

SESSION #41 (4 January 2011); Deut 18:1-8; Israel's Priesthood & Its Illegitimate Carryover into the Church

I. INTRODUCTION & REVIEW

1:1-5	Introduction to God's spokesman, the 1 st Prophet Moses
1:6 - 4:40	1 st Exposition of the Torah = <u>motivation to obey</u> from (1) <u>past gracious actions of Yahweh</u> and (2) <u>sovereign destiny of the nation (future gracious actions of Yahweh)</u>
4:41-49	Editorial comment on context of 2 nd Exposition of the Torah
5:1 - 26:19	2 nd Exposition of the Torah = proper response to Yahweh in heart and soul
5:1 - 11:32	Loving Yahweh with <u>all the heart</u>
12:1 - 26:19	Loving Yahweh with <u>all the soul</u> (<i>nephesh</i> =life)
12:1 - 13:18	Theological unity of Israel's tribes and its Enforcement (esp 1 st , 2 nd , and by implication the corresponding 9 th , 10 th commandments)
14:1-21	Enforcement of Distinct Cultural Sustenance from Life to Death (a witness consistent with Yahweh's name, see 3rd commandment)
14:22 - 16:17	A Distinct Culture of Theocentric Faith in God's Economic Order (with emphasis upon the 4 th and by implication the corresponding 8 th commandment)
16:18 - 18:22	A Distinct Culture of Human Authority Under God's Justice (emphasis upon human authority starting in the home—the 5 th commandment and by implication the 7 th commandment)
16:18 - 17:13	Authority & Function of Israel's Judges
17:14-20	Authority & Nature of Israel's King
18:1-8	Authority & Nature of Israel's Priests
18:9-22	Authority & Nature of Israel's Prophets

Chap 12-26 expounds the implication of the 10 commandments throughout the theocratic society of Israel
Yahweh is King → theocracy = unique social arrangement in human history (true only of ancient Israel)

- (1) Based upon outworking of the _[Abrahamic "contract"] = channel of blessing to the world (channel & custodian of divine revelation—**Rom 3:2; 9:4**; source of the concept of Messiah and the Messiah Himself—**Rom 9:5**; the key nation for bringing into existence the Kingdom of God by a yet future national, sincere, welcoming of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Messiah—**Matt 23:39 cf 21:9**);
- (2) Uniquely functioning linkage between _[nature & the national obedience or disobedience]_ to Yahweh (conforming to the Mosaic contract stipulations and prophets' announcements of His lawsuits to implement the cursings—**Deut 28**—in contrast to a less clear and time-lagging relationship between nature and Gentile nations' obedience and disobedience—**Acts 17:26-27; Rev. 6-18**).

Loving Yahweh with all the heart =

Loving Yahweh with all the "nephesh" (life)

A word about utilizing this revelational material today:

- (1) We seek wisdom principles within it that can be [_brought out_] of the theocratic contractual arrangement;
- (2) We seek principles that are expressions of God's creation design of human society that function whether within [_theocratic Israel_] or outside it;
- (3) We seek to filter out those features that are [_unique_] to the theocratic contractual relationship with Yahweh

Examples in **16:18-18:22**

- (1) Office of judge (Lessons #38-40a): requirement for local, immediate access to justice, elimination of influential manipulation of judges; need for a transcendental standard of justice external to individual judges which ultimately must be the righteous character of the immutable self-revealing God of the Bible, use of strict rules of evidence, need to address violated consciences to protect against moral fatigue and attenuation of laws, and the legitimacy of capital punishment.
- (2) Office of king (Lesson #40b): limitations on the authority granted to the supreme civil office including the requirement to intimately know the laws that define the office [office holder is under law]; limitation of being preservative of society by restraining evil—domestic and foreign—and allowing good actions without becoming a redemptive institution with a utopian agenda.

II. AUTHORITY & NATURE OF ISRAEL'S PRIESTS (Deut 18:1-8)

Tonight we address the 3rd type of authority—the priesthood.

A. Importance for the Church.

- Priests act as intermediaries between God and man in the Old Testament, but nowhere in the post-Pentecostal Church New Testament record does it exist outside of Jesus Christ Himself.
- Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches insist upon continuing the priesthood as the core ministry of the Church rather than the teaching, evangelistic, and edifying ministries as core.

Issue: what, if any, is the role of priesthood in the Church?

B. NT Depiction of Church officials

No NT evidence exists of any office outside of the “apostle,” “elder,” and the “deacon.” “Elder” was taken over [_from Israel_] as recognizing the natural authority of older and wiser men (see **Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2, 22-23; 1 Tim 4:14; Titus 1:5; 1 Pet 5:1-3**). “Elder” was synonymous with “bishop” (**Acts 20:17, 28; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:1**)

“In light of later developments, it is striking that nowhere in the New Testament are elders invested with a priestly function which sets them apart from the rest of the church. Moreover, no list of spiritual gifts includes a particular *charisma* for performing priestly functions. The purpose of all the gifts was the edification of the Church, not mediation between God and other church members.” Ronald E. Diprose, *Israel and the Church*, . . . Peter and the writer to the Hebrews make it clear that priesthood is a prerogative of all members of the spiritual house which Christ is building. . . .” Ronald Diprose, *Israel and the Church*, p 102.

