

#265 Kingdom: Priesthood

Exo 19: 4] `You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and **brought you to Myself.** [5] `Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep **My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine;** [6] **and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'** These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.”

There is no question about the purpose of God for bringing Israel out of Egypt. He heart was to have a corporate nation of priests. God wanted to establish a kingdom on earth in which everybody would be priests of God and acknowledge that they are God's own possession. He created them and then purchased them from slavery in Egypt. This “kingdom of priests” were to be God's witness to all the other peoples of the earth with the testimony that all the earth belongs to God.

Israel had a valid promise from God to become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Then we may ask why then didn't God's promise come true? Because there were conditions set forth that required Israel's obedience. The conditions were that they should hear His voice, keep His covenant and obey. We also discover they were supposed to ascend the mountain into His Presence.

Deut 5: 4] “The LORD spoke to you face to face at the mountain from the midst of the fire, [5] while I was standing between the LORD and you at that time, to declare to you the word of the LORD; **for you were afraid because of the fire and did not go up the mountain.**

Since no one can see God's glory directly and live God said He would come down in a thick cloud. Exo 19: 9] And the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, I shall come to you in a thick cloud, in order that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe in you forever.”

In Deuteronomy 4 & 5 many other details are recorded so we can know the rest of the story. The summation is that Israel had good intentions and a desire to become a kingdom of priests but were just not prepared for the extreme terror of experiencing His Presence and hearing His voice that shook the earth. They asked that Moses would go up the mountain and hear from God and them come and tell them what He said.

Deut 5: 24] “And you said, `Behold, the LORD our God has shown us His glory and His greatness, and we have heard His voice from the midst of the fire; we have seen today that God speaks with man, yet he lives. [25] **`Now then why should we die? For this great fire will consume us; if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any longer, then we shall die.** [26] `For who is there of all flesh, who has heard the voice of the living God speaking from the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived? [27] **`Go near and hear all that the LORD our God says; then speak to us all that the LORD our God will speak to you, and we will hear and do it.'**

When we put all the details together we will discover what God expects in His Kingdom of Priests.. But how do we know that Exodus 19 even applies to us?

1 Pet 2: 4] And coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected by men, but choice and precious in the sight of God, [5] you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, **to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God** through Jesus Christ.

1Pet 2:8 for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed. [9] **But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION**, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; [10] for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.

Peter quotes Exodus 19 and applies it directly to the church to which he is writing. Since this applies to us we should understand the conditions for the fulfillment. We need to go up the mountain, hear His voice, keep His covenant and obey. Become a holy nation and His own possession. Out of this intimacy He will make us a kingdom of priests [a Royal Priesthood] and a people for His own possession because "all the earth belongs solely to Him" and He doesn't share ownership with any one.

Now we don't need to go out looking for a earthly mountain to climb because this mountain of Sinai has been replaced with the heavenly Mt. Zion. But where will we find that mountain? In Hebrews 12 we see Mt. Zion refers to the Most Holy Place in the Tabernacle of God. The Tabernacle of Moses is a graphic example of the Tabernacle of God so we see the Holy Place Life and ministry is the next stop on our journey to becoming a Kingdom of Priests. The Outer Court experiences clearly represent our preparation for going on to the next restoration which we are identifying as the "priesthood ministry." My theory is that this "priesthood ministry" toward God will supercede and excel the five-fold ministry of the Outer Court which is toward the people. This may require a further explanation.

Every tribe and nation and peoples demand government. They will have an appointed leader over them to guide them and to form a government for their safety and peace. If a leader is disappointing in his leadership they will kill him or remove him and appoint someone else.

Every people will have a god that they recognize as worthy of their worship. That god may be material as a stone or wood or spiritual as a demon but all peoples require a god. That is built into society at creation. If they lose contact with the only true God they will create one of their own. The reason is because they have an inherent desire to worship something and they connect disasters and trouble and sickness to some outside force or maybe the gods are angry. Because it is complicated for each individual in a society to appease an angry god they will appoint a priest to act in their behalf. He will spend his time and effort to learn what that god requires and how he can be appeased and then act in behalf of the society.

These gods may be departed saints who will act in behalf of the worshipers. The priests are called "santero" in Spanish. Artemis was the goddess of the Ephesians. In Greece there were many gods.

These priests were expected to stand between the people and the god and act in their behalf. They

were to appeal to the god in behalf of the people and appeal to the people in behalf of the god. Priest then means one who stands between.

If there is a perceived conflict between the god and the people the priest becomes the mediator between the two. If there is a perceived sin against their god the priest must find out what retribution is necessary to cover the sin and satisfy the god.

