



GLORY PRIESTS

INTRODUCTION

This is our final week of 'Unto Him' – a series in which we have been thinking about our calling as priests and what it means to 'minister unto the Lord'.

Early on in the series, we discovered that priestly ministry unto the Lord is about INTIMACY and the PRESENCE. Face-to-face is what GOD has ALWAYS VALUED MOST.

So, we've thought a lot about the holy of holies – what it means to access heaven now and engage with the ACTUAL presence of God – and we've considered what IMPEDES that access and what ACTIVATES it.

In this final session, we explore what it means to be a GLORY PRIEST and, in doing so, we will consider three observations about how our ministry to OTHERS is shaped by our ministry UNTO HIM.

WORLD NEEDS JESUS

But a quick thought as we begin.

We surely agree that the world needs Jesus.
What does that mean?
It means that it needs *JESUS*.

It does not need the IDEA of Jesus. It doesn't need entry level explanations of who Jesus is – as if our witness to the world should look like Sunday School for grown-ups. It does not

need charitable works that invoke the name of Jesus but look exactly like the things other charities do. It doesn't just need the *name* of Jesus – there are plenty of demonic cults that use the name of Jesus but have nothing to do with Jesus. It does not need weak interpretations, misrepresentations or distortions of Jesus that allow us to minister in ways that don't involve Jesus.

It needs Jesus. Actually Jesus.

It needs the manifest PRESENCE of the PERSON of the resurrected Jesus.

This is our calling as Glory Priests:



Let us note this from the outset – this session is concerned with ministering the GLORY to others.

OBSERVATION 1: WE ARE NOT RELIGIOUS PRIESTS; WE ARE GLORY PRIESTS

The enemy always turns the truth of God into a lie and seeks to distort that which is essential to our ability to minister unto the Lord and effectively minister to the world.

The enemy wants us to be lukewarm lovers, unfamiliar with the presence and powerless in our ministry. We must be aware of:

- the pull to powerlessness
- and the retreat to mere religion

We see this in what has become our reflex understanding of what it is to be a priest. For many, it is the notion of a professional minister of religion. The ordained person with a theology degree, who stands at the front, often in a collar. There is a separation between

“clergy” and “laity”. Those who *can* and those who *can't*. Those who *are allowed* and those who are *not*. That's a DISTORTION.

It was NOT the pattern of the early church. It was not until the 3rd or 4th centuries that the role of presbyter (a Greek word, simply meaning 'elder') became what we understand by 'priest' today. For the early church, they understood 'priest' to be the guy in the temple still operating under the Law. It was a STEP BACK when those who were leading the church came to be seen as professional priests...and an even further step back when they began to be seen as mediators between God and man.

Because we know from **1 Timothy 2:5-6** that there is only ONE mediator between God and man and it is the GOD-MAN Himself, Jesus, our Redeemer and Risen Saviour, who took the priestly ascent before us and opened the way for us to enter into the GLORY and minister unto Him in the intimacy of His presence.

Q: Do you have a default understanding of what it means to be a priest?

Q: Does your understanding inhibit your own ministry as a priest?

Q: Do you see yourself as a priest?

Don't let distortion disqualify you. You are a priest...in the pattern of Jesus, in the order of Melchizedek. You are a GLORY PRIEST. Your calling is to minister unto Him IN the glory and to minister THE GLORY to others.

DAVID'S TABERNACLE: CASE STUDY

Here is a significant case study into the religious pull that DISTORTS, DISTANCES and DISEMPOWERS.

David, as King, recaptured Jerusalem and established the governmental centre of his kingdom there. Right at the centre of the centre of his kingdom, he placed the Ark of the Covenant, the presence of God.

1 Chronicles 15

15 After David had constructed buildings for himself in the City of David, he prepared a place for the ark of God and pitched a tent for it. ² Then David said, "No one but the Levites may carry the ark of God, because the Lord chose them to carry the ark of the Lord and to minister BEFORE him forever." ³ David assembled all Israel in Jerusalem to bring up the ark of the Lord to the place he had prepared for it. ⁴ He called together the descendants of Aaron and the Levites...

