



Type: Magazine Article

Who Are the Sons of Levi? What Is Their Future Offering in Righteousness?

Author(s): John A. Widtsoe

Source: *Improvement Era*, Vol. 45, No. 8 (August 1942)

Published by: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Page(s): 513, 543

Abstract: This article discusses the Levites and the restoration of the priesthood.

EVIDENCES AND RECONCILIATIONS

liii. Is it Possible to Progress from One Glory to Another ?

THE answer to this perennial question is, No.

In the final judgment, all the earth children of the Lord will be assigned places in one or the other of the three grand divisions or degrees of salvation, known to us from modern revelation as the three glories. Each assignment will depend upon the use the candidate has made of the opportunities placed before him on earth and elsewhere. "For they shall be judged according to their works." By his own acts each person has shown his fitness to participate in the activities of this or that glory. It would be useless to place him higher than his capabilities would permit, and unfair to place him lower. If placed too high, he would not be competent or happy there, nor could he be content if placed too low. The degree of salvation of necessity corresponds, under the merciful justice of the Lord, with the demonstrated worthiness, capacity, and capability of each individual. The final judgment is individual.

Within each glory, however, there may be advancement. The law of progress may be utilized by every intelligence in the universe. Those who inherit the celestial, terrestrial, or celestial glories may progress, and progress eternally. But, let it ever be remembered that the power to progress is greatest in the celestial glory, and is decreasingly smaller in the lower glories. There can be no talk of those in the lower glories overtaking those in the highest, any more than an automobile traveling at the rate of twenty-five miles an hour can overtake one moving at the rate of fifty miles an hour.

They who inherit the celestial glory will dwell in the presence of the Father and the Son. They are kings and priests. From that glory issues the power of God, known to us as the Priesthood of the Lord. In that glory certain conditions of joy belong which are absent in the other glories. They who have inherited the lesser glories will receive a salvation so glorious as to be beyond the understanding of man—that has been revealed to us—but, "where God and Christ dwell they can not come, worlds without end." (D. & C. 76:112)

Once the final judgment has been uttered and our place assigned, we remain there, though we may progress forever, and everlastingly increase in power. Meanwhile, in all such matters, and with respect to all such questions, we can safely rest ourselves upon the mercy and justice of the Lord. Our only concern need be so to live as to win a place in the celestial glory.—J. A. W.

liv. Who are the Sons of Levi? What is their Future Offering in Righteousness ?

THE sons of Levi are the male members of the tribe of Levi, descendants of Levi, the third son of the patriarch Jacob.

While ancient Israel journeyed in the Sinaitic wilderness, they showed themselves unworthy to hold the higher or Melchizedek Priesthood. Consequently the Lord took this Priesthood from them, but allowed the lesser Priesthood to remain. (D. & C. 84:23-27)

This lesser Priesthood that remained was confined to the male members of the tribe of Levi; therefore, it is often spoken of as the Levitical Priesthood. Aaron, of the tribe of Levi, and his sons, were called to the office of priest, that is to the presidency of this Priesthood; therefore, it is also called the Aaronic Priesthood. The organization of the lesser Priesthood under the Mosaic dispensation must have been much like that of this day. Aaron and his sons served in offices similar to the priests, the other male members of the tribe of Levi in offices similar to the teachers and deacons of this dispensation of the gospel. The presiding priest, called the high priest, probably served as does the presiding bishop of our times.

The activities of the lesser Priesthood among ancient Israel were designed to meet the needs and conditions then existing. The law of bloody sacrifice or burnt offerings, in witness of the coming Savior, was in operation from this time until the coming of Jesus, the Christ. The Levites performed the labors and ordinances pertaining to this law. Explicit directions for the duties of the Levites are found in the Books of Moses. In course of time, the ordinances under the Levitical law became largely corrupted and unacceptable to the Lord. Only a few of the Levites held the true authority of the Priesthood. At the coming of the Savior, John the Baptist held the keys of the Aaronic Priesthood, that is, he was the presiding officer of that Priesthood.

On May 15, 1829, this John the Baptist appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, and conferred upon them the "Priesthood of Aaron," that is, the keys of the lesser Priesthood. In so doing he declared that this Priesthood "shall never be taken again from the earth, until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness." (D. & C. 13)

It does not seem probable that this offering will be a burnt offering. The coming of Christ ended the Mosaic law. The earlier sacrifices were in similitude of the coming sacrifice of Jesus, the Christ. After his crucifixion, death and resurrection, the sacrament was instituted to keep his sacrifice in constant living memory.

