

Apostolic Service: The Mystery of Priestliness

If we are going to be a vital church in word and deed and presence in the world at home and abroad; if we are going to be the church that will unmask and reveal the principalities and powers; if we are going to fulfill the eternal purposes of God—bringing world evangelization to completion—the thing that we need most of all is for God to inspire and restore in us a true sense of priestliness. Without it we will not partake in a calling that is heavenly nor will our ministries reap enduring fruit anywhere.

by Art Katz

Priesthood is at the heart of everything, and probably one of the most lamentable lacks in modern Christianity is the absence of the sense of priestliness. If someone had asked me in my adolescence in Brooklyn, New York, as a troubled and perplexed kid trying to make sense out of a bewildering universe, "What is your true vocation? What is it to which you think you are called?" I knew, even in my atheistic ignorance, that the real answer, if I had the courage to speak it, was, "Priest." Now I can understand better what my heart already knew about the centrality of priesthood. Furthermore, it is something that needs to be intuited and apprehended.

We stand in a very peculiar danger of adopting yet another "religious vocabulary." In the same way that we have been inducted into the "charismatic," we can easily be inducted into an "apostolic" form of speaking and have yet another phraseology to which, in the end, we have just been rendered mere technicians. To take these holy and absolute things and make of them yet another weary, religious form is the most horrible of all fates. If we are going to be a vital church in word, deed and presence and one that is going to fulfill the eternal purposes of God, then something critical is required, namely, the knowledge of the reality of God. This is the only thing that will save us from being mere technicians. We are therefore commended to consider Jesus in Hebrews 3:1,

Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession.

There is an inexorable connection between that which is apostolic and that which is priestly. There has been no neglect in our thinking of things apostolic, but there is a conspicuous lack of awareness of things priestly. We might attempt some fulfillment of other ministries and callings without the necessity of having a high-priestly center, although I doubt that, but there is something about that which is apostolic that is eternally joined to that which is high-priestly. That which is expressed in the heavenly calling of Jesus and indeed that which makes it heavenly is necessarily part of our calling as well. Until God shall inspire and restore in us a true sense of priestliness, we will not be partaking in a calling that is heavenly.

The word "heavenly" does not refer to something spatial, but to a mind-set, a mentality, or a mode of being. It is a particular character of something that is so hard to define, but when you encounter it, when something of it is wafted over you or communicated to you, then you know it. If "priestliness" is just a fanciful designation that has a clouded meaning, then that means that our priestliness is equally as clouded. The world is destitute of the sense of things heavenly for the lack of priests who are able to bring that dimension of reality. In fact, another synonym

for heaven is reality. Whatever reality is, then that is heaven. It takes even a priestly mentality to sense that and to feel for that and a priestly ministry to introduce that in a world that is inhospitable to heaven. Earth resists heavenly things, and yet mankind languishes for the lack of priests.

RESTORATION OF PRIESTHOOD

I had for a long time considered the teaching on the priestly garments and the nomenclature pertaining to priesthood to be quite dull. I am now convinced that there is an eternal weight of glory in all the things that pertain to priesthood. Priestliness must both precede and accompany the apostolic walk. What we so urgently need is for God to breathe upon us from heaven the spirit of true priesthood and to touch and transform every aspect of our life, our walk and our ministry with the sense of things that pertain to priestliness. There is a requirement to minister unto God before one ministers to men. If we lack the sense of the sacredness of God, which is to be found only in the holy place by those who have the posture of the priest, that is to say, prostrated as a dead man before Him, then there is going to be something brittle, something lacking and something plastic in the correct thing that we bring. There is a cry of God for the restoration of priesthood that alone will save us from the hokey kinds of demonstrations that are ostensibly performed in His Name.

The Levitical Consecration

Leviticus chapter 8 describes the consecration of the priests. As one reads it through, one cannot but sense the strange and antique ring about it. It seems so altogether remote from anything that can be considered modern, so that one is tempted to hurriedly pass over it as something rightfully buried in antiquity and no longer having any claim upon our attention. That attitude is completely wrong. Everything in this chapter is profoundly relevant to our age; perhaps even more relevant to us now than it was for the Biblical generation to which it spoke.

