faces (9:24)! As sinful people, they knew that they needed a mediator between themselves and God.

Leviticus 10: God Warns the Priesthood

It is impossible to know how much time elapsed between Leviticus 9 and 10. The event with Nadab and Abihu follows closely in the narrative because God is emphasizing that the priests had to reflect His holiness. Sadly, Nadab and Abihu were not concerned with doing this. When Aaron brought a godly sacrifice, God showed His approval by consuming the offering. When Nadab and Abihu served wickedly, God showed His disapproval by consuming the ones who had brought the offering.

Nadab and Abihu “offered profane fire before the LORD” (Lev. 10:1). The exact infraction is not known; perhaps they brought the wrong incense (Exod. 30:34–38), or maybe they had not brought fire from the altar (Lev. 16:12). The admonition in Leviticus 10:9–11 against drinking alcoholic beverages before going into the tent of meeting suggests that drunkenness may have led to Nadab and Abihu’s sin. Regardless of the exact nature of the sin, their disobedience had not shown the proper regard for God’s holiness. God punished them: “Fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD” (Lev. 10:2). Moses told Aaron the word of the Lord: “By those who come near Me I must be

regarded as holy; and before all the people I must be glorified" (10:3). Nadab and Abihu, even after seeing God's fire consume the sacrifice their father offered, did not respect God's holiness. They thought that they could serve God however they wished. Because they would not glorify God through obedience, God glorified Himself in their punishment. Aaron held his peace (10:3) because he knew that God was just in punishing Nadab and Abihu. God's holiness had not been exalted by those whom God had chosen to exalt it. The punishment served as a warning for generations to come. God will not let His name be defamed by those who represent Him.

Conclusion

God chose to display His holiness by requiring that there be a mediator between Himself and the Israelites. The danger of the Israelites coming directly before God's presence is seen in the execution of Nadab and Abihu. The results could have been catastrophic if God had allowed His holy dwelling place to be trampled by uninformed or disobedient worshipers. God's choice and acceptance of the priesthood was His gracious provision for the Israelites to come before Him and offer sacrifices. The priests were a continual reminder of the difference and distance between God and man. In God's righteousness and justice, He taught the priests to have a high regard for His holiness. Through the mediation of the priests, God's holiness was exalted.

New Testament saints have the Holy Spirit dwelling inside them (1 Cor. 6:19). Our bodies have replaced the tabernacle as the dwelling place of God. God's holiness required that the priests mediate in the Old Testament. His holiness still requires mediation. Jesus is not only the sacrifice for our sins but also the High Priest who offered Himself as a sacrifice. He is a better High Priest than Aaron. When Aaron died, the high priesthood went to his son. But Jesus "continues forever" and has an "unchangeable priesthood" (Heb. 7:24). Since He will never die again, Jesus is able to intercede between the believer and His Father forever (7:25). Aaron had to offer sacrifices for his own sin and then for the people, but Jesus, who is "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners" does not need to offer up sacrifices daily for the people's sins. He did this "once for all when He offered up Himself" (7:26–27). Christ is our High Priest, both reflecting and satisfying the holiness of God. The anchor of our souls, the surety of our eternal salvation is Jesus, who has become High Priest forever (Heb. 6:20). The believer's confidence must always be in the mediation of his High Priest, Jesus Christ.

POINT TO THE TRUTH

*"Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth"
(Psalm 78:1).*

This section includes questions to review last week's lesson and ideas to prepare students for this week's lesson. Choose from the following ideas to point to the truths of this lesson.



Review Questions

Use these questions to review and reinforce key truths.

What is another word for *offering*?

Another word for offering is sacrifice.

What are two reasons that sacrifices were made to God?

God commanded the Israelites to make sacrifices to Him to show Him they were thankful for all He had given them and especially to obtain forgiveness for their sins.

God said that animal sacrifices had to be without defect. What does "without defect" mean?

"Without defect" means without damage. The animals had to be perfectly healthy. They could not ever have broken a bone. They could not have a disease. This was because God deserves only the very best.

Who performed the sacrifices to God?

