

Resource:

Nelson Miles, who credited John Miles, Lewis Sperry Chafer, and David Thompson.
Theology 3 - A study of Ecclesiology - The Doctrine of the Church
Frontier School of the Bible.

When you study the doctrine of Ecclesiology, you find that the New Testament give 7 figures of Christ's relationship to His church.

- (#1) The Shepherd and the Sheep - John 10
- (#2) The Vine and the Branches - John 15
- (#3) The Cornerstone and the Stones of the Building - Ephesians 2
- (#4) The Head and the Body with its many members - 1 Corinthians 12
- (#5) The Last Adam and the New Creation - 1 Corinthians 15; 2 Corinthians 5
- (#6) The Bridegroom and the Bride - Revelation 19
- (#7) The High Priest and the Kingdom of Priests - Hebrews 5-8; 1 Peter 2

Jesus Christ is the great High Priest for believers in Him, that is, Christians. That is what the book of Hebrews says consistently (Hebrews 2:17; 3:1; 4:14; 4:15; 6:20; 7:26; 8:1), and keep in mind, that the book of Hebrews is written to believers. If you are a believer in Jesus, the picture is this: He is your great High Priest. He sacrificed Himself on your behalf. His sacrifice provided the forgiveness of your sin.

Now in relationship to Jesus being the High Priest of the believers, what we will learn tonight is this:

ALL BELIEVERS IN THIS CHURCH AGE HAVE BEEN MADE A KINGDOM OF PRIESTS AND HAVE BEEN COMMITTED TO PRIESTLY SERVICE BEFORE GOD AS PRIESTS.

Now you might say, "wait a minute. All believers are priests? You mean to tell me I am a part of a kingdom of priests? As a believer, I am a priest before God? Where does it say that in the Bible?" You may be thinking, "I am only a child, how can I be a priest?" Or, "I am a woman. How can I be a priest?" Well, let me show you what is written in the Bible.

1 Peter 2:9 - *"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."*

If you have believed in Jesus, have you been called out of darkness into his marvelous light? Colossians 1:13 teaches about all who have placed their faith in Jesus.

If you have believed in Jesus, are you included in the people called out for God's own possession? That is what James said in Acts 15:14 about all who have placed faith in Jesus.

If you have believed in Jesus for salvation, are you a part of a chosen race and are you set apart to be included in a holy nation? Paul wrote about that in Ephesians 1:4.

If you have believed in Jesus, are you called to proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you? That is exactly what Paul wrote about in 2 Corinthians 5:20.

So then, if you have believed in Jesus for eternal life, are you included in what Peter calls a royal priesthood? Yes. Why? Because that is what Peter wrote about in the inspired words of 1 Peter 2:9.

We are a royal priesthood. Jesus is our Royal High Priest. We studied last week that Jesus is a King Priest. We are royal priests under Him, our High Priest King. We are, in a sense, priest kings, working under the instruction of Jesus. We may not operate like kings now, but one day we will reign with Christ in the Kingdom age. That is what Revelation 20:6 teaches about believers in the Church Age.

Revelation 20:6 - *"Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years."*

Not only are believers currently a royal priesthood according to the apostle Peter, but also according to John, we will be priests of God in the Kingdom Age.

1 Peter 2:5 - *"you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."*

Revelation 1:6 - starting in verse 5, *"to him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."*

Revelation 5:9-10 - *"And they sang a new song, saying, 'Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.'"*

Priests are called people, chosen by God to do certain acts for God on behalf of other men and to speak to God on behalf of other men. And as New Testament priests, we are called at a particular time into our office, and we are called to render service to God particularly in three different ways.

Time of Calling - Believers are called to be priests by birth.

While the priests of Israel were called to be priests by birth, believers are also called to be priests by birth. There is a difference though in the birth. For Israel, priests were physically born into

their office by being sons of Aaron. For Christians, we are spiritually born into our office at the time of our new birth. We are not born into the royal priesthood physically; we are born into the royal priesthood spiritually.

When one believes in Jesus Christ for salvation, he experiences the new birth, also known as being born from above or being born again. **John 3:3-8**. Jesus spoke about the necessity of a new birth in order to enter the kingdom of heaven. He called this being born of the Spirit. This is a spiritual birth.

Jesus went on to say that this spiritual birth provides eternal life. While physical birth makes one alive for a temporary amount of time, spiritual birth makes one alive for an eternal amount of time. How does one experience the spiritual birth? According to **John 3:16**, a person becomes spiritually alive and is born again by believing in Jesus. That is what Jesus said accomplishes eternal life for a person, and according to **John 1:12**, the moment of belief in Jesus is also the moment one is born into the family of God. That is when a person becomes a child of God. Through belief in Jesus, a person becomes part of the royal family.

