

## A Polluted Priesthood

“And of the children of the priests: the children of Habaiah, the children of Koz, the children of Barzillai; which took a wife of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called after their name: These sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but they were not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood. And the Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood up a priest with Urim and with Thummim” (**Ezra 2:61-63**).

At first glance you might read the above cited verses and say, “Not much here.” But upon second glance you may just uncover some real gems, especially if you parallel that O.T. priesthood with today’s spiritual priesthood, the church- the people of God (**1 Pet. 2:9**).

The O.T. priesthood was comprised of those having complied with the Divine mandate(**Ezra 2:61**). Having been dispersed when taken into captivity it was imperative that they establish the legitimacy of their lineage upon their return, especially the Levitical priesthood. They couldn’t have men serving in that capacity who were unqualified (**Exo. 28:1; 30:30; 40:13-15**). And so it is today! Only those who have complied with the Divine mandate can serve within God’s royal priesthood (**cf. Acts 2:38, 47; John 3:3-5; Eph. 5:23ff; Rom. 6:1ff; Gal. 3:26-28**).

The O.T. priesthood demanded purity, and any who would pollute it were put out (**Ezra 2:62**). There was some discrepancy over the legitimacy of some claiming to be of priestly descent. Their names were not found on the registry, and without verifiable documentation, they were polluting the priesthood. They were put out until they could prove otherwise. God has always demanded purity amongst His people (**cf. 1 Pet. 1:15-16; Lev. 11:44**). And like the priesthood of old, God’s royal priesthood today must maintain that same level of purity (**Rom. 6:1-2; Jam. 1:21, 27**) or risk being put out (**cf. 1 Cor. 5:1-7**).

God ultimately determines the legitimacy of His priesthood. Those whose names were not found on the registry were told not to eat of the most holy things until it was divinely confirmed that they were worthy (**Ezra 2:63**). The *Urim and Thummim* were priestly articles that were placed in the priestly breastplate and used periodically to determine God's will in various matters (**Exo. 28:30; Lev. 8:8; Num. 27:21**). Today we have God's Word to guide and instruct us relative to all matters pertaining to life and godliness, which includes His royal priesthood. However, it is sometimes difficult for His people to determine the legitimacy of those claiming to be part of that priesthood, the church. Thankfully, in cases like these, when it may be unverifiable, God knows and will render His verdict on Judgment Day (**cf. Mat. 13:24ff**). He's keeping a registry in heaven and will one day read it (**Rev. 20:12-15**). And because He has the final say in the matter, it's imperative that we be "*diligent to be found by Him without spot or blemish*" (**2 Pet. 3:14**).

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