

Priestly Functions

Introduction

In this series of lessons we have seen how the Melchizedek priesthood existed prior to the Levitical priesthood and how our Lord is now the High Priest of the order of Melchizedek. We have also seen that the priests of Zadok, that is, the priests of righteousness, are types of our priesthood in the New Testament for we are a kingdom of priests. We have also seen how this priesthood will continue forever because our High Priest is a priest after the order of Melchizedek and will abide forever. This also implies an existence prior to Melchizedek so perhaps the better designation of this priesthood would be the Eternal Priesthood.

There are two aspects of our place in this priesthood that need to be covered: 1) the process of entering into our priestly functions, and 2) what our priestly functions are. This lesson will actually cover the second item first, which may seem backwards but I think it will become clear why we are doing it this way as we proceed.

An Offering

Jesus is our example. As our High Priest, he exemplifies all aspects of proper priesthood. We are to be like Him, conformed to His image. As a priest we will follow His pattern even though we can never fulfill the functions of the High Priest.

For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices; so it is necessary that this *high priest* also have something to offer. (Hebrews 8:3 NASB)

What did Jesus have to offer? His self, His body, His blood as a sacrifice for our sins. He was the Lamb sacrificed on the cross. When He ascended, He ascended as our High Priest to offer His own blood on the altar in Heaven and He continues to function as our High Priest in the throne room of God.

Jesus came into this world in human form so that His body might be offered as a sacrifice. His body was prepared beforehand for this very purpose.

Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, "SACRIFICE AND OFFERING YOU HAVE NOT DESIRED, BUT A BODY YOU HAVE PREPARED FOR ME; (Hebrews 10:5 NASB)

By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (Hebrews 10:10 NASB)

So, the “something to offer” that Jesus had was His body, prepared for that very purpose according to the will of the Father.

Now, with that as our pattern, if we are to function as a priest we must have something to offer. What do we have? The same thing that Jesus had—our bodies.

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship. (Romans 12:1 NASB)

Unlike Jesus, our bodies are presented as “living sacrifices” rather than dead ones. It is, however, still a sacrifice that is given to God.

The reason for this is that it is our “spiritual service of worship”. The word in the original which the NASB translates as “spiritual” and which the KJV translates as “reasonable” is “*logikos*”, which means rational, logical. Robertson's Word Pictures says of this phrase, “The phrase means here “worship rendered by the reason (or soul).” Paul is saying that we should present our bodies as living sacrifices as the logical result of what he had said in chapter eleven and doing that would be a reasonable act of worship.

Our bodies are offered following the type of “burnt offerings” in the Old Testament. Burnt offerings were fully consumed by fire. They were offered before the Law and can be tied to the functions of the Melchizedek type of priests. Some who offered burnt offering are Abel, Noah, Abraham, Jethro as the priest of Midian, and the children of Israel while in Egypt. Now, it is our function to offer ourselves, our bodies as a burnt offering to the Lord, which He consumes with the Baptism of Fire.

After our bodies have been presented as living sacrifices, Paul continues in Romans with “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind”. We receive a new spirit in the new birth. We offer our bodies as a living sacrifice. Our souls are transformed by the renewing of our minds. The key word here is 'transformed'. We don't receive new souls when we are born again but instead our souls, the ones we have had all along, are transformed by the renewing of our minds into the image of Jesus. [*The process of renewing our mind is detailed in other lessons including the nine part audio series “[Renewing the Mind](#)” and the four part audio “[Mindsets and Strongholds](#)” so we will not try to elaborate on that here.*]

Basics of the Type and Shadow

At this point we need to introduce some basic understanding of the type and shadow of the Tabernacle and its spiritual application to us. Hebrews 8:5 tells us that the Levitical system and the Tabernacle were a copy, a type of Heavenly reality. We find this hard to comprehend but everything in the old system corresponded in some way to spiritual truth that is revealed in Christ Jesus.

I don't want to go into great detail here because to fully expound upon this will require a complete series of lessons but we do need to hit some high points. The Tabernacle was laid out in three components: 1) the Outer Court, 2) the Holy Place, and 3) the Holiest of Holies. This correlates to various aspects of Truth and how we understand it. It will help us if we put some of this into a table format so that we can see how the various areas correspond to each other.

TABERNACLE	HEAVENS	MAN
Outer Court	Earth and its surroundings	Our bodies
Holy Place	Second Heavens or Mid-heavens	Our souls
Holiest of Holies	The Throne room of God	Our spirits

Jesus said that He is the Way, the Truth, the Life. He also said that He is the Door. When this is applied to the type of the Tabernacle we have some interesting correlations. The Tabernacle had three curtains or doors that were the way into each of the sections. Looking at it this way, Jesus is each of these doors.

