

PRIESTLY CHURCH MINISTRY

An interesting Greek word introduces in our lesson text subject of priestly church service. It was characterized the ministry of the Gentile Christian church at Antioch of Syria. "And while they were **ministering** (leitourgeo/ p.a.ptc.gplm) to the Lord" (Acts 13:2a) [Public worship service of the church]

Leitourgeo consists of two Greek words (leitōs and ergon). It was used in Greek democracy to refer to service to the nation. The Greek democracy encouraged wealthy citizens to fund special services to the state and religion. Aristotle chided them for using liturgies to fleece the wealthy. (TD of NT, vol.4, pg.216)

The English word liturgy is derived from this Greek word. In (Rom.13:6-7) (servants of God), Paul used it with the state. In (Acts 13:2) [ministering], he used it in reference to public church worship service.

This lesson will study four aspects of Priestly Church Ministry.

1. The writer of Hebrews used leitourgōs with the High Priesthood of Jesus Christ. He wrote on the superiority of priesthood of Jesus Christ in chs.5-10.

He used this special Greek word to contrast priestly service of the Old Covenant (OC), Levitical priesthood, to New Covenant (NC) Priesthood of Jesus Christ.

- (Heb.7:23-28) Contrasts the temporary Old Covenant (OC) priesthood to eternal New Covenant (NC) priesthood.
- (Heb.8:1-6) Contrasts earthly priestly service to heavenly priestly service (Heb.8:2, 6) [leitourgōs] (Lk.1:17, 23).
- (Heb.9:18-28) Contrasts shadow Christology Old Covenant (OC) blood to historical Christology New Covenant (NC) blood (Luke 22:20) (1 C or.11:25) (Heb.9:21) [Ministry]
- (Heb.10:1-14) Contrasts Old Covenant (OC) sacrifices and offerings for sins pointing towards a Messianic Savior to one New Covenant (NC) sacrificial offering of Jesus Christ for all sin (Heb.10:10-13) [Ministering].

2. Jewish Christian church had difficulty breaking with Levitical priesthood; shadow Christology, Old Covenant (OC), Mosaic Law, and Pharisaical legalism.

The Book of Hebrews documents this struggle with five warnings:

- (Heb.2:1-4) Levitical Priesthood
- (Heb.3:7-19) Shadow Christology
- (Heb.5:11-6:12) The Old Covenant
- (Heb.10:26-39) Mosaic Law
- (Heb.12:14-21) Pharisaical legalism

These five warnings were given to Jewish believers who were trying to mix law with grace in the church (Acts 15:1, 5, 11). We recently studied the Book of Galatians and addressed the danger of compromising grace (Gal.2:16 21; 5:4).

3. The Gentile Christian church also had difficulty breaking with idolatrous cultural religion.

Paul addressed their struggle in:

(1 Cor.10:14) “Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.”

(1 Cor.10:19-21) “What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, but I say the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.”

It is in this context that Paul taught three spiritual laws regarding how to have a priestly ministry.

- Law of spiritual love (1 Cor.8:1-13) [To Believers;] (1 Pet.4:8; Rom.14)
- Law of supreme sacrifice (1 Cor.9:1-6, 16-19) [To The Lord]
- Law of Expediency (1 Cor.10:23-33) [To Unbelievers]

(Heb.10:23) “All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable (expedient/ KJ). All things are lawful, but not all things edify.”

(Rom.12:1-2) “I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship; and do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

4. Under the New Covenant (NC), all Church Age Believers (CABs) are ministering priest in the local church. It is part of the 50 Things in the grace package of salvation (1 Pet.2:5, 9).

(Rom.15:15-16) “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, to be a minister (leitourgos) of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, which my offering of the Gentiles might become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.”

(Acts 13:2-3) “While they were ministering (leitourgeo) to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid hands on them, they sent them away.’”

(Rom.15:26-27) “For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister (leitourgeo/ a.a.infin) to them also in material things.”