

## DISCERNING THE MIND OF CHRIST

### Introduction - Qualifications for the Priesthood

LEV.21:16-24 God's intention was that at the beginning, all His people would be priests: Ex.19:5 But they didn't keep that covenant and so God chose Aaron and his descendants to be a priestly family. But God was always having problems with His priests - 1Sam.3; Mal.1:6. The call for the church to be a royal priesthood can be marred by spiritual blindness or spiritual lameness through the deforming characteristic of sin or the crippling characteristic of apathy and indifference. So the first thing that we find in this passage as a disqualification for the O.T. priesthood was **blindness**, [v.18,20]. The consequences of being blind were clearly a defect for the priesthood: **Urim & Thummim**. These were probably two stones distinguishable in some way by colour or form and kept in a breast pocket on the priest's garment called the Ephod. These stones were the method by which the priest would determine the divine will. 1Sam.14. The priest had to see these stones in order to discover God's will.

It is imperative that we are not blind to the things that God wants to show us. The mind of Christ for us is that we see what God is about. Also the priests were to teach the precepts and the law [Torah]. In order to do that they had to physically see what had been written down. The word of God is the primary source of God's plan for our lives. If we do not read it, learn it, meditate upon it, then we are placing ourselves in a position where we can no longer see what God is saying. And the blind spots that develop from that will mar our ability to be a priest unto God. The third way in which the priest was to use his eyes was in verifying disease. Even in the N.T. we find Jesus commanding some that were healed to get the priest to verify it. If we are to be effective priests towards one another then we need to be aware when things are wrong and could cause disease in the fellowship. There are many phrases in the scriptures that point to this - from Paul's message to the Galatians that those who are spiritual restoring those that have sinned - to John's plea in his letters for the church to walk in the light with one another.

**Lameness** speaks of having limbs that are designed to accomplish various tasks for the benefit of the whole body, but do not function as they ought - and as a result those limbs become burdensome. Spiritual lameness in individuals is having giftings from God that are given to accomplish various things for the benefit of the whole body, but those gifts have been suppressed and ignored so that the body does not benefit, and moreover the body of Christ suffers for she has to carry unproductive individuals.

The **hunchback** is a defect that also disqualifies someone for

the priesthood. Principally because the priest is always lifting up his head and his arms to God. Priests stood in the presence of the Lord, they stood around the altar playing trumpets and harps [2Chron.5:11f], they were to stand lifting up holy hands to God - and God wanted all men to do the same - and they were to wave certain offerings in the air unto the Lord. There are many spiritual applications for the way we stand - in our battle against Satan we are to stand firm as a soldier stands fully clothed ready for action. Then there are those who are weighed down with negative thoughts. Their heads are bowed down in heavy depression. Such people cannot function as priests. They cannot bring man to God because they don't go to God themselves. They cannot offer to God the sacrifice of praise because praise and worship cannot fit into the negative framework of their lives.

Then there are running sores, surface ailments that never seem to heal. I see these as being largely relational. We cannot be priests if there are relational sores amongst us. Brothers and sisters, don't hold up on your readiness to repent and forgive - if you do you cannot function as a priest, who is the spokesman of God's readiness to forgive.

The testicles are mentioned last. The reproductive seed is speaks of the call to produce the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. God has placed within us all what we need to bring forth the character of Christ to the world. If that receptacle of the Holy Spirit - our spirit - is crushed, we cannot produce the fruit of the Spirit.

There is another side to reproduction which is very dear to my heart though, and that is the call of each of us to live in such a way, to imitate Christ so closely, that we will reproduce a family of believers that know the way and the life because they have seen it in us. It means that we 'father' and 'mother' young believers and see them established. Paul wanted to see more father-figures in the church. Sometimes we men are so busy that we don't stop to think that in the things that make us busy we could have an apprentice or two.

None of us are indispensable, and however successful you are in what you do it is no good if you leave a gaping hole when you go. **Success without a successor is failure.** Find ways of reproducing what is godly in you - in others.

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### Discovering the Mind of Christ

Col.1:21 The verse tells us that before we came to know Christ there was a basic disharmony between our minds and God's mind. And it implies that once we have received Christ as Lord and Saviour there is the potential to know the mind of Christ. The Holy Spirit who searches out the mind of Christ has come to live within the heart of the believer and therefore we gain from Him an understanding of the mind of Christ.

