

A Royal Priesthood

Introduction

It has always been God's intention to have a people who function as His priests. We on the other hand have not understood this. In most ways we don't have a clue about the functions of a priest, especially a New Testament priest. And I don't mean Catholic priests or other denominational priest structures. All of these are based on the Levitical/Aaronic model from the Old Testament, We will see in these studies that the Levitical model has been set aside and another priestly order has been instigated.

In the Old testament, God used three types of people to administrate His relationship with His people.

1. *Priests* served the people by ministering to God on their behalf.
2. *Prophets* spoke the Word of God to the people.
3. *Kings* governed the people according to the will of God.

Under the old administration, the king could not be a priest or perform the functions of a priest. The priest could not be a king. However, either could possibly be a prophet.

There was a change in the way God administrated His people under the New Covenant. Now all things are administered in Him by the Holy Spirit.

He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him (Ephesians 1:9-10 NASB)

The current administration of the purposes of God is suitable to the close the age and the fulfillment of God's intention. Under this administration we can all prophesy one by one by the gift of prophecy given by the Holy Spirit. Now we have become kings and priests to our God.

"You have made them *to be* a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth." (Revelation 5:10 NASB)

Kingdom of Priests

As we have already said, it was always God's intention to have a kingdom of priests. When He brought the children of Israel out from Egypt and carried them to Mt. Sinai, He stated His intention.

'Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a

kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel." (Exodus 19:5-6 NASB)

God had chosen them to be 1) His own possession, 2) a kingdom of priests, 4) a holy nation. This was His intention for the entire race of the children of Israel. However, they failed to meet the conditions, which are also given in these verses, 1) obey His voice and 2) keep His covenant.

When the Israelites were camped at Mt. Sinai, Moses went up the mountain and received the words of the covenant that God was making with them. After coming back down, Moses built an altar at the foot of the mountain and spoke the words to the children of Israel and they responded with acceptance of the covenant.

Then he took the book of the covenant and read *it* in the hearing of the people; and they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!" So Moses took the blood and sprinkled *it* on the people, and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words." (Exodus 24:7-8 NASB)

Later Moses goes up the mountain again and receives from the Lord the tablets of the Law and the instructions for the Tabernacle. Meanwhile, the people became impatient and decided that Moses had abandoned them and made themselves a god in the shape of a golden calf that would take them back to Egypt. They were worshiping their golden calf when Moses came down from the mountain and saw what they were doing. He threw down the tablets of the Law, breaking them as the people had already broken the Law and the covenant that they had accepted.

then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, "Whoever is for the LORD, come to me!" And all the sons of Levi gathered together to him. He said to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Every man *of you* put his sword upon his thigh, and go back and forth from gate to gate in the camp, and kill every man his brother, and every man his friend, and every man his neighbor.'" So the sons of Levi did as Moses instructed, and about three thousand men of the people fell that day. (Exodus 32:26-28 NASB)

Because the tribe of Levi was willing to obey and uphold the holiness and righteousness of God, they became the priests of God.

"Then the priests, the sons of Levi, shall come near, for the LORD your God has chosen them to serve Him and to bless in the name of the LORD; and every dispute and every assault shall be settled by them. (Deuteronomy 21:5 NASB)

The result of the golden calf idolatry was that the nation lost the potential to become a kingdom of priests and only the tribe of Levi became priests. The consequence of the actions of the children of Israel was that they became unable to fulfill the fulness of the purpose of God.

However, it is impossible for man to thwart the purposes of God in any way that would cause His purposes to not be accomplished. All we can do is remove ourselves from participation, which is what happened to the Israelites and His intention to have a kingdom or nation of priests. We find the fulfillment of God's purpose in the New Covenant. Look at how similar Peter's words are to God's intention for the children of Israel.

But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE

FOR *God's* OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY. (1 Peter 2:9-10 NASB)

Peter said that we, under the New Covenant, are chosen as a race (a new race made up of people who are a new creation) to be 1) a people for His own possession, 2) a royal priesthood; that is, a kingdom of priests, and 3) a holy nation. This is the same thing that God told Moses to tell the Israelites at Mt. Sinai.

