

200930-4 Nu 17, The Priesthood Confirmed, Aaron's Rod—CThurman

In the previous chapter there was Korah and his company's rejection of the LORD's priesthood (vss.1-40), which then was followed by the congregation's negligence of the priesthood. This showed their ignorance of the need they had of the priesthood's intercessions to God in their behalf. I think it is right to say that had it not been for the intercessions of the priesthood, as the LORD had ordained it, Israel would have been consumed for sin as soon as they had received the law at Sinai because the law revealed Israel's sin against the LORD. Of all nations Israel was being held accountable for their sins against the LORD.

Ro 5:13 (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

The applications that can be drawn from the OT priesthood to the NT priesthood of Jesus Christ are many. This house, this church, the union we have as the members of Jesus Christ in this body is a priesthood of believers.

If Jesus Christ is the high priest, then those specially associated with Him in His church are priests of God: cf. He.7.24, 25; 8.1, 2, *we have such a high priest ... a minister of the true sanctuary; 9.11, Christ being come an high priest; 10.21, and having an high priest over the house of God ...; Re.1.6; 5.10 ... has made us unto God kings and priests.*

As the LORD established the OT Levitical priesthood of those from a greater body of the elect natural children of Israel, so Jesus Christ established the NT church (a NT priesthood) from a greater body of the elect of God from every nation, kindred, tongue and people in the earth. As Israel (not to mention the nations of the earth) rejected the priesthood and thought to usurp the priesthood to form it into something which suited them better, so many in Christendom have manufactured a church of their own making, after their own imaginations rather than looking for that which is formed according to the word of God. But as the LORD preserved the order of the OT priesthood unto the first coming of Jesus Christ so the Lord shall preserve the order of the NT priesthood, His churches, unto His second coming. He promised that the very gates of hell shall not prevail against the Lord's church.

cf. Mt.16.18, *gates of hell*, meaning that all of the forces that would otherwise bring the entire sum of Christ's body on earth to the place of the dead shall not prevail against the church of Jesus Christ.

No matter how spiritually dark this present age might become, no matter how intensely the world persecutes the churches of Christ, they shall continue somewhere in the earth until the day of the return of Jesus Christ from glory. (cf. M.28.20; Eph.3.21)

The Levites strove against the LORD by rejecting the order of Aaron's house over tabernacle and were punished for it. The earth opened up and swallowed Korah, Dathan and Abiram, and a fire consumed the 250 princes (of the Levites). So, the tension within the tribe of Levi has been resolved. However the rebellion of Israel shown in the last ten verses of chapter 16, that resulted in the deaths of 14,700 Israelites, manifests a tension between the tribes of Israel and the tribe of Levi which yet needs to be resolved. This unresolved tension is more apparent in the way that the Hebrew version of the OT divides the verses between chapters 16 and 17. The Hebrew Bible has for chapter 16, verses 1-35, and chapter 17, verses 1-28. Our chapter division now settles the issue as to which tribe will serve the LORD about the tabernacle.

**1 ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and take of every one of them a rod according to the house of their fathers, of all their princes according to the house of their fathers twelve rods: write thou every man's name upon his rod.**

rod, מַטֵּה, mat-teh, is a noun tss. *staff* (pl. *staves*), *rod*, and *tribe*.

For example, we could write the names of the 12 *princes* that were given in the Nu.1.16, 44 (vss.5-15). Or, the names of the *captains* (the same Hebrew for *princes*) in Nu.2.2-29. We don't necessarily know whose names are written upon these rods but they are men of renown of the tribes of Israel.

3 And thou shalt write Aaron's name upon the rod of Levi: for one rod shall be for the head of the house of their fathers.

Aaron is counted as a נָשִׂיא, nah-see, *a prince, a ruler, a captain, a chief, a governor* (which are the various tss. of this Hebrew word).

4 And thou shalt lay them up in the tabernacle of the congregation before the testimony, where I will meet with you.

and thou shalt lay them up, וְהִנַּחְתָּם, v^e-hin-nach-tam, Hiphil (causative active) pret. of נוּחַ, nuach, tss. to rest, to be quiet, to be confederate, to cease, to lay up, to set, to let down, to lay.