C. Development of the Roman Catholic Priesthood

“For our purposes it is significant that, according to [two Roman Catholic scholars who write concerning ecclesiology and ecclesiastical institutions in the early church], certain elements in the developing Christian liturgy were patterned on aspects of Jewish liturgy.”

Diprose, p. 104

Rise of Replacement Theology and the Results:

1 st Clement (AD 90-100 epistle from Rome to Corinth)	Mentions three levels of priestly ministry distinguished from laity using Levitical terminology
Ignatius (AD 35-107)	Mentions priest-laity distinction plus an altar for the Eucharist
Justin Martyr (AD 100-165)	Applies OT promises given to Israel to the Church; Eucharist described as analogous to the OT Levitical sacrifices and central to the Church’s ministry
Irenaeus (AD 130-200)	Develops further the parallel between OT Levitical sacrifices and Eucharist as the sacrifice conducted by Church priesthood through making an invocation to God
Origen (AD 185-254)	Physical OT Israel only a “type” of the true people of God; thus there exists levels of priesthood in the Church from “priest” to “pontiff”
Cyprian (AD ?? – 258)	Not only assimilated OT priestly and sacrificial categories into the Church but read back Christian terminology into the OT; limited the term “catholic” to churches linked in sacrifice and priesthood to Rome

Erroneous use of this OT revelational material due to misunderstanding of the relationship of Israel to the Church.

18:1 the Levitical priests—indeed the whole tribe of Levi....

Defines the office: see **Num 18:1-7, 21-24**.

vv1-7 “bear the iniquity” = carry on the duties relating to the sins of the people (that’s the function of a priest, to deal with sin!)

18:22 “not come near the tabernacle” = separation from God is the theocratic theme

Num 3:10 → Levitical priests were armed and would kill unauthorized people who approached the “sacred space”.

NOTE: without proper sacrifice for sin, *no one can approach God in spite of contemporary religious sentimentalism*; that’s why Jesus is the “way. . . and no one comes to the Father except through me” **John 14:6**

Therefore replacement theology in the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox Churches concerning the priesthood virtually removes the finished work of Christ.

Priests were custodians of the nation’s Scripture (Deut 17:18) → Word of God honored by its presence within the sacred space close to the physical Presence of God

High Priest had access to limited revelation in sense of yes/no answers pertaining to obedience to existing Scripture (**Ex 28:29-30; Num 27:18-21**)

Economic incentive for the Levites to lead Israel in obedience to the Mosaic contract with Yahweh: Gary North’s commentary on Deuteronomy: // SLIDE #5 // [quote]

//////// SLIDE #5 ////////// [quote]

“The multiplication of the Israelite population – long life (Ex. 20:12) coupled with no miscarriages (Ex. 3:26) – would have shrunk the size of each inheriting generation’s family plot. We might even call this God’s plot against family plots. The Levites would have been owners of urban real estate, which would rise in value as Israelites moved from the farms and aliens moved to Israel. God placed them in the geographical centers of future economic growth, assuming that the nation kept God’s covenant.”

POINT: These textual details contain very sophisticated economic wisdom thus evidencing the authenticity of the Word of God.

III. AUTHORITY & NATURE OF ISRAEL’S PROPHETS (Deut 18:9-22)

Final office: the prophet brought into existence to deal with the problem of detailed revelation of God’s response to Israel’s obedience or disobedience to the Mosaic contract.

A. Pagan Attempts to Gain Divine Guidance (Deut 18:9-14).

All these techniques are attempts to counterfeit authentic revelation. Why?

- (1) Knowledge of the future is virtually priceless
- (2) In paganism there is no Creator/creature distinction so any “god” might be able to be manipulated (early form of lobbying)

22:10-11 son or daughter pass through fire

Could be “pass through” type or actual child sacrifice = “I offer up my treasure to god X to procure knowledge of the future”

Cf **Lev 20:1-5** (Molech is a mocking name; made of consonants m-l-k for “king” and vowels o-e from bosest from “abomination”)

Eventually corrupt Jews yielded to this practice (**2 Kings 21:1-9; 2 Chron 28:1-4**)

practicing witchcraft (or divination)

Use of arrows in a quiver (**Ezk 21:21f**) or something like that (today Ouija board, pendulum swinging, etc.)

All various techniques of manipulation and magic trying to control the future.

Spiritist, one who calls up the dead

1 Sam 28:1-19!! (cf Isa 29:4)

Very real demonic activity. Remember Karl Jung!! Bishop Pike

18:12 drives them out

Canaanites were deeply involved in demon worship

18:14 has not appointed such for you

IV CONCLUSION

Offices of judge, king, and priest were carefully balanced under the authority of the Torah.

- Judge was civilian official who held court and sentenced
- King was an “add on” by unfaithful Israel that demanded a visible central government
- Priest was to separate the people from God and tend to sacrifices and atonement for sin

None of these possessed any authority to speak for God or had access to additional revelation (except High Priest with Urim and Thummim for yes/no type decisions).