

Major Bible Themes

52 Vital Doctrines of the Scriptures Simplified and Explained

Adapted from the book *Major Bible Themes*
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The Church: Her Service and Stewardship

- Introduction
 - Service which God appoints is committed primarily to a divinely fitted priesthood.
 - ✦ In Israel the priesthood was a hierarchy over the nation and in their service they were under the authority of the high priest.
 - ✦ In the Church every believer is a priest (1 Pet 2:5-9) under the authority of Christ, the true High Priest (Heb 9:11).
 - While Israel's priests served in the Tabernacle or Temple, the believer-priest of the Church serves wherever he may go.
 - Priestly service, whether in Israel or in the Church, is directed toward both God and man.
- Her Service Toward God
 - Sanctification for Service
 - ✦ Israel's priests were sanctified for service by being born into the priestly family of Levi and through being ceremonially cleansed by a once-for-all bathing (Ex 29:4) when being inducted into office.
 - ✦ The believer-priest of the Church is sanctified for service by the new birth into the family of God and through the once-for-all true cleansing at the moment of salvation (Col 2:13; Titus 3:5).
 - ✦ The believer-priest of the Church must willingly offer himself as a living sacrifice for service (Rom 12:1-2).
 - ✦ Every believer-priest thus yielded to God's will is accepted and placed into service by Jesus Christ, our High Priest.
 - ✦ In addition to the once-for-all ceremonial cleansing at the start of their ministry, Israel's priests had to regularly wash themselves at the bronze laver before undertaking priestly service (Ex 30:18-20).
 - ✦ Likewise, today's believer-priests, who were wholly cleaned at the moment of salvation, must regularly be cleansed of all unrighteousness and restored to fellowship with God through confession of sins (1 John 1:9) before undertaking priestly service.
 - ✦ Personal volition is involved in the willingness to serve and the preparation for service (confession), but it is God who consecrates the believer-priest for service.
 - The Service of Worship
 - ✦ Having been consecrated for service, the believer-priest is able to offer up spiritual sacrifices of worship through praise (Heb 13:15), good works (Heb 13:16) and giving (Heb 13:16; Phil 4:18).

- ✦ The Israelite priests were prohibited from using “strange” incense (Ex 30:9) or fire (Lev 10:1) in their service of worship.
 - ✦ This is the equivalent of the believer-priest today substituting emotion or other fleshly emanations for true spiritual worship which is empowered by God and motivated by the love of God and devotion to Christ (2 Cor 11:3; Eph 6:23-24; Jude 20-21).
- The Service of Intercessory Prayer
 - ✦ In Israel’s priesthood, only the high priest was allowed into the symbolic Holy of Holies by the offering of a blood sacrifice, and that entrance was only permitted only once a year (Heb 9:1-7).
 - ✦ The Church is a priesthood in which Christ as High Priest has rent the veil and given us unhindered access to the true, heavenly Holy of Holies by means of His own shed blood (Heb 10:19-22).
 - ✦ As Christ our High Priest, seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven, intercedes for His own (Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25) we also are privileged to minister in intercession (1 Tim 2:1; Col 4:12) with the necessary help of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:26-27).
- Her Service Toward Man
 - Just as believers are empowered by the Holy Spirit in their service to God, it is the Holy Spirit who supplies all that is needed for our service to man.
 - It is no accident that immediately following the passage in Romans 12:1-2 that speaks of our spiritual service through the offering of ourselves we find a passage that speaks of spiritual gifts and their role in serving one another (Rom 12:3-13).
 - ✦ As we studied before, some spiritual gifts from the apostolic age of the Church are no longer given in the age of the local church.
 - ✦ Note that spiritual gifts differ from person to person (1 Cor 12:4).
 - God gives us spiritual gifts so that we may employ them in serving one another and all of our service must be done in the strength which God supplies (1 Pet 4:10-11; Eph 6:10).
 - When a believer is carnal, any attempt at serving man may have the outward appearance of doing some good, but will fail to glorify God and will not produce divinely effective results.
 - True Christian service is a manifestation of the Spirit as God the Father produces the effects (1 Cor 12:6-7).
 - Spirit-filled believers who are willing to follow as God leads will be active in ministries that serve their fellow man.
- Her Stewardship
 - The stewardship of the believer in the Church involves being a trustworthy manager of all that God supplies in His manifold grace (1 Cor 4:1-2; 1 Pet 4:10).
 - In this study we will focus on the stewardship as it relates to God’s financial provisions.
 - The responsibility of the believer in financial stewardship will be examined under 3 phases...
 - ✦ Earning money
 - ✦ Possessing money
 - ✦ Giving money

