

Front Page - 2016 02

The Preparation Of Christ For The Priesthood

Introduction

One of the ways Luke presents the Lord is of the Lord being qualified to be a priest, having the qualifications of Aaron. Among others, some of the qualifications necessitated him being a male human being (Heb. 5:4) and Dr. Luke presents ample evidence supporting the truth of the humanity of the Lord. For instance, He was Mary's firstborn son, and spoken of as a man (Lk. 7:8, 39) and called the Son of man (Lk. 5:24). He must know what it is to be tempted and Luke records how the Lord was tempted (Lk. 4:1-12; Heb. 4:15) and what was required for a sacrifice to be acceptable to God (Lev. 22:20).

While there are similarities between qualifications for the spiritual leaders in the Old and New Testaments, the emphasis for the ideal spiritual leaders of the New Testament church are moral and spiritual (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:6-9). I am not aware of any mention of the moral or spiritual character of the priest in the Old Testament. However, we read of:

- a) At least eleven works they were to perform which were to offer sacrifices (Ex. 29:38-42):
 - i) Burn incense (Ex. 30:7-8)
 - ii) Maintain the sacred fire for the burnt offering (Lev. 6:12-13)
 - iii) Teach the people (Lev. 10:8-11)
 - iv) Determine impurity (Lev. 13-15)
 - v) Look after the lamps and the showbread (Lev. 24:1-9)
 - vi) Keep the tabernacle (Num. 3:38; 4:16)
 - vii) Bless the people (Num. 6:22-27)
 - viii) Prepare the holy things for each days journey (Num. 4:5-15)
 - ix) Blow the trumpets (Num. 10:1-10);
 - x) Bless God (Deut. 10:8)
 - xi) Be a judge in resolving issues (Deut. 21:5)
- b) The physical imperfections which would prohibit him from being able to officiate (Lev. 21:17-21).
- c) The clothing he had to wear when officiating whither he be priest or high priest. The High priest had two sets of clothing, the white linen garments (Lev. 16:4, while the garments of the priest are never said to be "white linen", yet we understand from 2 Chron. 5:12 and Rev. 15:6 that such would be white) and the garments of glory and beauty (Ex. 28:2-29). These garments foreshadowed the moral qualifications the Lord had for the work of being a priest. A man could not just become a priest, he had a five year apprenticeship (Num. 8:24 and 4:3). This observation points us to the qualifying of Christ to be our priest and Dr. Luke builds his book on the building of His qualifications.

It is always interesting to observe how a book begins and ends and Luke is no exception. He begins his gospel with a man in the temple (Lk. 1:-11, Zacharias had to be in the temple for that is where the altar was to burn incense; Lk. 24:51) and ends with a man about to go into the true temple, Heaven itself (Heb. 8:2; 9:24).

To be a priest he had to be able to sympathize with those who are tempted for he knew the same temptations. He knew the urgings of Satan and their fierce unrelentingness. It is to be observed that temptation has oftentimes five elements:

- a) There must be the ability to do something, for instance, making stones for bread would not be a temptation for me, for I do not have that ability.
- b) There must be opportunity to perform that which is proffered, as Eve was when tempted in the garden (Gen. 3:2-6).
- c) Often there must be a level of obscurity, that is, either without other persons present or only a few of like ilk, for, "Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil" (Jn. 3:19).
- d) There must be the compromising with that which is contrary to God's decrees (Gen. 3:1-6).
- e) There must be the exercise of will, whither to yield to the temptation or turn from it. However, Paul informs us of his experiences and lets us know that all the legislation that can be given and all the good resolutions which can be made, will not stop an individual from sinning (Rom. 7). The only way of

Front Page - 2016 02

The Preparation Of Christ For The Priesthood

victory is by the power of the resurrected Christ being made good to us by the Holy Spirit. Thank God that, “The blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 Jn. 1:7).

The Temptations of The Lord

The devil is a very sharp individual and began the temptations by seeking to have the Lord question His own relationship to God. Notice the first statements, “If Thou be the Son of God” (Matt. 4:3, 6; Lk. 4:3, 9). The natural reaction would be, “I will prove that relationship” or scornfully ask, “Did you not hear what the Father just said concerning me?” (Lk. 3:22). Satan was not only tempting Christ to get agitated and then prove His relationship by sinning, but he was also indicating God was a deceiver in that which He had said concerning the Lord, and so have Christ question the God of truth and His fidelity. In effect, Satan was taking on the entire Godhead. The Spirit of truth had revealed that Christ was God’s anointed universal monarch, the Father had declared His relationship to Jesus, and the Lord was being tempted to break rank with God and act independently of God or presumptuously on God.