## LISTENING TO THE HOLY SPIRIT.

We have to learn to listen to the Holy Spirit and having listened, to walk in step with the Spirit - Jesus said: "My sheep hear my voice and they follow me." That is possible as the Spirit speaks the Word of God to us. Therefore walking in the Spirit is following the teaching of Jesus and keeping His Word. John 16:15; Rom.8:14. Jesus walked in perfect harmony with the Father because He walked in perfect harmony with the Holy Spirit, and this is what He taught His disciples to do as well. (John 14:26)

## CO-OPERATION OF THE SPIRIT

The work of the Holy Spirit is in co-operation - He never works alone. Concerning the Scriptures - the Holy Spirit revealed the truth to men - but men wrote it down. Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit but born of a woman. When it comes to prayer - we pray in the Spirit - that is we seek continuously the Spirit's filling - we go on being filled with the Holy Spirit - and in that condition we pray... and the Holy Spirit makes intercession for us.

## PRAYING IN AND WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

1 Cor.14:18; Eph.6:18; Rom.8:33 There is no truer word than this: "*We do not know how to pray as we ought*". We cannot see far enough or deep enough into the heart of God. We like to be in good health, live comfortably, have a little more money, with nothing to shock us - these are natural human aspirations. But God sees deeper and further. These things may not be wrong for us - but who can really say what is for our best. So the co-operation of the Holy Spirit is needed if we are to pray aright. If we lack wisdom, we are told to ask God for it - and His response is to give us the Spirit of Wisdom to instruct, to strengthen and to guide. Many times Paul prays for his readers that they may receive this wisdom. When we really pray in the Spirit there cannot possibly be any prayer failures - for the Holy Spirit becomes a prayer warrior in us. He forbids us to stop praying; He encourages us in weakness; strengthens our resolve and spurs us on to victory.

## LISTENING EAR

We hear the voice of God in various ways. And sometimes it "jumps out" at us and something registers that meets the need of the moment - that's God speaking. We must spend time with Him if we want to hear Him. - But I'm very busy. You've got to MAKE time.

I always used to think that Solomon asked God for wisdom - but I discovered that he didn't. He asked God for a "*hearing or listening heart*." (IKg.3:23) I believe the desire of God for us all is to have "hearing hearts". Jesus said to Martha "One thing is needful and Mary has found it" and what was she doing? - LISTENING. Jesus said "I am the good shepherd - my sheep know me and follow me because they HEAR my voice." If you haven't had an answer to prayer over a length of time don't continue to ask that your prayer may be fulfilled, ask why not. Most likely God has another situation in your life to deal with first. I'm sure that it was God's intention at the start to eventually heal Job of his ailments - but I'm equally convinced that God wanted Job to learn and understand a few things first and it wasn't until, Job admitted that God's ways were greater than his ways that God healed and restored him.

**SERVING & HEARING** Dt.15:12-17, Ps.40:6f. Jesus was the greatest servant of all - and when the time came for a release from servanthood after His death, He said, No, I love my master and His family so much that I will continue to serve - and so it's written of Him who sits at the right hand of God - He ever intercedes on our behalf before the Father. Hearing begins with a desire to serve. Can't serve without hearing. Paul, describes himself as a slave for Christ - and we too must be slaves, servants who have had the opportunity to be 'free' but who know God, and delight to do His will and who recognize that true freedom will be found in His service - listening to His voice, obeying the master and finding that whatever we do will prosper.

I want to close this first session by giving you four guidelines in preparing yourselves to hear from God:

1. **Neutral Gear** - yes or no / stay or move.
2. **Divine Desire** - God-given - grows until you feel like bursting [Jer.]
3. **Scriptural Tests** - H.Sp. never contradicts the scriptures.
4. **Pray for God's Timing** - different from ours
4. **Pray for God's Timing**

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### Unity of Mind

One of the things that the N.T. makes very clear, is that the mind of Christ concerning His followers is that they should be One just as He and the Father are One. Jn.17; 1Jn.4:20. We cannot be committed to the Lord and be out of fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ, or indeed anyone else. So today we shall look at the whole area of 'gossip'; 'putting things right with one another;' and other related principles.

### GOSSIP

Gossip is an act that seems to be easily justified by Christians. Some of the things that we pass off as sharing, is no more than gossip. Gossiping is one of the greatest weapons that Satan uses to bring division within the church. The word 'gossip' is a corruption of an old English word 'GODSHIP' which described PRAYER, particularly intercession, as one who was in a relationship with God talked to Him, and then talked about Him. But now there is a crude distortion of this word. It has shifted from meaning 'one who talks to God, and about the good things that He has done', to 'one talking disparagingly to PEOPLE about the bad things another PERSON has done'.

One example of this in the scriptures is the relationship between Saul and David. Saul, the King of Israel, wrongly used David. He drew on David's great expertise in warfare but was very jealous of the fame that followed David everywhere he went. That jealousy grew to become a desire to murder him, and David was forced to be a fugitive running from the threats of Saul. On two occasions, David found himself in a position to do away with Saul - but each time he refused to do so. When his followers pointed out his madness, David replied: "Who can lay a hand on the Lord's anointed and be guiltless?" [1 Sam.26:9] Now read 2Sam.1:1-16. David was concerned about the way the Lord's anointed died so dishonourably, and felt the Lord's reputation and the reputation of the people of God in the eyes of Israel's enemies was being weakened in that their King should have been slain so easily and readily by their own number. That should challenge us; that David was more concerned about the honour of the Lord and the Lord's people than his own rights, [even the fulfilment of God's promise] his promotion and freedom.