- The Stewardship of Earning Money
 - ✦ For the properly oriented believer, labor is not about earning a living; it is about doing the will of God.
 - ✦ Every employment should be accepted by the child of God as a specific appointment from God.
 - ✦ All things, including earning money, should be done to the glory of God (1 Cor 10:31).
 - ✦ God is the one who supplies all of the believer's needs (Phil 4:19), so even though the laborer is worthy of his wages (Luke 10:7), for the believer whatever is received as compensation for labor is provided to him as an expression of the Father's loving care.
- The Stewardship of Possessing Money
 - ✦ It is not proper thinking for the believer to assume that it is God's will for him to possess money/property – these are to be held by the believer only as God directs.
 - ✦ The motives of men – the desire to be rich (1 Tim 6:8-9, 17-19; Jas 1:11; Heb 13:5), the desire to provide against a day of need (Matt 6:25-34) and the desire to provide for others – are commendable only when they fulfill the specifically revealed will of God in the individual believer's life.
 - ✦ The decision to possess money/property as well as the decision to give money/property should always be prayerfully made.
- The Stewardship of Giving Money
 - ✦ In the dispensing of money, the Christian is expected to stand upon a grace relationship to God.
 - ✦ This relationship presupposes that the believer has given himself to God in unqualified dedication (2 Cor 8:3-5) which involves dedicating all that he is (1 Cor 6:20) and has (1 Pet 1:18-19) – his life, his time, his strength, his ability, his ideals and his property.
 - ✦ Since we are not under Law but under grace (Rom 6:14), the Old Testament principle of tithing, like Sabbath observance, is never imposed upon believers in this dispensation.
 - ✦ Christian giving under grace is illustrated by the experience of the saints at Corinth from whom we learn that...
 - Christ is the pattern for giving under grace (2 Cor 8:9) – He gave all of Himself, not merely a tenth.
 - Their giving was even out of great poverty (2 Cor 8:2) as was seen with the “widow's mite” (Luke 21:1-4) who gave all she had.
 - Their giving was not commanded as was the case with Israel, but rather was to be done as the believer purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion (2 Cor 9:7).
 - Their giving was done systematically and as the Lord prospered them (1 Cor 16:2).
 - God supplies the giver with the means to give (2 Cor 9:8-10; Luke 6:38) when the giving is from a pure heart motivation.
 - ✦ True riches are from God (Luke 12:13-21) whereby the believer can be rich in faith (Jas 2:5) and good works (1 Tim 6:18).
 - ✦ As believers we have been lavished with the riches of God's grace (Eph 1:7-8) and should give accordingly.

- Questions
 - To whom is divine service primarily committed?

 - Contrast the priesthood of Israel and the Church.

 - In what way in particular is the believer-priest of the Church expected to dedicate himself to God willingly?

 - What is the difference between dedication and consecration?

 - What may the believer-priest experience if yielded to God?

 - Name the sacrifices of the believer-priest.

 - Contrast the ceremonial bathing of Israel's priests and the partial bathing at the bronze laver.

 - How does the cleansing of Israel's priests anticipate the cleansing of the believer-priest of the Church?

 - What prohibitions were given to Israel's priests and how does that relate to today's believer priest?

 - Compare Israel's priesthood under their high priests and our priesthood under Jesus Christ as High Priest.

 - Does every believer-priest today receive the same spiritual gift?

- How is the exercise of a spiritual gift affected by carnality?

- What are the three phases of the Christian's financial stewardship?

- How does earning money relate to a Christian's walk with God?

- How does the possessing of money become a responsibility for the properly oriented believer?

- How does the giving of money by a Christian reflect his grace relationship to God?

- In what sense is Christ our pattern in giving?

- How is giving related to poverty?

- How is giving related to commandment or compulsion?

- How is giving related to giving ourselves first?

- How is giving to be achieved systematically?

- How does God sustain the giver?

- Contrast earthly riches and heavenly riches.