It seems more probable that the "offering in righteousness," which will terminate the functions of the Sons of Levi under the Levitical Priesthood, will be the full acceptance of the gospel, when their Priesthood will come under the direction of the higher or Melchizedek Priesthood.

This view seems borne out (Concluded on page 543)

THE EDITOR'S PAGE

(Concluded from page 541)

your side you can pass through the dark valley of slander, misrepresentation and abuse, undaunted, as though you wore a magic suit of mail that no bullet could enter, no arrow could pierce. You can hold your head high, toss it fearlessly and defiantly, look every man calmly and unflinchingly in the eye, as though you rode, a victorious king, returning at the head of your legions with banners waving and lances glistening, and bugles filling the air with music. You can feel the great expansive wave of moral health surging through you as the quickened blood courses through the body of him who is gladly, gloriously proud of physical health. You will know that all will come right in the end, that it must come, that error must flee before the great white light of truth, as darkness slinks away into nothingness in the presence of the sunburst. Then, with truth as your guide, your companion, your ally, and inspiration, you tingle with the consciousness of your kinship with the Infinite and all the petty trials, sorrows, and sufferings of life fade away like temporary, harmless visions seen in a dream."

* * *

I am very grateful for the triumph, so to speak, of the truth you and I

have accepted. Lies are of no value in this world, and nothing is more forceful than William George Jordan's statement about lying. He goes on to say that lies are like a lot of drunken men, one vainly seeking to support another.

I have heard some of my own acquaintances preach remarkably fine sermons on tithing, and I have taken the opportunity to look up their records, because I knew they were neglecting their duty, and I found there was no credit on the tithing record. The record is what counts. Faith without works, we are told, is dead.

I hope that all men and women who hold membership in this Church may be inspired to make up their minds that so far as their ability and their capacity are concerned they are going to live this gospel so that their lives will preach the truthfulness of it. I humbly pray that God will help you and me and every living soul who knows that this is the gospel to live it, that our lives may be a truth and not a falsehood, and that our very diligence and faithfulness may inspire other people to live the gospel.

EVIDENCES AND RECONCILIATIONS

(Concluded from page 513)

by Latter-day revelation. In Section 84:27 it is stated that this Priesthood the Lord caused "to continue with the house of Aaron among the children of Israel until John." This suggests a termination with the coming of Christ. In Section 124:39, where the work of the modern temples is summarized, "memorials for your sacrifices by the sons of Levi" are mentioned as part of the temple service. No provision has been made in the temples for the ancient type of burnt offerings, and the word memorials would seem to exclude such an interpretation. A more explicit suggestion is found in Section 128:24: "For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap; and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Let us, therefore as a church and a people, and as Latter-day Saints, offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness; and let us present in his holy

temple, when it is finished, a book containing the records of our dead, which shall be worthy of all acceptance." The "offering in righteousness" is here identified with temple work for the salvation of the dead, which encompasses all the principles of the plan of salvation.

When, therefore, the sons of Levi accept Christ and His gospel, subject themselves to the ordinances of the Church, and become active in gospel requirements, they will offer the offering in righteousness of which has been spoken.

Though the type of sacrifice connected with the Levitical Priesthood is no more, yet the law of sacrifice remains. The Prophet Joseph Smith made it clear that sacrifice is ever a part of the gospel. In the restored Church, this law is in full operation. None can retain the spirit of the gospel unless he gives to the Cause of the Lord of himself, of his substance, time and strength. (*History of the Church*, 4:207-212)

—J. A. W.



GET AFTER 'EM NOW!

FOR WOODEN FLOORS...

A tough, lasting enamel that oil and grease can't penetrate. Dandy anywhere in the house. Dries hard overnight. New colors, decorator-selected.

Average-size floor about \$125

FULLERWEAR FLOOR ENAMEL

LINOLEUM A PROBLEM?

Forget washing and scrubbing that kitchen linoleum. A dry-mop's plenty on this special linoleum varnish. Dries overnight.



LIN-BAR VARNISH



TILE NEED PATCHING?..

Loose tiles, cracks fixed in a jiffy. Ideal around bathtub, shower, etc.

DURATITE SURFACING PUTTY

SHINE UP THE HARDWOOD!

Save time and labor with a 25-lb. waxing brush. Or, even easier, an electric polisher goes twice as fast! Many Fuller Dealers will rent you a brush or polisher at little cost.



Ask for FULLER POLISHING WAX



VARNISHED FLOORS...

One coat protects, resists scuffs and scratches. Brightens dull surfaces.

SPEEDITE VARNISH Average room as low as 84¢



PROTECT WHAT YOU HAVE. MAKE IT LAST!

SEE YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD FULLER PAINT Dealer