Therefore, we, under the administration of the New Covenant, have become a royal priesthood—a kingdom of priests and kings. Under this administration we function as king/priests combining the two roles into one that has two distinct areas of functionality.

A Change of Priesthood

Under the Old Covenant all priestly functions were conducted by the Levites and all high priest functions by Aaron and his lineage. Their job was to maintain the things of the Tabernacle, care for the holy things, and administrate the things of the Law.

We know that the Tabernacle and the things of the Tabernacle were a type, a shadow, a copy of the True Tabernacle in the Heavens.

who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned *by God* when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, "SEE," He says, "THAT YOU MAKE all things ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN WHICH WAS SHOWN YOU ON THE MOUNTAIN." (Hebrews 8:5 NASB)

We can also assume that those who serve the copy are themselves a type of those who serve the True. That means that aspects of the Levitical priesthood are a shadow of the true priesthood in Heaven. What is the true priesthood? We can determine that by looking at the High Priest.

For every high priest taken from among men is appointed on behalf of men in things pertaining to God, in order to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins; (Hebrews 5:1 NASB)

The Levitical priesthood had a high priest that was always taken from among men. Even then the high priest was called by God not by man.

And no one takes the honor to himself, but receives it when he is called by God, even as Aaron was. So also Christ did not glorify Himself so as to become a high priest, but He who said to Him, "YOU ARE MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU"; just as He says also in another *passage*, "YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK." (Hebrews 5:4-6 NASB)

However, God made Jesus to be a priest forever according to the priestly order of Melchizedek and then appointed Him to be our High Priest. His primary qualification was that He was God's Son. His other qualifications included prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears, His learning of obedience from the things suffered, and His being made perfect.

In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety. Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation, being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek. (Hebrews 5:7-10 NASB)

The goal of God's purpose is full maturity, perfection. Jesus told us, "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matthew 5:48 NASB) The word translated as "perfect" means the goal, the end, completeness, full grown, the fullness of maturity.

The Levitical priesthood and the administration of the Law is unable to bring people to maturity, to perfection.

Now if perfection was through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people received the Law), what further need was there for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be designated according to the order of Aaron? For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also. For the one concerning whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no one has officiated at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests. (Hebrews 7:11-14 NASB)

Our Lord was NOT from the tribe of Levi; therefore, He was NOT of the Levitical priesthood. He was from Judah, which had no designation of priesthood. Yet He was designated by God a priest after the order of Melchizedek, which priesthood existed before the Levitical priesthood.

And this is clearer still, if another priest arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become such not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life. For it is attested of Him, "YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK." (Hebrews 7:15-17 NASB)

Jesus' qualification as a priest according to the order of Melchizedek is not based on the physical requirements or lineage of the Law as is the Levitical priesthood, but is based on the power of an indestructible life.

For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness (for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God. And inasmuch as *it was* not without an oath (for they indeed became priests without an oath, but He with an oath through the One who said to Him, "THE LORD HAS SWORN AND WILL NOT CHANGE HIS MIND, 'YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER'"); so much the more also Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant. (Hebrews 7:18-22 NASB)

Jesus as our Melchizedek type of High Priest has brought us a better hope through which we draw near to God. He has set aside the former commandment because the Law could not make anything perfect. And He has become our guarantee of a better covenant. Jesus holds this priesthood permanently.

Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; who

does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the *sins* of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, appoints a Son, made perfect forever. (Hebrews 7:25-28 NASB)

The writer of Hebrews then sums up the main point of all that he had said in the chapters previous to this point.

Now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man. (Hebrews 8:1-2 NASB)

Jesus as our High Priest has made offerings and sacrifices for us in the Heavenly Tabernacle.

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. Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are those who offer the gifts according to the Law; who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, ..." (Hebrews 8:3-5 NASB)

Recap

Jesus as a Son who learned obedience has been designated by God as our High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek to serve the True Tabernacle in Heaven. He remains our High Priest permanently and forever. By doing this He invalidated the earthly priesthood by bringing in the heavenly priesthood. He invalidated the Law of commandments by bringing in the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus. And He invalidated the Old Covenant by bringing in a new and better Covenant in His own blood.

The next lesson will look at the Melchizedek priesthood, what it is and how it applies to us.