The following verses list them all and then in verse 12 it says:

¹² He said to them, "You are the heads of the Levitical families; you and your fellow Levites are to consecrate yourselves and bring up the ark of the Lord, the God of Israel, to the place I have prepared for it. ¹³ It was because you, the Levites, did not bring it up the first time

that the Lord our God broke out in anger against us. We did not inquire of him about HOW to do it in the PRESCRIBED way.”

Note: they hadn't ministered unto the Lord the way HE WANTED.

¹⁴ So the priests and Levites consecrated themselves in order to bring up the ark of the Lord, the God of Israel. ¹⁵ And the Levites carried the ark of God with the poles on their shoulders, as Moses had commanded in accordance with the word of the Lord. ¹⁶ David told the leaders of the Levites to appoint their fellow Levites as musicians to make a joyful sound with musical instruments: lyres, harps and cymbals.

So, David instigates immediately this incredible expression of liberated worship and adoration around the presence of God.

Now, let's jump to **verse 27**:

²⁷ Now David was clothed in a robe of fine linen, as were all the Levites who were carrying the ark, and as were the musicians, and Kenaniah, who was in charge of the singing of the choirs.

David ALSO wore a linen EPHOD. ²⁸ So all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the Lord with shouts, with the sounding of rams' horns and trumpets, and of cymbals, and the playing of lyres and harps.

²⁹ As the ark of the covenant of the Lord was entering the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul watched from a window. And when she saw King David dancing and celebrating, she despised him in her heart.

Note: David puts on a LINEN EPHOD. What's the significance? The significance is that he was NOT a LEVITE! He was not a priest. He wasn't supposed to wear an ephod. That is DEEPLY OFFENSIVE to the religious mindset. That is partly why Michal despised him. Who was David to put on the Ephod of a priest?!

But this was the prophetic insight of David – the man after God's own heart, who had spent so much time worshipping Him in the secret place, who had learned to pour out the oil of affection, who had discovered what God wanted, whose heart's song we see in **Psalm 27**:

One thing I ask from the Lord,
this only do I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life,
to gaze on the beauty of the Lord
and to seek him in his temple.

This is David, the King-Priest, the prototype of Jesus, honouring the actual presence of God and seeking to live his life, undertake his calling and administer his kingdom - his divine appointment - in and from the GLORY.

We now jump to **1 Chronicles 16** to see what happened next.

16 They brought the ark of God and set it inside the tent that David had pitched for it, and they presented burnt offerings and fellowship offerings before God...

4 He appointed **SOME** of the Levites to **MINISTER BEFORE** the ark of the Lord, to extol, thank, and praise the Lord, the God of Israel...They were to play the lyres and harps... to sound the cymbals...and to blow the trumpets regularly before the ark of the covenant of God.

Verse 37:

37 David left Asaph and his associates **BEFORE THE ARK OF THE COVENANT** of the Lord to minister there regularly, according to each day's requirements...

39 David left Zadok the priest and his fellow priests before the **TABERNACLE** of the Lord at the high place in Gibeon **40** to present burnt offerings to the Lord on the altar of burnt offering regularly, morning and evening, in accordance with everything written in the Law of the Lord, which he had given Israel.

Let's **STOP** and **UNDERSTAND** what is going on here.

David's tabernacle was so different from Moses' tabernacle.



Despite scripture not expressly stating it, many theologians believe that the sides of David's tabernacle were open¹. Which means that the Ark could be seen by everyone!

¹ See Appendix for note on the reasoning for this theological position

The reason for this conclusion is that David instigated a new practice in which it was no longer just the High Priest who was allowed to minister before the Ark, but ALL the priests were able to. In addition to that, the presence of God was accessible to all people, and not just the Israelites. Gentiles could access the presence too.

David was establishing a Melchizedek order of priests that he prophetically understood PRECEDED, and would SUPERSEDE, the Levitical order.

Fascinatingly, David's tabernacle wasn't where the ANIMAL SACRIFICES took place – that carried on under Zadok in Moses' tabernacle on another mountain. And there, sacrifices were made without the presence of the Ark - a major shift. Instead, the presence of God was relocated to the PLACE OF ACCESS where there was 24/7 worship, adoration and prayer. THOSE were the sacrifices that were now associated with ACCESS to the presence.

