

Priesthood Order

Part 8

As we begin Part 8, it seems relevant that we start by sharing how many years we're talking about, when these different experiences of Israel and the priesthood unfolded. It's fairly easy to look at the sequence of events and somehow begin to think they happened, "one after another." I don't like to go outside of scripture to verify or disclaim what is being presented here; but, sometimes it helps to get a different perspective. The historical Books of Flavius Josephus, a contemporary of John, the disciple of Jesus, have been preserved in a volume of writings called, "The Antiquities of the Jews," and have a tremendous amount of "information" related to the Hebrew people and the Nation of Israel. The following is from the Contents Page of his writings: "**Book 5 - Containing The Interval Of Four Hundred And Seventy-Six Years. From The Death Of Moses To The Death Of Eli.**"

Whether his "timetable" is absolutely accurate, or not, isn't crucial. If he happened to miss it by a few years, who cares? What is important to see is the fact that, "It was a considerable number of years between the deaths of Moses and Eli and, what has been written in the previous studies are the things that Israel and the Levitical Order of Priests experienced in their generations during this period of time."

To "set the scenario" for our study, we are going to refer, again, to Josephus' writings, keeping in mind he was an ancient historian, not a modern Theologian. That should give us a feeling of relief and the assurance that some of the things he writes may be the truth.

"Now Eli was the first **of the family** of Ithamar, the other son of Aaron, that had the government; for the family of Eleazar officiated as high priest at first, the son still receiving that honor from the father which Eleazar bequeathed to his son Phineas; after whom Abiezer his son took the honor, and delivered it to his son, whose name was Bukki, from whom his son Ozi received it; after whom Eli, of whom we have been speaking, had the priesthood, and so he and his posterity until the time of Solomon's reign; but then the posterity of Eleazar reassumed it." (Book 11, Ch 4)

From this record we can reaffirm that God's Order and His placement of sons according to their birth had been preserved throughout these four-hundred-plus years. An interesting phrase, "**that had the government,**" referring to each one named, i.e., Eli, Aaron and Ithamar, and associating these with those "High Priests," who are subsequently named, is not to be overlooked. Sometimes when we're reading we forget to allow for the "prophetic voice" to be heard in some very simple statements.

The scriptures that come to mind are those detailing the priestly garments worn by Aaron and each High Priest who took his place, and the stones of the breast piece and the onyx stones that were set in their proper settings and placed upon his shoulders. We know that the stones all had the names of the twelve tribes of Israel inscribed on them. If we can discern a link between

these stones and the Stone the builders rejected, or to the prophetic word from Isaiah, “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of *his* government and peace *there shall be* no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this. The Lord sent a word into Jacob, and it hath lighted upon Israel.” (Isa 9:6-8), we may begin to understand more fully that God’s purpose for a “Royal Priesthood” a “Kingdom of Priests,” has not changed. The “firstfruits” of God will be co-heirs with Christ and will be those on whom the word given through John the revelator will light, “Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. (Rev 20:6)

Another curious piece of information Josephus recorded indicates that Eli’s descendants were the first order of priests until Solomon reigned. Eli descended from Ithamar and not Phinehas, Eleazar’s son. Gill’s Commentary states that, “ **Zadok the son of Ahitub, and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, were the priests,**.... Not high priests, as Josephus suggests, for there was only one high priest at a time; indeed there was a "sagan", or deputy priest, on occasion; and so Abarbinel says that Zadok was the high priest, and Ahimelech his second or deputy; but the truth of the case was this, Abiathar was high priest only, and continued so until the time of Solomon, when he was thrust out of his office, and Zadok put into it; and Ahimelech his son and Zadok were the principal priests under him, the one of the family of Ithamar, the other of Eleazar; so the Targum on 1Ch_18:16 calls them "sagans", or deputies of the high priesthood. Zadok is mentioned first, though Ahimelech was the son of the present high priest, because he was in great favour with David, as afterwards with Solomon, in whose days the high priesthood was translated to him; the family of Eli”

WOW! If that doesn’t become confusing, nothing will. All of this gibber/jabber when, the end result is still the same, which is: “The high priests of the Levitical Order were all descendants of Aaron and we can sort out the who’s who between the time he was consecrated and made the High Priest and the time the Priesthood Authority was taken from him and given to another, even Jesus the Christ, who wasn’t even from the “right” tribe and became the First of the New Order, the order of Melchizedek.” That is all we really need to get straight in our minds. To try to observe and preserve any part of the Old Order established under the Old Covenant will detract and distract us from focusing upon the True Tabernacle, the New Covenant and the Kingdom God has always intended to make us preachers and ministers of, His Kingdom which always was and always will BE.

