

**STUDIES IN 1 PETER (11)**  
**A Royal Priesthood**  
**1 Peter 2:4-11 (2)**

In our last lesson, we examined our text and addressed what it means to be a spiritual house. We noted in that lesson that this text has 2 threads going through it – the spiritual house – which is like a spiritual temple, and a royal priesthood. Today we want to address the royal priesthood.

**I. We are a holy priesthood**

- a. What does “the priesthood of all believers” mean? All Christians are priests.
- b. Consider the significance of priesthood in Israel – an exclusive priesthood FOR all the people.
  - i. Sometimes called the Aaronic priesthood – priests were to be of the tribe of Levi, and in particular of the lineage of Aaron, the brother of Moses. They would be assisted by the Levites in administering sacrifices, the law, etc. But the priesthood was very limited.
  - ii. The priesthood addressed the sins of the people with sacrifices – daily, monthly, yearly and at other times.
  - iii. While the priests and Levites were to be honored for their work (and in time they would be neglected), a study of sacrifices shows that it was not glamorous at all. In fact, it involved substantial blood shed – a gruesome job. Why did God demand such sacrifices for sin? Among other reasons, it demonstrates how terrible sin really is to God. To consider what had to be done to atone for sins ought to have left an impression on the people (NOTE: The one guilty of sin had participate by laying his hands on the head of the sacrifice – Leviticus 1:4-5, and he had to put the knife to the throat of the animal. Only then would the priests handle the offering.  
Whenever there was sin, blood HAD TO BE SHED to make atonement (which is why I believe 1) God provided animal skins after the sin of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:21); & 2) God accepted Abel’s offering of the best of his flocks and rejected Cain’s – it was NOT a blood sacrifice (Genesis 4:1-5)).
  - iv. He was also obligated to live a pure and clean life. If he became unclean it affected his ability to serve.
  - v. AND, the priests would also care for the Law of Moses, and aided in teaching it to others (cf. Deuteronomy 33:10, Leviticus 10:8-10, cf. Nehemiah 8:2 & 7-8, etc.). The High priest had the Urim and Thummim which were used to determine right and wrong.
  - vi. These are some of the qualities of the Levitical priesthood.
  - vii. Of course, this priest hood has been done away with – it was replaced with that of Christ, who is our priest according to the order of Melchizedek (Colossians 2:13-14, Hebrews 7 & 8 which addresses the need for a new covenant along with the new priesthood of Jesus).
- c. Our priesthood is different – under the LOM, sacrifices were typically offered for 2 reasons.
  - i. To receive forgiveness - The primary usage was atonement for sins.
  - ii. As a gift of gratitude to God. Some sacrifices were offered simply to give thanks to God.
  - iii. Ironically, we CANNOT offer sacrifice for sins today – it has already been done through Jesus. He became the necessary sacrifice. That is the emphasis of Hebrews 10:11-18.
- d. We are a priesthood of believers –
  - i. In our text we are described as:
    1. “Living stones” together being built into a spiritual house, “**a holy priesthood**” (1 Peter 2:4-5).