It begins with these precious words: "Then the LORD spoke to Moses..." and follows on with, "As the Lord commanded Moses... As the Lord commanded Moses... As the Lord commanded Moses". Right from that beginning, God wants to rivet our minds to the Divine origin of all that is to follow. There is not a requirement given, not an ordinance in it that could have had its origin in human contemplation. The whole concept is totally Divine and contrary to the flesh. It is a calculated attack upon human sensibility and good taste. It has its origin in the heart of God and completely contradicts all that is human and is, therefore, all the more valuable and revealing.

One experiences a certain sense of exhaustion just from the reading of this chapter. What then must have been the effect of actually participating in the fulfillment of all of these requirements of God? All of the cutting, the sprinkling of the blood, the wave offerings and the sitting at the door of the tent of meeting are patently absurd and altogether exhausting. By the time that it was all finished and those blood-bespattered men were waiting at the door of the tent of meeting, everything that seemed appealing and honorific to the flesh about the role and title of priest will have dimmed and paled. This will cure us from romantic notions of what "priestly" means. It is full of blood, gore and exhaustion. The details and requirements are so extraordinary.

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'Take Aaron and his sons with him, and the garments and the anointing oil and the bull of the sin offering, and the two rams and the basket of unleavened bread; and assemble all the congregation at the doorway of the tent of meeting.' (Lev. 8:1-3)

We need to take note that the people were required to observe the entire process as a living instruction. It was not what the priests said but what they did and what was done to them and for them that was a statement of God to the whole congregation of Israel. They had an advantage that we do not have. We do not see animals being cut up and the absurdity of catching the blood in basins and sprinkling it upon articles of furniture and upon the clothing of the priests and upon their ear, thumb and big toe. Something has got to happen to the one who is seeing this. Something has got to register upon his deepest consciousness about the meaning of sin and what is required to expiate it. Someone had to stand between God and man, and death had somehow to be performed in order to obtain the life-giving thing, for the life is in the blood.

And so, if there is a New Testament priesthood, we will never really appreciate it in the depth that God intends unless we understand what preceded it and foreshadowed it. There are, therefore, certain essentials of priesthood itself that were given and described at the first, that are subsumed and brought into the New Testament—the Melchizedek priesthood. It is not that the one has replaced the old. In a sense that is true, but it has also subsumed and taken into itself the deepest meanings given to priesthood at the very beginning.

So Moses did just as the LORD commanded him. When the congregation was assembled at the doorway of the tent of meeting, Moses said to the congregation, "This is the thing which the LORD commanded to do." Then Moses had Aaron and his sons come near, and washed them with water. And he put the tunic upon him and girded him with the sash, and clothed him with the robe,

and put the ephod on him; and he girded him with the artistic band on the ephod, with which he tied it to him. He then placed the breastpiece on him, and in the breastpiece he put the Urim and the Thummin. (Lev. 8:4-8)

How much are we willing to be stripped and washed in the water of the Word? How willing are we to endure the humiliation of nakedness before men, before even the first priestly garment can be put on? Moses washed Aaron and his sons before the garments were donned. It was a public humiliation. All Israel was watching the preliminaries of the consecration of these priests. Humiliation is therefore at the heart of the meaning of the word priesthood. The garments were attached to the priests with skillfully woven cords. There was no quick on-and-off backstage costume change. Priesthood is not a role to be performed behind the pulpit and then discarded upon returning home. It is not a calling that a man chooses because he thinks that it is appealing. It is an exacting preparation, not entered into lightly nor performed with indifference.