1. As the Door to the Outer Court, He is the Way
2. As the Door to the Holy Place, He is the Truth
3. As the Door to the Holiest of Holies, He is the Life.

The door of the Outer Court had four posts which supported the curtain. These correspond to Jesus, the Way as revealed by the four Gospels. The door to the Holy Place had five posts which supported the curtain. These correspond to Jesus, the Truth as revealed by Him working through the five fold ministry. The door to the Holiest of Holies had two posts which supported the curtain. These correspond to Jesus, the Life as revealed by His work in His resurrection form as King and Priest.

The Light is also different in each of the three components of the Tabernacle. In the Outer Court was natural light. Anyone who looked could see and understand the things of the Outer Court because they are illumined by natural light. The Light of the Holy Place was from the Seven Branched Candlestick or Lamp. This corresponds to the Holy Spirit who is the Seven Fold Spirit of God (Rev. 4:5). The things of the Holy Place are only revealed by the Holy Spirit. In the Holiest of Holies there was no light unless God was present. The only light came from His Shekinah Glory.

Jesus has made a way for us to enter into the Holiest of Holies, into the very Throne room of God, into His very presence.

Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. (Hebrews 10:19-22 NASB)

So, we have in the Tabernacle the pathway to God and that pathway is Jesus—the Way. The furniture of the Tabernacle speaks of spiritual aspects of our cleansing and purification as priests of God. As we mature we move toward more intimacy with God. We move toward the Holiest of Holies. Each piece of furniture in each of the components of the Tabernacle have application to us as we proceed in holiness toward the Shekinah Glory of God.

The functions of the priests change as we move through the Tabernacle components. The Outer Court deals with the offering of our bodies and the washing of water by the Word and is focused on dealing with our flesh. The Holy Place deals with the renewing of our minds and is focused on our souls and their sanctification. The Holiest of Holies deals with our spirits and is focused on Life and the releasing of Life through our spirits by the Holy Spirit in the ministry of kings and priests.

Ministry to the Lord

As we said earlier, our priesthood follows the pattern of the priests of Zadok, that is, the priests of righteousness.

"But the Levitical priests, the sons of Zadok, who kept charge of My sanctuary when the sons of Israel went astray from Me, shall come near to Me to minister to Me; and they shall stand before Me to offer Me the fat and the blood," declares the Lord GOD. "They shall enter My sanctuary; they shall come near to My table to minister to Me and keep My charge. (Ezekiel 44:15-16 NASB)

Because of their faithfulness they were allowed:

1. to come near to the Lord and minister to Him
2. to stand before Him and offer Him the fat and the blood
3. to enter His sanctuary
4. to come near to His table to minister to Him
5. to keep His charge

The sons of Zadok, that is, the sons of righteousness, were primarily to enter the Lord's presence and minister to the Him. They were to offer Him the "fat and the blood", which are elements of the burnt offering (for us this relates to offering our bodies as a living sacrifice). The blood relates to sin and the old creation and the fat relates to God's satisfaction and the new creation. The other aspect of their charge was the altar of incense where incense was offered morning and evening before the Lord. (For us this is the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, prayers and supplications.)

We see that this type of ministering to the Lord comes across to the New Testament. We have an example of it in the book of Acts concerning the church at Antioch.

Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was *there*, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." (Acts 13:1-2 NASB)

The fact that these prophets and teachers were "ministering to the Lord" shows that they were performing the priestly ministry of the sons of righteousness. This gathering had no other purpose than

to “minister to the Lord”. This is hard for us to understand because this doesn't seem like something for which we need to meet. That is because we don't understand what “ministering to the Lord” is. We can't quantify it. To us, it is simply a nice religious term that sounds so spiritual. However, it is not just a phrase; it is a primary function of our priesthood. A function that has been woefully neglected.

It was out of the time of ministering to the Lord that the Lord spoke to them and the first apostles, Paul and Barnabas, to be sent forth by the Holy Spirit were confirmed. This wasn't the purpose of the meeting but rather the result of their ministering to the Lord.

We are in such dire straits today because we have lost the *functionality* of the priesthood. Not only do we not minister to the Lord, we don't know *how* to minister to the Lord. The good news is that the Holy Spirit is beginning to bring understanding in this area and He is beginning to lead some into practical experience as priests who are learning to minister to the Lord.

Only after we have learned to minister to the Lord do we have an effective ministry as a priest to the people. Paul spoke of himself as priest that ministered the gospel of God. The result of his priestly ministry was the offering of the Gentiles, acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God, to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that *my* offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:15-16 NASB)

It is now the season for us to learn about our priesthood. It is the season for us to begin to function in that priesthood. It is the season of ministering to the Lord.

Our next lesson will look at the process of being consecrated as a priest and the things that can disqualify us as priests.