

BFF339 Priests as Ministers

Scott Moore: Welcome to the "Building Faith Families" podcast with Steve Demme. I'm your host, Scott Moore. Thanks for joining us today. How are you today?

Steve: I'm well. How are you?

Scott: Good.

Steve: We're going to do part two of our priestly studies. Exodus 19:3–6, "Moses went up to God, and Jehovah called him from the mountain, saying, Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the sons of Israel, you yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself."

"Now then, if you will obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine, and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation."

Hold that thought, now read 1 Peter 2:4–5, "As you come to Him, a living stone rejected by men, but in the sight of God, chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

This is God's heart, right from the beginning, that we would be His people, a holy people, a people for His own possession. It's hard to take this in, but we want to get this in our heads that it's not just a select few. He wants the whole nation to be a holy priesthood. He wants all of us to be living stones and be part of this holy priesthood.

Revelation 1:5–6, "Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, firstborn of the dead and the ruler of Kings on earth. To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood and made us a kingdom priests to His God and Father."

I'm going to emphasize this truth for it is so ennobling, which is a great word. We are not here to get saved and then spin our thumbs, maybe preaching the gospel once in a while to our neighbors and go through the motions, and then arrive to in heaven.

We are called to be priests. God's priests. God's people. God's chosen possession now. I'm finding new purpose, you might say, in thinking of myself according to what scripture teaches that by grace I am a priest unto God through Jesus Christ, who was the high priest. Amen?

Scott: Can I jump in there for a second? I don't get all jazzed about thinking of myself as a priest, but I do remember reading through the Old Testament and realizing their whole culture was set up around God. They had to farm to get food for themselves, but everything was set up around the truth of God being real and then relating to Him.

I realized that's foreign to the Christian Church today. We don't have our whole lives set up around our relationship with God. It's just we have our relationship with God, and then we do everything else. It was really a life-altering realization for me. I'm like, "Maybe that's why I struggle so much with a lot of stuff that I'm not bringing to Him." His kingdom is not saturating my whole life. My relationship with God is not saturating every area of my life. Maybe that's what it means to be a priest.

Steve: Amen. End the podcast. We're all done.

Scott: laughs

Steve: No, that's great. That's perfect because that is it. We live in a culture that's going the exact opposite direction. It's all about us. In the end times, people will be lovers of self. No lovers of God. Well, with God's help, we love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. We are doing the opposite.

As you have observed, the whole culture revolved around the tabernacle. All the tribes were arranged around it, for 40 years. The temple then became the focus after the tabernacle stopped being mobile. Three times in a year the tribes would go to Jerusalem, to the temple, to keep the feast.

Passover reminded us how He brought Israel out of Egypt. The Spirit came upon them in Pentecost during the Feast of weeks. You're right. It's all about Him.

1 Peter 2:9, "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 called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

God doesn't change. He is always magnifying His Son. Neither does His Word. It is seamless from Genesis to Revelation. Revelation is simply, the revelation of Jesus Christ. God has not swerved in pointing people to His son through the tabernacle, and He points them to His son in the last days. When God's judgments are on the earth, people learn. You can either learn the easy way by responding now, or you can learn the hard way when the heavens open, and you're going to see Jesus coming back. We're all going to see.

Let's pray: Father, help us now to see today what you have for us. We want to be priests under the new covenant. We want to be followers of Jesus in our generation. We want you to be everything to us, and we want to be your people. Thank you for calling us and ennobling us by this wonderful calling for us to be a royal priesthood, a people for God's own possession. Help us now to understand different aspects, and today we have a new word. Help us to grasp it and apply it in our lives. In Jesus' name, amen.

Scott: Amen.

Steve: What does a priest look like? I know that you grew up in a high church, right?

Scott: More or less, yes. Compared to the non-denominational stuff that goes on.

Steve: You grew up with liturgy. Probably your priest had a garment.

Scott: Yes.

Steve: I grew up in Methodism, which was close to Episcopal. Same thing, we had garments, and there was order and structure in the service. Perhaps not as much liturgy as the Episcopal or Anglican, but similar. We referred to our priest as a minister.

We didn't call them pastors, we didn't call them father. We didn't call them rectors. We had deacons in addition to the ministers.

I can never forget the time that my mom invited three ministers to lunch one Sunday after the service. You have to be on your good behavior because the ministers are coming. This is big stuff. We looked up to and admired our ministers. This attitude was prevalent even in Jesus' time, but to a different degree.

In Matthew 23, Jesus addressed these religious leaders, "They do all their deeds to be seen by others for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long. They love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi by others."

That's the situation when I grew up and that's the situation that Jesus is referring to. He says, "But you," when He is talking to them, He's talking to His followers who He's training to be priests. He says, "You are not to be called rabbi, but you have one teacher and you are all brothers, and call no man your father on earth for you have one father who is in heaven."

"Neither be called instructors, but you have one instructor, the Christ. The greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled and whoever humbles himself will be exalted." He clears the air right from the start. He said, "This is not right. A minister is a servant."

I've done some work and discovered that in the Old Testament Hebrew, *Sharath* means to serve or to minister and is used 97 times.

Deuteronomy 10:8, "Jehovah set apart." Hold that thought for future podcast. He set them apart. He chose the tribe of Levi, to carry the ark of the covenant of Jehovah and to stand before Jehovah to minister to Him. What a calling. To minister to God, to serve God.

Whenever you hear the word minister, you can generally use the synonym serve. To stand before Jehovah, to serve Him, to minister to Him, and to bless in His name, which will be another podcast. It's part of the calling of a priest, of a minister, of a servant, to not only minister to God, but to bless in His name.

Exodus 30:30, "You shall anoint Aaron and his sons and consecrate them that they may minister or serve as priests to me." Now, this word is *Kahan*, K-A-H-A-N, in English but in Hebrew, *Kahan* and that is the verb "to minister" as priests and then closely related to this word is *Kohan*, which is used 750 times in the Old Testament. It also means priests, but it's a noun. I'm going to put them together in Exodus 35:19, "The woven garments for ministering in the holy place. This is the word to serve. They're to minister in the holy place, wearing holy garments for Aaron, the priest, *kahan* and the garments of his sons "to minister" the verb as priests.

Another passage which caught my attention is in Ezekiel 44:15-16, "The Levitical priest, the sons of Zedok who kept charge of My sanctuary when the sons of Israel went astray from Me, they shall come near to Me to minister to Me."

"They shall stand before me to offer me the fat the blood declares Jehovah God. They shall enter my sanctuary. They shall come near to my table to minister to me and keep my charge."

What a privilege to be a priest, ministering to God himself. I don't know if you thought about this, but where does this concept appear in the New Testament? Several wonderful passages, for not only did they minister to God, but they also ministered to Aaron. **Numbers 3:6.** "Bring the tribe of Levi near and set them before Aaron the priest that they may minister to Him."

Not only the Levite's minister in the tabernacle, minister to God, and carry the ark, all of these different callings but they also took care of Aaron, the priest. I thought of that when I read Philemon the 13th verse.

Paul writing a letter about Onesimus, said, "Whom I wish to keep with me so that on your behalf, he might minister to me in my imprisonment for the gospel." This is the same language and the same thought. We're serving one another. We're ministering especially to God's people.

Philemon found out that Onesimus, his servant, was now serving Paul in prison. Levites were chosen to minister to Aaron. Joshua was a minister/servant to Moses. There's a bunch of words, but they're all really similar in the roots.

Priesthoods, to service priests, a priest, temple, sacred place, all come from a similar Greek root, H-I-E-R as in hierateuo or hierous or hieros and hieron.

These verses are talking about being a priest, being part of the priesthood, and serving in the temple. Now, let's go back to the New Testament. In the New Testament, Jesus is still setting the record straight. He's still talking to these people who have been inundated with priests their entire life.

The warp and woof of Israel revolved around the tabernacle, the temple, and it was administered to by the priests. Matthew 20, Jesus takes another opportunity to reinforce what He already has told them. "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lorded over them and the great ones exercise authority over them."

"It shall not be so among you. Whoever would be great among you must be your servant. Whoever would be first among you must be your slave. Even as the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many. The Son of man, the great high priest came not to be served but to serve.

First, He talks about the priests. They've got it wrong. Now, He's talking about the rulers of the Gentiles. They've got it wrong. He said, "Look, you need to be a servant." I looked up that word to serve and to minister. Fascinating to me that in the Greek, it's diakoneō, that's the verb. The noun is Diakonia. They're both used over 30 times, and mean to serve, to minister, or a servant in a ministry.

Scott: I think that verse is the one that turns the whole thing on its head where he is like, "Look, I didn't come to be served, nor should you..." Then if they don't get that, he hammers it home with the last supper and washing their feet and all that.

Steve: Which freaked them out.

Scott: Exactly.

Steve: They still didn't get it.

Scott: Right.

Steve: Do you remember in the sixth chapter of Acts, the apostles were saying, "We're spending a lot of time taking care of widows, taking care of feeding people, waiting on tables, and we really need to be spending more time in the Word. We're going to set apart certain men who are going to be the diakoneōs, the servers/ministers or deacons."

That's their job is in Acts:6, to serve tables. Then they turned it around two verses later and said, "So that we can give ourselves to the ministry of the word." It's the same root and it means the service of the word.

They're going to focus on serving people by teaching them the word of God. You're going to focus on taking care of their physical needs. We're going to take care of the spiritual needs. We are still servants, we are still ministers.

Ministers should not have robes. They should not have long titles. The right reverend, whatever. John 12:26, "If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me. And where I am, there will My servant be also. If anybody serves Me, the Father will honor him."

We've addressed the word to serve, and to minister, but there is also a noun, the ministry. Paul talks about his ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles in Romans 11. In Philippians 2:3–8, we have a wonderful picture painted of what a minister/servant looks like, "Don't be selfish. Don't try to impress others. Be humble. Thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others too."

You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had, though He was God. He did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, He gave up His divine privileges. He took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When He appeared in human form, He humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross."

The word for slave in Greek is DOULOS, which you're probably familiar with. That means a slave or a bondservant. This is what Jesus came to do. He took the position of a slave, and then He ended up dying a criminal's death. Couldn't go any lower than that.

We have Jesus calling us to be servant-hearted, ministering priests who are not trying to magnify ourselves or our ministry. We are to serve others.

We should not magnify our ministry instead of serving people. We can seek to see people by encouraging them to be priests of God, priests to their families, priests to their community, and servant-hearted ministers.

Now, we've already filled up the time, but I'm going to read through what my priestly study is for this one, which is focusing on Jesus as the king of kings and lord of lords. "He is the blessed and only potentate, the king of kings and lord of lords," 1 Timothy 6:15.

When I come to God, I start by believing in the blood of Jesus, just like the priest did when they came into the courtyard of the Tabernacle, they first had to offer a sacrifice. Revelation 1:5, "Jesus Christ is the faithful witness, the first to rise from the

dead and the ruler of all the kings of the world. All glory to Him Who loves us and has freed us from our sins by shedding His blood for us."

I love reading these passages. The more I read them, the more I'm comprehending that He shed His blood for us and freed us from our sins. I don't need to kill any more lambs, I simply need to believe in Jesus, who is the Lamb of God, the final sacrifice. I'm also grateful for His Spirit. Paul says, "Be filled with the spirit." Jesus encourages us to ask. Ask and He will be given to you. Seek and you will find. Knock and He will be open to you. How much more will the Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him? I'm believing afresh for the Holy Spirit to fill me and help me, to serve as a minister of God.

I appreciate the washing of water with the word and how the priests had to wash their feet, before entering into the Holy Place. Ezekiel 36 that says, "I will sprinkle clean water in you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness, from all your idols. I will cleanse you and I will give you a new heart and a new spirit. I will put within you and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my ordinances."

We begin to enter into His courts with a joyful, militant shout based on Psalm 100, "Come into his presence with not only singing and thanksgiving, but with a joyful noise." I'm going to start with a familiar one. Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Your name. That's what we had last week. Holy be Your name. Today, may Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Revelation 11:17, "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, Who is and Who was for you have taken Your great power and begun to reign." Amen.

Then we are to come into His presence with singing: Shall I sing to you?

Scott: Please.

Steve: You have a strange sense of humor. OK, here you go. One of my all time favorite hymns. "Rejoice the Lord is king, Your Lord and king adore, rejoice. Give thanks and sing and triumph evermore. Lift up your heart. Lift up your voice. Rejoice again. I say rejoice." That's one of six verses.

Scott: Dude, that's not an easy one either. I'm impressed. I couldn't do that this early in the morning.

Steve: You just butter me up.

Steve: Then I have other verses that provide direction for being thankful, I like and I try to make it personal. Thank you that you are God in heaven above and upon the earth beneath, and there is none else based on Deuteronomy 4:39, and then I praise His name.

I love these verses, which focus on Jesus Himself. We praise the Lamb who shall overcome them, for He is Lord of Lords and King of Kings. On His robe and on His thigh, He has a name written, King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

And so, Father, we bless you, for being King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and we bless Jesus, who is the Lamb Who shall overcome them for He is Lord of Lords and King of Kings. There you go.

Scott: Amen.

Steve: Amen. Father, thank you for this thought. I pray that right down deep in our heart, those of us, especially, who have a ministry as ministers of the word help us to be servant-hearted ministers. Those of us that perhaps think we're in a lower tier, I pray that you'll ennoble us with the thought of being a priest of God. It is right that we humble ourselves.

This is good that we feel lowly. This is what Jesus encouraged us to do. I pray that you'll also ennoble them, and quicken them, and give us all a divine taste of being called to be priests. You have called us to believe in Jesus. You've called us to be praying before the throne.

You've called us to do the work of God which is believing in Jesus, and we can do it while we're washing dishes, teaching our children, carrying pizzas from house to house, whatever it is, we are priests unto Jehovah, and thank you for this ennobling calling. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scott: Amen. That's our show for this week, folks. Thanks for joining us for the Building Faith Families podcast with Steve Demme. If you have a question for the show, email Steve at spdemme@gmail.com. If you have a question for me, you can reach me at scott@unsocializedmedia.com. Thanks for joining us. Have a great week.