He also placed the turban on his head, and on the turban, at its front, he placed the golden plate, the holy crown, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. (Lev. 8:9)

Aaron wore a golden plate that rested upon his forehead and which registered its presence with every step he took. We would do well to sense that same golden shield on which were inscribed the words, "Holiness unto God." With every step and movement of our body, there would be impressed upon us "Holiness unto God... Holiness unto God... Holiness unto God." You could not scratch yourself nor could you make a gesture without it being pressed onto your head, "Holiness unto the Lord." We need to be reminded of this the whole time because our head is always wanting opportunity, if we would grant it, to have its own excursions, its own delights, its own activities and its own thoughts. The mind continually

needs to be brought unto the knowledge of "Holiness unto the Lord." There would be much less brash and soulish ministry and much less of a rush to come to the place of speaking if that golden weight were resting squarely between our eyes. Let us feel again the heft of that weight with every step we take. Only then and only after being thus clothed and thus prepared did the priest receive the anointing oil.

The Anointing Oil

Moses then took the anointing oil and anointed the tabernacle and all that was in it, and consecrated them. (Lev. 8:10)

If God required furniture to be anointed, then how much more does He require it for the vessels of flesh and blood who are His ministers. Do we rightly esteem the anointing of God? If ever a subject deserves examination, it is the phenomenon of anointing, and we need to have the deepest respect for it. Very expensive ingredients, tempered finely together, were required to make it up, and God commanded that it was not to be poured on man's flesh. There was also an extreme penalty for anyone who made anything like it. You do not dare concoct something that approximates to or is the equivalent of the holy anointing oil. The ingredients or spices used were usually associated with the anointing of a body for burial. They had a very particular fragrance. It was not to be employed for the things that have to do with the purposes of men, but God only. And it is the pure thing given of God alone.

How many times have we been guilty of making our own oil? We can say much about fictitious anointing, things that seem to be like it and are not, but are really more the effulgence of human personality. How many can distinguish between their own human personality and the holy anointing of God? There are so many "hotshots" operating today who have the gift of gab and an executive ability and "know how" to conduct and per-

form, but that is not the operation of the anointing at all. God will not force upon us the perfect if we are too satisfied with the substitute. When the man-made thing is spurned and we rest wholly upon what

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God gives, then we are candidates to receive it. Every time we turn the amplifiers up or give our voices a little soulish boost and add a little razzmatazz in order to bring an effect, or give an invitation that we know is calculated to play upon the emotional responses of our hearers, then that is false anointing. That is making something like it. It is not an absolute trust in the power of the anointing itself to obtain the consequences that God desires through His word.

Watchman Nee warned us back in the 1920s that the deadliest deception of the last days was the soulish substitute for the realm of Spirit that would come through technology. We need to be both wary of it and guarded against it, lest we find ourselves depending upon soul power rather than Spirit power. We have done everything imaginable over the years to simulate the anointing of God, for example, by effecting pious tones, the amplification of sound, but the difference always shows. We know how to produce good services and preach good sermons, but we can

never produce glory from heaven. We need to be careful not only about technology but also our own voice as a technological instrument employed with cunning to effect a certain response.

The Sacrifice

And he (Moses) sprinkled some of it on the altar seven times and anointed the altar and all its utensils, and the basin and its stand, to consecrate them. Then he poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron's head and anointing him, to consecrate him. Next Moses had Aaron's sons come near and clothed them with tunics, and girded them with sashes, and bound caps on them, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. Then he brought the bull of the sin offering, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the bull of the sin offering. Next Moses slaughtered it... (Lev. 8:11-15a)

We need to understand what is implied in Moses slaughtering the bull. It was a horrific phenomenon of bringing death that there might be life, and it was done before the entire congregation. They are watching the knife go in and the blood spurt out. They watched the animal sag and totter and go down and then be cut up. It was vivid before them. The hacking of animals and watching them jerk as their throats were being slit was one act after the other of utter foolishness. And there was nothing in it that could be explained by reason.

...and he (Moses) took the blood and with his finger put some of it around on the horns of the altar, and purified the altar. Then he poured out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar and consecrated it, to make atonement for it. He also took all the fat that was on the entrails and the lobe of the liver, and the two kidneys and their fat; and Moses offered it up in smoke on the altar. But the bull and its hide and its flesh and its refuse, he burned in the fire outside the camp, just as the LORD had commanded. (Lev. 8:15b-17)

This is the opposite of what man would do. This shows how much heaven is antithetical to earthly reckoning and

consideration. What we would have saved is the thing that God destroys, and the things that we would have cast aside as disgusting and worthless are the very things that God calls the sacrifice. The flesh and the hide, which we would have savored as of great value, were burnt with the dung. They were not only to be burnt, but burnt outside the camp; such is God's disgust for flesh. What men esteem is an abomination in the sight of God.