If we considered what dishonour it did to the reputation of the Lord and the Church - we would be slow to slander even those that give us a rough ride. The N.T. also talks about what our attitudes to both leaders and the whole body of Christ should be. The scripture says: Heb.13:17. There is a very important phrase in that, which forbids the leaders to act improperly - "They watch over you as THOSE WHO WILL GIVE ACCOUNT". One of the most common areas of gossip is against leadership. It is not your position

to seek veangence. Gossip is veangence. It is our position to submit to our leaders, if they do wrong, if we are treated unfairly we have two actions that are legal to do.

The first is a vertical response - to pray for them. The second course of action is the horizontal one. It is the 'Matt.18 Principle'. [Matt.18:15-18] Let us remind ourselves that when Jesus spoke about relational breakdown he approached it from two angles: Matt.5:23 and Mk.11:25

What is forbidden? If 'x' sins against me, perhaps he said something untrue about me that hurt. It is forbidden for me to go and tell somebody else about it. Note, that it is even forbidden for me to seek counsel from a pastor about it. Why is that? As soon as I do that, the grievance is now shared, x's character is stained in this instance in the mind of another believer. If I love 'x', then it is not love that drives me to reveal something wrong about him. No, my first port of call is to go to 'x' myself, confront him with it. Not accuse, or judge, or condemn. I can simply inform him at this stage, of what I understand to be his sin. If he repents "YOU HAVE WON YOUR BROTHER OVER". It has been settled **JUST BETWEEN THE TWO OF YOU.**

Now, if, for any reason, 'x' said "I will not withdraw it" - then my next action is to take one or two others with me to be witnesses, so that what transpires between us can be witnessed as fair. That protects both 'x' and me - that we don't exaggerate or go over the top. If they are agreed that I have a case against 'x' and he still doesn't repent then he is to be treated as an unbeliever - one who needs to be taught about the grace, love and forgiveness of God as if he'd never heard it - and one who does not have the right to belong to Christ. Now, if the guilty partner repents, then there are still only four people that ever knew about the incident. Most situations I fear, are known by the majority, before the person concerned knows what is really happening, and that is sin.

One of the principle areas of damage in this regard within any relationship goes something like this: There has been sin committed, {let us say 'Fred' acted improperly to 'Susan'} and it has been dealt with properly. And then 'Fred' falls again, this time with someone else, 'John'. And somehow 'Susan' and 'John' meet together; 'Susan' hears how 'John' has been mistreated by 'Fred'. What is 'Susan' to do? How is she to respond to 'John'?

There are two illegal things that she must not do: 1. She must not listen to any criticism of her brother 'Fred'. Rather she must encourage 'John' to go direct to 'Fred' and talk it through and come to a place of repentance and forgiveness. 2. She is not at liberty to dig up all her past experiences with 'Fred'. See Prov.26:20.

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### The stable mind - preparing for difficulties

When things get 'hot' - go to pieces. Tiredness, 'hot and bothered and frustrated'. At least four pictures in scripture which teach us something of the mind of Christ for us - so that the 'hot' days do not reduce us to inefficiency. Firstly, Jn. 15 The Gardener does two things: Pruning, so that the goodness goes to the new fruit, and cleaning. Jesus turns to His disciples and says - "you are already clean because of the words that I have spoken to you." Cleaning - incision down the length of the branches and then peeling back the bark. Apart from preparing the vine for the coming year, this process **gets rid of all the diseases of the past year**. If this isn't done then all kinds of bugs, **meelibugs** make their home and multiply under the bark. Then of course, when the hot season arrives, the eggs hatch - and havoc reigns.

Jesus tells us that it is the WORD that cleans. [It is the Word of God that reveals to us the mind of Christ, primarily.] There are all kinds of bugs that make their home in our lives - words which cause **hurt**. **Negative thoughts** sown and germinate. **Rejection or unforgiveness**, that we push further and further down into our subconscious. And sooner or later, the heat of the day comes and the bugs have a field day. A person normally very **rational, composed, self-controlled** - suddenly acts totally out of character - it may be violence, or anger, or they just become sloppy and careless. This is because some event, some thought pattern, something that was said, **"triggers"** off something that has been suppressed for years. Often doesn't identify that this is what is happening.

