

CHRIST WILL BE ALL IN ALL

Chapter 6

THE PRIESTHOOD OF GOD

INTRODUCTION

We have already looked briefly at the manifestation of God in the Head and body of the Lord Jesus Christ, and how His coming shall be like the rising of the sun in its strength. Yet there are many other perspectives from which we may view this truth, one of which is that of the Priesthood of God. As with all deep realities of the Spirit, this subject is inexhaustible, but it is essential to have a spiritual comprehension of this aspect of God's plan, if we are to understand His purposes the more fully.

A REPRESENTATIVE OF GOD AND MAN

The Spirit gives to every born again child of God the desire to mediate, to stand before God in intercession for our fellow man, and to display the glory of God to man. Though this role of priest has been abused and carnalized for long centuries by any religion you care to name, there is a spiritual priest that is of God. Sadly, because of the Romish doctrine of eternal hellfire, among other things, many of the brethren express this yearning by attempting to "scare the hell out of people". Though this reality is a sorrow to all who see the marvelous truth of Christ becoming All in all, it is also essential we understand the root and heart of much of this behavior – the priestly desire. As with our entire faith, only the truth can harmonize all the various desires we have from God, the truth being Christ Himself. We may have a very Godly desire indeed, but only the truth of Christ causes that desire to shine with God's own light. Thus, if we preach hell instead of Christ, the despairing world looks to the self-proclaimed representatives of God and sees but death and fear, as the message of God's insatiable desire for hell fodder is given preeminence.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF THE OLD COVENANT

To learn about the true priesthood of God, we must cast our minds back to the story of the Exodus, when God appointed an earthly priesthood to be a shadow of heavenly things. God sovereignly chose Moses and Aaron's tribe of Levi to be His priests, with Aaron as the High Priest (Christ). It is in His selection and declaration of His intent that we begin to see some exciting foreshadowings:

⁵ And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ⁶ "Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may serve him. ⁷ And they shall attend to his needs and the needs of the whole congregation before the tabernacle of meeting, to do the work of the tabernacle. ⁸ Also they shall attend to all the furnishings of the tabernacle of meeting, and to the needs of the children of Israel, to do the work of the tabernacle. ⁹ And you shall give the Levites to Aaron and his

sons; they *are* given entirely to him^[a] from among the children of Israel. ¹⁰ So you shall appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall attend to their priesthood; but the outsider who comes near shall be put to death.”

¹¹ Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ¹² “Now behold, I Myself have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of every firstborn who opens the womb among the children of Israel. Therefore the Levites shall be Mine, ¹³ because all the firstborn *are* Mine. On the day that I struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I sanctified to Myself all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast. They shall be Mine: I *am* the LORD.” (Numbers 3:5-13)

There are many symbolic truths in this appointment of the tribe of Levi, and they are brought into focus when we understand Levi to be a symbol for the *Body of Christ*. One of the most glorious truths concerning this tribe is that they were a *firstfruits* of Israel.

¹² ..“Now behold, I Myself have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of every firstborn who opens the womb among the children of Israel. Therefore the Levites shall be Mine, ¹³ because all the firstborn are Mine....”

With this declaration, God reveals that the Levites were taken in lieu of first born of every womb – the firstfruits, and thus became a *tribe of firstfruits*. We can immediately see the parallel truth in Christ:

¹⁸ **Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures. (James 1:18)**

Thus, as the Levites were taken as priests, representatives, and firstfruits of Israel, the children of God are born into the kingdom as priests, representatives and firstfruits of the world! *Of all creation!* Even as God took a tribe to be His own special people, and His own representatives and servants, so we, as disciples of the great High Priest of our confession, Jesus Christ, are being taken out of the world, refined and purged, and made ready for the true service of God, the ministry of reconciliation and the shining forth of the glory of Christ!

² “ **But who can endure the day of His coming?
And who can stand when He appears?
For He is like a refiner’s fire
And like launderers’ soap.
³ He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver;
He will purify the sons of Levi,
And purge them as gold and silver,
That they may offer to the LORD
An offering in righteousness. (Malachi 3:2-3)**

Here we see in symbolic language God’s intent to purify ‘the sons of Levi’ (the true priesthood of God) for His good pleasure and the service of His almighty will. This statement is entirely consistent with God’s present dealings in our lives, as He heats up

the furnace of our afflictions here and there to mold us more fully into the image and expression of His son.