The things that are a sweet savor to God are the inwards, the "inner parts" not the outward things. God is not interested in the outer hide and the flesh. He counts that along with the dung. What is on the inside, in the inner man, worked by Him in the hidden places, born of "inward wrestling" these things are the offering of a sweet and pleasing savor before God. We have been guilty as contemporary Christians of offering our personalities, our winsomeness and our fleshly abilities to God, simply because we do not have the inward parts to offer, never having learnt to rest or wait before God. We have despised the suffering, reproach and obscurity in which alone the sweet offerings are formed deep within us. We have not esteemed such things as God esteems them and have preferred to do without them. We need the obedience and vision that will enable us to take our hide and flesh outside the camp and to exclude it from the holy place as well as from the pulpit—from our ministries.

One cannot tell where the priest ends and the sacrifice begins. The priest and the sacrifice are one, and the priest that is a priest indeed, and who is a sacrifice, is one who has got 'fat', an accumulation or residue or the inward workings of God in the hidden place. He knows God in the hidden place behind the veil of circumstances and outward feelings. God has dealt with him in ways that cannot be explained to men, ways that are scandalous and that men look upon as reproach, ways that leave one utterly alone to suffer and endure. They are humiliations, things that God has wrought in you in the still-

ness and the quiet, things that are calculated to bring you to Him. Few have opened themselves to God for that dealing in that inner place where something can be built up of a sweet savor. Most of us are protective, and we do not allow God or anyone else into that place. We have protected ourselves from the suffering and pain of it, and therefore our whole life is lived on the outside.

IDENTIFICATION

There was also an identification with the sacrifice where Aaron and his sons would lay their hands on the heads of the animals. There is something inherent in priesthood in conferring by the laying on of hands, the symbolic identification with something that goes right into the apostolic thing. We see the same principle in Hebrews 2:17,

Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.

This corresponds exactly with Aaron and his sons laying their hands upon the animals. It is an identification with the thing that is sacrificed of something that needs to die as a substitute for the sin of man. The priest acknowledged his own sinfulness and the sins of the nation by the laying of the hands on that which is being offered as a substitute for them. It is the same as Job saying, "I abhor myself and I repent in dust and ashes." In other words he was saying that he needed to go down into death and that the only place for him before a holy God was as a dead man. This principle of the laying on of hands actually confers something that has come from God because you have already also identified as a priest with man in his sin and weakness and failings as Jesus Himself did. The whole grit of what it means to be man was the experience of Jesus—

that total identification, not just by the laying on of hands, but by being it.

This is not an academic consideration of the novelty and the esoteric practices of Old Testament priesthood. This is God rubbing our face into the grit and the reality of what must be attached to that which is apostolic, namely, that which is priestly. That which is priestly is steeped in blood, gore and sacrifice right up to our elbows, and you have to eat it!

OBEDIENCE

Then he (Moses) presented the second ram, the ram of ordination; and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the ram. And Moses slaughtered it and took some of its blood and put it on the lobe of Aaron's right ear, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot. (Lev. 8:22-23)

"Hear, O Israel!" is the beginning of all of the commandments of God. Hearing is obeying and obeying is doing. From the ear to the hand, from the hearing to the doing there must be an unhindered response. Until God has the whole of us in every kind of act, however much it contradicts our natural disposition, then He does not yet have a priest. Blood on the toe suggests Divine control over the direction of our lives. Until we are prepared to remain in those tedious and demanding situations in which God has placed us, then the blood of consecration is not upon our toe. Our "goings" as well as our "remainings" have got to proceed out of a death to everything other than the word of the Lord. How many of us predicate our decisions on mere logic, rather than being led by the Spirit of the Living God? I am not opposed to logic or practicality as long as it is God's logic and His practicality and as long as it is not at the expense of hearing the voice of the Spirit. We are entirely capable of drawing reasonable conclusions about how this or that will aid in God's service, or how it will further His interests, without ever having heard from Him concerning His intentions. How many true works of God have been