2. Then in 1 Peter 2:9 we are described as “**a royal priesthood.**” The word royal associates this with kingship. This is a difference considering the priesthood was of the tribe of Levi while the monarchy was of the tribe of Judah. (We know this applies to our Lord Jesus who was both. Hebrews 7:11-19). Thus our priesthood is after the likeness of Christ.
  3. An interesting observation here is to note that the priesthood is a reference to all of us together. Individually we are priests, but we TOGETHER work as His priesthood. Think about this as we fulfill our priestly roles – sacrificing to God (we help each other in this), teaching others (and one another), helping one another maintain our purity, etc.
- ii. “The priesthood of all believers” historically
1. The development of Catholicism was primarily a corruption of the priesthood of all believers. In the early centuries of the church, the simple autonomous & independent nature of the local church was corrupted. Over a few hundred years, the apostate church began to develop a clergy/laity system (the clergy was a higher, priestly class and the laity was the rest – considered lowly and often inferior). The Catholic priesthood is based upon the Levitical priesthood (without the animal sacrifices).
  2. This was one of the significant catalysts that began the protestant movement. One of the objections Martin Luther, William Tyndale and other reformers had, was concerns with the corruption of the Catholic hierarchy.
  3. As Bibles began to be translated into the common language of the people (Tyndale was one of the early writers of the Bible in English, the first to produce a text from the Greek and Hebrew and paid for it with his life – strangled and burned at the stake in 1536)
  4. It soon became clear that Jesus is our ONLY Mediator between us and God. See 1 Timothy 2:5, Hebrews 9:15, etc.
  5. There was no authority for the Roman Catholic clergy/laity system where the priests are over and control the salvation of the individual (offering the sacraments, etc.).
- iii. Passages such as our text, AND Revelation 1:5-6 bear out how we are all priests. We are a kingdom of priests, with Christ as our High Priest.
- e. As priests we offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God – see 1 Peter 2:5
- i. A word about the meaning of sacrifice. The Greek & Hebrew words for sacrifice is primarily associated “the victim” (Thayer) or that which is offered, primarily an animal. (NOTE: Under the LOM, the “sacrifice” always referred to an animal {Genesis-Deuteronomy}. When the gift was grain or something else, it was referred to as an offering. Remember it was costly and reminded them of how terrible sin really is and how holy God is.
  - ii. Also consider that associated with sacrifice is the idea of a gift (not just something we give up). Do we think in terms of giving or offering something to God? Let that take precedence over thinking about sacrifice as something we give up (which we do).
  - iii. Israel offered animal sacrifices – a bloody mess.
  - iv. We offer SPIRITUAL sacrifices – not the blood sacrifices (that has already been offered by our Lord). In the NT there are different sacrifices we offer. These include:
    1. **Ourselves** – Romans 12:1-2 – we present our bodies a living sacrifice. Remember that “you are not your own” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Our lives are dedicated to Him – Galatians 2:20.
    2. **Praise** – Hebrews 13:15-16. When we worship God, we are offering to Him time and adoration. IS IT OUR BEST????

3. **Doing good for others** – Hebrews 13:15-16. As Christians we are to be caring and willing to share with others (James 1:27, Galatians 6:10). What will we give up to win others to Him?
4. **Supporting the gospel and sharing** – Philippians 4:18 – Paul mentions their support of the gospel was a “sweet smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God”
5. **Our lives if need be** – Paul is an example of this - Philippians 2:17, cf. 2 Timothy 4:6-8. And of course, our Lord is the ultimate sacrifice – Hebrews 9:26, 10:11-12.
- f. As priests, we go directly to God (through Jesus) with our prayers and petitions – James 5:16, 1 John 1:9, Hebrews 4:14-16, etc.
- g. Priests were also administrators of the law – so are we. We are to study for ourselves (2 Timothy 2:15, 1 Peter 3:15)

## II. **We are also (9-10)**

- a. A chosen generation – we have addressed how we are the chosen of God
- b. A royal priesthood – we have addressed this in this lesson
- c. A holy nation – we are a people set apart in service to God
- d. His own special people – the KJV uses the word “peculiar” here – meaning we are distinct. Specifically, the word means that we are God’s possession (we belong to Him). We are proclaiming praises to Him. We will see more about being different as we go through this book.
- e. The people of God – meaning we are His family. However unworthy we are, He has still accepted us and shown us His great mercy (cf. Ephesians 2:4-10).
- f. Each of these points have been or will be further developed in our studies of 1 & 2 Peter.

And thus, we can see our spiritual priesthood in Christ. In a world that is hostile to Christians, we need each other and we need our Lord. And we need to live pure and holy lives – as this is where true faith begins. Are you a faithful priest? Think about it!