

Background and Characters in the OT Lesson 7 4Q 2010

Abiathar: The Priest

Who was this priest?

ABIATHAR – His name means the father is preeminent, father of abundance, or my father excels. He was the tenth high priest, and the fourth in descent from Eli. He was a descendant of Eli the priest through Phinehas, Ahitub, and Ahimelech. Abiathar was the only son of Ahimelech to escape the sword of Doeg the Edomite, who slaughtered the priests of Nob at Saul's behest because of Ahimelech's aid to David (1 Sam. 22:17–20). Abiathar fled to David with the ephod and David, feeling partly responsible for the tragedy, accepted him among his own people (vv. 20–23).

This is occurring at approximately 1000 b.c., the world at this time is inhabited by approximately 50 million people. It is the start of the Iron Age.

- Ancient Iranian people are entering Persia,
- China is in the Zhou dynasty.
- The Phoenician alphabet is invented.
- Rice is cultivated in ancient Japan.
- Chavin culture starts in the Andes.
- Italy is just being inhabited by Latin speaking people from the Danube region.
- Assyrians start conquering neighboring regions.
- Greece was in its Dark Ages, the first Olympic games wouldn't be played for another 224 years in 776 b.c. Coins wouldn't be introduced for 400 years in 600 b.c. and the Persians first invade Greece in 546 b.c. and defeat the Spartans at Thermopylae in 480 b.c.

Abiathar served as David's priest, not only at Keilah (1 Sam. 23:9) but also later when the Amalekites had raided Ziklag (30:7). He advised the future king through the lots of the ephod which he had taken with him from Nob (cf. 23:6). Abiathar continued in this

capacity even after the death of Saul and subsequently during David's reign at Hebron and Jerusalem.

- **AMALEKITES** Amalek was the son of Eliphaz (Esau's son) by his concubine, Timna (Gn 36:12; 1 Chr 1:36). Descendants of this tribal chief of Edom were known as Amalekites. They settled in the Negev Desert and became allies of the Edomites, Ammonites, Moabites, Ishmaelites, and Midianites.¹

Throughout the rebellion of Absalom Abiathar remained loyal to King David. He and Zadok intended to carry the ark as they fled Jerusalem (2 Sam. 15:24), but were instructed by David to carry it back into the city (vv. 25, 29). They were also to keep the exiled king informed of new developments (vv. 35–36), which they did (17:15–21).

Surprisingly, near the end of David's long reign Abiathar favored Adonijah rather than David's younger son Solomon for the throne (1 Kgs. 1:7). Perhaps Abiathar, as the descendant of Aaron's youngest son Ithamar, was jealous of Zadok (the descendant of Aaron's elder son Eleazar), the other Davidic high priest (usually mentioned before Abiathar; e.g., 2 Sam. 15:24–29; so KD *in loc.*). But once the rebel son of David was executed, Abiathar was deposed from his priestly office by Solomon and banished to his estate at Anathoth. He was not given the death penalty because he had carried the ark and had shared in David's afflictions (1 Kgs. 2:26–27). According to the author of Kings, this is how the prophecy concerning Eli's house became fulfilled (cf. 1 Sam. 2:27–36): Eli was one of Abiathar's ancestors and Zadok, who had supported Solomon, replaced Abiathar as high priest (1 Kgs. 2:35).

In his account of Jesus' discussion with the Pharisees about David and the meaning of the Sabbath laws, Mark attributes David's eating the Bread of the Presence to the time of Abiathar rather than that of his father Ahimelech, when the incident actually occurred (Mark 2:26; cf. 1 Sam. 21:1–6).²

Thoughts?

¹ Elwell, W. A., & Comfort, P. W. (2001). *Tyndale Bible dictionary*. Tyndale reference library (33). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

² Myers, A. C. (1987). *The Eerdmans Bible dictionary* (5–6). Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans.

SABBATH

Read memory text – “But you are a chosen people...” thoughts?

What does this text mean?

- How are you and I priests?
- What does it mean to be a priest?
- What is the duty of a priest?
- Are we priests only in our homes or are we priests of God for the community, in the church?
- Does one have to go to seminary to be a priest of God?
- Does one have to be ordained by the church?

Is there a difference between the priesthood of the Old Testament and that which we are called to fulfill? What would be the difference?

Did God want a specific elite group of priests and the rest not to have priestly duties?

Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, ⁶ you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.” Exodus 19:5,6

Thoughts?

Why a specific priesthood if God wanted all the people to be a nations of priests?

The Levitical priesthood was that of the theater, the stage, the enactment, the lesson book – they represented in the lesson book what all people were to become in reality.

What about in the church today? Is the church supposed to be a theater or is it to be a reality of Christian unity and experience? Are we to all be functioning as priests? In what way?

What were the duties of the priests? Intercession? What does this mean? What were the priests to intercede for, about, with whom?

In the lesson book example what did the priests do and how does that translate into our reality?

- They wore white robes and we are to be clothed in the character of Christ
- They ministered the blood of the sacrificial animal around the sanctuary. We are to spread the gospel truth and love of God in our world – into hearts.
- They ate the showbread together in the Holy Place on Sabbath. We are to gather together on Sabbath and ingest the living word, partake of Christ, study His word.
- People presented themselves to the priests for examination to determine cleanliness to be in community. When people come to us we can counsel and help diagnose spiritual problems that needs resolution, helping them to experience God’s grace, healing and victory in life.
- The priests carried the ark into battle – we are to carry the fullness of God’s truth, love, law, principles, methods, fruits of righteousness and His Spirit into the battles we face in life.