So, in David's tabernacle, new forms of sacrificial ministry were established – the ministry of music and singing; of raising hands and of thankfulness; of testimony, rejoicing and dance; of shouting and of clapping hands; the ministry of the 'Amen' (a prophetic agreement and declaration ministry); of spiritual sacrifices; of seeking the Lord; and the ministry of Psalms.

Those things were the new MINISTRY UNTO GOD IN THE GLORY.

So, in David's day, there were two tabernacles: Moses' and David's. Two mountains: Sinai and Zion. Two emphasises to their priestly ministry: animal sacrifice and worship. A new way for the Gentiles. The shift in the emphasis, access and ministry of the presence.

This was a significant prophetic foretaste of what was to come with Jesus.

The Levitical, law-based, exclusive, sacrificial priestly ministry, was going to become the Melchizedek, grace-based, inclusive, worshipful priestly ministry.

But here is the WARNING OF THE DISTORTION:

What followed David's tent was SOLOMON'S TEMPLE.

Magnificent and full of honour and glory BUT it wasn't enough to stop the pull to powerlessness and the return of the religious spirit. In its second incarnation, it ultimately became the temple whose tables Jesus overturned and prophesied the destruction of. The legacy of Solomon's temple was actually a STEP BACK from David's tabernacle. David's tent was all about access through a King-Priest. The second temple that ultimately followed it, became the nest of vipers that Jesus rebukes in [Matthew 23](#).

David had released something that was later DISTORTED and LOST.

But in [Acts 15](#), we read what Jesus came to restore! Quoting Amos 9, it says:

¹⁶ “After this I will return
and rebuild David’s fallen tent.
Its ruins I will rebuild,
and I will restore it,
¹⁷ that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord,
even all the Gentiles who bear my name,
says the Lord...

Jesus rebuilt David’s tabernacle and re-established our access to the Glory.

So, resist the pull that returns God’s people to powerlessness and a loss of intimacy – you are a Glory Priest and you belong in the intimate presence of the Most High! To minister unto Him IN the glory and to minister to the world FROM His glory.

Q: What are your impressions of David’s tabernacle?

Q: In what ways did it prophesy of Jesus’ ministry?

Q: What had David grasped that compelled him to make such radical changes to the worshipping life of Israel?

OBSERVATION 2: THE ROLE OF A PRIEST IS NOT SYMBOLIC

Let’s jump back to the tabernacle of Moses. We are now very familiar with the layout, the objects, the significance of each part and the ministry of the priests within it.



On the day of atonement, the High Priest only would enter the Holy of Holies and sprinkle the blood of a sacrificed animal on the mercy seat – the cover of the ark of the covenant, where the presence of God dwelt. In doing so, he was satisfying the Law given to Moses by God, which was designed to keep the people in right relationship with God. When the High Priest passed through the veil and entered the Holy of Holies, he carried the blood with him.

Represented in that blood was the sin of all the people, including himself. In sprinkling the blood on the mercy seat, he was REPRESENTING the people BEFORE the Lord.

Hebrews 5:1

5 Every high priest is selected from among the people and is appointed to REPRESENT THE PEOPLE in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.

So, there is a MEDIATORY MOMENT: the dynamic of representing the people to God. But here is the KEY: the place where he represented the people is the PRESENCE.

It wasn't an empty altar. He was standing before the mercy seat, the location of the MANIFEST PRESENCE of God – his bringing the people before the Lord is only to be understood in terms of him standing BEFORE the Lord.

He represents the people TO the presence.

Why is that key? Because it was not a symbolic act – it was a GLORY EXCHANGE.

In that same moment, God is being represented TO THE PEOPLE. The high priest ENTERS the Holy of Holies conveying the sins of the people and he LEAVES the Holy of Holies conveying the mercy of God. And then He conducted other acts of atonement outside the Holy of Holies, amongst the people – which we don't have time to look at here – but the point is that there was a ministry to the Lord on behalf of the people and a ministry to the people on behalf of the Lord. And the thing that linked them is the GLORY – the presence of God.

- It wasn't a disconnected, representative, symbolic, religious act – which often seems to be the currency of contemporary priestly ministry
- It was a presence-activated, representing to a person and that person to His people. Its was a GLORY EXCHANGE.

Note: in order to minister that exchange to the people, the high priest FIRST had to come before the presence of the Lord and be EXPOSED to the glory.