Some tend to think that Moses had free access into the holiest of all and was not limited to a ‘once-a-year’ meeting as Aaron was, but I haven’t been able to prove that to be true. It seems that the rods are simply laid in close proximity to where the altar of incense is, next to the veil. So a total of 13 rods are gathered together including Aaron’s rod. These are probably very much like an old dead, dried walking stick. I’m not sure that every man’s rod was of the same kind of tree, but Aaron’s rod, we do know, was made of the almond tree. (v.8)

5 And it shall come to pass, that the man’s rod, whom I shall choose,

shall choose, אֶבְחַר, ev-char, Qal fut. of בָּחַר, ba-char, and most freq. tss. to choose; Pv.21.3, excellent (meaning choice); Ecc.9.4, to be joined.

shall blossom: and I will make to cease from me the murmurings of the children

of Israel, whereby they murmur against you.

עֲלֵיכֶם

2ppl. [both, Moses and Aaron]

shall blossom, יִפְרַח, yiph-rach, Qal fut. of פָּרַח, pa-rach, and tss. to break out, to blossom, to grow, to bud, to spring up, to flourish, to break out, to spread.

and I shall make to cease, וְהִשְׁכַּחְתִּי, Hiphil (causative act.) pret. of שָׁכַח, and of the five times this is found in the OT it is tss. with a different English word each time: Est. 7.10, to pacify; Est. 2.1, to appease; Jer. 5.26, to set Ge.8.1, to assuage (so to abate); Nu.17.5, to cease.

The people murmured against Moses and Aaron saying, 'Ye have killed the people of the LORD.' There was a reason that the LORD killed the people with a plague: because they rejected God's order which separated the Levites from the other tribes of Israel to be His chosen servants. And this which the LORD performs shall settle this matter once for all.

There were individuals (kings) that presumed upon the office of the priesthood and came into great trouble for it (Saul, 1Sa.13.8-13; Uzziah. 2Chr.26.16.21)

6 And Moses spake unto the children of Israel, and every one of their princes gave him a rod apiece, for each prince one, according to their fathers' houses, even twelve rods: and the rod of Aaron was among their rods.

7 And Moses laid up the rods before the LORD in the tabernacle of witness.

8 ¶ And it came to pass, that on the morrow Moses went into the tabernacle of witness; and, behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds [בָּרָח], and bloomed blossoms [צִיץ, the bloom, the flower], and yielded almonds.

and yielded, וַיִּגְמַל, Qal fut. of גָּמַל, tss. to yield, to reward, to deal bountifully, to reward, to bestow.

almonds, שִׁקְדִים, a masc. pl. noun שִׁקְדָה, always tss. almonds (4).

So the LORD chose Aaron's rod, a rod from in the midst of the brethren, a rod that was dried up and dead and it budded with buds, blossomed with blossoms and yielded almonds. Aaron, as well as his rod is a very good type for Christ, a rod among His brethren, a chosen rod, dead yet brought to life.

Isa 11:1 And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots ...

Isa 42:1 Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.

Heb 2:13 And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me.

Re 1:18 I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

9 And Moses brought out all the rods from before the LORD unto all the children of Israel [primarily the princes gathered there]: **and they looked, and took every man his rod.**

10 And the LORD said unto Moses, Bring Aaron's rod again before the
Put back

bring ... again, הָשִׁיב, ha-shav, Hiphil (causative act.) imper. of שׁוּב, shoov, to return, to come again, to turn, to turn away, to bring again, to retire, to turn back, to restore.

testimony, to be kept for a token against the rebels;
for safe-keeping as

to be kept, לְמִשְׁמֶרֶת, the preposition לְ, to, for, as, and the fem. noun מִשְׁמֶרֶת, tss. a charge, a keeping, an ordinance.

For consideration about the place where the rod was put at this time, compare it to where a token of the incense was put up before the LORD.

Ex.30.35 And thou shalt make it a perfume, a confection after the art of the apothecary, tempered together, pure and holy:

36 And thou shalt beat some of it very small, and put of it before the testimony in the tabernacle of the congregation, where I will meet with thee: it shall be unto you most holy.

It was put up before the testimony. At the present time it does not appear that either the incense or the rod was put into the ark of the covenant. It seems that these were situated in the vicinity of the golden altar of incense which also was located against the veil that is by the ark. All of these could be said to be *before* the mercy seat.

