

### Discerning the Difference Between Holy and Phony Ministries!

The book of First Samuel tells us that an unnamed prophet came to Eli with an awful message. This unknown man delivered an amazing prophecy -- one that has everything to do with what we see going on in the church today. It is a word that reveals much about dead, dry, ungodly ministers and churches in operation right now!

This prophecy tells of two priesthoods that would develop and continue, from that day onward until the very end of time. Both of these priesthoods would be ministering in the church. One would be a cursed, abominable shame. But the other would be a ministry after God's own heart!

The unnamed prophet tells Eli:

*"Behold, the days come, that I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father's house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house" (1 Samuel 2:31).*

He is describing a curse upon the ministry of Eli!

But then he continues:

*"And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed for ever" (verse 35).*

This prophecy of two priesthoods is being fulfilled today -- right before our eyes. Indeed, both ministries are operating simultaneously, in nations all across the world!

**First, the prophet speaks of the ongoing ministry of a self-centered, backslidden, compromising priesthood. He describes those priests who are of the spirit of Eli, mentioning two things:**

#### ***1. Such priests are people-pleasers, more than pleasers of God.***

*"Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering ...and honourest thy sons above me..." (verse 29).*

Eli was soft on sin! He never made any decisions that would offend his two sons. Only once, in over fifty years of ministry, did Eli correct them. They had been committing adultery, raping women, committing the most vile acts. Yet even then, all Eli could say to them was, "Why do you do this?"

This man had no righteous indignation! He never shared God's wrath and hatred toward sin. And he represents a priesthood of ministers who are afraid to reprove God's family, the congregation!

There are churches today that you can attend for up to a year, and yet never hear one word of reproof. A church could be totally corrupted -- half of the congregation divorcing, adultery rampant, teenagers sleeping around, children unruly. The whole congregation can be given over to pleasure, sports, entertainment -- but there is never a word of correction from the pulpit! Instead, the pastor caters to the people's weaknesses and cravings. He is afraid to offend anyone -- afraid the offerings will go down and he'll lose his income.

This is the first characteristic of the evil ministry developing in Eli's soul. And it is the mark of every ongoing, compromising priesthood today!

## ***2. They cater to their own needs and comfort rather than give themselves toward the needs of the flock.***

They "...make (themselves) fat with the best of all the offerings of Israel my people" (verse 29).

When the people brought the meat offering to the priest, it was supposed to go into the seething pot to be boiled. Afterward, the priest dipped a three-pronged hook into the pot, and whatever came out on the hook went onto his table.

But Eli's two sons didn't want the boiled, sodden meat. They wanted the red, raw filet mignon! So they brought their father the prime cuts. There was no sodden flesh on his table. That's how Eli got fat, lazy, and careless. If he would have dealt with his sons, he might have lost his filet mignon!

Eli was concerned with his own interests, his own table. And that is what is happening in many dying churches today: Preachers are interested only in their own comfort, in caring for themselves -- instead of spending time on their knees for the sake of the people!

The prophet is saying, "You are self-absorbed, Eli -- feathering your own nest! To you, the ministry means nothing more than food on the table, security for you and your family. You don't really care about the flock. You're more interested in what goes onto your table than in what goes into the people's hearts. Yet you never once think about how your compromise and selfishness bring reproach to God's name. You never consider the people who watch as your sons steal the prime meat. You are soft on sin, afraid to reprove --because you're consumed with things that make you comfortable!"

### **The Prophet Pronounced Three Terrible Judgments on This Priesthood!**

Every so-called minister who is of the seed of Eli -- compromising, soft on sin, concerned only for himself -- will know three judgments:

#### ***1. A loss of all spiritual power and authority.***

*"...they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed. Behold, the days come, that I will cut of thine arm [strength], and the arm of thy father's house..."* (verses 30-31).

To be "lightly esteemed" by the Lord meant a loss of God's favor and blessing! It meant no impact against Satan's kingdom. Such a minister may be esteemed by others -- but in God's eyes he is a lightweight, someone in whom He puts no trust!

God said, "You despise Me by not preaching My whole counsel. You're not a man of prayer. You're not concerned about My people, but only about your success and reputation. You just want to make sure there's a crowd. You have lightly esteemed My Word -- and now I am going to lightly esteem you! Go your way -- do your own works. You are lightly esteemed in My eyes!"

This cutting of of God's anointing leaves the Eli priesthood to busy, helter-skelter programs -- works of the flesh that only look good. It all sounds like important kingdom work. But God refuses to touch it! It is simply busy activity -- lightly esteemed ministries undertaken by lightly esteemed ministers!