But the *hot weather has suddenly come* - the pressure has become too great, and there has not been the application of the word of God in their lives to counter and "clean" away these suppressed feelings. The diseases of past years have hatched. We must **learn to apply the word of God to our lives** - more than the simple reading of the word - it is the digestion of it. It involves preaching to oneself. [Ps.23] The word of God **demand a response of change in us**. The 'cleaning' operation therefore is what is needed to allow the Holy Spirit to "debug" our thinking and our actions. Jesus taught that whatever goes on in our hearts will sometime become part of our action and speech unless we deal with it. **Adultery** - not repented of - will actually come to pass. When we least expect it - the hottest time for us. Christians are not **immune from the pressures** but they should know how to handle them. We need to discover the mind of Christ as we allow the Word to cleanse us daily so that the meelibugs don't get a chance to breed.

Secondly, LYING DOWN. If you go to some of the **country areas around Gallilee** at midday, [which is the hottest part of the day] you will often see the shepherd standing in a shady spot calling

his flock - about 12 - 20 on average - to him, and then tying their back legs together. And so, in the words of King David: "He makes me lie down in green pastures..." There is a place in our Christians lives to stop. Where we feed on Lord, from the Word that cleans and strengthens. Jesus was always taking time out.

*Resting largely has to do with attitude.* We can be busy but at rest, because we are constantly feeding from the Bread of Life and the waters of the Holy Spirit. **Lk.10:38.** For Martha, the things that Jesus was teaching to her sister in the lounge were only background sounds. For Mary sitting at Jesus' feet, it was revelation and Martha's clattering activity in the kitchen was the background sound. It's a question of what we tune-in to. It's better that the sounds and voices of the world become the background noise to the words of Jesus than vice versa.

Thirdly, **MEMORIAL STONES** [Josh.4:2f, 9] I am told that there is a stone in a lake near Geneva in Switzerland and the message that is carved onto this stone is this: "When you read this, weep." For when the water gets low enough for you to read that inscription then the whole territory has dried out and the drought means that the country is in trouble. But the memorial in Jordan was exactly the opposite. Somebody could have written on it: "When you see this, be glad and remember ." They were to instruct future generations. And to tell other nations. I believe it is very important that in our minds, in our spirits we set down milestones, as it were, that we can look back on, as significant times, learning points, in our Christian lives. Clearly, our conversion is one such milestone, and at conversion God looks after us in a very special way. The first few months of our conversion period are months where God provides, where God reveals Himself, where God answers our prayers, where God does everything to encourage us, revealing His power and His truth to us. But it's not always that cosy.

Fourthly there is **THE EAGLE** - [Dt.32:11]. For the new-born Eaglet, snuggled in its warm, secure home life is very easy. All it has to do is sleep and Mum feeds it. It is the same for all believers at first, we have it easy when we are young in the Lord. *And we need to set down* those times in our minds, to remember that God is this kind of a God, because - will be times, in order to mature us, of *barrenness*, and *dryness*. One day Mum returns with no food, and begins destroying the nest. The Eaglets hope that Mum is just temporarily deranged! We always assume that turmoil is due to Satan, but this is NOT ALWAYS the case. Our Heavenly Father is more interested in our **character** than our **comfort**. And for that reason He sometimes comes to destroy the cosy environment of the nest - [Job]

On the way down they remember those appendages - What are they for? Mum rises on an air current and hovers over them - she has an enormous wing span. The eaglets look up. "Cor! Look at



Mum's wings!" Mum comes swiftly, sweeping down below the eaglets and catches them on her back just before they hit the ground. She repeats the whole process, and eventually they discover their wings. They use them - a bit wobbly at first, but Hallelujah, they work! Many times God pushes us out of our security and comfort in order that we might discover that God's faith (the gift of faith) has been given to us, that we might fly above the circumstances, move mountains, be victorious in every area of life. And build on those milestones of experience.

If we go back to the third picture now, there are also milestones for doubts. There are times in our lives when we will question certain things about God and His activities. There are times when we even doubt that God is there or that God is a God of His word - and so on. It may be that something traumatic has really shaken their faith and their lives, and the natural question is, "Where is God now?"

And at these times it is important that there are certain milestones that we can go back to, so that in our questions and in our doubtings we do not throw everything overboard, but there are certain 'longstops' that have been worked out in our experience and we do not need to go back further than those.

**Milestones:**

- \* God exists.
- \* Jesus has come and that He died for us.
- \* He died for us because He loves us.
- \* We know the plan He has for our lives.
- \* He speaks to us through His word.

Now if we understand that these are milestones, that these, for us, are verifiable experiences [*if they are, of course*] - they are not just intellectual beliefs but they are things that we've worked out with fear and trembling, as it were. Then, when there are incidents that shake us, we do not need to doubt those milestones, because if we doubt those then we '*shipwreck*' our faith.