Ordinary people could not sacrifice to God directly. God commanded that the priests make sacrifices to God for the people.

Who was the greatest sacrifice ever?

Jesus was the greatest sacrifice ever. He gave His life so that we could be forgiven of our sins once and for all. But we can receive forgiveness only if we believe in Jesus Christ and trust that His sacrifice paid for our sins.



Unapproachable Light

We need the sun. It makes the plants grow to give us food. It is good, but on bright days, many people wear sunglasses so the sun does not hurt their eyes. The sun is extremely hot and bright. If a person looks at it directly, even for a few seconds, it could hurt his eyes. In a much greater way, we need something to protect us from a holy God. God is holy and perfect in every way, and He is much more powerful than all the suns in the universe. The Bible says that God dwells in light that is so bright that no one can look at Him. This light represents His holiness. God is so holy that sinful man cannot come near Him. We need something to stand between us and God. In the book of Leviticus, God made a group of men to stand between Israel and God. These men were called priests. A big word we use for this is *mediator*. A mediator is someone who helps us come to God so that we will not die. In Leviticus, the mediator priest offered sacrifices for the people so they could have a relationship with God. We all are sinful and need a mediator. In today's lesson, we will learn how God started a priesthood to help the Israelites come to Him. Jesus is now every Christian's high priest. He stands between God and man.



High-Priest Presentation

Before class, make a child-sized vest out of a brown paper bag. Cut a neckhole in the bottom and armholes in the sides. Cut the bag in the middle of one of the wide sides, from the top of the bag to the neckhole. This will make the shape of a vest. See Exodus 28 for decorating the vest. This vest is what the high priest would wear into the tabernacle. You may wish to follow all the directions found in Leviticus 8 to make the costume very realistic. During class, ask a student who has been very quiet and obedient to come to the front of the class. Demonstrate how the priests prepared to go into the tabernacle. First, Aaron had to take a bath. Then he had oil put on his head. After that, he had a drop of blood put on his right earlobe, his right thumb, and his right big toe. (Pretend to do these things with the student.) This prepared the high priest to make sacrifices for the people. The priests had a very special job. They had to dress in special clothes and act in a holy manner to do these jobs.



Order in the Court

Materials: black robe, gavels

Directions: Dress up as a judge and ask the students whether they have ever seen a judge or a court. Explain that when someone commits a crime, he has to go to court and be punished. Explain that when we sin, we are committing a crime against God. So we must go to God's court to be judged. The good news is that if we are believers, Jesus is our defender and mediator. Explain that Jesus takes our punishment, and we take His innocence. In today's lesson, we will learn about the priests, who were the mediators between God and men before Jesus died on the cross.

PROCLAIM THE TRUTH

"Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done" (Psalm 78:4).

This section includes the Bible lesson, lesson questions, and praise and worship ideas. Song suggestions are included that you can use to proclaim your worship to God. Use the lesson questions to check the students' understanding. This section also includes various presentation ideas to use during the teaching time. Read the Bible passage several times before you read these pages. All teaching should be done directly from the Bible.

Bible Lesson

Reading of the Text

Read Leviticus 9:22–10:7.

Do you remember what we learned last week? We learned about sacrifices. Why did the Israelites make sacrifices to God? The Israelites had to make sacrifices because of their sin so that they could come before God and be right with God. The Israelites usually made their sacrifices on the altar at the tabernacle. We already learned that the tabernacle is the house God commanded the Israelites to build for Him.

After the tabernacle was built, God told Moses that someone must help the Israelites make their sacrifices at the tabernacle. Someone had to make sure they

were done the way God commanded. These people who were assigned to help the Israelites make sacrifices were called priests. How do you think Moses knew whom God wanted to be the priests? God told him. God said, "Moses, you will tell your brother Aaron and his four sons that they are to serve Me as priests. All the priests in the future will come from Aaron's family." Being a priest was a very big responsibility! Priests had to prepare themselves to be in God's house. They were washed with water and anointed with oil. They put on the special clothes that were just for priests.