brought forth prematurely, or stillborn and dead, because something in us was still untouched by the blood of sacrifice? We cannot enter into the high heavenly calling without the oil and the blood. We cannot meet its demands in our own self. We can only come in the power of another Life. When we have become discontent with everything less, when we have staggered and reeled before the demands of this calling, then we come to see that to enter into this priesthood we must enter into the High Priest Himself. The book of Hebrews brings us to the reality of which the Levitical priesthood was but a type and a shadow. There is a higher order of priesthood, more sublime, more exalted and more demanding. It is the order of Melchizedek, the king of righteousness and of peace. Most of us have a rather glamorous notion of what a priest of God is; a notion derived from our own humanity, born of the earth instead of imparted from heaven. The carnality of our understanding is reflected in our discomfort over and lack of comprehension of these Levitical requirements. Sadly, it is reflected also in our conduct and ministry in God's house where there is little evidence of the purging and consecration, the very thing which God requires to produce administration that is heavenly.

Waiting in Silence

After all of these sacrifices had been made for the consecration of the priests, there was yet one last thing,

At the doorway of the tent of meeting, moreover, you shall remain day and night for seven days, and keep the charge of the LORD, that you may not die, for so I have been commanded. Thus Aaron and his sons did all the things which the LORD had commanded through Moses. (Lev. 8:35-36)

There is something so human in us that is adept at producing schools of discipleship to process men in three months and send them out to change the world.

Where is the waiting? There is a human itch, where the last refuge of self hides, ostensibly in doing the work of God, but that corrupts it from being a pure and priestly work. It is not (and can never be) a work of eternal consequence. That final waiting somehow brings the death to that last thing. We are not to rush out and do "our ministry." There is a season of waiting that is an ultimate waiting.

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Seven is the number of completion. One can do a lot of "good things," but the ultimate things, the priestly things, the apostolic things, require waiting seven days at the door of the tent of the congregation. A lot of us have fallen short at this one place. We have allowed the cutting and the shedding, but we have rushed out prematurely without first waiting for the last processes of God to take place.

Acts chapter 13 commences with a group of people ministering unto the Lord. In that mode of being, the Holy Spirit could say, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." These men were set apart or consecrated in a separation of such an ultimate kind that they would have been just as content to remain in the place of worship at Antioch as to be sent into the purposes of God. They had come to such a place of death to themselves, even the religious desire to serve God and to see fruit and to be used, that it was all the same to remain as to go. It was a separation from the deepest and most subtle elements of ambition that hide themselves in

the last place in which they can find refuge, namely, a religious and spiritual ambition to do for God.

God has said that we will die if we go before, and untold numbers have done that and "died," a short spurt, a little flurry of activity and recognition, and then lost to obscurity. Where are they? The seven days of waiting is the final death to that last impulse to do for God and to be found doing. When we have passed those seven days, then we are safe to minister in a priestly way for God, free from any consideration of the effect and benefit for ourselves. If there is something in us that wants to be heard, then our service is not priestly. We are a generation that is so ministry-minded, so "doing-oriented" that we have no concept for and no disposition to see the extraordinary investment that God requires in the preparation of His servants. God sets His premium on what we are, not what we do. If the doing does not flow from the being, then it is not apostolic.

The church at large more or less sees priestly service as little more than a performance for which they are paying, and so they are getting just what they are paying for—cheap, shallow, unheavenly services. They may be scripturally correct, but they are unable to transform life. People have not been brought to a heavenly place. The aura of heavenliness and the fragrance that is about the Throne has not been breathed because we have not been disposed to wait before God in silence. Even Sunday services have been so structured for the optimum convenience of men, sufficient to allow us a time to sleep in and to get it over with, and yet not too much so as to ruin the day. We leave a sufficient leisure available for the football game or whatever our good pleasure is. Modern Christianity is a religion of convenience—contrary to the whole priestly demeanor.

