

The Clergy-Laity Myth

“The Clergy-Laity Myth” is an attempt to explain the roots and purpose of the gospel, putting it into the form of an article. [See also: “The Gospel of the Kingdom of Priests” (9411T01).] Without understanding what our Master Yahshua came for and labored to establish, His work remains only a fact taken out of context.

The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob

There was a time when God was known as the God of Abraham. He had been able to reveal Himself to this man because Abraham, in the midst of a society that had lost its pure knowledge of God and was therefore becoming more and more corrupt, was desperately groping to understand his purpose for being alive. For this reason Abraham was willing to do the will of his Creator, to serve Him and to walk in His ways, the prerequisite upon which God is able to reveal Himself to a person. So if at the time of Abraham anybody wanted to know the true God, he had to be introduced to Him through Abraham or at least through one of the members that were part of Abraham's clan.

After Abraham it was the same with his son Isaac and subsequently with his grandson Jacob, Isaac's son. Thus God became to be known as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The God of Israel

After that God became the God of a people — Israel. This was actually His original intention in revealing Himself to Abraham, to obtain a people through him so that through this people He'd be able to demonstrate His character and life to the whole world. Individuals like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or even their clans, were not sufficient to be a demonstration that could reach the whole world, and God in His love for all mankind desired to reach out to all of the world. Only a whole nation that was as dedicated to Him as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had been could be such a demonstration.

The Covenant with Israel

As the seed of Abraham had grown into the nation of Israel, God officially entered into a covenant with them in which He committed Himself to be their God while they committed themselves to be His people. Some of the leaders of Israel, representing their nation, ratified and celebrated the covenant as they partook in a meal in the presence of God Himself. This meal was an expression of the relationship and fellowship that Israel and God had entered into with each other through the covenant.

The Golden Calf

Soon afterwards however, as Moses, their leader, was up on the mountain of God to receive further instructions in the covenant, the people, because of his prolonged absence, began falling away. Aaron who had taken the place of leadership in the camp during the absence of his brother Moses, let the people go out of control and assisted them in making a strange god, a golden calf, which they worshipped in a great celebration.

The Levitical Priesthood

When Moses came down from the mountain and realized what was going on, seeing the condition of the people, how they had gotten so completely out of control, he stood in the gate of the camp and called all those who were for the Sovereign to him. Only the sons of Levi gathered to him, about 22,000 of them.

After that, they were commanded to put a sword on their thigh and go back and forth from gate to gate in the camp, and kill every man his brother, and every man his friend, and every man his kin. About 3,000 people died that day at the hands of the Levites. This was the purification of the tribe of Levi.

It does not actually say in the account in the book of Exodus that Moses drew a line for the people to cross over, but the Levites did cross a line. They had to kill everyone from their own tribe who stayed in the camp, otherwise these people would have been a constant source of defilement within the tribe of Levi, wearing down the undivided loyalty of the faithful Levites to their God and hindering them in their priestly service. The Levites ordained themselves as priests that day. Because of their zeal for their God, His covenant continued with Levi. They became His special possession within Israel, serving at the sanctuary. They didn't pursue earthly possessions, since God Himself had become their possession. For this

reason as later on the Promised Land was portioned out to all the tribes, no portion was given to the Levites. An abnormal development had taken place however, something that God never intended. Israel had become a clergy-laity system.

Israel after the Golden Calf

All the tribes of Israel that didn't heed the call of Moses and rallied to him, had committed an unpardonable sin. And even though Moses interceded for them, they had lost their priesthood. The covenant didn't work and was becoming obsolete. From that time on, God was looking forward to a New Covenant with a new Israel in which the sincere from every tribe could be readmitted to priesthood, thus obtaining the mercy Moses had sought for them. If it wasn't for the intercession of Moses on behalf of Israel and if it wasn't for the zeal of the Levites, God would have cut off the whole nation. Although Israel was disqualified from being the demonstration of a priestly nation, they were still regarded as God's people. God still had a purpose for them. He sent His angel before them. Israel was to bring forth the prophets, write and preserve the Old Covenant Scriptures, and eventually give birth to the Messiah, the Savior of the world.