A FORESHADOWING OF HEAVENLY THINGS

Every detail of that time in the wilderness, from the manna (symbolizing Christ, the true bread from heaven), all the way to Moses inability to enter the promised land (symbolizing the law and it's lack of power to enter the rest of God, whereas Joshua, a type of Jesus, brought the people into their land) – all of these details are great types and foreshadowings of heavenly things, as we also saw with the tribe of Levi:

³ For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore *it is necessary that this One also have something to offer.* ⁴ For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; ⁵ *who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things*, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, “*See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.*”^[a] ⁶ But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises. (Hebrews 8:3-6)

The sanctuary and tabernacle of God in the wilderness, and later the temple at Jerusalem, were designed in this heavenly pattern down to the minutest detail. The entirety of this layout is far too complex to go into in depth here, but there are several pertinent points for us to consider in our pursuit of this priestly theme. The sanctuary was divided into three parts: the Outer Court, the Holy Place, and the Most Holy Place, or Holy of Holies. The latter two areas were located within the tabernacle, which was situated at the western end of the sanctuary. Any Israelite, provided he properly sanctified himself, might go into the Outer Courts, but only the priests could enter the Holy Place, and only the High Priest, once a year on Yom Kippur, could enter into the Holy of Holies, coming before the Ark of the Covenant and the Mercy Seat, where the Shekinah glory of God was shining. There was no artificial light in the this room, nor light of the sun, for the glory of God was it's light. At this sacred time, once a year, the priest would go in and intercede for the people with the required blood offering, a foreshadowing of that great and final offering of Christ's own blood.

These three areas of the sanctuary also correspond to the three major Holy Days, three major fulfillments of God's redemptive plan, and the three manifestations of God Himself. The outer courts correspond to Passover and to the Son, the spotless lamb. This is the baptism of water, the act of repentance and salvation, and the indwelling Spirit. Every man may come here, and behold the Son, that pathway to the bosom of the Father. This is God's expression of humanity, the 'Outer Courts', and express image of His divine presence.

The Holy Place corresponds to the feast of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit, and the baptism in that Holy Spirit. This is the equipping for the ministry, and empowerment from on

high. This is the firstfruits of the Spirit, and the promise of the final fulfillment of His Spirit being poured out without measure, in all its fullness.

Finally, The Holy of Holies corresponds to the Feast of Tabernacles, and to the Father – to the fullness of the Spirit, and the completion of God’s plan. To God dwelling among men, and His glory being seen by them:

³ And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be their God.* ⁴ And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” (Revelation 21:3-4)

What a glorious picture of God’s grace, and what a great hope! No more death, nor sorrow, nor crying! How a hurt, bruised, lost and frightened world needs to receive the soothing balm of this proclamation! How this great light of love and glory needs to break in upon the foul and loathsome darkness of this evil age! O Saints of God, it is the beauty of our priestly calling to ever seek and bask in this unveiled glory of God’s face, even that same glory that shone in Moses face whenever he conversed with the Most High:

²⁹ Now it was so, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the Testimony were in Moses’ hand when he came down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him. ³⁰ So when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him. ³¹ Then Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned to him; and Moses talked with them. ³² Afterward all the children of Israel came near, and he gave them as commandments all that the LORD had spoken with him on Mount Sinai. ³³ And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face. ³⁴ But whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with Him, he would take the veil off until he came out; and he would come out and speak to the children of Israel whatever he had been commanded. ³⁵ And whenever the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses’ face shone, then Moses would put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with Him. (Exodus 34:28-35)

This is a powerful symbol and foreshadowing of the glory of God being seen in His saints, and a profound encouragement to seek constant communion with our great God. Oh that our faces might also shine with His glory! Oh that people may look upon the body and recognize the Head! Indeed, such light shines upon us even now, and is ours to gaze upon at all times. Harken to the words of the Spirit, written by Paul in his second letter to the church at Corinth:

¹² Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech— ¹³ unlike Moses, *who* put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. ¹⁴ But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament,

because the *veil* is taken away in Christ. ¹⁵ But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. ¹⁶ Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. ¹⁸ But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Corinthians 3:12-18)

What a beautiful passage! Even as the veil still remains over those who are under the law, it has been taken away in Christ. We now, with unveiled face, are beholding the glory of the Lord and being changed from glory to glory *by beholding Him!* We are conformed to His image even as we contemplate His beauty and perfection! Truly the veil has been torn and cast aside! Indeed, there was a thick veil that hung between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, a great metaphor for the estrangement of man, separating the Shekinah glory of God from the view of even the priesthood, but rejoice – for Christ has torn that great veil asunder!