After all the preparation and ceremonies, these men were now the priests of Israel before God. They were now different from the rest of the Israelites. They had to be very careful to show God's holiness all the time. Aaron offered the first sin offering, burnt offering, and peace offering to God after he and his sons became priests. God was very pleased. He was so pleased that He decided to appear to Aaron and all the Israelites at the tabernacle. He sent fire down to burn up the sacrifices to show that He accepted them. The Israelites were very thankful that God had been so good to them. They bowed down and shouted praises to God.

Some time later, a very sad thing happened. Two of the priests did not obey God's commands for them as priests. Their names were Nadab and Abihu. They brought incense, which is similar to a candle. God had special rules for bringing incense. Nadab and Abihu did not listen to God's command and brought the incense the wrong way. They did not have the right attitude toward God's holiness. God punished them both for their sin. God sent down fire on them, and they were killed. This was a warning for the other priests. God reminded them how important it was for them to respect His holiness.

The priests existed to help the Israelites come before God. They could not come before God by themselves because of their sin. They were not holy. They had special sacrifices to make so they could help others. Are you holy enough to be in God's presence? No. We all are sinful. You are sinful. I am sinful. So we need a priest, right? Yes, but we do not have any priests here at church, do we? So who is our priest? Jesus is our priest! He made the only sacrifice that will ever need to be made for our sins by dying on the cross, rising from the dead, and living forever. If we give our lives to Jesus, His sacrifice covers our sins, and we can be in God's presence. Jesus will be our priest forever.



Lesson Questions

What was a priest?

A person who helped the Israelites come to God.

Why did Israel need priests?

They were sinful.

Did the priests have special rules to follow?

Yes. They had to make sacrifices for themselves, and they had to offer all the sacrifices in a special way.

Why was God pleased when Aaron offered his sacrifices?

He followed God's rules completely.

What happened to Nadab and Abihu?

They were killed because they did not follow God's rules.

Who is the high priest for believers?

Jesus. He is the perfect High Priest forever.



Presentation Ideas

A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards

Use A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards to present with the lesson.



Betty Lukens Flannelgraph

Use appropriate flannelgraph pieces with the lesson.

Praise and Worship

Holy, Holy

Lord, I Lift Your Name on High

Oh, Be Careful

This Little Light of Mine

Trust and Obey



Holy Priests

Our holy God can't look on sin,
(Point up; shield eyes with hand and shake head back and forth.)

And so He set apart some men
(Push hands to one side.)

To serve as priests, the people bless,
(Place palms together.)

And focus on God's holiness.
(Make circles with fingers and place over eyes; rotate hands as though focusing.)

Some priests served with disregard,
(Hold hands sloppily; shrug shoulders.)

They didn't follow God's Holy Word.
(Hold hands like a book and shake head back and forth.)

But now we know that God is pleased
(Point to temple; nod head and point up.)

With Jesus Christ as our high priest.
(Make a cross with fingers; place palms together and nod head.)

PRACTICE THE TRUTH

“That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments” (Psalm 78:7).

Choose ideas from this section to review and apply the truths of the Bible lesson.



Hot Lava

Lay out pieces of colored paper on the ground. Choose one color to make a path across the room. The stepping stones are like the specific instructions that God gave Israel about how to approach Him. Have the students walk the path. If they step on the wrong color, or off the paper, they are out. This helps illustrate that if we ignore or disobey God, we are on the wrong path.



Jesus the High Priest

Materials: colored construction paper, craft sheets at back of lesson, crayons, scissors, cutout crosses, glue, glitter

Directions: Have students spread a thin layer of liquid glue on the cloud of God’s glory on the right side of the page, being careful not to cover the words in the cloud. Then have them carefully spread glitter on the glue. Next, have them draw a picture of themselves on the left. Tell them that their sin separates them from God. They need a mediator to go to God for them. Color the cross and glue it on the middle of the page to make a bridge between the student and God. Tell the students that if they repent, confessing Jesus as Lord and following Him, He will be their high priest, allowing them to come to God.