Ex.30.6 And thou shalt put it (the altar of incense) before the veil that is by the ark of the testimony, before the mercy seat that is over the testimony, where I will meet with thee.

Three things are positioned before the mercy seat: the golden altar of incense, a portion of incense, and Aaron's rod.

I do not know when the Aaron's rod would have been put into the tabernacle, but it was according He. 9.4. And it is not revealed when the ark was emptied of its contents, though by the time king Solomon dedicated the Temple only the tables of the covenant were inside of it. (cf. 1Ki.8.9; 2Chr. 5.10)

and thou shalt quite take away their murmurings from me, that they die not.

and thou shalt quite take away, וְתִכַּל, ooth-cal, Piel (intensive act.) fut. of כָּלָה, tss. to make an end, expire, to consume, finish, make clean riddance, to wholly reap, to accomplish, to utterly destroy; the Piel verb communicates to busy oneself eagerly, a strengthening and repetition of the action (cf. Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar, p.141), emphatic (to make, to utterly make, cf. Weingreen's Hebrew Grammar, p.105) an end.

In other words the LORD commanded Moses to put up Aaron's rod as a witness against the rebels of Israel to keep them from murmuring so that they should not die. Israel was to remember that this rod was there and refrain themselves from sinning so against the LORD.

11 And Moses did so: as the LORD commanded him, so did he.

The LORD has confirmed the priesthood to the nation. The issue is settled. Only the tribe of Levite shall come near to do the service of the LORD about the tabernacle.

12 And the children of Israel **spake unto Moses,**
[probably the representative princes]

saying, Behold, we die, **we perish, we all perish.**
give up the ghost fail fail

we die, גָּוַעְנוּ, Qal pret. of גָּוַעַ, ga-va[g]; tss. *to die, to perish,* Gen.25.8, *to give or yield up the ghost* (9); **v.13, with dying.**

we perish, אָבַדְנוּ, Qal pret. of אָבַד, tss. *to destroy, to perish, to be undone, not to escape, to fail, to be lost, to break; twice in this verse.*

They now understand that they all should have died for what they did, just as the others had died only two days earlier.

13 Whosoever cometh any thing near unto the tabernacle of the LORD

All that come near unto the tabernacle of the LORD [to usurp the duties of the priesthood]

shall die, יָמוּת, Qal fut. of מוּת, mooth, tss. *to die, to be slain, to be dead, to kill, to destroy.*

shall die:

The nation agrees that the service of the priesthood belongs only to that tribe which the LORD has chosen: to the tribe of Levi.

shall we be consumed with dying?
spent

shall we be consumed, תִּמְנָנוּ, Qal pret. of תִּמְנַם, tss. *to spend, to be consumed, to clean pass, to accomplish, to come to the full.*

As if to say, we sin against the LORD at every turn. Sounds like us doesn't it.

What application can we make of this text of Scripture? There was a people that God called into special service. They served in the priesthood. Serving the LORD in this capacity was a blessed privilege, but it was also a grave responsibility. Today, so many that are outside of the fellowship do not understand the blessedness of service. Some on the inside don't appreciate the service to which they have been called. How empty the Christian's life is apart from this special service and fellowship. There is no higher calling in this life than to be in this place and in this holy service. I don't know why everyone that knows Christ does not come into one of the churches of Jesus Christ, the priesthood of the believer, to show forth the praises of him that has called out of darkness and into His marvelous light, but they don't. It is as if they think that being in a church means that we can't enjoy life any longer. But I have observed that of all of the people of God the ones that enjoy life the most are the saints of God, those of the churches of Jesus Christ.

We live in the last of the last days just before the coming of the Son of man. These are very dark days. The witness of the church is diminishing. Churches are not being taught. Preachers are leaving and none are taking their places. They prefer a program of entertainment. As a result they're cold and lifeless; and as salt that has lost its savor churches have become worthless and carnal. Don't let that be us. Follow Christ day by day.

Take every opportunity to gather with the saints when the doors are opened. Take part in the fellowship of the saints or offer up spiritual sacrifices to God by Jesus Christ. Let us always examine our lives in the light of the word of God. Let no sin slip by. Let no sin fester. Let no sin grow. Daily be conformed to the image of Christ.

Count it a joy to be a part of this church and in this priestly service.

Re.1.4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne;

*5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,
6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*