

## *Priesthood Order*

### Part 10

Our last study, although it ended with a departure from our “Theme,” gave us an accounting of how the Ark of the Covenant was finally brought to Jerusalem. The preparations David instituted, following the initial, failed attempt when Uzzah was slain for touching the ark, are where we’ll begin this portion of our study.

Now *David* built houses for himself in the city of David; and he prepared a place for the ark of God and pitched a tent for it. Then David said, "No one is to carry the ark of God but the Levites; for the LORD chose them to carry the ark of God and to minister to Him forever." And David assembled all Israel at Jerusalem to bring up the ark of the LORD to its place which he had prepared for it. **David gathered together the sons of Aaron and the Levites:** of the sons of Kohath, Uriel the chief, and 120 of his relatives; of the sons of Merari, Asaiah the chief, and 220 of his relatives; of the sons of Gershon, Joel the chief, and 130 of his relatives; of the sons of Elizaphan, Shemaiah the chief, and 200 of his relatives; of the sons of Hebron, Eliel the chief, and 80 of his relatives; of the sons of Uzziel, Amminadab the chief, and 112 of his relatives. Then **David called for Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and** for the Levites, for Uriel, Asaiah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel and Amminadab, and said to them, "You are the heads of the fathers' *households* of the Levites; consecrate yourselves **both you and your relatives**, that you may bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel to *the place* that I have prepared for it. "Because you did not *carry it* at the first, the LORD our God made an outburst on us, for **we did not seek Him according to the ordinance.**" So the priests and the Levites consecrated themselves to bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel. The sons of the Levites carried the ark of God on their shoulders with the poles thereon, **as Moses had commanded according to the word of the LORD.** (1Ch 15:1-15)

According to David’s direction, the sons of Aaron and the Levites were gathered together for the purpose of bringing the ark to Jerusalem. It is significant that the sons of Aaron and the Levites are distinguished individually and yet, they are joined/gathered together for one purpose. Both “orders,” with their individual members are named and numbered and **all** had to consecrate themselves to bring the ark of God to the place prepared on Zion. Everything they did was necessary to accomplish their objective and had to be done according to the word of the LORD that was given to Moses, more than five hundred years earlier.

If we casually read the account of all that was happening we will miss something of the enormity or this transformation. When all the priests and Levites are added together they are a congregation of around eight hundred and seventy men. These had all been set apart from the rest of Israel to perform the sacred service they were appointed to, when the tabernacle was built in the wilderness. Their “calling” was never cancelled and their responsibility to fulfill the purpose to which they were born was not annulled. They are identified according to their placement as sons, their relatives/families, and **all** of them had the same responsibilities as their “fathers” who were the beginning of their calling and election. How is it that so many, who were uniquely set apart for a sacred purpose, didn’t seem to know God’s way concerning the transportation of the ark of the LORD or make it their priority to be where they were needed when they tried to bring the ark from Kiriath-jearim? (See I Ch 15)

Could it be possible that they, like all of Israel, had taken daughters from among the nations around them for themselves as wives, and gave their own daughters to their sons, and served their gods, doing what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and forgot the LORD their God and served the Baals and the Asheroth? Could it be possible they did not have a “Teaching Priest” who would lead and guide them into the truth or instruct them concerning the high calling upon their lives?

I am supposing that any of this could be true, based on personal observation of those who have undoubtedly been born to embrace and fulfill the high calling of God in Christ, to become administrators of the New Covenant, but have not yielded to the Spirit of Truth who would lead us and teach us all things concerning God’s purpose. Some may have set out to “build” but neglected to count the cost. Who knows? There are likely any number of “reasons” why many of the called are not chosen but there are no acceptable “excuses” to abandon the high calling or settle for anything less.

After the priests took the ark upon their shoulders David spoke to the chiefs of the Levites and told them to appoint singers and those who could play a variety of instruments to, “raise sounds of joy!” “So the Levites appointed Heman the son of Joel, and from his relatives, Asaph the son of Berechiah; and from the sons of Merari their relatives, Ethan the son of Kushaiah, and with them their relatives of the second rank, Zechariah, Ben, Jaaziel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Unni, Eliab, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattithiah, Eliphelehu, Mikneiah, Obed-edom and Jeiel, the gatekeepers. So the singers, Heman, Asaph and Ethan *were appointed* to sound aloud cymbals of bronze;” (1Ch 15:17-19) The Levites were so elated to have God’s help they offered a sacrifice of seven bulls and seven rams.

