

Exod 05-03-13b

Let's resume our study now. We'll return, at least nominally, to Exodus. I'm afraid that anything I say now is going to be anticlimactic after our lively break discussion on things related to the second death, the lake of fire, and the subject of our first session this morning.

But we're going to take a look at the actual functioning of the priesthood. We've looked at the garments. We've looked at the commissioning ceremony and the meaning of the sacrifices and the daubing of the blood and the pouring of the oil and everything that gets them cranked up.

It reminds me of a commissioning service for a military officer or graduation day at a service academy or graduation day at a boot camp when you finally have more or less completed all of your preparation. You've got your uniform on, you've got your orders in hand, and you're ready to go do the thing that you've been aiming at for quite a long period of time. This is the situation with the priest.

And this directly, we've talked about how important it is to be aware of our priesthood. We looked at that in our first service this morning, looking at what it says in Revelation chapter 5, what it says in Revelation chapter 20. The opportunity is there to be a priest in the future kingdom, in the future kingdoms.

The opportunity is there. There's not a reason in the world why you and I should not be in that number unless it is a lack of interest, some sort of apathy, some sort of indifference, some distraction, something that blocks our view. You know how I'm always tempted to sing the song, things that are higher, things that are nobler, these have allured my sight.

But you don't want something else to obscure your sight. Things that are lower, things that are baser, these have obscured my sight. I will hasten to Him, I will come to Thee.

I have resolved, I am resolved no longer to linger, charmed by the world's delights. But you don't want your vision obscured, you want it allured by things that are higher and nobler. This is what our priesthood is.

It is a higher and nobler calling. It's a great opportunity, we don't want to miss it. So, by looking at the priesthood of the Levites, and we say, okay, I'm with you, I see the importance, let's do this thing.

Well, we look at the Levites and their priesthood, and this informs us about how ours works. It's one thing to have a willingness. You put a child on their new bicycle they get for their birthday or Christmas, and they say, I want to ride a bike.

Well, how do you ride a bike? I'm 15 and some change, I want to drive a car. Well, here's the keys. I'm sitting in the front seat, quite knuckled.

Let's see if you can drive this thing. So, looking at the details of priesthood, this is what's going

to give us our driver education, as it were. The interesting thing that we saw in Acts chapter 6, when we went through that book, was that in the early days after Pentecost, when Peter and the other apostles were preaching, it says in chapter 6, verse 7 of Acts, the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

They are specifically mentioned. A great many priests were obedient. Why do you suppose that is? Who is in a better position to see the fulfillment of the Old Testament shadows in Christ than a priest? A great many of the priests figured this out.

It's their life's work. It's what they do. And you also recognize that this is a big step for them.

If you're a priest, and you come to Christ, what does it say in Hebrews chapter 6? You do not crucify yourself again and again, the Son of God, and put into an open shame. You've believed yourself out of a job if you're a priest. You're, I can't do this anymore.

It's been done. It's over. And so, this was a serious step.

And it's no small thing that a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith. What an incredible thing. But the nature of the priesthood in Israel was predictive.

It was a foreshadowing. And it was their job to make sure that people in Israel understood that this is a shadow. It is a ritual that reflects a needful reality.

And we have to repeat it year by year, month by month, week by week, day by day, because this is not the effectual system. This is what needs to happen, but it hasn't happened yet. And the natural question would arise in the heart and mind of an Israelite, when are we going to have to quit slaughtering the best bull, and the best goat, and the best sheep, every time something happens? We have a feast come by, we have Passover, we have this, and we're forever slaughtering the best out of our flocks and herds.

Is this ever going to end? Well, that's the subject of the book of Hebrews. That's the foundation that that whole book is written on. So, obviously, the Levites, the priestly Levites in particular, those who are sons of Aaron and functioning in the priesthood proper, are themselves representative of the future great high priest.

That's why they had to represent no blemish, no flaw, no scar, no missing parts to their body. They had a higher standard of purity because they are a picture. And the picture needs to be of Christ, and it needs to have those certain characteristics.

It doesn't have anything to say about having a scar, or sawing the end of your thumb off in a saw, or whatever it might be. All of us, I think everybody here has had an operation, or a scar, or something done to us where none of us could qualify as priests. We've all been under the knife, or had a disease, or something has happened to us.