God's purpose with Israel was for every person to act in his own behalf before God, come up into His Presence, keep His covenant, hear His voice and obey. Still, there is one more ministry that is implied in "for all the earth is mine." There is a whole earth out there that doesn't know God and have no idea how to be reconciled to God. If Israel would become a Kingdom of Priests they could be the mediator between God and the other nations and peoples of the earth. All the nations of the earth then could be reconciled and blessed by God through Israel. In the restoration that came through Calvary that ministry of reconciliation has been given to the church.

2 Cor 5: 17] Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. [18] Now all these things are from God, **who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation,** [19] namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, **and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.**

2CO 5:20 Therefore, **we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were** entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. [21] He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Mat 28: 18] And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. [19] "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Rom 15: 15] But I have written very boldly to you on some points, so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God, [16] **to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, that my offering of the Gentiles might become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.**

Most of the commentaries say that every believer IS part of that Kingdom of priests because every believer becomes the temple of the Holy Spirit and are therefore automatically a kingdom of Priests. There is a tremendous difference between the sanctuary itself [the temple] and the priesthood that stood before God and ministered to Him. This represent the confusion that is between the Outer Court Levites and the priests after the order of Aaron. The Levites did the work of service while the order of Aaron stood before the people in behalf of God and also before God on behalf of the people. They could enter into the Holy Place life and ministry and eat of the holy things and offer the Incense before God. They interceded with God for the people.

Martin Luther understood that every believer was called to that holy priesthood and assumed that

if they were justified by faith that was all that was required. The Outer Court preparations of the priests in the Tabernacle of Moses depicts the process of setting apart a holy priesthood for Himself.

The commentaries assume that all that is required is to believe in Jesus and ignore the preparations. To be called to the Holy Priesthood is one thing but to be qualified is quite another. Therefore, we must make certain about His calling and choosing us. This priesthood must function out of the Kingdom because it is a kingdom of priests. Therefore, entrance into the Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ must first be granted us.

This Kingdom government of God then is to be administered by this Kingdom of Priests. In other words this priesthood is to stand between the Government of God and the nations or peoples of the earth. They [the priests] are to minister to God on behalf of the people and minister to the nations in behalf of God and act as reconcilers. God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. Jesus Christ is functioning as the High Priest between us and God dealing with our sins and trespasses. Now Christ is in us reconciling the world to Himself through us. Paul said “We beg you on behalf of Christ be reconciled to God.

We could say that Christ is an ambassador for God acting on His behalf toward us. He is also an ambassador for us before God, always making intercession for His redeemed people. Now this “priesthood ministry” acts as His ambassador to the nations speaking on His behalf to the nations. The redeemed people also act as ambassadors for the nations before God and speak to God on their behalf, always making intercession for them. We are begging the nations on behalf of Christ to be reconciled to God. If we have no active ministry as reconcilers to God and ambassadors for Christ, can we really claim to be priests of God? To claim to be a Kingdom of Priests with no active ministry to God or to the nations is foolish.

Therefore, Paul could confidently say in Romans 15: 15] But I have written very boldly to you on some points, so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God, [16] **to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, that my offering of the Gentiles might become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.** [17] Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God. [18] For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed, [19] in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. [20] And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, that I might not build upon another man’s foundation; [21] but as it is written, “THEY WHO HAD NO NEWS OF HIM SHALL SEE, AND THEY WHO HAVE NOT HEARD SHALL UNDERSTAND.”

This Kingdom of Priests should have a fulfillment here in this life before it has a fulfillment in the ages yet to come. Witnessing to sinners in the practice of some evangelicals is one thing but is really shallow in comparison to standing between God and the nations as ambassadors of Christ and carrying out the priesthood ministry of reconciliation and intercession on behalf of Christ is quite another. To stand before Christ and act in behalf of the nations, ministering as a priest

before God and interceding for the nations, demonstrates the profile of the Kingdom of Priests. Saying that we are “all priests” but then qualifying as priests and defining our “priesthood” in practice and experience is the proof that we are preparing to become that Kingdom of priests for the ages yet to come.

As priests we minister on the basis that we are His possession and ALL the earth is His. Standing with Him on Mt. Zion in our ministry of intercession, hearing His voice, keeping His covenant, and being a holy nation and obeying His voice is what qualifies us as a kingdom of priests. 1 Pet 2: 4] And coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected by men, but choice and precious in the sight of God, [5] you also, as living stones, **are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.**

1 Pet 2:9] But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, **that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;** [10] for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.

The “spiritual sacrifices” that Paul was offering up as a priest were the Gentiles that were sanctified by the Holy Spirit so they might be acceptable sacrifices to God. When we examine the prayers of Paul in Ephesians 1:18-23, Eph 3:14-19, Philippians 1:9-11, Colossians 1:9-12 it is much easier to discern Paul's priestly ministry to God for the churches and to the nations in behalf of Jesus Christ. For example; 1 Thessalonians 2: 1-20 [and really the first three chapters also] his heart of a priest is clearly revealed so that from his heart he could minister the gospel of God.