Israel’s triumphant and jubilant entry into Jerusalem, with David leading the procession dressed in his “priestly” robe of fine linen and wearing an ephod, was followed by David offering burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD, after which he blessed the people in the name of the LORD. Following the blessing he gave every man and woman a loaf of bread and a portion of *meat* and a raisin cake. The account given in I Chronicles, NASB, says he gave them a portion of *meat* but this is made clear from the record of Samuel, “Further, he distributed to all the people, to all the multitude of Israel, both to men and women, a cake of bread and one of dates and one of raisins to each one. Then all the people departed each to his house.” (2Sa 6:19) What is called a “meat” offering actually refers to offerings of “grain.” Regardless of the kind of “gift” that David gave to the people, everything David did upon entering Jerusalem was the function of those who were consecrated as “Priests.”

What David did next is a function of “Kings.” “He appointed some of the Levites *as* ministers before the ark of the LORD, even to celebrate and to thank and praise the LORD God of Israel: Asaph the chief, and second to him Zechariah, *then* Jeiel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Mattithiah, Eliab, Benaiah, Obed-edom and Jeiel, with musical instruments, harps, lyres; also Asaph *played* loud-sounding cymbals, and Benaiah and Jahaziel the priests *blew* trumpets continually before the ark of the covenant of God.” (1Ch 16:4-6) “So he left Asaph and his relatives there before the ark of the covenant of the LORD to minister before the ark continually, as every day’s work required;”

(1Ch 16:37)

When the Levites appointed “ministries” from among their relatives, they chose Heman, the son of Joel, as the “first appointed” from among his brethren. However, it appears that David elevated Asaph to be the “chief” among the musicians who would stand before the ark to minister. Heman was appointed to go to Gibeah/Shiloh where Zadok was sent, along with his relatives, to minister at the tabernacle which was set up there. This may not seem significant but it reveals something of phenomena that happened when Israel rejected GOD as KING over them and they came under the “Sovereignty of Men.” While in the wilderness the priests answered only to the LORD and the Levites were under the ministration of the priests. They had only One King \_\_ who is eternal, immortal, invisible and the only wise GOD, to whom they would go to for counsel. The priests and Levites belonged to the LORD, who called them His possession.

Under the anointed sovereign, chosen from among men, they began to be placed in their “orders” according to the pleasure and command of the king. This is most evident when we see how David chose Zadok as High Priest. When Abiathar escaped the slaughter of Saul at Nob and came to David, he had an ephod in his hand. David had him turn the ephod over to him and it is assumed that this is the ephod he wore into Jerusalem when he brought up the ark of the LORD from Obed-edom’s house.

Although Abiathar was high priest, according to his placement as a son, it is evident that David favored Zadok, who had fought alongside David and was considered a man of valor. In due time, when Adonijah took it upon himself to be king in David’s stead, it was Joab and Abiathar who sided with him and pressed for David’s throne. All of this was done in “secret” and only made known to David when Nathan the prophet came to him wondering why Adonijah was king, instead of Solomon, whom David had already determined to set on his throne.

David sent for Zadok and Nathan and had them put Solomon on his mule, take him to Gihon and anoint him king. From that time on, Zadok was established as high priest and held that place of prominence in the temple Solomon built. It was Zadok, who was descended from Eleazar and Ahimelech, the descendant of Ithamar who set the priests and Levites in their twenty-four divisions, according to the direction of David. By setting Zadok and Ahimelech as high priest, and second in the priesthood order, the priestly authority was restored to the placement of sons who were descended from Aaron. The “divisions” were chosen by “lot” and not strictly according to their order of birth. The eighth lot fell to Abijah, from whom Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist was descended. Zacharias was still a priest of the “eighth order,” in the temple in/near Jerusalem, (possibly in Hebron), and this is where he is found in Luke, Chapter one.

It is significant that these orders were still adhered to, considering the number of years that had passed from when they were initially determined and Solomon’s temple had long since been destroyed, the priesthood had been scattered along with Judah and went into captivity until the time of Zerubbabel’s return to Jerusalem, along with the priests and Levites, to rebuild the temple.

During the interim, between Samuel and Malachi, there were a succession of “Prophets”

who were anointed for the purpose of receiving the word of the LORD and speaking it to the people, often with the accompaniment of signs and wonders. This did not absolve the priesthood of their responsibility concerning their orders or function and the charge given to them concerning the "Law of God." This is evident when we read the Book of Ezra. Ezra is initially identified as a "scribe" who was, "skilled in the law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given; and the king granted him all he requested because **the hand of the LORD his God was upon him.**" Also,

For Ezra had set his heart to **study the law of the LORD and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel.** (Ezr 7:10)

Before the appearance of Ezra, it is worth the time to read the Book of Ezra to get a good understanding of the restoration of the temple at Jerusalem and how the "priesthood" was functioning at that time. Although they performed their "ministries" according to the pattern of the "Law" they were not acting "faithfully" because of their "condition." They were priests and Levites who were not "sanctified" and had a lot of personal problems that would have disqualified them from performing the duties of the priesthood, in other times.