NOTE: Even Flavius Josephus, writing in his last book of the antiquities, seemed to have a better “revelation” of Christ than many in the visible church systems, who call themselves, “Christian.”

“Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day;

as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.” (Book 20, Ch 10)

Anyway, let’s try to get back to where we left off concerning Eli and his sons and see how the priesthood was radically changed through Samuel’s life and how that experience as a “type” can give us a glimpse into God’s plan to bring about a whole New Order with a New Man.

A series of scriptures and statements concerning Eli and his sons will quickly bring us to the transition we are looking to see:

1. Now Eli was very old; and he heard all that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who served at the doorway of the tent of meeting. (1Sa 2:22) This seems to be the strongest indictment against Eli’s sons although they also took from the best portions of the sacrifices and offerings, sometimes before they were even put upon the altar.

2. Then a man of God came to Eli and said to him, "Thus says the LORD, 'Did I *not* indeed reveal Myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt *in bondage* to Pharaoh's house? 'Did I *not* choose them from all the tribes of Israel to be My priests, to go up to My altar, to burn incense, to carry an ephod before Me; and did I *not* give to the house of your father all the fire *offerings* of the sons of Israel? 'Why do you kick at My sacrifice and at My offering which I have commanded *in My* dwelling, and honor your sons above Me, by making yourselves fat with the choicest of every offering of My people Israel?' "Therefore the LORD God of Israel declares, 'I did indeed say that your house and the house of your father should walk before Me forever'; but now the LORD declares, 'Far be it from Me--for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me will be lightly esteemed. 'Behold, the days are coming when I will break your strength and the strength of your father's house so that there will not be an old man in your house. (1Sa 2:27-31)

3. “But I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest who will do according to what is in My heart and in My soul; and I will build him an enduring house, and he will walk before My anointed always. 'Everyone who is left in your house will come and bow down to him for a piece of silver or a loaf of bread and say, "Please assign me to one of the priest's offices so that I may eat a piece of bread.” (1Sa 2:35-36)

4. "In that day I will carry out against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. "For I have told him that I am about to judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons brought a curse on themselves and he did not rebuke them. "Therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever." (1Sa 3:12-14)

5. So the people sent to Shiloh, and from there they carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts who sits *above* the cherubim; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, *were* there with the ark of the covenant of God. (1Sa 4:4)

6. Then the one who brought the news replied, "Israel has fled before the Philistines and there has also been a great slaughter among the people, and your two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God has been taken." When he mentioned the ark of God, Eli fell off the seat backward beside the gate, and his neck was broken and he died, for he was old and heavy. Thus he judged Israel forty years. (1Sa 4:17-18) Eli was 98 years old and could not

see clearly. (Had no vision)

7. When Phinehas' wife who was pregnant, heard the news about her husband's death, the death of Eli, and that the ark had been taken, she gave birth and named her son, "Ichabod" which is interpreted, "the Glory has departed from Israel"

Retracing our steps we will cover the same portion of scripture to introduce the "transitional" priest, Samuel, whom the prophet spoke to Eli about. An overview of what took place may be easier to follow and, we are all aware of these things so there isn't any need to repeat every line of scripture.

Elkanah, a descendant of Korah, the Kohathite who rose up against the Priesthood of Aaron, had two wives. Hannah, the one he loved best, was without children. (Hannah is literally = Grace) It was Elkanah's custom/duty to go to Shiloh each year to worship God and offer a sacrifice, from which he gave portions to his wife Peninnah, along with their children, but he always gave a double portion to Hannah. She began to cry on one such occasion because she saw the others eating and enjoying the fellowship and she had no children, which was cause for Peninnah to irritate her and chide her for being barren. She went to Shiloh to seek the LORD and speak to Eli, who thought she was drunk __ when he saw her lips moving but not saying anything out loud __ but she had been speaking to the LORD in her heart concerning her barrenness, during which she made a vow to Him that if He gave her a son she would give him, "back to the LORD."

