



NACBA 58th National Conference – Orlando 2014

Church Administration

Modern Day Levites: Why Your Work Matters

Workshop A10

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Objective

The objective of this session is to review the Old and New Testament history of the Levites, their duties, characteristics, and personalities. With these historical facts comparisons are made to modern day church staff pastors and support staff who serve as special servants “set aside” for special service in today’s church.

What You Will Learn in This Session

- The biblical history of Levites
- The significant contributions of Levites in the bible
- Modern day Levites as pastors, support staff, and servants

Outline

- I. Old Testament Levites
 - a. Descendants of Levi, the 3rd (of 12) son of Jacob / Leah (Isaac/Rebekah-Abraham/Sarah, brother is twin of Esau)
 - i. Levi is traditionally described as a prophet and saint, able to prophesy the future, worship of God
 - b. Moses was one of Levi's great grandsons
 - c. The descendants of Aaron, Moses' brother, became the first appointed of priests in the Tabernacle during the wilderness wanderings
 - i. Role was
 - 1. Level 1: Priests after Aaron – although all priests were Levites, not all Levites were priests
 - 2. Level 2: Other descendants but who were not descendants of Aaron
 - a. Charged with the care of the most sacred parts of the Tabernacle
 - b. singing Psalms during worship
 - 3. Level 3: performing construction on the temple
 - a. doing maintenance on the temple
 - b. serving as guards
 - c. serving as teachers and judges
 - ii. Ezra reports that Levites were responsible for construction of the Second Temple (replaced the first temple destroyed by the Babylonians, preceded the 3rd temple which is yet to be built)
 - iii. During the period of Egypt after Joseph's time, they were the only tribe that remained devoted to God, hence became allies of Moses, their leader.
 - iv. Set Apart - During the Exodus from Egypt, the Levites were instrumental in protecting the Mosaic Law in the face of the worshippers of the Golden Calf at Mt. Sinai.
 - 1. Since Moses was a Levite, and since the Levites were faithful to God in the face of idol worship, the Levites became special allies of Moses.
 - v. Age 25-50: actually served at the Tabernacle
 - 1. Numbers 8:25 – “But at the age of fifty years they shall retire from service in the work and not work anymore”
 - vi. Original families / division – sons of Levi
 - 1. Gershonites (Gershon) camped on the west
 - 2. Kohathites (Kohath) on the South
 - 3. Merarites (Merari) on the North
 - 4. Priests on the East
 - vii. Did not serve in the military but were set apart for “service to God”
 - viii. Could not inherit or own land but were supported by the tithes of the crops and were to be cared for just as the widows, orphans, and aliens.
 - ix. After the settling of Canaan, became instructors of the Law in all the land.

- x. During the “temple period” when the temple resided permanently in Jerusalem, they were charged with being officials, judges, gatekeepers, musicians, teachers, administrators of the law
- d. Scripturally:
 - i. Chosen by God for service of the sanctuary.
 - 1. **1 Chronicles 15:2** Then David said, none ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites: for them hath the LORD chosen to carry the ark of God, and to minister unto him forever.
 - 2. **Numbers 3:6** Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister unto him.
 - ii. Were consecrated.
 - 1. **Numbers 8:6** Take the Levites from among the children of Israel, and cleanse them.
 - 2. **Numbers 8:14** Thus shalt thou separate the Levites from among the children of Israel: and the Levites shall be mine.
- e. Duties: Numbers 18 (NIV)
 - i. ¹The Lord said to Aaron, “You, your sons and your family are to bear the responsibility for offenses connected with the sanctuary, and you and your sons alone are to bear the responsibility for offenses connected with the priesthood. ²Bring your fellow Levites from your ancestral tribe to join you and assist you when you and your sons minister before the tent of the covenant law. ³They are to be responsible to you and are to perform all the duties of the tent, but they must not go near the furnishings of the sanctuary or the altar. Otherwise both they and you will die. ⁴They are to join you and be responsible for the care of the tent of meeting—all the work at the tent—and no one else may come near where you are. ⁵“You are to be responsible for the care of the sanctuary and the altar, so that my wrath will not fall on the Israelites again. ⁶I myself have selected your fellow Levites from among the Israelites as a gift to you, dedicated to the Lord to do the work at the tent of meeting. ⁷But only you and your sons may serve as priests in connection with everything at the altar and inside the curtain. I am giving you the service of the priesthood as a gift. Anyone else who comes near the sanctuary is to be put to death.”
 - ii. Specifically:
 - 1. Ministering to the Lord – sing his praises and bless His Name
 - 2. Ministering to priests – care of the priests
 - 3. Ministering to the people
 - 4. Keeping charge of the sanctuary (tabernacle)
 - 5. Keeping sacred instruments and vessels
 - 6. Keeping sacred oil, flour, etc (used in worship)
 - 7. Keeping sacred treasures – referred to as “dedicated things”
 - 8. Taking charge of the tithes and offerings – accounting, spending
 - 9. Doing the service of tabernacle – various duties before, during, and after worship
 - a. Including washing the dishes used in the sacrifice
 - 10. Taking down, putting up, and carrying the tabernacle