There's no defect there, but it's the picture that counts. It is the body of Christ that has to be perfect to bear our sins. It's essential.

It's just as essential as His blood. The blood without the body doesn't work. The body without the blood doesn't work.

The life of the flesh is in the blood. But a bowl of blood is not a living thing. And flesh without blood is not a living thing either.

They both have to be there together to make the thing work. The animal sacrifice has to be a living animal with its blood, and you make the offering. So this is why you have the two elements of the communion table we talked about Friday night.

There is the cup, and there is the bread. There is the body, and there is the atoning work. And they are separate and distinct, and yet they are complementary.

Each is essential to the other. Well, the priests preside over this. That's what they do.

That's all they do, is focus their lives. They are not to be landowners. They are not to be businessmen.

They are assigned no inheritance in the land of Israel. They are accommodated. They are tenants on the land of the other tribes.

Because this is what they do. This is their assignment. So, if you read in the Word of God about the organization of the sons of Aaron into priests, you find that there are divisions within the priesthood so that they can do their job.

If you look in 1 Chronicles 24, these are the divisions of the sons of Aaron. The sons of Aaron were Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. Nadab and Abihu died before their father and had no children.

Therefore, Eleazar and Ithamar ministered as priests. David, with Zadok of the sons of Eleazar and Ahimelech of the sons of Ithamar, divided them according to the schedule of their service. Once you get to the monarchy, once you get to David, you have the anticipation of the temple.

You get geared up for the worship that will take place when Solomon builds the temple. So, David gets with Eleazar's head representative, which is Zadok, and he gets with Ahimelech, who is the head guy from Ithamar, the two great initial divisions under the priesthood, and he divides up the priests according to their schedule of service. There were more leaders found for the sons of Eleazar than the sons of Ithamar.

Thus, they were divided. Among the sons of Eleazar were sixteen heads of their father's houses. Eight heads of houses among the sons of Ithamar.

What do you get when you add sixteen plus eight? Twenty-four. It's kind of a familiar number

given our first session this morning. Thus, they were divided by lot, one group as another, for there were officials of the sanctuary and officials of the house of God from the sons of Eleazar and from the sons of Ithamar.

Two groups, two general groups from which they are drawn, making a total of twenty-four representatives. What two major groups do you suppose the twenty-four elders who are before the throne are drawn from in human history? Israel and the church would suggest itself to our minds, wouldn't it? Both sons of the same father in the priestly sense, and yet different households. One group larger than the other.

I leave it to you to speculate on which one is larger than the other. But the total is twenty-four. The scribe Shemaiah, the son of Nethanel, one of the Levites, wrote them down before the king, the leaders, Zadok the priest, Ahimelech the son of Abiathar.

So, what are we looking at here? They are divided, they are assigned, and they are written down in a book, written down on a scroll, written down in some fashion, aren't they? So there is a record. Some people are in the book, some people are not. The scribe Shemaiah writes them down.

The first lot fell, and then in the rest of these verses, from verse seven all the way down to verse thirty, where you get the sons of Mushi, Mali, Eder, and Jeremoth, these were the sons of the Levites according to their fathers' houses. These also cast lots, just as their brothers, the sons of Aaron did, in the presence of King David, Zadok, Ahimelech, and the heads of the fathers' houses. The priests and Levites, the chief fathers did, just as their younger brethren.

What is this talking about? Well, up through verse eighteen, you have the distinguishing, the assigning of the twenty-four courses of priests. When you get to verse nineteen, this was the schedule of their service for coming into the house of the Lord according to their ordinance, by the hand of Aaron their father, as the Lord God of Israel had commanded him. Verse twenty, the rest of the sons of Levi, of the sons of Amram, Shubael of the sons of Shubael-Jediah, concerning Rehoboiah of the sons of Rehoboiah, the first of Isha, all the rest of these sons of Levi, the sons of Amram, and so on, you have them assigned, in verse thirty, the sons of the Levites according to their fathers' houses, these cast lots, to determine their order.