So, after the LORD gave her Samuel and he was weaned, she returned to Shiloh and offered sacrifices, dedicated Samuel and presented him to Eli. It says he ministered to the LORD before Eli, and also that he ministered before the LORD as a boy, wearing a linen ephod. He remained there at Shiloh and grew in stature and found favor with the LORD and with men.

"Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD before Eli. And word from the LORD was rare in those days, visions were infrequent. It happened at that time as Eli was lying down in his place (now his eyesight had begun to grow dim *and* he could not see *well*), and the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD where the ark of God *was*, that the LORD called Samuel; and he said, "Here I am."" (1Sa 3:1-4) The KJV says, "the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision." This is one of those portions of scripture that are not to be passed over without pause and given time for the meaning to sink in. This is what is being considered a "watershed" moment.

We all know how Samuel went to Eli and sent back to lay down before the ark again and to listen for the "Voice" to speak, with the instruction to answer, "Speak, LORD; for your servant is listening."

"Then Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son." And he said, "Here I am." He said, "What is the word that He spoke to you? Please do not hide it from me. May God do so to you, and more also, if you hide anything from me of all the words that He spoke to you." So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. And he said, "It is the LORD; let Him do what seems good to Him." Thus Samuel grew and the LORD was with him and let none of his words

fail.” (1Sa 3:16-19)

And the LORD appeared again at Shiloh, because the LORD revealed Himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the LORD. (1Sa 3:21)

From the day that the ark remained at Kiriath-jearim, the time was long, for it was twenty years; and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD. Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, "If you return to the LORD with all your heart, remove the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth from among you and direct your hearts to the LORD and serve Him alone; and He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines." (1Sa 7:2-3)

And it came about when Samuel was old that he appointed his sons judges over Israel. Now the name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; *they* were judging in Beersheba. His sons, however, did not walk in his ways, but turned aside after dishonest gain and took bribes and perverted justice. Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah; and they said to him, "Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations." But the thing was displeasing in the sight of Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." And Samuel prayed to the LORD. The LORD said to Samuel, "Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them. "Like all the deeds which they have done since the day that I brought them up from Egypt even to this day--in that they have forsaken Me and served other gods--so they are doing to you also. (1Sa 8:1-8)

Although there a lot of things omitted concerning Samuel, this gives us a short review to remind us of how God brought about such a radical change. There was no attempt to “raise up” another priest, who would bring a revival and get Israel to continue to worship in the same tradition that Eli and his sons perpetuated. They didn’t start some new programs to get the youth involved and use Samuel as an example of how God can use them, even though they are not yet adults. They didn’t try to “Jazz” up the rituals to make them more contemporary and acceptable to their lifestyle. They didn’t compromise and accept the methods instituted by Samuel’s sons by roasting the meat and enjoying the fat instead of putting it on the altar. Samuel offered them only one solution. Return to the LORD with all your heart, “repent;” serve the LORD alone; and put away every other “foreign god.”

Although Samuel’s sons didn’t walk in his ways and Samuel was getting old, these were only excuses that Israel used to get their way. They continued to behave exactly as Joshua had said when he told them to make a choice; whom would they serve. When they said they would serve the LORD he said, **“You will not be able to serve the LORD, for He is a holy God.”** God told Samuel they had been seeking for that day, when they would cease to know God as their King and ask for another, since the day they left Egypt. How many years? Was it four hundred and seventy-six from the time Moses died, until the time Eli died(?) __ and then you add the years that Samuel served __ it looks like it had been around five hundred and forty years or so. Add the years that followed, which brings us to the present and we find that things haven’t changed all that much. The LORD is still being rejected as the ONE TRUE SOVEREIGN, and other “gods” are being worshiped CONTINUALLY! Men are still claiming “free will,” and setting themselves as sovereign.

(To be continued..)