

THE PRIESTHOOD OF THE BELIEVERS

“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.” I Peter 2:9

PURPOSE: To inform each member of the Body of Christ as to their calling, and to provoke them to priestly service before God.

DEFINITION:

Priest: One officiating by courtesy, although a layman. A mediator, a conciliator between God and man. Under the law the priests were assistants to the High Priest. They completed the link between God and man.

PRINCIPLE:

God has chosen to use people, like you and I, to redeem others to Himself. In this sense we are a chosen generation. Each of us has a ministry before God that benefits our fellow man. Indifference to this high calling is detrimental not only to us but to others who would have benefitted from our service.

NOTES:

ISRAEL’S MISSED CALLING:

“You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wing and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation...” Exodus 19:4-6

God’s original intent was for Israel, as a nation, to be a kingdom of priests that would effect the rest of the world. They excused themselves from this calling.

“Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off. Then they said to Moses, “You speak with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.” Exodus 20:18,19

“Now when Moses saw that the people were unrestrained (for Aaron had not restrained them, to their shame among their enemies), then Moses stood in the entrance of the camp, and said, “Whoever is on the LORD’S side-----come to me! And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him.” Exodus 32:25,26

“Thus you shall separate the Levites from among the children of Israel, and the Levites shall be Mine. After that the Levites shall go in to service the tabernacle of meeting, So you shall cleanse them and offer them, like a wave offering. For they are wholly given to Me from among the children of Israel; I have taken them for Myself instead of all who open the womb, the firstborn of all the children of Israel....And I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and his sons from among the children of Israel to do the work for the children of Israel in the tabernacle of meeting, and to make atonement for the children of Israel, that there be no plague among the children of Israel when the children of Israel come near the sanctuary. Numbers 8:14-19

Instead of being priests, as was originally intended, they became in need of priests, and their relationship with God took on an impersonal nature as they worshipped with the assistance of mediators.

PRINCIPLE: You either are a priest, or you are in need of one.

A BETTER PRIESTHOOD IS PROPHESED

“But you shall be named the priests of the Lord, They shall call you the servants of our God. You shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory you shall boast.” Isaiah 61:6

“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 launderer’s soap. 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

NOTES:

THE PRIESTHOOD OF THE BELIEVER #2

As we assume the privileged role of being a spiritual priest, let us consider that we, as the Levites were, are helpers of the High Priest. Our position has significance as we understand our relationship to the Lord Jesus, and under His authority function as an extension of His great work in the earth. Consider the nature of His God ordained everlasting priesthood.

“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. He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness. Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer sacrifices for sins. And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God as Aaron was. 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.’ As He also says in another place: ‘You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.’” Hebrews 5:1-6

1. He has been established as High Priest by God.
2. He is a High Priest forever as foreshadowed by Melchizedek .
3. His sacrificial work is complete.
4. He is ever administering compassion upon struggling humans who call upon Him.

“For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heaven.; who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people’s, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. For the law appoints as high priest men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, appoints the Son who has been perfected forever.” Hebrews 7:26-28

“Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Hebrews 4:14-16

Our position with Him is twofold. We stand in need of His intercession and yet make intercession for others. We are recipients of mercy and grace and yet we administer the same to others. We are comforted by Him and share that comforting Spirit with others. We have been reconciled to God through Him and have been given the ministry of reconciliation.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”
II Corinthians 1:3,4

“Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.” II Corinthians 5:18

PRIESTHOOD OF THE BELIEVERS #3

QUALIFICATIONS OF THE PRIESTHOOD FORESHADOWED BY THE LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD.

1. They Must Be Born Right. Genealogies were meticulously kept so proof could be presented that the candidate for priesthood was truly of the tribe of Levi. If evidence could not be produced then he was disqualified.

“These sought their listing among those who were registered by genealogy, but they were not found; therefore they were excluded from the priesthood as defiled.” Ezra 2:62

PRINCIPLE: A New Testament priest should show evidence of being born again.