#### ***2. They will be bypassed by the true anointing and blessing of God in the last days.***

*"And you will see the distress of My dwelling, in spite of all that I do good for Israel..."* (verse 32, NAS).

In other words: "When I choose the time to pour out My Spirit, you'll be standing in ruins!" And that's exactly what is happening in America today: Preachers are standing in churches that are dead, dry and ruined! God has said to them, "I will pass you by!"

This priesthood will be standing there among the ruins as God blesses and anoints another priesthood -- men of God who have paid the price! Right now, in these last days, His anointing is falling on those

who have given their lives to Him. The Spirit is laying hold of these praying, fearless men. But those of Eli's seed are being bypassed -- left to play their church games!

God is saying, in essence, "In spite of all I do, you will not see the good! You will not be part of My last-day, holy remnant. You are lightly esteemed -- and you will go about your ministry with no real spiritual authority!"

### ***3. They will lose God's touch in the very prime of their life.***

*"...all the increase of your house will die in the prime of life" (verse 33, NAS).*

This verse is taken two ways. First, it was fulfilled literally when Saul sent Doeg up to Nob to slay eighty-five priests who were of the seed of Eli.

But the verse also has a spiritual application: It is saying that this priesthood will look good up to a certain point. The ministers will be very active and busy. But just at the point when they ought to be at their best -- full of energy, power, wisdom and holiness, ready to be used the most -- a spiritual death will take place. God is going to leave them! They'll be left standing before the people as dead men, while in the very prime of their lives!

Yet perhaps the most tragic of all the prophecies given by this unnamed man of God is that this backslidden, compromised priesthood would never be cut off from God's altars! The evil ministry would continue to the very end:

*"Yet I will not cut off every man of yours from My altar that your eyes may fail from weeping and your soul grieve..." (verse 33, NAS).*

God will not cut them off! Compromising, spiritless, dead men are going to exist till the last day, when the Lord returns. But, God says, "What a grief they're going to be. They will be a cause for weeping!"

Yet now I want to show you another kind of priesthood. It is the other ministry that the prophet said God was raising up:

*"But I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest who will do according to what is in My heart and in My soul; and I will build him an enduring house, and he will walk before My anointed always" (verse 35, NAS).*

This holy ministry is the Zadok priesthood! It is made up of faithful, holy ministers of God who walk and live according to His desire. And such a priesthood remains to this very day!

Everything that this unnamed prophet prophesied is fully illustrated in David's kingdom. David is a type of Christ, and Israel is a type of the church. And David had two priests who fulfilled these two prophetic priesthoods to the letter: Abiathar and Zadok.

"And hast thou not there with thee Zadok and Abiathar the priests?" (2 Samuel 15:35).

### ***1. Let Us First Consider Zadok.***

Zadok's name means "one who's proved righteous".

*"Now these are they that came to David to Ziklag... And Zadok, a young man mighty of valour, and of his father's house twenty and two captains" (1 Chronicles 12:1, 28).*

Zadok was the first young priest to recognize God's anointing on David!

Men were fleeing to David, coming from all over to join his forces. Zadok recognized that the Spirit had left Saul; his ministry now was all hype, flesh, with no call or touch of heaven. And Zadok said, "I don't want any part of that kind of ministry. It's dead -- God has gone from it. I'm going with David, who has the Spirit's anointing!"

So Zadok went to David at Ziklag -- never to leave him for the rest of his life! Through every rebellion, Zadok stood with him, a man proved righteous. David had captured the priest's heart -- and Zadok never looked back.

Thank God, there are men of God like this in many pulpits today. These are men of prayer who are committed to Jesus, having walked away from all flesh, entertainment and worldliness. And you know it when you hear them preach -- because something registers in your soul!

When others forsook David, Zadok remained faithful. David was running from his son Absalom, who had rebelled. And when David came to the brook Kidron, Scripture says,

*"Now behold, Zadok also came... and Abiathar went up..."* (2 Samuel 15:24, NAS).

Notice here that both Zadok and Abiathar are with David. Both are at the brook Kidron with him, and both go back to Jerusalem at David's order. So, while Absalom defiled David's concubines in full public view, and Israel went berserk with wickedness and revelry, two holy men stood in God's house -- Zadok and Abiathar.

And so it is today! While the whole world is going to hell amid unheard-of wickedness, God still has His holy men serving at His altar. He still has a Zadok priesthood, faithful in all God's Word!

## ***2. Consider Now the Abiathar Priesthood!***

Abiathar's name means "at peace with God." He was with Zadok as they took the ark back to Jerusalem.

Indeed, at this point, Abiathar appears to be holy, dedicated, devoted, loyal to David. He will have nothing to do with Absalom's rebellion. He goes about his ministry looking as pure and uncompromising as Zadok.