The Link from God to Man

Materials: “The Link from God to Man” craft sheet copied on construction paper, scissors, markers or crayons, staplers

Directions: Have each student cut the one-inch strip from the short end of his craft sheet and cut the rest of the paper in half along the solid line, making two pages. Write “God” in the space provided on one page and “man” on the other page. Color and decorate the borders of the pages. On the one-inch strip, write “Jesus, Our Great High Priest.” Staple the one-inch strip to the center of each page by matching up the Xs. This will create a gap between God and man, with Christ as the link.

Coloring Sheets

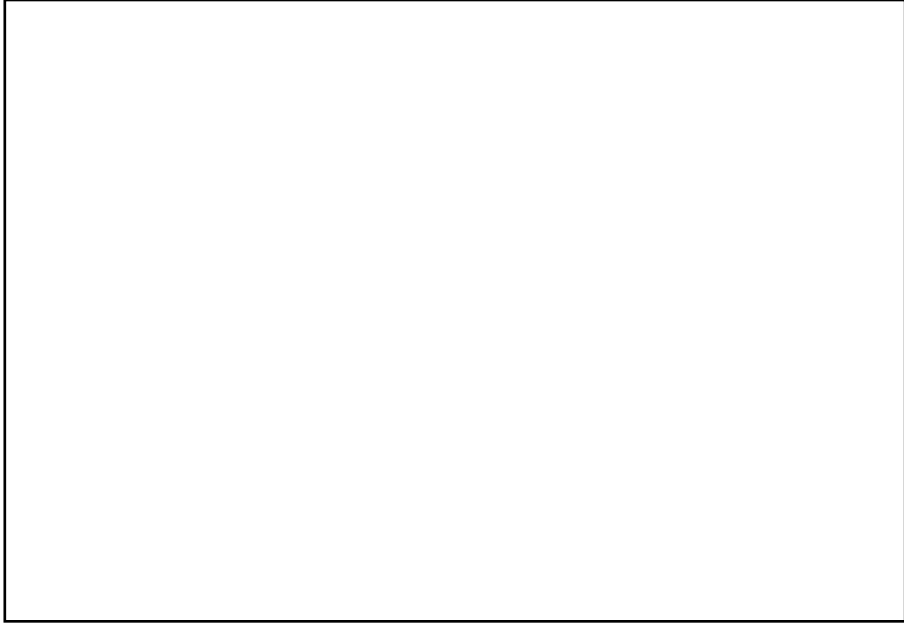
Give each student a copy of the coloring sheets at the back of the lesson. The students can color the pages in class or take them home to color.



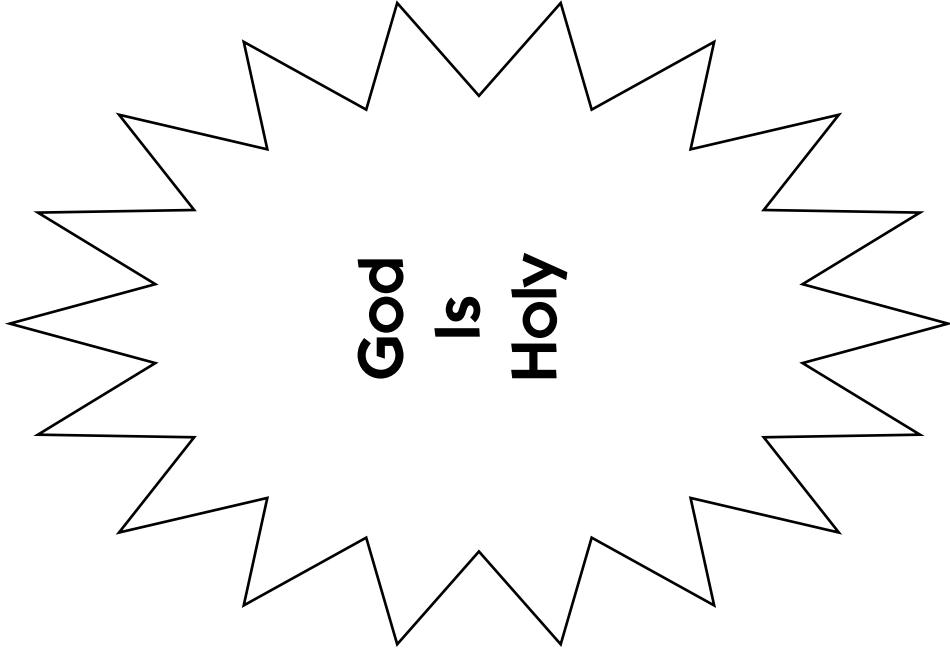
MEMORY VERSE

“Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy’” (Leviticus 19:2).