2. They Had To Be Physically Exemplary.

PRINCIPLE: A New Testament priest should be spiritually exemplary.

3. He Must Be Holy. He could not involve himself in the rituals for the dead except for his immediate family.

PRINCIPLE: There is a certain amount of separation from the world's defilement that is necessary for the New Testament priest to be effective. We are to be ministers of life and not overly problematic.

TRAITS THAT DISQUALIFY Leviticus 21:17-23

1. He Could Not Be Blind. Eyes would be need to discern good and evil.
2. He Could Not Be Lame. He must be able to follow the leading of the Lord.
3. He Could Not Be Ugly. He must be approachable.
4. He Could Not Have A Crippled Hand Or Foot. Loads had to be carried.
5. He Could Not Be A Hunchback. He had to be able to look up and walk uprightly
6. He Could Not Be A Dwarf. He must be mature and of good stature.
7. He Could Not Have A Defect In His Eye. His Vision Must Be Clear.
8. He Could Not Have A Skin Disorder. He must not draw attention to himself or be contagious.
9. He Could Not Have Damaged Reproductive Organs. He must be able to reproduce.

PRIESTHOOD OF THE BELIEVER #4

TYPES FROM THE LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD THAT RELATE

It is so important for the Christian to understand that they are a peculiar or unique people unto God. If this is properly understood then we will not compare ourselves to the standards and styles of the world. We have a calling to fulfill and that requires our utmost diligence to present ourselves holy unto God through the blood of Christ. We can take an example from the Levites and the requirements laid upon them. It effected the following areas of their life.

THEIR MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

References: Leviticus 21:7-9, Ezekiel 44:22

Their marriages were to be for the furtherance and not the detriment of their calling. It is of great importance that Christians marry Christians and that their children are raised in the nurturing atmosphere of united faith. This is so beneficial to the kingdom of God. However if one becomes a believer and the other is not, the Lord still sanctifies that marriage and the children that are born through it. It still works for good to the glory of God.

“They shall not take a wife who is a harlot or a defiled woman, nor shall they take a woman divorced from her husband; for the priest is holy to his God.....the daughter of any priest, if she profanes herself by playing the harlot, she profanes her father. She shall be burned with fire.”
Leviticus 21:7,9

“If a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination..” Titus 2:6

“But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: IF any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, and he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy.” I Corinthians 7:12-14

THEIR BODY HYGIENE AND CLOTHING

References: Leviticus 21:1-5 Ezekiel 44:18-21

Meticulous laws were prescribed for the priests that they might be clean physically. They were to avoid touching anything dead unless it was a member of their immediate family . They were to wear vestments that did not cause sweat. They were not to be under the influence of wine.

The antitypes are far reaching. Consider first of all the profound truth that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost. We are to give utmost care to avoid uncleanness both of the body and spirit. We are to avoid such things as fornication, youthful lusts, idolatry, the love of money, immoral believers, people who cause division, idle babblings and needless disputes. These represent spiritual death. The work of the Lord is not to be some wearisome duty that causes us to just sweat it out. It's a joy! God has provided us with garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Let us not grow weary in well doing. Christians should dress modestly, that is not giving undue attention to themselves by being too stylish or indecent. We too are not to take our stimulation from mind altering drugs and alcohol, but we are to be filled with the Spirit and do the work of God with a clear and sober mind.

References: I Corinthians 6:19, 20 - Matthew 11:28-30 - I John 5:3 -
I Timothy 2:8-10 I Corinthians 6:18 - I Corinthians 10:14 - I Timothy 6:10, 11 -
Romans 16:17,18 I Corinthians 5:11 - II Timothy 2:16,23

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. II Corinthians 7:1

Our cleanliness will determine our usefulness.

“Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: The lord knows those who are His, and, Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.”

