

## VI.3. Lambs to Rams: The New Testament Priesthood

Priest; Gk.2409- Thayer: “One who offers sacrifices and in general is busied with sacred rites.” “Metaph. of Christians, because, purified by the blood of Christ and brought into close intercourse with God, they devote their life to Him alone (and to Christ).” Examples of this are found in Rev 1:6; 20:6.

Priests under the O.T. served as mediators between God and the Israelites in worship with the High Priest making atonement in the Most Holy place once each year during the Day of Atonement; which served only as a “shadow of the heavenly things” (*Heb 8:5*) of which Christians serve as mediators between God and man today. We are the ones who are to fulfill the Great Commission (*Mat 28:19-20*) that brings man into a covenant relationship with our Maker. Christ became our High Priest since He offered up His own blood, once for all (*Heb 10:10*), as the final sacrifice for sin (*Heb 9:12; 13:10-12*).

God has had a sacrificial system in place to cover man’s sin from the beginning (*Gen 3:21*) and a priesthood, since possibly Melchisedec (*Heb 7:1*) along with the Israelites, which was known as His “kingdom of priests”\*. So when we come to the New Testament, that priesthood, which was to be “forever” (*Ex 29:9*), continues through “the Israel of God” (*Gal 6:16*), the church **until** Jesus returns to take her home. (*Mat 5:5; 28:19-20*)

\*Exo 19:6 And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of **priests**, and an **holy nation**. These *are* the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. (*Emp. added*)

As the physical/spiritual kingdom of the Lord on earth, the Israelites were to be His priests, meaning they were to worship God according to the Divine pattern. Likewise His priests today are to worship Him according to the New Testament pattern given by revelation from God.

1Pe 2:5 Ye (*Christians*; “*the Israel of God*”- Gal 6:16) also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an **holy priesthood**, to offer up **spiritual sacrifices**, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. (*Emp. added*)

### Access into the priesthood

For Christ to be initiated into the office of High Priest He had to obey the ordinance that commenced that process. Likewise, in order to be priests under Him, the same process must be obeyed by all who wish to be His followers. Christ obeyed the Father by coming in the form of flesh and submitting to the ordinance of baptism (*Mat 3:15*) as man is to obey Christ's ordinance in turn (*Mat 28:19*). “He Who sanctifies (*Christ*) and those who are sanctified (*Christians*, “*sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ*”- 10:10) all have one source” (*flesh and blood, i.e., human nature*) in order to begin their respective ministries. After His baptism, Christ referred to Himself as “the Son of Man” (*Mat 8:20*) and since baptism is to be considered a “*rebirth from above*” (*Jn 3:3*) for mankind, man's obedience to the ordinance gives him “the right to become children of God” (*Jn 1:12*) and thus “He (*Christ*) is not ashamed to call them brothers”.

Under the O.T., birth into the tribe of Levi was a condition that first qualified the Israelite for the priesthood. No other tribe was permitted access to the daily service that the priest was to perform (*2 Chr 26:16-18*). As part of the initiation process a Levite had to be immersed in the laver before donning his priestly garment (*Lev 16:4*). Under the N.T. a “birth” process is necessary in order to enter the priesthood of believers “by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit” (*Titus 3:5*). The same process that initiated a Levite into the priesthood is necessary for the N.T. believer with a different focus though. The Levite was washed “of the filth of the flesh” whereas under the N.T. the same process of immersion produces a “good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (*1 Pet 3:21*).

Joh 3:5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee,

Except a man be born of water and *of* the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Christians, as were the priests of the O.T., are subservient to our High Priest Who is Jesus. The former high priest was the only one who was permitted to enter the Most Holy Place within the tabernacle (*or later the temple*) during the Day of Atonement to make reconciliation for the people. Even though Jesus wasn't born into the tribe of Levi (*He was of the tribe of Judah*) He made atonement for the world by giving His life on the cross (*Heb 7:14*).

Rom 5:11 And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, **by Whom we have now received the atonement.** (*Emp. added*)

Heb 2:17 Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto *His* brethren, that He might **be a merciful and faithful High Priest** in things *pertaining* to God, **to make reconciliation** for the sins of the people. (*Emp. added*)

#### Altar of Burnt Sacrifice/Living Sacrifice

Lev 6:24 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 25 Speak unto Aaron and to his sons, saying, This is the law of the sin offering: In the place where the **burnt offering is killed** shall the **sin offering be killed** before the LORD: it is most holy. 26 The priest that offereth it **for sin** shall eat it: in the Holy Place shall it be eaten, in the court of the tabernacle of the congregation. (*Emp. added*)

As the priesthood under the New Covenant, our sacrifices are not according to the animal sacrifices offered under the Old. Theirs were physical whereas ours are spiritual.

Heb 9:23 *It was* therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the

heavenly things themselves with **better sacrifices** than these. 24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places **made with hands**, *which are the figures of the true (the physical throne room of God on earth)*; but into Heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: 25 Nor yet that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place **every year with blood of others**; 26 For then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world (*Gk.165- age; here Mosaic*) hath He appeared to put away sin by the **sacrifice of Himself**. (*Our High Priest went in to the Most Holy with His own blood.*) 27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: 28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time **without sin unto salvation**. (*Emp. added*)

“So, like all men, He had to die once and face the consequences of sin. Of course, the sin He bore was not His own. "Appointed" means "reserved for," or "laid up." Jesus came as a sin bearer, or sin offering, the first time, but He will not do so the second time.”

