

A Royal Priesthood

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The church was a mystery to the Old Testament Saints but was made known by Christ to His apostles and to us through them. We are now living in the age of the church which could end at any time. The Lord has commanded us to be looking for and hastening His coming back to rapture His church. As royal priests, we will one day rule and reign with Him in His kingdom. However, until then, we must offer our bodies as a living sacrifice. We must set our affections on things above and not on things of this earth. Our life is hidden in Christ until He calls us up to meet Him in the sky. Then our eternal life will begin to evermore be with Christ!

In the fourth chapter of Revelations, John is called up to Heaven where he is shown things which are to come. The scene he sees in heaven takes place around the throne of God.

Around God's throne, John saw twenty-four smaller thrones and it was revealed to him that those who sat upon those thrones were twenty-four elders and they were all clothed in white, with golden crowns upon their heads. (Revelation 4:4) There is some debate as to who these "elders" are. Some say they are angels while others say they are representative of the church.

Nowhere in the bible are angels **referred to as elders**, but leaders in the church are.

The crowns they wear are "*stéphanos*" and not diadems. In classic Greek, Stephanos is a crown symbolizing victory as in the public games, whereas diadems symbolize sovereignty. So, these elders have been rewarded for victories which they have won.

They are wearing white garments, the same apparel of the saints returning with Christ at the close of the tribulation.

All of this points to the elders as being representatives of the church. Therefore, the rapture of the church precedes the events to take place in the tribulation period.

Furthermore, **the number 24** alludes to the priestly order found in the Old Testament which lends more to the elders being representatives of the church for we, the church, are a kingdom of priest unto the Lord. (see also Rev. 21:12; 21:14 – the gates and foundation stones of the new Jerusalem city)

"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." (1 Peter 2:9)

A Chosen Race.

God is creating a new race of people from among all nations of the world – from among the "whosoever wills" among men. He's not changing our skin color or our outward physical features, but He is changing the inward man through a new birth by the power of God through the Holy Spirit.

In Christ we become a new creation; we are made partakers of His divine nature, and we are born into the family of God, and we are ordained as a royal priesthood. We are a royal priesthood for we belong to the divine creator, and we serve under our chief priest, Jesus Christ who is the king of kings and the Lord of Lords!

Functions Of The Priesthood.

The priests were chosen people among chosen people. They were divinely separated unto the service of God. The old testament priests had no inheritance in the allotting of land among the tribes of Israel. God, Himself was their inheritance.

The same could be said of the church; this world is not our home; our home is eternal with Jesus the Christ, our Lord and redeemer.

"For we have died, and our life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then we also will be revealed with Him in glory." (Colossians 3:3–4)

The priests served in the temple continuously before the presence of the Lord. In Christ, we have been granted access to God whose presence is continually with us and in us through the Holy Spirit!

The priests were mediators between God and the people, and we, the church, are ordained ambassadors of Christ, representing Him before the world.

The whole nation of Israel was to be a kingdom of priests offering up sacrifices and praises to the God of Israel, and we, the church, have been chosen by Him from among the nations of the world to be His holy nation; He has called us out of darkness and placed us into His marvelous light so that we *may proclaim His excellencies*.

We are ordained to speak of the wonderful excellencies of God
That He will be magnified and glorified in us!

Now, in Christ, Peter describes the church “as living stones, being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 2:5, NASB)

Our Spiritual Sacrifices.

Continual praise to God.

“For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come. Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.” (Hebrews 13:14–15, NASB)

Our substance / finances.

Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.
(Luke 6:38, NASB)

Our acts of service.

“And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.”
(Hebrews 13:16, NASB)

Our own body.

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.” (Romans 12:1, NIV)

Casting of Crowns: The scenes of the 24 elders are scenes of worship and adoration. They cast their crowns before God’s throne as they cry out in worship to the Lord!

Stephanos Crowns: the imperishable crown, the crown of rejoicing, the crown of righteousness, the crown of glory, and the crown of life. Are these separate crowns or different facets of the same crown?

One thing is for sure. Jesus Christ is the church’s faithful high priest. He is the lamb of God. He is the king of kings. He will one day soon call up His church, His special race of people, His holy nation, His royal priests, and we will celebrate and worship in His holy presence; casting our crowns at His feet.

“And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. “You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.”” (Revelation 5:9–10, NASB)