Bear with us as we read this portion, which is quite lengthy but gives a very good sense of what was happening with the priesthood and the people whom they served: "Now when these things had been completed, (you'll have to read some previous chapters), the princes approached me, (Ezra), saying, **"The people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands, according to their abominations, those of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians and the Amorites.**" For they have taken some of their daughters *as wives* for themselves and for their sons, so that **the holy race has intermingled with the peoples of the lands; indeed, the hands of the princes and the rulers have been foremost in this unfaithfulness.**" When I heard about this matter, I tore my garment and my robe, and pulled some of the hair from my head and my beard, and sat down appalled. Then **everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel on account of the unfaithfulness of the exiles gathered to me,** and I sat appalled until the evening offering. But **at the evening offering I arose** from my humiliation, even with my garment and my robe torn, and I fell on my knees and stretched out my hands to the LORD my God; and I said, "O my God, I am ashamed and embarrassed to lift up my face to You, my God, for our iniquities have risen above our heads and our guilt has grown even to the heavens. "Since the days of our fathers to this day we have been in great guilt, and on account of our iniquities we, our kings and our priests have been given into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity and to plunder and to open shame, as it is this day." But now **for a brief moment grace has been shown from the LORD our God, to leave us an escaped remnant and to give us a peg in His holy place, that our God may enlighten our eyes and grant us a little reviving in our bondage.**" For we are slaves; yet in our bondage our God has not forsaken us, but has extended lovingkindness to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us reviving to raise up the house of our God, to restore its ruins and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem. "Now, our God, what shall we say after this? For we have forsaken Your commandments, which You have commanded by Your servants the prophets, saying, **"The land which you are entering to possess is an unclean land with the uncleanness of the peoples of the lands, with their abominations which have filled it from end to end and with their impurity. 'So now do not give your daughters to their sons nor take their**

daughters to your sons, and never seek their peace or their prosperity, that you may be strong and eat the good *things* of the land and leave it as an inheritance to your sons forever.' "After all that has come upon us for our evil deeds and our great guilt, since You our God have requited *us* less than our iniquities *deserve*, and have given us an escaped remnant as this, shall we again break Your commandments and intermarry with the peoples who commit these abominations? Would You not be angry with us to the point of destruction, until there is no remnant nor any who escape? "O LORD God of Israel, You are righteous, for we have been left an escaped remnant, as *it is* this day; behold, we are before You in our guilt, for no one can stand before You because of this." Now while Ezra was praying and making confession, weeping and prostrating himself before the house of God, a very large assembly, men, women and children, gathered to him from Israel; for the people wept bitterly. Shecaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, said to Ezra, "We have been unfaithful to our God and have married foreign women from the peoples of the land; yet now there is hope for Israel in spite of this. "So now let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives and their children, according to the counsel of my lord and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law. "Arise! For *this* matter is your responsibility, but we will be with you; be courageous and act." **Then Ezra rose and made the leading priests, the Levites and all Israel, take oath that they would do according to this proposal; so they took the oath. Then Ezra rose from before the house of God** and went into the chamber of Jehohanan the son of Eliashib. Although he went there, he did not eat bread nor drink water, for he was mourning over the unfaithfulness of the exiles. They made a proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem to all the exiles, that they should assemble at Jerusalem, and that whoever would not come within three days, according to the counsel of the leaders and the elders, all his possessions should be forfeited and he himself excluded from the assembly of the exiles. So all the men of Judah and Benjamin assembled at Jerusalem within the three days. It was the ninth month on the twentieth of the month, and all the people sat in the open square *before* the house of God, trembling because of this matter and the heavy rain. Then **Ezra the priest stood up** and said to them, "You have been unfaithful and have married foreign wives adding to the guilt of Israel." (Ezr 9:1-10:10)

Ezra, the scribe/priest represents, at least to me, a man intent on doing the will of God as fully as he understood it in his generation. After those who had returned to Judah/Jerusalem had made a covenant with God, to put away their strange wives, etc., they began to keep the feasts and offer the sacrifices prescribed according to the Law of Moses.