They're going to serve in rotation. And, of course, that rotation was in effect in the days of the birth of John the Baptist, his father Zechariah tells us that his course had the duty, so to speak, and that's how he found himself in the temple facing the angel and losing his voice. So, this is the first thing to understand about the priests.

Not all of the priests function simultaneously. They rotate. They have an assignment.

We, as priests, are not all assigned the same duty. We are all priests before God, under the high priest Jesus Christ, in the order of Melchizedek, but we have different assignments. Not all of us function in priesthood and have some other duty, like these other sons in verse twenty and

following.

But all holy to the Lord. So, the courses that were instituted by David and Solomon were maintained, even after the captivity. You know, everything got messed up when the temple got knocked down.

The time of Ezra and Nehemiah coming back and building the walls, rebuilding the temple, reassembling the priesthood, people trying to figure out their heritage so that they could document that they were qualified. The duties of the priests and Levites are everything from security, guarding the gates, making sure that unauthorized people do not come in and defile the holy precincts. They themselves have to clean up.

You have sort of the janitor duties of cleaning up the offal. That's O-F-F-A-L. I don't get that word too much anymore, and it's a shame.

It's a good word. Nice euphemism for what's left behind when you have a lot of animals hanging around. There are the outer gates once the temple is built, and you have the city of Jerusalem proper.

You have various levels of security, various precincts that some people are allowed into. You have the court of the Gentiles, for example, and the Gate Beautiful that is the main entrance into the court of the women that existed in Jesus' day. I'm drawing here on Alfred Eidersheim, who has written a great book called *The Temple, Its Ministry and Services*.

He has pulled together not only the biblical statements and witness, but also what is known from rabbinical sources about how this all worked. He talks about the fact that the laws of Levitical cleanness, as explained by the rabbis, were most rigidly enforced upon worshippers and priests. If a leper or any other who was defiled ventured into the sanctuary, or any priest officiated in a state of uncleanness, he would, if discovered, be dragged out and killed, without form of process, by what's called the rebel's beating.

People were dragged out and beaten to death. Now, we've seen with some shock some of the videos that were shot during the days of the Taliban, and what they would do when they found a woman who didn't have her little gunny sack on properly or something, and they would take sticks and in some cases beat women severely, and in a few cases, I saw a video of them being shot or executed in other violent fashion. Well, this is not an unknown idea in the Middle East.

And it goes back. Now, does the Bible say anything about this? Does the Bible, does God specify death for the leper who wanders into the wrong place, or the priest who officiates? Is that what Scripture says? It does not. This is the human help that has been provided to God's system by the oral Torah, the oral law, that was accreted like barnacles on the hull of God's great ship, slowing it down and impeding its progress through the water and making it ugly instead of beautiful.

But this is what they did. The Sabbath rest was strictly enforced. There was times that were

fixed and were assiduously observed for the various sacrifices.

Each course of priests and Levites came on duty for a week from one Sabbath to another. The service of the week was divided among the families that made up the course. So if there were five houses of fathers, three served each one day and two each two days, and it was all down to a very complex system of how many courses are there, how many families, this is how many days you have, and they broke it all down as to who would show up and do the work.

The point here is it was important that people recognize their assignment and show up and do it. If it's your day for the course, this is like having the duty in the military. If you're supposed to be the regimental duty officer, it's your job to make sure that you've got a uniform out of the cleaners or out of the press shop or wherever it comes from, that you get there by whatever means, that you are aware of what your duties are, you know what your scope of responsibility is, you show up when you're supposed to show up and you do what you're supposed to do.

So the first principle that we observe here as we look at the functioning of the priests is you have to know what your assignment is. What is my course? What is my duty day? And on that day, what am I supposed to do? Do I have my priestly robes? Am I there on time, fully equipped to do my job? How does that pertain to our spiritual priesthood? We have responsibilities with regard to keeping ourselves pure, keeping short accounts with the Lord. Evening and morning and at noon, will I pray and cry aloud? He will hear my voice.

To walk in the light, to draw near with all of the conditions that we are studying in Hebrews chapter 10 so that we are sprinkled and cleansed and fully functional. God can't use impure priests. Do we really want to dabble in forms of entertainment or in lines of thought or in other activities that disqualify us and defile us so that our priesthood doesn't work? There's too much on the line.