Jesus, the High Priest



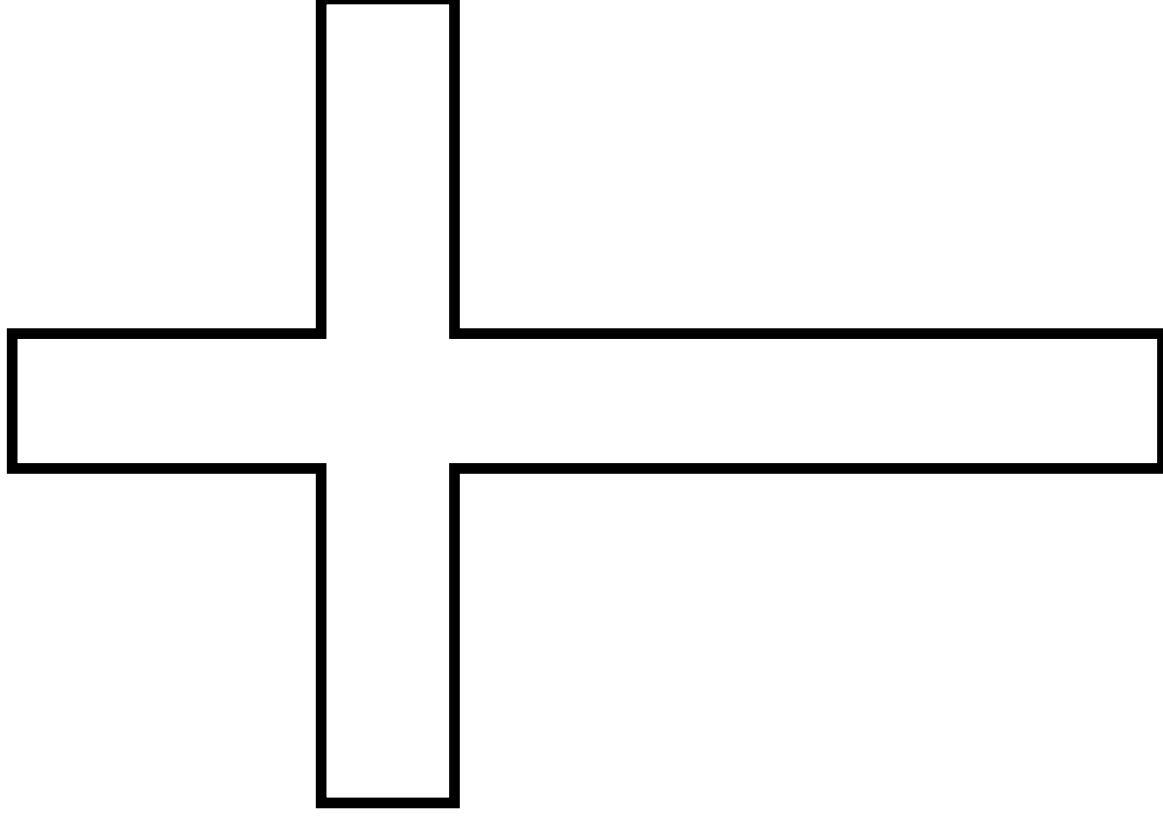
Glue cross here.



“Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus” (Hebrews 3:1).