Including a portion from Nehemiah will conclude our look at the life of Ezra and how he ministered according to the hand of the LORD upon his life. "And all the people gathered as one man at the square which was in front of the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the Law of Moses which the LORD had given to Israel. Then Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly of men, women and **all who could listen with understanding**, on the first day of the seventh month. He read from it before the square which was in front of the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of men and women, those who could understand; and all the people were attentive to the book of the law. Ezra the scribe stood at a wooden podium which they had made for the purpose. And beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah on his right hand; and Pedaiiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah *and* Meshullam on his left hand. Ezra opened the

book in the sight of all the people for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. Then Ezra blessed the LORD the great God. And all the people answered, "Amen, Amen!" while lifting up their hands; then they bowed low and worshiped the LORD with *their* faces to the ground. Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites, explained the law to the people while the people *remained* in their place. **They read from the book, from the law of God, translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading. Then Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people were weeping when they heard the words of the law.** Then he said to them, "Go, eat of the fat, drink of the sweet, and send portions to him who has nothing prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. **Do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength."** So the Levites calmed all the people, saying, "Be still, for the day is holy; do not be grieved." **All the people went away to eat, to drink, to send portions and to celebrate a great festival, because they understood the words which had been made known to them.** Then on the second day **the heads of fathers' households of all the people, the priests and the Levites were gathered to Ezra the scribe that they might gain insight into the words of the law.** They found written in the law how the LORD had commanded through Moses that the sons of Israel should live in booths during the feast of the seventh month." (Neh 8:1-14)

The temple in Jerusalem, rebuilt by the exiles, served a purpose until Herod the Tetrarch, in the eighteenth year of his reign, built the temple that existed until 70 A.D., when it was destroyed by Titus. That brought to an end the Aaronic Order, that had tried to continue, "business as usual" after the crucifixion of Jesus, when the veil was rent from top to bottom and it became obvious to all who had access into the temple, that the Presence of God was surely not there.

Although there is much more that could be included in this series of documents concerning the priesthood orders, this will be the last part of the study. The word, "Priest," along with variations such as "priesthood," is found approximately 960 times in the bible. Most of these occurrences are related to the priests of God. With this amount of attention to one particular subject, it is evident that we have only scratched the surface of what could be written. It was never intended that this be all inclusive and, as previously noted is for us to learn that the purpose of God for a kingdom of priests, which has not been changed, is being fulfilled by those called to the "high calling," in the priesthood He has chosen for our generation and the ages to come, the Priesthood after the Order of Melchizedek.

Anyone trying to fulfill God's righteousness by ministering from a "Mixture" of old order, and new order, will fail to be recognized as a priest as certainly as did those who tried to usurp the priesthood of Aaron, even though they may be a king. One of the realities that is intended to be brought to light is the seriousness attending those who have been set in place as sons and given the privilege of seeing, touching, and partaking of those holy and most holy heavenly gifts that God has given free to those qualifying to enter the kingdom through Jesus Christ.

The change of priesthood, which necessitated a change of the law, did not change God's

Eternal Purpose. The requirements of the law of the spirit of Life in Christ Jesus, that set us free from the law of sin and death, have been “elevated” to a standard that exceeds the law of Moses, making it even more “impossible” to fulfill its demands by carnal men. If we think the “Law” has been done away with \_\_\_ altogether \_\_\_ and “Grace” has taken the place of the Law, we will never ascend to the dimension where we experience the fullness of the Law of Liberty in Christ. Even the Law of Moses was “spiritual,” and was not contrary to the promises of God; but, it couldn’t be kept because of man’s carnality and could not impart LIFE. If it had been able to impart Life, then righteousness would have been based on the Law.

What shall we say then? “That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith; but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at *that* law.” Why? Because *they did not pursue it* by faith, but as though *it were* by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone, just as it is written, "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for *their* salvation. For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness. But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows: "DO NOT SAY IN YOUR HEART, 'WHO WILL ASCEND INTO HEAVEN?' (That is, to bring Christ down), or 'WHO WILL DESCEND INTO THE ABYSS?' (That is, to bring Christ up from the dead)." But what does it say? "THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART"--that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, that if you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. Rom 9:30-10:10)

If we have been able to get a glimpse into what is meant by a “kingdom of priests” and “a royal priesthood” we should have a better understanding of what it means to “believe” with our heart, resulting in righteousness and having a “confession” that results in salvation. It certainly does not mean to, “believe something about Jesus, say these words after me, and be saved.”

**A Song of degrees.** LORD, remember David, *and* all his afflictions: How he sware unto the LORD, *and* vowed unto the mighty *God* of Jacob; Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, *or* slumber to mine eyelids, Until I find out a place for the LORD, an habitation for the mighty *God* of Jacob. Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah: we found it in the fields of the wood. We will go into his tabernacles: we will worship at his footstool. Arise, O LORD, into thy rest; thou, and the ark of thy strength. Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let thy saints shout for joy. For thy servant David's sake turn not away the face of thine anointed. The LORD hath sworn *in* truth unto David; he will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne. If thy children will keep my covenant and my testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon thy throne for evermore. For the LORD hath chosen Zion; he hath desired *it* for his habitation. This *is* my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will also clothe her priests with salvation: and her saints shall shout aloud for joy. There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed. His enemies will I clothe with shame: but upon himself shall his crown flourish. (Psa132:1-18)