We become easily distracted. We are so edgy, itchy and impatient. We have marched by another beat, and we reflect the spirit and temper of the world. We

simply cannot wait in silence. So we need to see that it is not a man or a bull but we who are being laid on the altar. In waiting, every fleshly thing, every human contrivance and device, every desire to perform and win some glory for ourselves, every lazy, fearful tendency to take the easy and cheap way out, rises to the surface. It is a kind of mind battle when one really sets oneself to wait. Thoughts come to mind of the things that need to be done and how the time should really be employed. To be able to dismiss that and bring our minds to a place of rest in God, free from distracting thoughts, is no small thing. We are not going to come to that readily, but through a process of time and experience in waiting in order to bring our minds into subjection to Christ, and not allow ourselves to be influenced by every stray thought.

All this needs to be brought to the altar, to be hacked and cut and the life-blood allowed to spurt out until it dies there, a spiritual sacrifice before God. There is really no mystery as to why we care so little to wait upon God. We have even less inclination for the making of this sort of sacrifice than we have for the butchery required of the Levites. We find such spiritual blood letting repugnant, such self-revelation too embarrassing and painful. We are too offended by such a requirement, too ready to deem it absurd, outdated, unloving, uncomely and wasteful.

The disciples once asked Jesus, "To what purpose is this waste?" They were referring to the woman who smashed the expensive alabaster box, and Jesus told them not to bother her for she had done a good work. It was the only time in the gospels that Jesus ever acknowledged anything done by man as being a good work. He called her work good. It was not only good, but wheresoever the gospel was going to be proclaimed in the world, that which the woman had done would be spoken of as a memorial to her. It was an extravagant acknowledgment of the uniqueness of what she had performed.

Yet the very same act in the sight of the disciples moved them to indignation at the waste.

Waiting is not entered into in the hope of some breakthrough. Rather, God is God, and He deserves that acknowledgment. We are not to wait expecting some consequence to our waiting. Waiting that has strings attached, even spiritual strings attached and that hopes for blessing, is not true priestly waiting. Waiting is only waiting when we ask nothing, desire nothing and expect nothing. We make no claims. We are not requiring. We are the creation and He is the Creator. That is priestliness!

The needs are everywhere about us crying out for our attention. Only a "Son of God" (a Priestly Son) could have waited two days longer where He (Jesus) heard that His friend Lazarus, whom He loved, was sick unto death. This is the heart of true priestliness. There was no deferring to the flesh, sentiment, and human need or to the expectation of men, but to the Father alone.

A SWEET SMELLING SAVOR

True waiting is a sweeter smelling savor to the Lord than even the sacrifice and the burning, all the more when one has to suffer the reproach for it by those who are activists and say to you, "Well, what are you doing?" And you cannot answer them!

In our doing for God, it is possible to be secretly or even unconsciously obtaining something for ourselves that therefore dismisses it from being priestly. Pure priestly ministry does not bring to the minister anything for himself. It is totally and exclusively unto God. Paul often writes, "For your sake" and "For God's sake" but never "for Paul's sake." Paul is an example of New Testament priestliness, and therefore he would not withhold bringing the whole purpose and counsel of God. He did not consider whether it would be approved, whether men liked it, how they would react or even whether it was appropriate. A priest is utterly selfless. He has no regard for himself.

It is costly but ultimately glorious to wait the full seven days upon God. We need to come to this priestly place and the reality of it, having known such waiting. Should God require action or activity, then it must always flow out of the place of waiting. Waiting has become then so structured into the priestly life, that even the acts of God that issue from us, when they are required, still come out of that rest. I am persuaded that the greatest exploits of the Last Days will come out of the rest of God, from those who know that rest and who, by the wastefulness of finding time for it, make it a habitual aspect of their priestly life.

Waiting inaugurates the priestly ministry, but it is not the end of it. Waiting needs to be characteristic of our whole mind-set and disposition before God, not only for the time of ministry, but even in the process of ministry. Can you believe that one can be waiting even in the midst of speaking? While you are speaking, you are waiting on God for the next statement. It is a remarkable disposition of an inward kind, even while one is active. This kind of waiting is virtually unknown to modern consideration but needs to be restored.