It's not worth it. If you keep your eye... We had a good question on the break and a couple of people pointed out that isn't it something that John cried when he saw the seven seals on the scroll and that there was no one available to open it. He wept.

And it seems kind of odd in the context. What are you crying about? It's a scroll. It's got seals.

What's the big deal? It is understanding what's on the line with that scroll that makes it such a big deal that John weeps. And a good observation. If he knows the Lord Jesus from personal experience, he is aware he heard John the Baptist say, Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world, then why is he crying? Instead of crying and saying there's nobody worthy, why isn't he looking around poking the angel with his elbow saying, Hey, where's the Lamb? Where's the Son of God? Where's the one who defeated death on the cross? But he's weeping.

What does it tell us? It's important that we look at things and recognize their significance. Recognize their import. Recognize their priority.

And there is a time to be righteously indignant. There is a time to be sad and weep over the

state of things. Even though we're knowledgeable.

Even though we have learned a lot of the Word of God. What are you made of that your heart is not sad when you look at the lost in our fallen world who can't see the Lord Jesus and do not have any desire to believe in Him and rescue themselves from eternal damnation? If that doesn't make you sad, there's something the matter with you. And I know it's the righteousness of God.

I know it's the justice of God. But it is a sad, sad thing that there are those who will not see, who willingly blind themselves and allow the God of this world to blind them, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ who is the image of God should shine unto them. It's tragic.

And it's something that ought to have some sort of response. And it's just as John did. But the point is, these priests have an assignment.

They're written down. They know their place. They know their function.

They know when and where they're supposed to be and how they're supposed to do their job. We should be the same way in our priesthood. That's our first point.

On Sabbath days, there was a lot of extra stuff going on on the Sabbath, so everybody in the course showed up on the Sabbath. On the weekdays, the assigned portion of the course for that day would show up. On the Feast of Tabernacles, all 24 courses were required to show up and officiate.

Kind of interesting. What does the Feast of Tabernacles connote? What does it represent? Dwelling in booths, dwelling in temporary dwellings, and Jesus Christ is God tabernacling among men. And so Abraham dwelt in tents looking for a city whose founder and builder was God.

Israel dwelt in tents awaiting the day when God would give them the land. It is a time of anticipation. All priests officiate on that feast representing the anticipation of when we trade in a tent for a city.

We trade in our fallen and corrupt flesh for our resurrection body. We trade in this fallen world for the kingdom of Christ. The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ.

That's what we look forward to. And all of the priests were on duty on that day. So, the priests who were actually engaged in the service of the temple were not allowed to drink wine either by day or by night.

It doesn't mean they could never, you know, the lips that touch liquor will never touch wine, or I would never impart, you know, like the Nazarite vow or something, never touch wine. That wasn't the idea. It's when they are on duty in the function of their priesthood, no wine.

Why is that? By the way, the same guidance was given for the king. If you go over to Proverbs, you know, the king ought to abstain. Why? In the function of rulership for a king, what does alcohol tend to do? You're relaxed, you're gregarious, your judgment declines, your sense of general well-being increases, your reflexes are slow.

You know, why do we not drink and drive? Well, you're not at your best, you're not your sharpest, you're not incisive, you are not alert. That is a time of relaxation. Nothing wrong with drinking wine, but not when you're on duty.

How many thousands of policemen on TV shows have said, can't, I'm on duty. Well, the priest on duty does not drink. What is the point here? We do not want anything to distract us, to make us less alert, less aggressive in the performance of our priesthood.

Nothing ought to impede it. Anything that messes up our priesthood ought to be eliminated. We can't afford it.

If it's wine, get rid of the wine. So to speak. So, no drinking while on duty.

The other families during the week of ministry, even if they're not on duty, if their course is on duty for that week, there's no wine except at night. Because if somebody had an accident and could not serve, they are the reserve. They are the guys who step in.

The rest of the course might have to step in if somebody is taken ill or is taken out or run over by an oxcart or something. They short a guy. They are the backup.

They're on call, so to speak. They're the first substitute. So, you don't want to be in the middle of guzzling down a skin of wine and, well, you know, Azariah fell down and broke his leg so you've got to go and shizzle rizzle.