MONDAY

Fourth paragraph last sentence states, “The author of Hebrews tells us that Jesus can be our High Priest because He fully can empathize with us (Heb 2:17).” Thoughts?

And Question 2 from Friday states, “Dwell more on the idea of how Jesus in His humanity is able to sympathize with us in our struggles.”

What does this mean? Can the Father be our High Priest? Why not? Is the Father less empathetic? Is the Father less capable of

empathizing? Does the Father need the Son to inform Him of our difficulties because the Father doesn't actually appreciate how hard it is on us?

Let's read the text starting in Heb 2:14:

Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. 16 For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham. 17 Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted. ³

Thoughts? What do you hear? Why did He have to be made like us?

- To destroy Satan's power of death
 - What is Satan's power? John 17:3
- To free mankind
 - What holds us? Lies and our own carnal nature, John 8:32
- To help humans
 - Help us with what? 1John 3:8
- Propitiate, atone, forgive sins,
 - **But forgiveness has a broader meaning than many suppose.** When God gives the promise that He "will abundantly pardon," He adds, as if the meaning of that promise exceeded all that we could comprehend: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways,

³ *New American Standard Bible : 1995 update.* 1995 (Heb 2:14–18). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

and My thoughts than your thoughts." Isaiah 55:7-9.
God's forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness for sin, but reclaiming from sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart. David had the true conception of forgiveness when he prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Psalm 51:10. And again he says, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath **He removed our transgressions from us.**" Psalm 103:12. {MB 114.1}

- To aid those being tempted
 - How does He aid us?

So why is Christ our High Priest and the Father is not? What does Christ possess that the Father does not possess? A perfect human character!

The law requires righteousness,--a righteous life, a perfect character; and this man has not to give. He cannot meet the claims of God's holy law. **But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and developed a perfect character. These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them.** His life stands for the life of men. Thus they have remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. More than this, Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. Thus the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ. God can "be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Rom. 3:26. {DA 762.2}

Thus when he was made perfect he became the source of salvation for all who obey him. Heb 5:9

Thoughts?

TUESDAY

Second to last paragraph describes the duplicity, spying, plotting, and conniving going on, people pretending to be one thing but doing another.

Read the last paragraph, “In our own...” thoughts? How do we do this?

WEDNESDAY

Second paragraph states, “In the time of David, the firstborn son was traditionally considered his father’s main heir. For a king, that would mean that the firstborn won would inherit the throne. God is, however, never bound by tradition.”

The lesson points out that Abiathar ignored God’s plan in favor of tradition.

Then read last paragraph, “Tradition can be...”

Do we have traditions today that we prefer over God’s plan?

- Day of worship?
- What we do on day of worship?
- Dress?
- Ordination?
- What about traditional ways of explaining the gospel?
 - EGW said the medical ministry is the right hand of the gospel - do we present the gospel message as a healing message or does tradition cause us to reject this in favor of a legal message?

The lesson asks in the pink section, “How often do we let tradition get in the way of God’s leading?”

THURSDAY

Read second paragraph, “A superficial...”

Then read question #4 from Friday – thoughts?

Does God have foreknowledge? Does God’s foreknowledge affect free choice? Why or why not?

If God doesn’t have foreknowledge what does it say about God?

If God does have foreknowledge what does it say about God?

Does it bring you comfort to believe God has foreknowledge?

If God didn’t have foreknowledge what would it mean that He had Noah preach 120 years but build only one ark?

Bottom pink section states, “Free choice is one of the most sacred gifts God has given us.”

Why is this so important? What is lost without freedom? Love!

Do we have freedom if God is threatening to punish and kill us for disobedience? No!

Do we have freedom if God is warning us that unremedied sin will damage and destroy us? Yes!

What about doctrines that say God uses His power to inflict punishment for sin upon sinners – then are we free?

If you told your spouse they were free to talk on the phone, but if they do you will beat them, are they free?

Do we have full freedom if we are being threatened?

The earth was **dark through misapprehension of God**. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, Satan's deceptive power was to be broken. **This could not be done by force. The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government; He**

desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened. To know God is to love Him; **His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan.** This work only one Being in all the universe could do. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it known. Upon the world's dark night the Sun of Righteousness must rise, "with healing in His wings." Mal. 4:2. {DA 22.1}

God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but He did not do this. **Rebellion was not to be overcome by force.** **Compelling power is found only under Satan's government.** **The Lord's principles are not of this order.** His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. God's government is **moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power.** {DA 759.1}

Satan's representations against the government of God, and his defense of those who sided with him, were a constant accusation against God. His murmurings and complaints were groundless; and yet God allowed him to work out his theory. God could have destroyed Satan and all his sympathizers as easily as one can pick up a pebble and cast it to the earth. **But by so doing he would have given a precedent for the exercise of force. All the compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's principles are not of this order.** He would not work on this line. He would not give the slightest encouragement for any human being to set himself up as God over another human being, feeling at liberty to cause him physical or mental suffering. **This principle is wholly of Satan's creation.** {RH, September 7, 1897 par. 7}

God made them free moral agents, capable of appreciating the wisdom and benevolence of His character and the justice of

His requirements, and **with full liberty to yield or to withhold obedience**. PP 48.

They do not see that **to deprive man of the freedom of choice would be to rob him of his prerogative as an intelligent being, and make him a mere automaton**. It is **not God's purpose to coerce the will. Man was created a free moral agent**. PP331

One of the traditions of the church, which opposes God's purposes, is the idea of a punishing God who must inflict punishment upon unrepentant sinners. Revelation tells us it is the beast who uses coercive power, not God!

FRIDAY - Read and discuss question 1