⁴⁴ Now it was^[1] about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. ⁴⁵ Then the sun was darkened,^[m] and the veil of the temple was torn in two. ⁴⁶ And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, “Father, ‘*into Your hands I commit My spirit.*’”^[n] Having said this, He breathed His last. (Luke 23:44-46)

Jesus Christ, that great High Priest, has forever torn that veil, so that we may all behold the glory of God, and be changed into that same glory. Saints of God, we change no other way but by seeing God and His glory, by beholding Jesus Christ our Lord. And this is our priestly ministry - even to walk forth into the darkness and spiritual gloom of this fallen world with unveiled faces, that all may see the glory of our Lord!

¹ Arise, shine;

For your light has come!

And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you.

² For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth,

And deep darkness the people;

But the LORD will arise over you,

And His glory will be seen upon you.

³ The Gentiles shall come to your light,

And kings to the brightness of your rising. (Isaiah 60:1-3)

Hallelujah!

A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD

Even as God purposes us as representatives of Himself to man, and also as intercessors of man before His face, the calling is also a royal one, that of kingship. Consider the cry of the redeemed in the book of Revelation:

⁸ Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. ⁹ And they sang a new song, saying:

**“ You are worthy to take the scroll,
And to open its seals;
For You were slain,
And have redeemed us to God by Your blood
Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,
¹⁰ And have made us^[d] kings^[e] and priests to our God;
And we^[f] shall reign on the earth.” (Revelation 5:8-10)**

This song is similar to the opening passage of the Revelation, where John declares:

Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth.

To Him who loved us and washed^[a] us from our sins in His own blood, ⁶ and has made us kings^[b] and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (Revelation 1:4-6)

So The Lord states two times within the opening five chapters of this glorious book that He has made us Kings and Priests to God. This truth can be seen as two distinct beautiful realities coming together. “*He has made...*” – this reaffirms the sovereignty and power of God, showing us to be clay in His hands, and showing that we have not made ourselves anything, nor can we. And what has He made us into? Kings and Priests! Rulers and Representatives in the likeness of Himself! Sons of His own Spirit, and ministers of His own righteousness! Brethren, this is the exceedingly high call of God in Christ. We must understand that our refinings and purgings in this life are not the devil stifling the purpose of God, but on the contrary:

¹⁶ Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward *man* is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory..” (2 Corinthians 4:16-17)

The Lord, in His infinite wisdom, is bringing forth a new tribe of priests, in the order of His only begotten, Christ Jesus, to proclaim His praises. Hear the words of Peter by the Spirit:

⁹ But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰ who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. (1 Peter 2:9-10)

What beautiful lines! We are chosen! We are royal! We are holy! A priesthood, a nation, a special people! And why? In order to *proclaim His praises!* Brethren, if any of you still wrestle with the idea of a fiery hell that never ends, ask yourself this: *Who are we proclaiming His praises to if not the world?* When we catch a glimpse of the purpose of God, and understand that even as the world is the harvest, we are the *firstfruits*, we can so much better understand why so many people around us do not come to Christ in this age. Each in His own order! God is raising us up in this age, that in the ages to come we might proclaim His praises to those who are aching to hear that sublime truth!

⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:4-7)

Saints of God! What a passage! He loved us even when we were dead in trespasses! *He loves the world even while they are still dead in trespasses also!* He has sovereignly raised us up in heavenly places, that in the ages to come He might reveal His kindness towards us in Christ before the face of all the nations! An ever increasing revelation of how far reaching the cross is, and how white the blood washes! Brethren, let us not lose heart, but rejoice in such glory. Having received the revelation of our calling, let us understand that to walk in our priestly ministry means following the High Priest and Lord of all:

⁴ Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, ⁵ you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, *a holy priesthood*, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 2:4-5)

Amen and amen!

CHRIST THE HIGH PRIEST

Above all, when seeking God with regards to this great calling of priesthood, we must fix our eyes upon Christ. In the Lord alone, is truth, and in the Lord alone, we find all the perfection of God's plan for mankind. Our hearts must yearn for the glory of Jesus Christ. There is nothing we receive apart from Him, nor anything we could want outside of Him. In suffering as He did, He surely paved the way for every blessing that has ever been received in His holy name.