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Heb 10:1 For the law having a shadow of good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can **never with those sacrifices** which they offered year by year continually **make the comers thereunto perfect**. 2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had **no more conscience of sins** (*1 Pet 3:21*). 3 But in those *sacrifices there is* a remembrance again *made* of sins every year (*Heb8:12; 10:17*). 4 For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. (*Emp. added*)

1Co 5:7 Purge out therefore the old leaven that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ **our Passover is sacrificed for us**: (*Emp. added*)

Rom 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a **living sacrifice**,

holy, acceptable unto God, *which is your reasonable service (Gk.2999- ministration of God, that is, worship). (Emp. added)*

Just as the Israelites through the Levitical tribe offered up their animal sacrifices under the Old Covenant continually, so we, as New Covenant Israel of God (*Gal 6:16*), offer our sacrifices of praise through Jesus our Lord.

Heb 13:15 By Him therefore let us offer the **sacrifice of praise** to God **continually**, that is, the **fruit of our lips** giving thanks to His name. (*Emp. added*)

Other passages that show the Christian serves in the office of the N.T. priest are the following.

Rom 15:16 That I should be the **minister of Jesus Christ** to the Gentiles, ministering the Gospel of God, that the **offering up** of the Gentiles **might be acceptable, being sanctified** by the Holy Ghost. (*Emp. added*)

Php 2:17 Yea, and if I be **offered upon the sacrifice** and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. (*Emp. added*)

2Ti 4:6 For I am now **ready to be offered**, and the time of my departure is at hand. (*Emp. added*)

Php 4:18 But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things *which were sent* from you, an **odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable**, well pleasing to God. (*Emp. added*)

### Departure into Apostasy

It wasn't long after the death of the apostle John that "Christians found themselves using philosophical terminology to explain Christian concepts. This continued until revealed

truth lost its unique position, and instead of Christianity's being understood and defended upon the basis of miracle, revelation and inspiration, it was watered down with human rationalism". (pg. 107)

"Any departure from such teaching and practice, however, is denominational and cannot be said to be characteristic of the Eternal Kingdom." (pg. 108)

F.W. Mattox: "The Eternal Kingdom- A History of the Church"

This eventually triggered a deep heretical departure from the pattern laid out in the O.T. that was given for the N.T. priesthood to follow (*Heb 8:5*). As elders met, in time there meetings began appointing a chairman and the different terms for the different practices of the same office became titles (*Mat 23:1-12*). Terms such as elder, bishop, presbyter, shepherd, etc., began to become titles in the hierarchy of what eventually became the Roman Catholic Church ("*pope*" is entirely a man-made invention which translated stands for "*father*"- *Mat 23:9*). The "pope" is called the "Vicar of Christ" or an "earthly representative of Christ". He is the head of the Roman Catholic Church, whereas Jesus is the universal Head of His body the church of Christ. No human can claim that title without claiming deity as well and the "pope", as human as he truly is, is not to be deified.

Some say that there was probably "no single 'monarchical' bishop in Rome before the middle of the 2nd century...and likely later."

Cambridge History of Christianity, vol. 1, 2006, Pg. 418

So where is the scriptural example of the succession of the popes to be found that supposedly trace such authority back to Peter as "the first pope"? To prove such the Roman Catholic Church has unsuccessfully attempted to use Matthew's account (*chpt. 16*) where Jesus asked His disciples Who people were saying He was. Peter answered "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (*v. 16*). Jesus responded that it was upon the foundation (*Gk. 4073- a mass of rock*) that He is the Christ, that

His church would be built, and not on Peter (*Gk.4074- a piece of rock*) as the first pope (*Mat 7:24-25*). If Jesus isn't the Christ, the church would have no foundation upon which to stand as the kingdom that would outlast all others (*Dan 2:44-45*). Therefore, all claims to the priesthood in general by the Roman Catholic Church are to be regarded as blasphemous, heretical and void of truth. They do not fit the N.T. pattern as laid out in Holy Writ.

Mat 23:8 But be not ye called Rabbi: for One is your Master, *even* Christ; and all ye are brethren. 9 And call no *man* your (*spiritual*) father upon the earth: for One is your Father, which is in Heaven. 10 Neither be ye called masters: for One is your Master, *even* Christ. 11 But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. 12 And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

### VI.3. Questions

1. Who alone was permitted to enter the Most Holy Place on the Day of Atonement? a) the Pope; b) the high priest; c) the common Levite.
2. What was the first animal sacrifice for sin (*Gen 3:21*)? a) Abel's offering; b) coats of skin Adam and Eve wore; c) those sacrificed by Noah after leaving the ark.
3. How long did God tell Moses and Aaron that the priesthood would last? a) until Aaron died; b) until AD 70; c) forever.
4. Since the Levites were naturally born into the tribe of priests, how is that process fulfilled today? a) immersion; b) sprinkling; c) pouring water over the penitent.
5. If immersion for the Levite was to remove the filth of the flesh, what is its purpose today? a) obtain a good conscience before God; b) to wash away any knowledge of sin; c) neither a nor b.
6. How are Christian concepts explained when revealed truth loses its uniqueness? a) through philosophical terminology; b) through science; c) through spoken tradition.
7. True or false: The apostle Peter was the first pope? a) true; b) false; c) the text does not say.
8. Explain the difference between the Greek word for Peter and the one for rock. a) Peter means a mass of rock where rock implies a pebble; b) Peter's confession was the foundation that made him the first Pope; c) Peter means piece of rock whereas rock denotes a mass of rock.