In a survey of the temptations, certain features come into focus:

- a) A major feature of the temptations was to create:
 - i) Dissatisfaction with the lack of provision by God for the Lord was hungry (Lk. 4:3-4)
 - ii) Dissatisfaction with the method of God for Christ to take universal rulership, for Satan offered him the kingdoms of the world then and there (Lk. 4:5-8)
 - iii) Dissatisfaction with the timing of God for the presentation of the Lord’s greatness, so “Cast thyself down” (Matt. 4:6) and the indication is, you will be upheld by angels. Just think what a presentation that would make.

Dissatisfaction is a curse among believers, for while we all face disappointments in life, yet when we seek to satisfy those disappointments or unsatisfied grasping for more despite the will of God, we are falling into the temptations of Satan and indicates a very localized and unspiritual perception of life.

- b) There was in two of the temptations opportunity to do that which no human on earth would immediately know about, but the government of Heaven and hell would know. Had the Lord yielded to the temptation the results would have been horrific beyond comprehension:
 - i) There would have been a split in the Godhead.
 - ii) This would have been a world without hope.
 - iii) God would have been helpless to fulfill His purposes for they were all depending on Christ.
 - iv) There would have been a failure in fulfilling many of the Old Testament prophecies and pictures.
 - v) There would be no hope of a resurrection.
 - vi) There would be no judgment of saved or unsaved.
 - vii) There would have been no hope of salvation.
- c) There was in the temptation to make stones bread to let rationale guide and not the word of God exclusively. The human body craves nourishing food and is greatly weakened after a fast, especially one of 40 days. Is it not logical to take or make something to eat? Is it taking care of the body by depriving it of nourishment? Surely God would want an individual to care and nourish the body. It was an attempt to have the Lord satisfy his own needs by disobeying the will of God.
- d) In the temptation to worship Satan and be given the whole world (and being the liar Satan is, he would not have given it), to do so would have been to act contrary to God’s decreed plans for him. All the following promises and plans would have been meaningless.
 - i) That lovely promise to Israel but applicable to the Lord spoken by Jeremiah: “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD” (Jer.29:11)
 - ii) The glorious purposes of God for Christ personally such as:
 - 1. “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion” (Psa. 2:6)

Front Page - 2016 02
The Preparation Of Christ For The Priesthood

2. “Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both” (Zech. 6:13)
 3. “For the kingdom is the LORD’S: and he is the governor among the nations” (Psa. 22:28)
- iii) That glorious promise of glory universally for the Lord and creation: “But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD” (Num. 14:21).
- e) Who can determine the audacity of Satan when he asks the Lord to fall down and worship him? The utter impudence of even suggesting that the King fall down to an inferior.

Concluding Thoughts

We must never lose sight that the Lord, while being truly God with all the attributes of deity, was a real man, and in the temptations was being qualified to be a High Priest. He could never succor and help us if He used His divine power to overcome temptations, for we are not divine persons who have taken on humanity. It is with a sense of wonder that we consider the spiritual stamina that was needed and devotion to the will of God that this servant displayed by being upheld. The Lord could not sin because He was Holy and sin was contrary to His essential character, which is a love for righteousness (Heb. 1:9). Therefore, it was contrary to that which appeals to him. He lived for:

- a) The glorification of God (Jn. 17:4)
- b) To fulfill the will of God (Heb. 10:9)
- c) To reveal God (Jn. 1:18)

Had the Lord yielded to any of the temptations:

- a) He would have immediately failed to reveal God
- b) Brought dishonor on God in failing to give Him the honored place which is His due to total yielding
- c) It would have been a denial of His love for the Father (Jn. 14:31).

He could not be caught off guard but was fully aware of all of Satan’s wiles. The Lord was tempted, “yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). Despite the severity of the temptations, He will not sin, and despite the persistence of the devil, He will not yield. What an example to all of His own.

. . . . Rowan Jennings