

Let's connect the visual from last weeks teaching of David, though being a king, he took off his kingly garments and worshipped before the Lord with all his might wearing the garments of a priest, a linen ephod. Place this picture in your heart because this is a prophetic picture of the New covenant believer. Before any other assignment we are priests unto God.

I want to flush out what the priestly ministry looks like under the New Covenant. This is essential in understanding a Presence centered Church. We are to be so in love with our bridegroom, King Jesus Christ that we corporately and personally own the priestly ministry of First love, worship, ministry to Jesus from a place of intimacy. Being Presence centered means We don't build a place for people and invite God; we build a dwelling for God and invite people.

The Old Testament imagery given in the Tabernacle of Moses and the temple that Solomon built help give us an understanding of the importance of the temple and dwelling space of God. Within the new covenant there is a temple theology that is so important to understand because the temple is no longer a place it is the people of God filled with his Holy Spirit. Making every believer not simply someone who goes to the temple **but individuals who are the temple**, with each being a part of the Holy Priesthood.

Peter emphasizes the fact that because of the blood of Jesus every believer is part of the Holy priesthood which would have absolutely felt like a radical statement to Jews who understood the significance of the priesthood and the sanctity of the temple.

1Peter 2:4- Coming to Him *as to a living stone*, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God *and precious*, ⁵ you also, as *living stones*, are being built up a spiritual house, a **holy priesthood**, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

1Peter 2:9 But you *are* a chosen generation, a **royal priesthood**, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

This “Royal priesthood” is meant to be a major part of our identity. Through Jesus Christ we have been repurposed, *set apart by Him to be worshippers of God, Holy dwelling places that seek His face and desire Him above all. Our great High priest Jesus Christ offered Himself as the unblemished lamb of God and opened the door for us to take our place in this holy Priesthood that is being built up into a spiritual house that will bring Him much glory.*

You are invited into direct ministry to God Himself, this is Presence centered worship, Davidic worship.

I. Peter highlights we are Living Stones not bricks! 

Bricks Are Man-Made — Stones Are God-Made

Bricks-Manufactured, identical And Built by human design

Stones-Formed by God, Unique in size, weight, grain, and Shaped by pressure, time, and environment, Chosen, not produced

Bricks fit because they are identical. Stones fit because the builder knows where each belongs.

Jesus said “**I will build My church.**” (Matthew 16:18)

Stones preserve identity, brick erase identity

Stones Speak of Temples, Not Towers

Bricks built Babel (Genesis 11). (Man made) let's make a name for ourselves

Stones built: Temples and Altars, Temples say The Lord is here!

Solomon's Temple Was Built of Prepared Stones

1 Kings 6:7 (NKJV) And the temple, when it was being built, was built with stone finished at the quarry, so that no hammer or chisel [or] any iron tool was heard in the temple while it was being built.

- Stones were shaped away from the site
- They were fitted together in silence
- The temple rose as a place of peace and glory, not noise

This mirrors the believer's formation:

- God shapes us in hidden places (sanctifies His people)
- Preparation happens before public placement
- The dwelling of God is marked by rest, not striving
- **Peter is saying: what Solomon's Temple was in stone, the Church now is in people.**

Christ the Cornerstone Ephesians 2:20 (NKJV) having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner[stone,]

We are not bricks because God is not building a system—He is building a dwelling for His presence. This is beautiful! God our maker has designed His dwelling and is building it with His priestly people. (Remember that this is a collective picture of the church, yes you are the temple but God is building His temple with all of us together.)

I. A Kingdom of priests

The Old Testament priesthood from the line of Aaron the brother of Moses gives us vision of what our spiritual assignment is as the priesthood of believers.

Hebrews 9:6-7 – NASB Now when these things have been so prepared, the priests are continually entering the outer tabernacle performing the divine worship, but into the second, only the high priest enters once a year, not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance.

Hebrews 10:19-20 – NASB Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh,

Exodus 19:6 (NKJV)

⁶ And you shall be to Me a **kingdom of priests** and a holy nation.’ These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.”