- 11. Preparing the sacrifices for the priests
- 12. Preparing the show bread – for the various symbolic offerings
- 13. Purifying the holy things
- 14. Regulating weights and measures
- 15. Teaching the people – the mosaic law
- 16. Blessing the people – ministry as in #3
- 17. Keeping the gates of the temple – guard
- 18. Conducting the sacred music
- 19. Singing praises before the army
- 20. Judging and deciding in controversies
- 21. Special guard to the king
- iii. Verses 8-30 give the specific instructions for offerings for Priests and Levites
- iv. As connected to the tabernacle they were to:
 - 1. Dismantle it
 - 2. Erect it
 - 3. Guard it
 - 4. Carry it from place to place (including the Ark of the Covenant)

- f. Characteristics
 - i. Practical
 - 1. Their work was practical rather than spiritual
 - 2. They look after the practical side of church life, such as facilities and service
 - ii. Privileged
 - 1. As was said, their work was especially related to the construction, transportation, and care of the tabernacle
 - iii. Proud
 - 1. Not of the desirable traits, as in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10), the Levite as the one who refused to help the injured man, or in essence, refused to minister or share the gospel
 - iv. Principled
 - 1. As was said, stayed loyal to God during the “golden calf” experience at Mt Sinai.
 - 2. Descendants inherited the duties generation after generation
- g. Who's in the Levite Hall of Fame?
 - i. Aaron (Moses' assistant during the Exodus)
 - ii. Barnabus (Paul's assistant during the great missionary drives of the NT)
 - iii. The fact that there were very few notable Levites by name indicates their role as servants who did not ascent to greatness or fame, but faithfully labored in the background doing their job “as unto the Lord”
 - iv. Book of Leviticus named after the Levite tribe

- ## II. New Testament Levites
- a. The “Good Samaritan” Levite who would not stop and help the injured man – Luke 10
 - b. John 1:19 - Jewish leaders sent priests and Levites to ask John the Baptist who he was
 - c. Acts 4:36 – Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (“son of encouragement”)

- III. Modern day Levites
 - a. World War II, when he Holocaust began the orthodox rabbis saw the role of the Levite / Priests as one of serving as an intermediary of prayer and promoters of prayer and action.
 - i. American Rabbi Menachem Risikoff wrote about the role of Levites: "Today, we also are living through a time of flood, not of water, but of a bright fire, which burns and turns Jewish life into ruin. We are now drowning in a flood of blood...Through the Kohanim and Levi'im help will come to all Israel."
- IV. Most Significant Contribution of Levites Biblically: Their significant contribution was that they made it possible for the people to worship and fulfill their obligations to God. Further, it was done at personal sacrifice of personal gain but with honor and dignity "as unto the Lord"
- V. Being a Levite in today's church in cleaning and caring for the temple
 - a. A Church in Washington-state that cleans their facility with volunteers. They call it their "Levite Team" responsible for cleaning and preparing the House of God
 - b. I recently read about a Christian camp manager in Belgium who described his job as a modern-day Levite whose responsibility was to make sure the facility is clean and functional for worship, prayer, missionary conferences, evangelism training meetings, etc. "It means making sure that the guests have everything they need to pursue their calling and gifting. I am a part of THEIR MINISTRY"
 - c. Another facilities manager wrote in his blog, "We are a royal priesthood, called to be set apart for the purpose of revealing God's glory (1 Peter 2:9)" and hence I am a modern day Levite in the way I am to manage this church facility to reveal God's glory.
- VI. How what you do makes a difference - storytelling
 - a. Story of Reggie
 - b. Flood of '89
 - c. Hurricane Katrina
 - d. Facilities and Food Service are two of the most outward ministries of the church.
 - e. Most Significant Contribution of Levites Biblically: **Their significant contribution was that they made it possible for the people to worship and fulfill their obligations to God. Further, it was done at personal sacrifice of personal gain but with honor and dignity "as unto the Lord"**
 - f. What we do as support, service, and administrative staff in the church is just as important in supporting the mission of the church as any staff ministry!
 - g. If we value and see the purpose in our jobs with an attitude of Christian service, then nothing is impossible at your church with regard to finances, facilities, and ministry.
 - h. Conclusion
 - i. Do your work with your Bible in Hand!
 - ii. Events become ministry opportunities for your facilities support staff
 - iii. Food service is a means to an end for ministry
 - iv. Cleanliness and order are scriptural (I Corinthians 14:40)
 - v. Be a Reggie! Be an Ossie! Be a Harold! Be a Mike and Tony! Be a Ping! Be a Sanchez!

BE A LEVITE IN TODAY'S CHURCH AND UNDERSTAND THAT YOU ARE MAKING A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO MINISTRY IN YOUR CHURCH
 - vi. Be encouraged. You are so valuable to ministry at your church!
- VII. How to minister to your support staff

- a. Engage them
- b. Appreciate them
- c. Affirm them
- d. Involve them



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Ron Chandler has over 30 years of experience in ministry-related business administration and over 8 years of business management and corporate auditing experience. Ron directs the Customer Development division of Shelby Systems comprised of the Shelby Training, Education, and Events departments. An active member of the National Association of Church Business Administration, Chandler received the 2002 Saucedo Award, recognizing him as Church Business Administrator of the Year. He is also an author and conference leader.