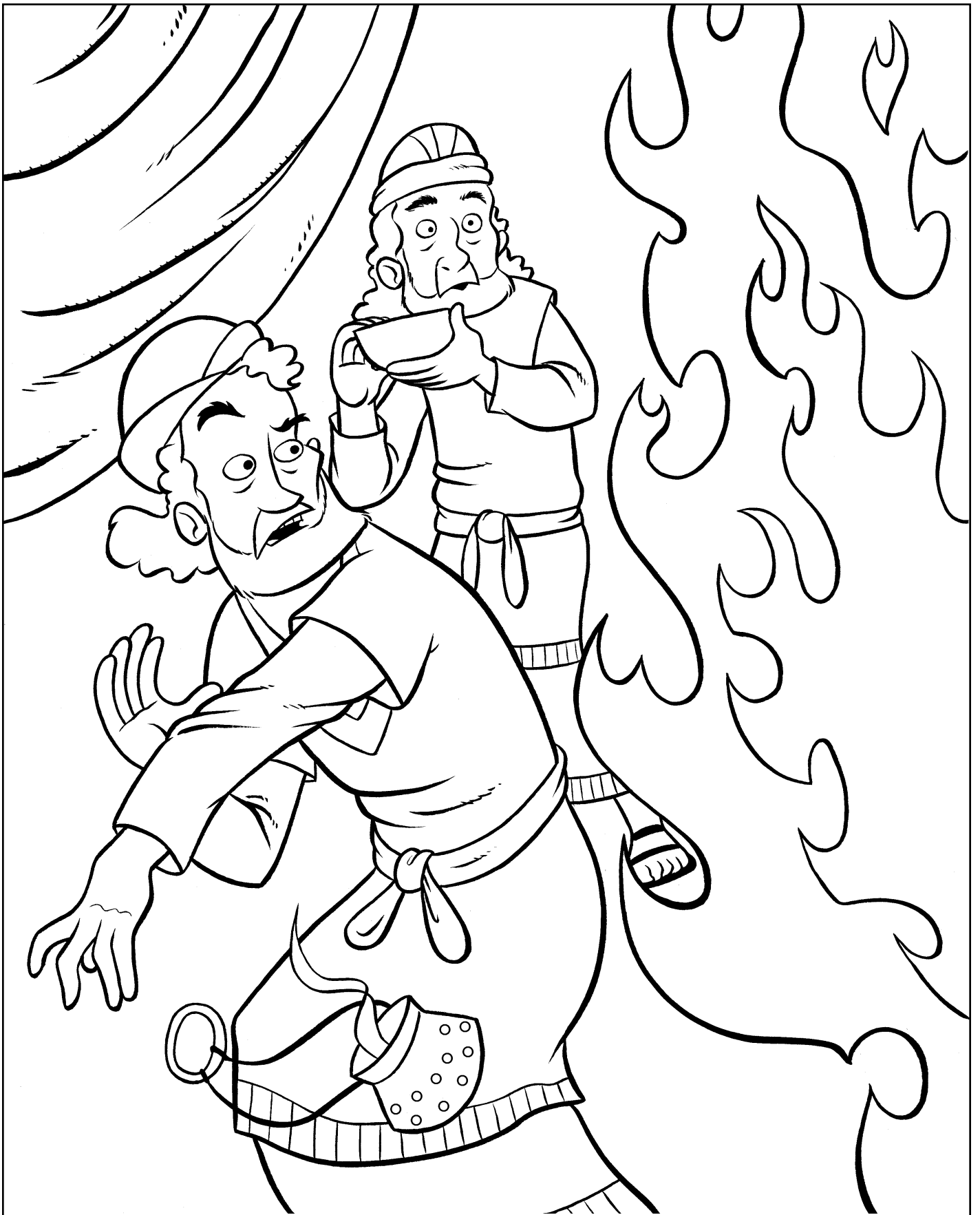
Cross for “Jesus, the High Priest”

Cut out the cross and glue it to the “Jesus, the High Priest” craft page.





Moses made Aaron and his sons holy priests to God and dressed Aaron in special high-priestly clothes (Leviticus 8:6-8).



**“Then Nadab and Abihu...offered profane fire before the LORD.... So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD”
(Leviticus 10:1–2).**