¹⁰ For it was fitting for Him, for whom *are* all things and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. ¹¹ For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified *are* all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, ¹² saying:

*“ I will declare Your name to My brethren;
In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.”^[c]*

¹³ **And again:**

“ I will put My trust in Him.”^[d]

And again:

“ Here am I and the children whom God has given Me.”^[e]

¹⁴ **Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. ¹⁶ For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. ¹⁷ Therefore, in all things He had to be made like *His* brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted. (Hebrews 2:10-18)**

There is such a glory in this profound scripture. Consider that Christ had to be made like us in order for us to be made like Him. What an amazing truth! He partook of our own flesh and blood, that He may be our sinless representative, and that He might impute to us His righteousness, which we receive by the freely given gift of faith. Let it be a comfort to us all that He was tempted, *yet without sin*. There is not a trial that can befall any of us, His flock, that He has not overcome in the days of His flesh. A Most High Priest indeed! Thus, as the Spirit speaks through Paul in his letter to the Romans:

³⁴ **Who is he who condemns? *It is* Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. (Romans 8:34)**

Thus, we discover the core of priesthood. We see how one is taken as a representative of his own kin, to intercede, to bless, and to petition God on behalf of, And we see the need for one who has felt the same pain, suffered the same agony, and tasted the same sorrows as the people he represents. Consider again our Lord:

¹ **For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things *pertaining* to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. ² He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness. ³ Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer *sacrifices* for sins. ⁴ And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was. (Hebrews 5:1-4)**

Understand the compassion of Christ. He knows our weaknesses, and our frailty, and He is a gentle, kind and true Shepherd. Let us never doubt the fidelity of such a one, who has been tested in all points, and suffered alone for our redemption. And let us comprehend that we are called to be priests of His priesthood, to have compassion on the world that remains in darkness to this day. The day shall come where we shall minister forth the praises of Him who saves with His very glory, like the brightness of the noonday sun! Hear again the word of the Lord:

⁴ And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was.

Yet again we see the sovereign will of God at work . Let us not think we have anything to offer, that we have any claim on this priesthood of ourselves. Only He who is called by God, according to His own divine purpose and foreknowledge. The Spirit through Paul continues:

⁵ So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, *but it was He who said to Him:*

***“ You are My Son,
Today I have begotten You. ”^[a]***

⁶ As He also says in another place:

***“ You are a priest forever
According to the order of Melchizedek ”;^[b]***

⁷ who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, ⁸ though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. ⁹ And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, ¹⁰ called by God as High Priest “according to the order of Melchizedek,” ¹¹ of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. (Hebrews 5:5-11)

One of the true divine mysteries concerns this need for Jesus to be “perfected” before entering in to His glory, but so it was. He was without sin, yet “He learned obedience by the things which He suffered”, going on to be proclaimed High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. Brethren, if our perfect forerunner, completely without sin, was dealt with thus, how can we who have been brought forth out of bondage escape similar purgings? If His very perfection had to be perfected, as it were, how much more must we expect to be dealt with accordingly, before entering into the fullness of our priesthood? But praise His name – for He has entered in behind the veil, and torn down the middle wall of separation between us and the God of All:

¹⁹ This *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the *Presence* behind the veil, ²⁰ where the forerunner has entered for us, *even* Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. (Hebrews 6:19-20)

We must always understand this truth of Christ being our forerunner. He has forged a path and built a bridge between the Father and His alienated creation, which pathway and bridge is even He Himself, and He has shown the way, and set the example for every son of God to follow:

¹⁸ “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before *it hated* you. ¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. ²⁰ Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. (John 15:18-20)

In all things Christ is our great example. If we have His Spirit, and are being conformed into His likeness, we must expect the same treatment from the world, from the religious systems, and from our Father Himself, who will refine us with that same hand of fire. And Brethren, if Christ drank the cup the Father gave Him, we must do likewise.

PRIESTS WHO HAVE SUFFERED

Saints of God, there is a high and holy calling to priesthood that rests upon us according to the infinitely wise purpose of the Most High God. There is a wondrous glory that is destined to shine through these vessels, as sanctified instruments of the Lord, fashioned after the pattern of the Only Begotten, the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet this calling, though glorious, must be accomplished by many painful purgings and much refinement. As we will study in the next chapter, there is no priesthood, no high calling, and no conforming into His image, without the fellowship of His cross and His sufferings.