But why is he never mentioned in the Word after this? Why is he not named among the prophets? Why does his name die out? Something happens. Suddenly Abiathar is "lightly esteemed" -- and Zadok is made the example of the holy, remnant priesthood. Why? It is because Abiathar had the spirit of Eli in him! All those awful prophecies spoken by the unnamed prophet fell upon him.

And it all happened quickly!

The unnamed prophet had said that not all such kind would be cut of. Abiathar's father and eighty-three other priests who wore an ephod were slain by Doeg. Only Abiathar escaped! He ran to David -- and the ministry he represented survived, which was according to prophecy.

Yet just as the prophet had spoken, Abiathar -- the seed of Eli -- in the prime of his life and at the peak of his blessings was seduced by the call of success. He lost his place with God's anointed!

You see, David had another son, Adonijah. His name means "success and prosperity." This young man pretended to introduce a "new move" in the land by naming himself king. Yet it was only another rebellion -- not a move of God, but a snare of Satan!

This is the very ministry the prophet had warned of: self-exaltation and success!

*"Then Adonijah...exalted himself..."* (1 Kings 1:5).

It was self-centeredness, pride! Adonijah said, "I will set myself up as king!"

This young man was raised under a ministry of "no reproof":

*"And his father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so?"* (verse 6).

Notice here: Everything the prophet had prophesied of this kind of ministry had come to pass. All of the elements he had said would happen under this kind of priesthood were in this man, Adonijah!

*"And he conferred with Joab, the son of Zeruiah..." (verse 7).*

Adonijah surrounded himself with ungodly men! There was not a holy man among them -- not Zadok, not Nathan, not any faithful men of David (see verse 8). And, Scripture says, this group met at "the stone of Zoheleth" --which means "place of the serpent."

This was a group of self-serving, success-driven, ego-stroking rebels. They cried, "Here is something new, something that works! Away with David's old, wornout ways. God is doing a new thing in the land!"

Up to that point, Abiathar had been loyal to David. But now the word was out: "There's a new move taking place -- some great, new thing happening in the land. And it's very exciting!" It grabbed the heart of Abiathar -- because it looked like a ticket to success and prosperity. Now he could make it! He had found a new man and a new message.

I meet many people who come to this country from places in Europe, Africa and Asia where churches are dying. They hear about some new work happening in the churches here, and they become hungry to see it happen in their church -- a new move of God!

Once, when I was overseas, I told one pastor friend, "You and your wife used to be on your faces continually, weeping before God. That's why your church was so blessed. But you've gotten so busy, you don't know God anymore!" This couple began to weep, crying, "You're right!" But instead of repenting, they came to America -- looking for some new program that would make their ministry work!

**That is the ministry of Abiathar! He got caught up in a fleshly, ungodly work of Satan. And he gathered with the others at the stone of Satan, eating, drinking and shouting, "Long live King Adonijah!"**

When David was told about it, he cried, "Get me Nathan!" You see, when God wants to do something that really counts for His eternal purposes, He calls on those who have been shut in with him. David is a type of Christ here. And he cried, "Forget Abiathar. Go get Nathan! I lightly esteem Abiathar. Tell Nathan to get the trumpet and the oil, and to go anoint Solomon!"

So Solomon was anointed king. And the first thing he did was to kill Shimei, who cursed David. Then he began dealing with all of David's enemies -- and he called forth Abiathar.

Now, I remind you that the unnamed prophet said this Eli-Abiathar ministry would never be cut off. And Solomon knew all about this prophecy. Abiathar should have been executed for treason. But instead, Solomon told him:

"You cast your lot in with my brother Adonijah. You tried to bring down this kingdom. And because of that, you deserve to die. But I'm not going to kill you. You carried the ark of God for my father, David, and you were afflicted with him. Because of those things, I will not put you to death at this time. Now, go to Anathoth, to your own field, to do your own thing. You are lightly esteemed!"

*"So Solomon thrust out Abiathar from being priest unto the Lord; that he might fulfill the word of the Lord, which he spake concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh" (verse 2:27).*

The Eli priesthood is still here today! But God says to their kind, "Go, do your own thing. I lightly esteem you!"

### ***3. Ezekiel Understood the Prophetic Importance of These Two Priesthoods!***

Both the Zadok and Abiathar priesthoods were operating in Ezekiel's day. And, like the unnamed prophet, Ezekiel prophesied they both would flow as two streams of ministry to the very end:

*"...mark well the entering in of the house, with every going forth of the sanctuary" (Ezekiel 44:5).*

God was telling Ezekiel, "Stand at My house and see all the people coming and going. Discern all the activities going on here. It's all an abomination! They're bringing strangers and foreigners into My house to defile it!"