In this we **see the heart of God that we would be a kingdom of priests**. *Through we are not natural descendants of Aaron and the tribe of Levites we are spiritual descendants.*

Revelation 1:5-6 ⁵ and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, ⁶ and has **made us kings and priests** to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ we now have access to the holy of holies that under the Old Covenant only the High priests had access to.

Deuteronomy 10 sums up the priestly duties that can be applied under the new covenant.

Deuteronomy 10:8 (NKJV) At that time the Lord separated the tribe of Levi to **bear the ark** of the covenant of the Lord, to **stand** before the Lord to minister to Him and to **bless** in His name, to this day.

TODAY there are natural blood descendants of the tribe of Levi, and there are spiritual blood descendants (through Christ’s atonement): now everyone who is born again has the calling of a priest.

I. **Three aspects of priestly ministry**

There are three specific aspects to this calling

1. *"To carry the ark of the covenant of the of Yahweh"*

The ark of the covenant represented God's presence and his glory. It was a weighty and awesome responsibility to carry this ark, and this was the first specific mark to their **calling**. *The Israelites were to follow the ark, the Presence and Glory of Yahweh, wherever it led them. If the Glory rested, they rested. If the Glory moved, they moved.* The Levites were assigned the responsibility of carrying this Glory of God.

I believe this is a specific stirring and longing God's puts upon His people to long for the Presence of God just like King David did when he established that the presence of God was his one desire. His 24/7 prayer tent that continued under his leadership as King of Israel showed His highest value for the Presence of God worship and prayer. God is both searching for and moved by the authentic worshipper. He wants our supreme value like David to be Him.

We long to be a church body that hosts/carries the Presence of God. This is both a corporate call and a personal stirring that we must be willing to own. Those called as Levitical worshippers need to see themselves as carriers of God's glory, which transforms and enables them to walk in the ministry of the Spirit

2 Corinthians 3:7-8,18 – NASB(7-8) *But if the **ministry of death**, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was, how will the **ministry of the Spirit** fail to be even more with glory? (18) But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.*

The ministry of beholding is what holds everything else together. Our eyes must stay fixed on His face and our ears tuned to His voice.

2. "To stand before Yahweh to minister to him"

This moves us to our next point which is our **first love is Jesus and our first ministry is unto the Lord to behold His glory.**

Those with a Levitical calling, are mandated first of all "to stand before The LORD to minister." Ministry to the Lord takes precedence over all other ministry and assignments .

What does it mean to minister to the Lord? It means to focus our first love, our highest attention, our greatest energy, our deepest passion on Him. It means to express our love and devotion to him first of all with all that is within us and with any and every means he has given to us: "Serving the Lord" Is Task-Oriented, "Ministering to the Lord" Is Presence-Oriented. Serving the Lord is great but can be done outside of intimacy. Ministry to the Lord is Focused on being, Directed toward God Himself, Includes worship, prayer, waiting, attentiveness and is Often hidden and unseen it is fully for Him.

It means to lavish our love on him with the best we can offer, as Mary of Bethany in pouring her most precious ointment on the feet of Jesus.

3. *"To bless in his name"*

As Levitical worshippers today are called to first of all bless the Lord, He then also mandates them to "bless others in His name." Those called to this Levitical ministry, will inevitably be constantly loving (blessing) others, representing Jesus, interceding for other. Serving others flows in fullness and overflow when our first priority is ministering to the Lord. I face God before I face the world. In order to serve others well and do my God given assignment I realize that my kingly assignment or what I do, is fueled by my priestly role of loving God. Like David, I may have an incredible calling, a kingly robe! Yet what I wear closest to my heart is a priestly ephod.

Home groups

- Discuss what it means to be a living stone in comparison to a brick.
- Discuss the beauty of God's ways and His emphasis on us maintaining our individuality even as we are being built into one temple.
- Are you living in the revelation that you are a priest before anything else.
- Discuss the difference between ministry that is to Jesus and ministry for Jesus and share personally what this looks like in your life.
- Discuss the three aspects of priestly ministry.