Yahshua, the Mediator of a Better Covenant

So when finally Yahshua the Savior came, it is not surprising that the message He proclaimed was firmly in keeping with God's original purpose in obtaining a nation of priests, a people for His own possession. The gospel that Yahshua proclaimed, the gospel of the kingdom, is nothing short but the call to priesthood

Yahshua learned much of His gospel from the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant provided the foundation and pattern that He followed and drew from. When Yahshua called people to follow Him, He picked up the call of Moses who called those to himself who were for the Sovereign. The stipulations were the same — a cutting off and severing of every tie that would interfere with a person's absolute loyalty and devotion to Him. Of course, the sword that He proclaimed He had come to bring wasn't a physical sword as in the case of Moses and the Levites. But it brought just as real a separation as back then, dividing those who were for Him from those who were against Him. As He said even within a family would be a division from now on.

As a matter of fact, He added one more stipulation to what Moses told the Levites. He not only said that a person that wants to follow Him has to hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, but even his own life. A person's entire life and all of his possessions had to be surrendered to Him, otherwise that person was considered to be against Him. These were the terms a person had to obey to be part of the New Covenant He came to establish. Since Old Covenant Israel had failed to develop into a nation in which every member's life along with his possessions were devoted solely to the service of God, the privilege of being that kingdom of priests, the people for God's own possession was taken away from them to be given to a people who would bear the fruit of that kingdom.

Yahshua came to bring about this New Covenant. That's all He proclaimed, taught about, called people to. That's what He died and rose again for. That's what He sent His Spirit for. Even after He ascended to the throne of His Father, New Covenant Israel became the nation He's ruling over right now.

Through His death He purchased *for* God with His blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation and made them into a kingdom of priests to God. He opened up the priesthood to men and women of all the nations of the earth. His atoning death provides the basis by which a person who wants to be *for* God and who wants to surrender to Him is able to repent and to be forgiven for not having been *for* Him and giving Him everything.

Only a person who has been forgiven by the blood of Yahshua would be able to receive the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God Himself. This Spirit would regenerate such a person and cause him to walk in newness of life, thus fulfilling the righteous requirements of the Law. Only a person who has been bought by the blood of Yahshua and received His Spirit would be able to no longer live for himself but for the One who died and rose again on his behalf. But a person had to express his willingness to do God's will, just like the Levites of old, by actually forsaking everything for their Creator.

The Law and the New Covenant

The Old Covenant didn't work, not because something was wrong with the Law. The Law itself is holy and perfect. It is of God. There was no need for it to change. The problem lay within man who, in his fallen state, is not able to keep this righteous Law. Of course, a righteous God would never change His righteous standard. That was totally confirmed by Yahshua when He said that He did not come to abolish the Law but to fulfill it and that, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law.

Man had to change, since he was the problem. It was God's merciful intention to bring man up to His standard, since man doesn't have the power within himself to change his nature, which would actually mean to recreate himself. That's why God sent His Son. The forgiveness in the blood of Yahshua is so complete that God righteously could impart a new life into a person who has been cleansed by it. That's why the priesthood in the New Covenant is not based on a law of physical requirements as in the Old Covenant, where a person had to be a descendant of Aaron's family to qualify as a priest, or at least belong to the tribe of Levi to be qualified to serve at the sanctuary. The priesthood in the New Covenant is based on the power of an indestructible life, the life of Yahshua within a person.

That's why citizenship in the New Covenant Israel is open to anybody who proves his willingness to give everything to his God and Maker, by cutting off all of his ties with the world, even within his own family, and surrendering his life and possessions to his Savior and his God. This is the zeal of the Levites.

The Birth of New Covenant Israel

This was the gospel that was proclaimed at Pentecost by the men that Yahshua Himself raised up and equipped to do so. The message they spoke was in no way different than the message Yahshua proclaimed

As a matter of fact, any true sent one, that is, any person that is authorized by Yahshua to proclaim the gospel, will have the same message with the same results as to what happened at Pentecost. The message preached at Pentecost gave birth to New Covenant Israel. The apostle Peter, who was the main speaker that day, later on called this New Covenant Israel a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession.