Before we minister to people we must first stand in the glory.

In **2 Chronicles**, we read about the rebuilding of the temple by King Hezekiah after the Babylonian exile had ended. In **2 Chronicles 29:11** King Hezekiah says this to the priests:

“My sons do not be negligent, the Lord has chosen you to stand before him, to minister unto him and to be his ministers.”

That is the order of ministry for a Glory Priest:



To minister to others, we must first make sure that we understand what it means to encounter His presence, practice the presence, engage with His presence – spend time in prolonged proximity to His presence. Our effectiveness in ministering to others is completely linked to the degree that we **FIRST** stand in His presence and minister unto Him.

OBSERVATION 3: YOUR MINISTRY IS THE GLORY ITSELF

In the ‘Priestly Inactivity’ session, we said that we would look very **CLOSELY** and **CLEARLY** at what it actually means to minister to people. At the beginning of this session we noted that the world needs Jesus – actually Jesus.

Let us be clear – let us not water anything down or rewrite the bible to suit our level of faith or the limit of our understanding – the raw material of priestly ministry is the GLORY ITSELF.

1 Peter 2:9 tells us that, as His royal priesthood, we are set apart. That means that we have access to God so that we can know God as He is. It is from **THAT PLACE** that we are then to **EMERGE** to minister to the people. We are meant to come forth from the secret place of His presence – **CARRYING** the very presence of God:

- smeared with His anointing
- hearts cut by His voice
- carrying a sense of Him as He is
- ready to impart the substance and reality of His glory

...because we have apprehended Him in the Most Holy Place.

Otherwise - what do we truly have for others? We can pass on information about God, we can address physical need by physical means, but we can't impart the substance of His glory without having sought His face. Like Moses, we are meant to communicate a sense of God as He is, having encountered Him ourselves "face to face". This is the high calling of a GLORY PRIEST.

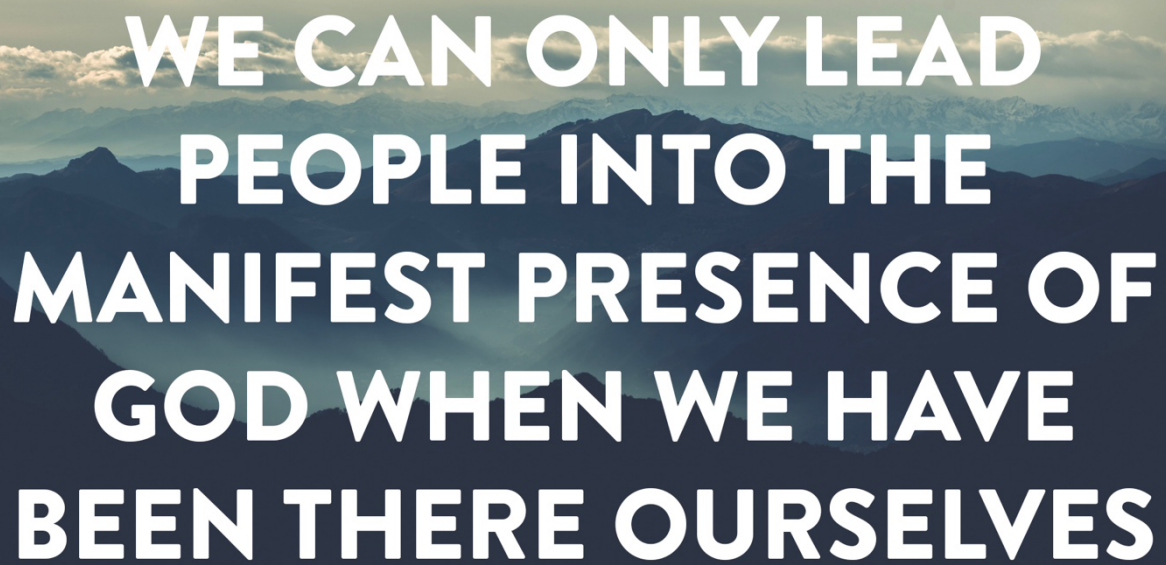


That's it. That's our ministry.

Leviticus 9:23 -

"Moses and Aaron then went into the tent of meeting. When they came out, they blessed the people; and the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people."