There is a conjunction between the willingness and the ability to be unseen and unheard and to wait, that has everything to do with the power, the glory and the authority that is exhibited when we are called to be employed. One never knows when that calling will come or if it will come at all, but one has got to come to a priestly place where it makes no difference. To wait on God silently is as much to render Him priestly service as to go and speak. A church that is not priestly is simply not the church. Priestly service is effectual service and no other service is.

This human thing, this taint that finds expression in witness and ministry, however compatible it might be with "good meetings," prevents and forestalls the experience of the glory of God falling in fire from heaven. Being jealous for the glory of God and the fire from heaven is an incentive for waiting. If our motive is

only success, good messages and good services, then we will not have the stamina and incentive for that final waiting, which is the necessary death that must precede the falling of the fire.

The falling of the fire may express itself in a holy hush before God, a moment of such a kind that you virtually stop breathing. God is there. We need much more of that, and God wants us to have much more of that, not because we are "glory seekers" in the sense that our flesh wants to be titillated, but that the whole earth should be filled with His glory. His glory is the testimony of Himself, which we ourselves often prohibit and preclude by our own religious and ministerial actions, because we do not know and are not disposed to wait. Men can conduct successful religion, but only priestly ministry can bring down fire from heaven, the glory of God. The glory of God and the fire of God are equally attached and exclusive to priestly ministration. Glory is lacking in God's house and it is glory that ignites and empowers the word and transforms doctrine into life-changing conviction and transforms mere religious services into heavenly events.

TRUE BLESSING

After the last sacrifice and after the last waiting and after the last waving of the sacrifice then,

Then Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people and blessed them.... (Lev. 9:22a)

Can you imagine what those hands looked like? They were steeped and impregnated with blood and gore right into the finger nails and every pore. He would have looked more like a butcher than a priest. When God asked Israel who would be on the Lord's side after the incident of the fashioning of a golden calf, it was the Levites who separated and detached themselves from the rest of the profaned Israel and came to Moses and stood on the Lord's side. They were to put their swords on and go in and out of the camp and every man was to slay his

friend, his father and his neighbor. It says that on that day, the priests were consecrated of God, and the word consecrated means, 'hands full of blood'.

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WORD TO WHOM IT
IS ADDRESSED.***

So here is Aaron lifting up his hands to bless the people. Only priests can raise holy hands above men and command blessing from heaven. Only the priest has the authority. Only he has been in the presence of the Most High. One of the reasons that our attempts at blessing do not convey a blessing, is because they are not priestly, and they are not priestly because they are not bloody. It did not cost anything—there was no sacrifice. It was easy and facile and was merely the intonation of words that speak of blessing but do not constitute blessing, because it is not a hand that is dipped in blood.

A priest is not a priest if he cannot pronounce blessing, and what is his blessing if it is only a mere verbalization without bringing the palpable blessing in fact? There has been no word more cheapened than the word blessing—"Bless you brother, bless you sister...bless the Lord, etc." It is been spoken and used as a 'fill-in', something to punctuate the silence that sounds good. If there is any word that needs to be contended for and brought

back from the dead, it is the word 'bless'. It has become a pitiful cliché by people who do not even expect that something is going to be conferred by the speaking of the word to whom it is addressed. True blessing is a priestly benediction that performs something. Something of a palpable and substantive kind is transmitted. It was something manifest from heaven brought into the deeps of men. It was an experience of blessedness, the absence of which is known by the word, curse.

There is something about this priestly calling that makes it ever and always inseparable from a heavenly calling and that is because the High Priest into whom we are called is in heaven. The Tabernacle and the Temple and the Holy of Holies into which the Levitical priests entered were types and shadows of the heavenly reality into which the true High Priest has entered and into which the Melchizedek Priest is called to enter by virtue of the power of an indestructible life. It is very heaven itself—the throne of God. It is out from this place that we come to minister as priests unto men.

(For continuation of this article go to page 205.)



Art Katz is the founder of Ben Israel Fellowship, a small community of believers seeking to live an apostolic and prophetic lifestyle. This article, used

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