You know, he's going down there trying to... It's not going to work. So, during the day, they did not partake of wine even when they were sort of on call rather than on duty. This is serious dedication to being ready if and when called.

The nation of Israel, as we've said before, Exodus 19, 5 and 6, is a special treasure to God above all people. They are or were to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. The substitutionary picture of the Levites standing in for the firstborn is the picture of transition from this kingdom of priests where the senior patriarch in every tent and every clan is the priest.

He has been redeemed by a Levite. So, the Levites are substitutionally taking care of the priesthood for all Israel. And so, there's a sense in which that remains true.

And there's a sense in which it has been done vicariously. And the same is true for us. We are unable to serve on our own without the Lord Jesus Christ being our substitute and standing in our place and making it possible for us to serve.

The remnant, the element within the church at large that actually understands and functions

within priesthood is in a sense the redeeming factor for the whole church. Jesus, I quoted this verse during the break, wants to present to himself a glorious church without spot or wrinkle or any such thing but that it should be holy and without blemish. Well, the church at large is not all qualified for that.

It is a minority. So, in the same way that the priests who are on duty sort of stand in for all the Levites and for all the Israelites, that's our job. And it is important that we recognize that there's a lot of people not doing it and if we know, then we ought to be motivated to be one of the ones that stands in the gap, that makes a wall, so that God doesn't say, well, this church thing is not working out at all, as it were.

We saw that in Ezekiel the other night. Priests were trained. They had to undergo a course of instruction.

They were examined before they were allowed to officiate. They had to sort of pass a test. I'm a licensed priest.

I've got my Levitical badge here that I can flash showing I've been through training and got my diploma, graduated. They were still subject to law in Israel, could be brought up on charges just like anybody else. The rulers of the synagogues in the later days after the captivity, the teachers of the people, leaders of their devotions, all other officials were not necessarily priests, but were simply chosen for learning and fitness.

Anyone whom the elders or rulers deemed qualified for it might, at their request, address the people on the Sabbath with a word of exhortation. Anybody that the rulers thought had something good to say could speak. This is how Jesus, who was not a priest and not a Levite, often stood up in synagogue and even at the temple, addressed people.

Because if there was a ruler like Nicodemus or Joseph of Arimathea who said, I think we ought to let this guy air himself out in front of the people, they could do so. It is distinctly stated that if he committed an offense which by the law deserved whipping, the great Sanhedrin whipped him and then had him restored again to his office, even the high priest himself. Every year, an ecclesiastical council was appointed to instruct him in his duties for the Day of Atonement, the high priest, in case he were not learned or, at any rate, to see that he knew it and remembered it.

So there is training involved to make sure people know what they are supposed to do. This is why we focus so intensively on the study of the Word of God. We can't function in any of our roles, and particularly not in our priesthood, if we don't know what we are doing, if we don't know what we are looking forward to, if we don't know what is on the line.

We need training and we know that we are subject to discipline. Whom the Lord loves, He chastens. He scourges every son whom He receives.

No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but we know that afterward it yields the peaceable

fruit of righteousness. That means it encourages our faith. Discipline encourages faith, because the only way we gain righteousness is by faith, right? So if discipline yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness, what does discipline do for us specifically? It motivates faith.

That is how discipline creates righteousness for us. The peaceable fruit is the fruit of faith. Discipline impels, compels, motivates our faith.

That's how it works. That was true for the priests. The office was hereditary.

You couldn't just come as a proselyte and say, well, I'm joining Israel and I'd like to pick the tribe of Levi and could I please start training to be a priest? You couldn't come in that way. You had to be born into it. We are priests by the new birth.

We are born into our priesthood. There was no fixed age for entering on the office of high priest any more than on that of an ordinary priest. The Talmud says 20 years old.

But as Idershein points out, Aristobulus, one of the Maccabees, was only 16 years of age when he was officiating as high priest in the temple and Herod got jealous and had him killed. But of course that's late. The Maccabees weren't necessarily Levites and so on.