II Timothy 2:19-21

PRIESTHOOD OF THE BELIEVER #5

PRIESTLY DUTIES

1. To offer quality sacrifices unto the Lord. The Old Testament priests were instructed not to offer anything blemished unto the Lord. There yet must be a high standard set for the spiritual sacrifices we give to Him. He is worthy of our utmost.

“Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.” Hebrews 13:15,16

“Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:18,19

List some spiritual sacrifices that are well pleasing to God:

2. To pronounce blessings upon the people.

“Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, ‘This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them; ‘The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make His face to shine upon you, And be gracious to you; The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.’”
Numbers 6:23-26

“Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.” Romans 12:14

3. To teach the people the particulars of the Law.

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Matthew 28:19,20

4. To keep the sacred fire burning and the lamps trimmed in the sanctuary. It was to be a continual service before the Lord.

“not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.” Romans 12:11

“Therefore my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” I Corinthians 15:58

5. To be the custodians and copiers (scribes) of the law.

“Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.” I Corinthians 4:1

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed,

rightly dividing the word of truth.” II Timothy 2:15

“Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.” Revelation 1:3

6. To receive and administer tithes and offerings.

“Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar? Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.”

I Corinthians 9:13,14

7. To write and perform music sacred music before the Lord.

“speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.” Ephesians 5:19

8. To be judges and magistrates for civil matters.

“Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life? If then you have judgments concerning things pertaining to this life, do you appoint those who are least esteemed by the church to judge.” I Corinthians 6:3,4

“For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside?” I Corinthians 5:12

9. To encourage the warriors on the eve of the battle and sound the trumpet.
Deuteronomy 20:1-4

*“For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged.
I Corinthians 14:31*

“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teacher, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.” Ephesians 4:11-16

10. To purify the unclean.

“Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.” Galatians 6:1

“If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. I John 5:16

PRIESTHOOD OF THE BELIEVER #6

‘THEIR UNIQUE INHERITANCE’

THE INHERITANCE OF THE LEVITES.

The Levites were privileged to serve as priests for the nation of Israel. When Joshua lead the people into Canaan each tribe was given a choice segment of land to serve as their inheritance from the Lord. This included cities, vineyards, fertile fields, sea coasts, timber land, river plains and mountains. However the Levites would not share in these very earthly blessing. God had some better thing for them. They were not to be collected together in one location as the other tribes, but they were to be dispersed throughout the nation as teachers and judges in Israel. Their portion would be the tithes, first fruits, the redemption money and a portion of the sacrifices offered to the Lord. They were granted cities strategically located, some which would serve as cities of refuge for those guilty of unintentional manslaughter. The Lord reminded them that He was their portion, something the other tribes with all their material blessings did not share.

“Then the Lord said to Aaron: “You shall have no inheritance in their land, nor shall you have any portion among them: I am your portion and your inheritance among the children of Israel.”
Numbers 18:20

THE CHRISTIAN’S INHERITANCE

Much like the Levites of old, Christians do not share the worldly portion that so many are content with here on earth. Jesus calls us to self-denial that will lead to even greater riches. He has promised to supply our needs as we sojourn here but has promised an even greater portion in time to come. We are heirs of Christ. He is our Portion. All things that are His are ours, that is if everything we have belongs to Him. It’s called being joint heirs with Christ.

“Oh Lord, You are the portion of my inheritance and my cup; You maintain my lot. The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; Yes I have a good inheritance. Psalms 16:5,6

“Then Peter answered and said to Him, ‘See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have? So Jesus said to them, ‘Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of He glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sister or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name’s sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life.’”

Matthew 19:27-29

“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs –heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.” Romans 8:17,18

God is no man’s debtor. The Christian life is a very rewarding lifestyle. Though we may have material blessings they should never be greater than our spiritual blessings which come from above. Our portion is one of glory and immortality. What greater gift could be given than eternal life in the presence of the glorified Christ..