Likewise today, the abominations going on in churches are so horrible, God is saying, "Enough -- I've had it!" Ungodly ministers have brought into the holy sanctuary rock-and-roll, entertainment, utter foolishness, singers who use drugs and alcohol and don't even know God. These people stand ministering in the pulpit, and the people don't even know the difference!

*"And ye have not kept the charge of mine holy things: but ye have set keepers of my charge in my sanctuary for yourselves" (Ezekiel 44:8).*

He was saying, in other words: "You've brought in foreigners, people who do not know me, to keep charge of My sanctuary!" These were foreign elements -- wicked, unholy, unseparated, still of the world. God's house was being profaned!

So God appointed the Abiathar priesthood to minister to a people whose hearts were set on idols! The shepherds had strayed far from God. They were filled with the spirit of Eli, chasing fame and success -- and the people loved to have it so! Thus, God appointed idolatrous priests to give the people what they wanted. "Like people, like priest!"

*"Yet I will appoint them to keep charge of the house of all its service, and of all that shall be done in it" (verse 14, NAS).*

How blind such ministers are! God says of them,

*"And they shall not come near unto me..." (verse 13).*

They stand in the pulpit lightly esteemed by God, full of self and idolatry, nowhere near to the Lord. Yet they go through all the motions: preaching, teaching, counseling, all the ministerial duties. But they don't know the difference! They have no discernment, no witness of the Spirit!

They are conjoined twins with the ministry. They cannot live without getting their daily kick of some preacher, as they do not know the Holy Spirit. They are parasites and have to get their blood from their priesthood.

Beloved, if you do not repent and surrender all to Jesus -- if you hold onto an idol in your heart -- you will end up listening to a minister who preaches to your idolatry!

God Made a Promise in His Word That If His People Would Repent and Return to Him With All Their Hearts, He Would Raise Up for Them Zadok Shepherds!

*"Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord... and I will bring you to Zion: and I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding" (Jeremiah 3:14-15).*

Ezekiel prophesied that a Zadok priesthood would be very much alive and well in the last days:

*"But...the sons of Zadok, that kept the charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from me, they shall come near to me to minister unto me, and they shall stand before me to offer unto me the fat and the blood, said the Lord God: They shall enter into my sanctuary, and they shall come near to my table, to minister unto me, and they shall keep my charge" (Ezekiel 44:15-16).*

There will be no mixture in this priesthood:

*"...they shall be clothed with linen garments; and no wool shall come upon them, whiles they minister..." (verse 17).*

Wool mixed with linen represents mixture -- a little bit of God and a little bit of flesh. But God says, "My priesthood is made of pure linen. There is no mixture!"

This Zadok priesthood will be fearless against sin -- and will have the power to lead people into righteousness and holiness.

*"And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and the profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean" (verse 23).*

### **These are the marks of the Zadok priesthood:**

**1. They are not afraid to reprove with the power and authority of the Holy Ghost.**

**2. They make clear to you what wrong and right are, until you gain the knowledge and wisdom to make right choices.**

**3. These men know the voice of the Lord.** They know what God speaks, because they sit and wait on Him! They don't pray, "Bless me, bless my programs, give me money..." Rather, they cry, "Oh, Jesus, I love you! I want to know Your mind and Your heart!"

You may be saying, "It's good to know all this about preachers." But God is saying to you right now: "What about you?"

Dear Saint, Did You Know This Message Is All About You?

Scripture says,

*"(He) hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be the glory and dominion for ever and ever..." (Revelation 1:6).*

Beloved, this verse is true for the whole body! Everyone who calls himself or herself by God's name is to be a priest unto the Lord.

So, I ask you: Which priesthood describes your walk with God? Are you of Zadok? Or Abiathar? Are you self-centered -- running around to conventions and seminars looking for comforting answers? Or do you receive reproof with joy, knowing that God wants to cut the cancer of sin out of you in order to heal you? Do you buy tape after tape of some evangelist to try to get a word from heaven? Or are you learning to discern God's voice for yourself, by giving quality time to Him in the secret closet?

Everyone who lives by the name of Jesus should be learning to hear God's voice. He wants you to hear His word in your own heart! If you learn that, you can go to any church anywhere and know within five minutes if the Spirit of the Lord is there. If it's really Zadok, your hands will go up in the air. You'll say, "I'm hearing something good. Something is registering in my soul. This is God!"

Or -- you will discern what is of Abiathar. And it will make you sick to your stomach! You will flee, because you cannot stand the stench of flesh!

Oh, God -- give us the spirit of the Zadok priesthood!