After Peter explained to the multitude of people that were listening to him on the day of Pentecost the significance of Yahshua's death and resurrection and that He was actually the Son of God and the Messiah, he exhorted them with *many* other words to be saved from this perverse and crooked generation. These *many* other words were the gospel of the kingdom, the terms of surrender and capitulation to make peace with God, the requirements for the priesthood.

The 3,000 who received Peter's message that day and were baptized, cut off all their ties with the world. They came out from that perverse and crooked generation and had nothing to do with it anymore except to be a light to it and to call others out. The zeal that they showed forth was no less than the zeal that the Levites of old had exhibited. Since every single one of them was completely devoted to the one God; they were of one heart and one soul. And since everyone had surrendered all of his possessions, there was no needy person among them. This was the Commonwealth of Israel.

From a later record in the books of Acts we can see that they began to grow and actually developed into a twelve-tribed nation in which every soul was completely consumed with serving God night and day. God finally had a people, a witness on the earth.

The Decline

Everything that is recorded about the church after this is not so encouraging anymore. Seeds of corruption, decay, and deception started taking root. There are several letters of correction to different communities in different tribes. One, the letter of James, which was even written to all the twelve tribes, sounds more like an epitaph.

Although the Apostle Paul, along with others, desperately tried to stem the tide, it was to no avail. Paul was the one who had written that the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Yahshua the Messiah; who gave

Himself for us that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

The zeal that should have increased more and more into a raging fire of jealousy for their God started cooling down. Finally, the community in Laodicea was even called lukewarm. Although the power of an indestructible life was available to them, they stopped more and more to rely upon this power. Apart from this power, they were not able to maintain their priesthood.

The Coup

Strong, gifted, and charismatic leaders took over and conquered and quenched the Spirit. These people did not have a spiritual ministry, but only a natural one. This was the work of the Nicolaitans. *Nicolas* means conqueror. As a result of this, just like in old Israel, the clergy-laity system came in. This was simply the end.

The many divisions that had sprung up had already been evidence that strange gods had come in. Of course, it was more subtle than with the golden calf, but every division exposed in greater clarity that not all were connected or devoted or hearing from the same source.

The True and the False Witness

God can only be borne witness by a people who are in absolute unity because this unity is the proof that there are no strange gods among them. God is a jealous and zealous God. He has great jealousy and zeal for His people. He can only be borne witness by those who have a reciprocal zeal and jealousy for Him and for His people as well. Such people are His true image-bearers.

He showed us what it means for Him to be *for* man, by giving us His very life in His Son and by wanting to give all of His possessions to those who received the life of His Son. He expects and deserves a reciprocal response. Only those who have given their life and all of their possessions to Him have knowledge of the true God and are therefore able to represent Him. For this reason, God could never be represented by a clergy-laity system in which some are supposedly full-time and others part-time devoted. This represents another god, not the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of Israel and the Father of Yahshua. God actually hates this system and has already condemned it because it misrepresents Him and is therefore a false witness, a deceiver. He wants to call His people out of this system before He executes His judgment upon it.

For even though the New Covenant Israel failed in the same way as Old Covenant Israel and turned into something that God actually hates, that still was not the end for God. He had promised a restoration of all things. Yahshua Himself said that this gospel of the kingdom that He was preaching would be proclaimed as a *witness* to all the nations before the end comes. So right at the very end of this age, God once again will raise up a standard, a true witness to all nations, this time to succeed. The call to priesthood is going out once again. Not only the call to cross the line initially to become part of the priesthood, but this time also the call to cross the line daily until the very end in order to maintain this priesthood.

The Conclusion

The conclusion after everything has been said could be given with the wisdom of the Proverbs: “A truthful witness saves lives, but he who speaks lies is treacherous.” Any gospel, therefore, that does not bring about this holy nation of priests or that does not come forth from this holy nation of priests must be rejected as a false witness, a false gospel that is not able to impart the knowledge of salvation and lead a person to Yahshua.