When we come into the glory of the Lord, we are empowered to truly bless the people – and to lead them into THEIR OWN ENCOUNTER with the glory of God. Moses and Aaron went into the tent, they encountered the glory, and then they blessed the people – who then encountered that same glory.



WE CAN ONLY LEAD PEOPLE INTO THE MANIFEST PRESENCE OF GOD WHEN WE HAVE BEEN THERE OURSELVES

The Levitical Priests were ANOINTED NOT GIFTED. In the modern church, we focus on gifts rather than anointing. Gifting can be a blessing to the church BUT if we rely only on our gifting, we'll never be able to travel *further* than our gifting.

True priestly ministry is not based on, and does not rely on, gifting. It relies on the anointing of God. It relies on what has been apprehended of God in the secret place.

If we receive the very presence of God in the secret place – then we won't be limited by our giftings because we will have the greatest gift of all to bring to others – the gift of God Himself. His power, His presence, His anointing, His heart, His manifest GLORY. Actually Him.

The raw material of all TRUE priestly ministry is the GLORY – the actual manifest presence of Jesus. Nothing less.

Q: *What are your practical gifts?*

Q: *What spiritual gifts have you eagerly pursued and walk in?*

Q: *Do you value gifting over anointing?*

Q: *Do you see your spiritual life in terms of anointing?*

CONCLUSION

Romans 15:18-19 is very compelling -

¹⁸ I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done— ¹⁹ by the power of signs and wonders, through the power of the Spirit of God. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ.

It is compelling because Paul says that to FULLY proclaim the gospel, it has to include - not just words - but a demonstration of signs and wonders through the power of the Spirit.

Many of us have grown up in a words-only environment. It may have brought us to faith in Jesus – for which we are so grateful! – but it didn't always teach us how to encounter Jesus and walk in miracles. The idea of anointing received in the glory and then passing that anointing on to others is often, sadly, not part of the deal in many churches.

But Paul is clear on what the FULL gospel is here. And he is equally clear that the full gospel of words, signs and wonders is true priestly ministry, because he says this in the verses just before the passage above –

¹⁴ I myself am convinced, my brothers and sisters, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with knowledge and competent to instruct one another.

¹⁵ YET I have written you quite boldly on some points to REMIND YOU...again,

Note: he's speaking of the pull away from powerlessness; the SATISFACTION with being good, being knowledgeable and being competent. So he says, "that's all great, YET"...he continues in **verse 16**:

...He gave me the **PRIESTLY DUTY of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.**

And so he says that he has undertaken that priestly duty by:

what I have said AND done— ¹⁹ by the power of signs and wonders, through the power of the Spirit of God.

The raw material of all TRUE priestly ministry is the GLORY – the actual manifest presence of Jesus. Nothing less.

You are a GLORY PRIEST. You are a conduit for the presence and power of Jesus Himself.

That's what the world needs. That's what Jesus is looking for in us.

ACTIVATION: Spend some time in the presence and ask Him to impart in you His anointing so that the realities of heaven can overflow through you to the people around you.

*APPENDIX

Biblical note: this is not stated expressly in scripture, but 1 Chronicles 15 and 16 tells us that – unlike Moses’s tabernacle – David’s did not have a Holy of Holies, an Outer Court, an Inner Court or an outside boundary. It was simply a “tent” with the Ark of the Covenant in it - and the Levites/priests were given a worship role around the Ark.

Sacrifices were made on the first day it opened (though notably no sin offerings) but then it was given over exclusively to worship and the sacrifices moved back to Moses’ tabernacle in Gibeon.

In David’s tent there was no door (into the Holy Place) or veil (into the Most Holy Place) to separate the different sections - there were no sections at all in David’s tent.

Whether David’s tabernacle did or didn’t have open sides is not the essential point – the instructive point for us is the symbolism and reality that all the priests and people had access to God’s presence/the Ark. Whether the tent had sides or not, the bible expressly tells us that David removed the doors, the veil and the restrictions that barred people from coming before the Ark. That is the material difference.

This is why Scripture says the Ark was in the “middle” of the tent (reflective of people surrounding the throne in heaven), rather than at the end of a long, dark, guarded corridor (as in the tabernacle at Gibeon and later Solomon’s Temple).