A believer in Jesus becomes a royal priest by spiritual birth, which takes place when one puts faith in Jesus for salvation and then becomes a child of God. That is the time of calling to this royal priesthood.

Now as members of this royal priesthood, the New Testament describes 3 functions of service that we have before God. We have 3 service responsibilities as priests.

Service Responsibility #1 - We are to sacrifice our lives to God.

The Old Testament priest was set apart and called to do work of sacrifice. When the priest would offer a sacrifice, he would first offer a sacrifice for himself, then he would offer a sacrifice for other people (Leviticus 16:6).

In this New Testament age of the Church, the priests, who are the believers in Jesus, have been set apart and called first by the sacrifice that Jesus made of Himself for us, and then we have what the Bible calls a "reasonable sacrifice" to make to God. In other words, in light of all that God has done for us in freely giving us, rotten sinners, eternal life, the logical sacrifice we ought to make to God is the sacrifice of our body, our life. This is called a living sacrifice. Let me show you where this sacrifice is found.

Romans 12:1 - *"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."*

Take my life, and let it be
Consecrated, Lord to Thee:
Take my moments, and my days,
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.
Take my hands, and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love
Take my feet and let them be
Swift and beautiful for Thee.
Take my voice, and let me sing
Always, only, for my King;
Take my lips, and let them be
Filled with messages from Thee.
Take my silver and my gold;
Not a mite would I withhold,
Take my intellect, and use
Every power as Thou shalt choose.
Take my will, and make it Thine;
It shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart, it is Thine own:
It shall by Thy royal throne.
Take my love, my Lord, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure store.
Take myself, and I will be
Ever only all for Thee.

"Dr. Chafer points out that at the beginning of his ministry, the Old Testament priest would be ceremonially cleaned by a once-for-all whole bathing (Exodus 29:4). After this, he was required to be cleansed repeatedly by a partial bathing at the brazen laver to be prepared for his daily priestly service. If they overlooked this step there was a big consequence. When believers experience the new birth they are completely cleansed and forgiven. There is never a need for additional "full baths." (John 13:9-10). However, in daily ministry as priests, there is need for cleansing that we receive through confession of sin (1 John 1:9). We cannot be effective priests if we have unconfessed sin in our life." - Mr. Nelson Miles.

Service Responsibility #2 -

We are to worship God with our life and lips.

Like the priests of the Old Testament worshipped God in word and deed, the New Testament explains that believers are to render worship to God in sacrifices of praise with our words and praise with our deeds.

We can offer praise to God as a sacrifice. **Hebrews 13:15; 1 Peter 2:9**

We can offer our finances to the Lord's work as a sacrifice. **Philippians 4:18**

We can share with others and do good as a sacrifice. **Hebrews 13:16**

We can offer our time to study God's Word as a sacrifice. **2 Timothy 2:15**

We can imitate God and walk in love as a sacrifice. **Ephesians 5:1-2**

It is also important that we note that for the Law Age priests, they were warned about false worship, offering strange incense and fire (Exodus 30:9; Leviticus 10:1). It is critical for us Church Age priests to never offer up false worship.

Service Responsibility #3 -

We are to do intercessory prayer to God for others.

While in the Old Testament the prophet is God's representative before man, the Old Testament priest was man's representative before God. The Old Testament priest was not allowed to enter the presence of God whenever he wanted. There was one particular day a year when the high priest could come before God on behalf of the people. That is what the writer of Hebrews explained in **Hebrews 9:7**. There was a major barrier between God and His people in the Old Testament ages. That barrier was physically represented by a thick veil that separated the Holy place from the Holy of Holies. That veil represented a separation between God and man, and man did not have direct access to God. But when Jesus went to that cross and died for our sins, that veil was torn by God from the top down (**Matthew 27:51**). God tore the barrier between Him and man. Because of the cross-work of Jesus, man has direct access to God through faith in Jesus (**Hebrews 10:19-22**). Through faith in Jesus, we have direct and uninterrupted access to God. **Ephesians 2:18-19**

For us who are priests in the Church Age, we can go directly into the presence of God at anytime through prayer, because we have become children of God through faith in Christ. And as priests, it is our responsibility to go into the presence of God and pray for one another. This is the work of intercession. We speak to God on behalf of other men. We can do that whenever we choose, and God wants us to come to Him in prayer.

Ephesians 6:18 Colossians 4:12 1 Timothy 2:1

Nelson Miles wrote, "Individual intercession and group prayer times are God's will, they are powerful, and they are critical. A failure to intercede for each other is a reason so many churches lack power and vitality.

David Thompson said, "N.T. believers who do not intercede and pray for others of their local church are not fulfilling their priestly responsibilities, and they are living in disobedience to the Word and will of God. There is tremendous power when God's people come to a prayer meeting to intercede for one another. Unfortunately, the majority do not take their responsibilities seriously."

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