But the entrance of Levites is fixed in the sacred text at 30 during the wilderness period. And after that, when the work required less bodily strength but a larger number of ministers at 25 years of age. So this comes out of Numbers chapter 4 and 1 Chronicles 23.

The idea being there is a level of maturity required even though you may have a bar mitzvah at 13. You don't run in there. Samuel was something of an exception in that he served as a priest even as a child.

He wore an ephod in 1 Samuel. But generally it is a requirement that there be some maturity. And that's why it's so important for us to grow in grace and knowledge.

The dress of the priest we've already talked about. The duties are what we're looking at this morning. The classes of officials that were designated and assigned within the priesthood is post-Mosaic law.

And we're not going to talk about that. There were 14 different levels of officer that were assigned. One of those, by the way, is the Sagan or the Sagan.

Carl Sagan. His name comes from the name of one of these 14 offices of the high priest, whether he knew it or not. But this brings us to the point of the duties involving sacrifice.

The sacrifices were handled officially, the actual offering of the sacrifice by the priest. But turn with me to Numbers chapter 3. There is a lot that goes on as far as logistical support to make the sacrifices happen. Once again, you have the names of the sons.

Nadab and Abihu died before the Lord. So Eliezer and Ithamar minister. God says, Bring the

tribe of Levi near.

In verse 6, Present them before Aaron and the priests that they may serve him. This is the tribe of Levi. They shall attend his needs and the needs of the whole congregation before the tabernacle meeting to do the work of the tabernacle.

They shall attend to the furnishings of the tabernacle meeting to the needs of the children of Israel to do the work. You shall give the Levites to Aaron and his sons. They are given entirely to him from among the children of Israel.

You shall appoint Aaron and his sons. They shall attend to the priesthood. The outsider who comes near shall be put to death.

Verse 14, The Lord spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, Number the children of Levi by their fathers' houses, by their families. You shall number every male from a month old and above. They numbered them.

You can see all the sons of Gershim and the sons of Kohath and the sons of Merari. Verse 22, Those who were numbered according to the number of all the males from a month and above. 7,500.

It goes on to give the whole list. This is where they are matched up and used as redemption for the firstborn. That's what the whole chapter 3 talks about.

Look at chapter 4. After the redemption, money is given for those who are different. The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, Take a census of the sons of Kohath from among the children of Levi by their families, by their fathers' houses, from thirty years old and above. This is what we just talked about.

From thirty to fifty. All who enter the service to do the work of the tabernacle. Meaning, this is the service of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle related to the holy things.

When the camp prepares to journey, Aaron and his sons will come. They will take down the covering veil and cover the Ark of the Testimony with it. Remember when we talked about the collapsible Holy of Holies? This is it.

They take down the veil, the sons of Kohath, and cover the Ark of the Testimony with it. Then they put on it the covering of badger skins. Spread over that the cloth entirely of blue.

Insert its poles. On the table of showbread they shall spread a blue cloth. Put on it the dishes, the pans, the pitchers, the showbread.

Spread over them a scarlet cloth. Cover the same with the covering of badger skins. Insert its poles.

Take a blue cloth. Cover the lampstand of the light with its lamps, its wick trimmers, its trays,

and all its oil vessels with which they service it. Obviously the lamp has been put out at this point.

Otherwise you're going to have a busy industry making coverings for it. They shall put it with all its utensils, covering of badger skins. Put on it a carrying beam.

Put it on a carrying beam. Over the golden altar spread a blue cloth. Cover it with the skin of badger skins.

Insert the poles. Take the utensils of service. Blue cloth, covering of badger skins, carrying beam.

Take away the ashes from the altar. Spread a purple cloth over it. Put on it all its implements.

Remember the altar could contain virtually all the rest of the furniture. It was so big. Fire pans, forks, shovels, basins, utensils of the altar.

Spread on it covering of badger skins. Insert the poles. When Aaron and the sons have finished covering the sanctuary, verse 15, and all the furnishings of the sanctuary when the camp is set to go, the sons of Kohath shall come to carry them.

But they shall not touch any holy thing lest they die. These are the things in the tabernacle of meeting which the sons of Kohath are to carry. The appointed duty of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, is the oil for the light and the sweet incense, the daily grain offering, the anointing oil, the oversight of the tabernacle of all the tenant with the sanctuary and its furnishings.

Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, verse 18, Do not cut off the tribe of the families of the Kohathites from among the Levites, but do this in regard to them that they may live and not die when they approach the most holy things. Aaron and his sons shall go in and appoint each of them to his service and his task. But they shall not go into watch while the holy things are being covered lest they die.

These are Levites, and yet they do not have the privileges of the actual functioning priests. There is a distinction in assignment and there is a distinction in the level of privilege. This carries forward.

What did we see in Revelation? The ones who are holy and blameless will be priests. Others will be there but will not get to do the things that the priests get to do. Who do you think is going to get to partake of the hidden manna? Who is going to walk in white with Christ? Who is going to get to sit with him on his throne? We tend to think, well, there is going to be this select few.

It is going to be like the awards ceremony in high school where somebody else walks across the stage and I am sitting in the audience. That is for the geeks. That is for the people who are... Not at all.

You and I ought to be in this group. There is not a reason in the world why all of us should not

be serving as priests and have these rights and opportunities. You don't have to be the Apostle Paul.

You don't have to be John the Baptist. You don't have to be some impossibly high attainer of faith and righteousness. We just have to fulfill our assignment.

It is not difficult. You and I have the rights of American citizens unless we commit felonies that have our rights taken away. And it is by dereliction of duty that believer priests lose privilege, lose their meros portion, lose their potentials.

It is not a matter of working hard to attain something. It is a matter of working hard to maintain something. This is our destiny.

Everybody wants to talk about destiny. This is our destiny. This is what we have been predestined for.

It is not a matter of attaining it. It is a matter of not losing it for us. We are priests.

We are a kingdom of priests. And it is by forfeiture that we lose our meros. It is by forfeit that we lose our inheritance.

Verse 21, The Lord spoke to Moses, Take a census of the sons of Gershon, by their families. We've seen the sons of Kohath. We've seen the sons of Eleazar.

Now we're looking at the sons of Gershon by their father's house and families, 30 years old, 50 years old. Enter to perform the service. They, verse 25, shall carry the curtains of the tabernacle and the tabernacle meeting with his coverings, badger skins, screen for the door, screen for the door of the gate of the court, hangings of the court, cords, furnishings.

Aaron and his sons shall assign all the service of the sons of the Gershonites, all their tasks and all their service, and you shall appoint to them all their tasks as a duty. There is a hierarchy. The priests tell the other Levites, You are in charge of picking up the tent pegs.

You are in charge of the silver blocks. You are in charge of the poles. You are in charge of the curtains.

There is structure. There is authority. And they don't take a democratic vote.

God assigns the authority. What is the authority in our system? God has set up authority within families. God has set up authority within marriages.

It's not a matter of quality. It isn't like the sons of Kohath or the sons of Gershon were somehow inferior. But this is their assignment.

And it's critically important. What's going to happen if they try to move the camp and the tabernacle doesn't go? Whoops, I forgot the veil. Whoops, I forgot the silver blocks.

I left them back in the previous campsite. We just got busy, you know, and had them all piled up there. It's important.

All of these things are important. Everyone has a place in God's plan. You have a place in God's plan.

I have a place in God's plan. We are all, in some way, shape, or form, contributing to the priestly function that is epitomized in the Lord Jesus Christ. And if we seem to have a humble assignment, fine.

He that is faithful in that which is least will be faithful also in that which is much. The last shall be first. The first shall be last.

So, as we contemplate the week ahead, as we go forward and try to apply our priesthood, we will wrap up our study of the Levitical priests in terms of their duties next week. But in terms of our priesthood, it is all a matter of being two things, aware and faithful. You can't be faithful if you're not aware.

And you can't be aware if you're not faithful. If we remember who we are and why we're here, and then we dedicate ourselves to doing what we're supposed to do, there's no reason for any of us to lose our portion and to not be giant reflectors of God's glory in the age to come. Let's close in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for the truth of your word, the graphic ways that you have illustrated the truths that pertain to us. May God the Holy Spirit impress it on our hearts in such a way that we will be motivated and encouraged and strengthened in the task that has been assigned to us. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen.