

FaithBridge LEVITeam Covenant 2021

LEVITES 101

Then David said, "No one is to carry the ark of God but the Levites; for the Lord chose them to carry the ark of God and to minister to Him forever. 1st Chronicles 15:2(NAS)

When the children of Israel came out of Egypt, they had been in slavery for four hundred years. Four hundred years of someone else telling them what to do, when to do it, how to do it, what to eat, when to eat, when to sleep. Four hundred years of conditioning not to think for themselves, not to have or show any initiative, any self-governance. One can only imagine what a monumental task loomed before Moses, to shape and form this rag tag race of slaves into a thriving well-ordered nation, with a functioning government.

The tribe of Levi surfaced early in the development of the community of God's people. Following Israel's departure from Egypt and venture into the wilderness, the Levites soon distinguished themselves by their fervent loyalty to God and to Moses, His servant. When Moses returned from God's presence with the Ten Commandments in his hand, he found the camp of God in an uproar of lusty celebration and idolatry, bowing down to a golden calf.

In Exodus 32:26 the scripture says, "...then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, 'Whoever is for the Lord, come to me!' And all of the sons of Levi gathered to him."

The Levites made a decisive step that day which did not go unnoticed by the Lord. Their purity of heart postured them to be rewarded by the Lord, as He took steps to progressively move them forward into their destiny. Of this same event, Deuteronomy 10:8 says, "At that time the Lord set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the covenant of the Lord, to stand before the Lord to serve Him and to bless His name until this day."

What do these events say about the character and the heart motivation of the tribe of Levi? I believe it is a glimpse of the reality, that from deep within their heart, they longed for genuine worship of God. And that they had a glimmer of understanding that that worship involved a reverence for His chosen leader and a willingness to be a team player in seeing the purpose of God established for His people. When responding to Moses' call for "whoever is for the Lord", they made a stand for righteousness sake and signaled to God that they could be trusted with His purpose and His presence.

All of us called to praise and worship ministry will have this same moment and opportunity during the course of our journey, where our response will establish or delay our sanctification or "setting apart" to the high calling of Levite.

As the Lord continued to form and shape the community of His people, the role and function of the Levites also developed and was more clearly defined. When Moses' Tabernacle had been completed and with it, its order of worship, it was the Levites, as God had designated, who were entrusted with the care and the oversight of the holy objects of God. He said in Numbers 1:50-51: "But you shall appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of the testimony and over all it's furnishings and over all that belongs to it. They shall carry the tabernacle and they shall take care of it . . . But the layman who comes near shall be put to death." Then the Lord made an even further distinction within the tribe when He said in Numbers 3:6-10, "Bring the tribe of Levi near and set them before Aaron the priest, that they may serve him. And they shall perform the duties for him and for the whole congregation before the tent of meeting, to do the service of the tabernacle. You shall thus give the Levites to Aaron and to his sons; they are wholly given to him from among the sons of Israel. So you shall appoint Aaron and his sons that they may keep their priesthood, but the layman who comes near shall be put to death."

According to God's instructions, the sons of Aaron were to be raised up as priests, with specific duties and functions. Their kinsman, the Levites, were to be given unto them as help ministers in the service of the tabernacle, fulfilling the order of worship, as ordained by the purpose of God. They were **wholly** given unto the sons of Aaron for **support** and **help**, while the priests (Aaron's sons), were strictly instructed to **keep their priesthood**. In addition, anyone else, not specifically called by God to this function of service to and care of the holy objects, and who came near to them, was DEAD. Period. Of a certainty, this Levitical call was a high and noble honor in the kingdom of God. Of primary importance for us though, today, is the fact that the Levites were called of God to function first and foremost as help ministers to the priests. It is our PRIMARY calling.

So, in summary, as God led the Levites to their destiny, there came a distinction by God within the tribe of Levi between the sons of Aaron and their kinsmen. The Levite's primary call was as help ministers to the priests. They were given wholly to Aaron and his sons for support and help in the care and the administration of the tabernacle and all of its furnishings, while the priests (Aaron and his sons), were strictly instructed to keep their priesthood.

As today, caring for the house of God, then too, was a tremendous undertaking, with many details to be handled. God, in His wisdom, laid out very detailed instructions for Moses about how all of the tasks were to be divided and who would be responsible for what, by families. Remember, the entire community of the children of Israel were having to be "birthed" by God into a nation, capable of governing themselves. God gave them His word to empower them to move from a slave mentality into the kind of divine order that would make them a great nation. To do this, they had to understand their roles and how they were to relate to one another in a way that fit with God's design.

Aaron and Moses were three generations from Levi. He was their great-grandfather, and all of the various branches of the family tree had specific duties in God's community. Of the descendants coming down from the family of Kohath, the Lord said in Numbers 3:31, "*Now their duties involved the ark, the table, the lampstand, the altar, and the utensils of the sanctuary with which they minister, and the screen, and all of the service concerning them.*" The descendants of Kohath were specifically responsible for handling the furnishings and utensils of the "Holy Place" in the Tabernacle. They had oversight of the table of showbread, the lampstand, and the altar (altar of incense). Each of these are a type and foreshadowing of a New Testament truth, with a New Testament meaning and are walked out in the church today. It is significant that the responsibility for these items fell to the family of Kohath, who are of the lineage of Aaron and the priesthood, as opposed to some other branch of the family tree. What do these important pieces of tabernacle furniture represent in New Testament pattern?

- The Table of Showbread:** John 6:48 & 50 *Jesus said, "I am the bread of life, come down out of heaven."*
John 1:14 *tells us that Jesus is the "Word"*
The table of showbread represents the bread of life or the word of God.
- The Lampstand:** Revelation 4:5 *"And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God."*
The lampstand is representative of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in pouring forth revelation knowledge.
- The Altar of Incense:** Revelation 8:3 *"...and much incense was given to the angel, that he might add it to the prayers of the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne."*
The altar of incense is representative of prayers (the priestly ministry of intercession) and worship.

So, the lineage coming forth from the family of Kohath has responsibility for handling the oversight of the word of God, the ministry of revelation knowledge and worship and intercession. And, it is from this lineage that the sons of Aaron, or the priesthood springs forth. Therefore, the Old Testament Priesthood of the sons of Aaron, springing forth from the lineage of Kohath, correlates to the New Testament five-fold ministry, which is responsible for building up the body of Christ through the pulpit ministry of the word of God. In Ephesians 4:11-12 we read, *“And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, . . . ”*

The sons of Aaron were strictly instructed to keep their priesthood which is the New Testament ministry of the word of God and prayer as we see in Acts 6:3-4, where the apostles said, *“But, select from among you, brethren, seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. But, we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”* So, the priests are to minister the word and focus on seeking God in prayer and the ministry of intercession, while.....remember? The rest of the tribe of Levi were to.....“be helps ministers to the priest”. It is their primary role and function.

In short, brethren, all Priests are Levites. But, not all Levites are Priests. It is incumbent upon the five-fold ministry that they “keep their priesthood” in prayer and the study and proclamation of the word of God. And the role and function of the Levite is first and foremost as a helps minister to the Priest, in helping him/her accomplish the vision and the purpose of God, set forth in the Lord’s community, the church.

So, what does this mean to us who are called to lead worship in the New Testament church? Well, it was the Levites who were tasked with the role of functioning as the singers, musicians and the leaders of the singing in the Tabernacle of David. And, according to Acts 15:16, that revelation of divine order of worship that God gave to King David, is our New Testament pattern. So, in the context of God’s historical dealings with them, we can see what the tribe of Levi has been called to and destined to, from Moses, to David to the present. It is a high and noble calling to be a helps minister to the priest. And to be successful in our calling and in our destiny, we must understand our role and how it relates to the rest of the body of Christ. We must understand how we are to be rightly related to the priests. John 10 talks about how nothing enters into the sheepfold of God except through the shepherd. The shepherd is the porter of the house and the first line of defense for the sheep. This is God’s order. The Shepherd, Pastor, Set-Man, chief Elder, whatever you choose to call him/her is tasked with the responsibility to seek God for vision and wisdom to lead the flock. And, that includes seeking God for the vision of the house for worship. They are the Priest. As a worship leader, our task is to labor to help him/her to fulfill that vision. We must fit within God’s design and never think more highly of ourselves than we ought, for that would be to frustrate God’s purpose in our lives and to leave us frustrated, as well. But, we should rejoice in the honor of that to which we have been called and arise in revelation and faith, in purity of heart and motivation, as our “brother Levites” did so long ago, to support the purpose of God and His chosen leader in gathering the community together in holy worship of Him!! It is a high and noble calling!