

# The Royal Priesthood

**“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. 10. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”**

When it comes to understanding the meaning behind our royal priesthood, we need to understand what the “priesthood” in the Old Testament was in the first place.

## **Priesthood Meaning**

In the Old Testament, God chose the tribe of Levi to serve as the priests in Israel, ministering in the tabernacle and later, the temple. The Book of Numbers tells us the Levites were viewed as belonging to God. They were set apart and considered holy.

**“Behold, I have taken the Levites from among the people of Israel instead of every firstborn who opens the womb among the people of Israel. The Levites shall be mine”**  
**Numbers 3:12 (ESV)**

However, amongst all the Levitical priests an even more anointed role was chosen, the role of the high priest of Israel.

The high priest is the title of the chief religious’ leader of the nation of Israel. He oversaw the responsibilities of all the subordinate priests and lead the nation of Israel according to God’s will and direction.

However, in the New Testament (found in the book of Hebrews) we are told that the Levitical priesthood, which came about under the old covenant made with Moses, has now been done away with.

Now, God has made a new covenant through His Son Jesus Christ. In this new covenant He has raised up a new high priest in Jesus, who is not a priest after the old order of the Levitical priesthood, but after the order of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 7:17 says:

**“For it is witnessed of Him, “You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek”.”**  
**Hebrews 7:17 (ESV)**

Now under the new covenant, Jesus is our forever High Priest and all believers are subordinate priests underneath Him.

1 Peter 2:5 says:

**“You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”**

**1 Peter 2:5 (NIV)**

So now that we've gotten an overview of the meaning of priesthood, let's look at the "royal" part of being a royal priesthood.

One resource I really like for understanding our Royal Priesthood is the book: *The Supernatural Ways of Royalty: Discovering Your Rights and Privileges of Being a Son or Daughter of God* by Bill Johnson and Kris Vallotton.

### **Kingdoms in the Bible**

What we see throughout the story of the Bible is how God goes about reasserting His Rule and Kingdom over the kingdoms of the world.

God does this by singling out one couple in particular, Abraham and Sarah, and promises to make their offspring into a great nation, which we later know becomes the nation, or Kingdom, of Israel.

However, we know through the stories in the Old Testament that the Israelites fail miserably at being faithful to God and end up being captive to numerous evil kingdoms throughout history, namely Babylon, Assyria, and Rome.

However, even though the Israelites failed to remain faithful to God, God remained faithful to them.

In Isaiah we read about how God promises a day when He will save His people and free them from bondage and captivity as their future King ([Isaiah 52:7](#)).

The fulfillment of this promise is what we see in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Jesus came as Israel's promised King who established the Kingdom of God here on earth.

So, Jesus is King, but guess what? You are also royalty.

If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, then you are now sons and daughters of God, heirs of God, and co-heirs with Christ.

**Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory."**

**Romans 8:16-17 (NIV)**

Read More: [What Does It Mean to Be Joint Heirs with Christ?](#) Different teaching

Because Jesus is royalty, you are royalty, too. You are a member of God's royal family.

Jesus is the King of kings and Lord of lords, and because of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross our sins have been removed and we have been restored to our original design as the image bearers of God who are created to rule and reign on God's behalf.

Now that we have a decent summary of the "royal" part of the royal priesthood, what we want to do next is put it all together.

## **You are a Royal Priesthood**

We've covered what it means to be kings (royalty) and priests, but now let's look at what it means to be a royal priesthood.

As believers we are called to be both a king and a priest, just as Jesus is both the King of kings and our forever High Priest.

However, in the Old Testament it's important to note that you could not be both a king and a priest at the same time.

However, the idea of God's people being both a king and a priest was always part of God's plan. Let me explain.

In Acts 15 (which is a retelling of an Old Testament passage, Amos 9:11) God says He will rebuild the Tabernacle of David through the reign of King Jesus.

**“After these things I will return, and I will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen, and I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, So that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, And all the Gentiles who are called by My name.”**

**Acts 15:16-17 (NASB)**

You see, in the Old Testament the lineage of kings and priests looked like this:

- From the tribe of Judah came the kings of Israel
- From the tribe of Levi came the priests of Israel

Wavering from this rule was not allowed under any circumstance, and if a king were to take on the role of a priest, then that king would surely die.

This rule was firm for everyone without exception! At least, anyone except for King David.

David was not from the tribe of Levi; he was from the tribe of *Judah*, which is why he was a king. However, David had a uniqueness around him because unlike the other kings of Israel, David acted as both *a king and a priest*.

While the other kings needed a priest in order to talk to God, David talked to God directly..

This is significant because as already discussed, a king was not allowed to act as a priest. Furthermore, only a person from the tribe of Levi could be a priest and take on the priestly duties.

But in 1 Samuel 30:7 we see David acting as a high priest by putting on the ephod, which was a ceremonial garment worn *only by the high priest* and speaking directly to God.

“Then David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelek, **“Bring me the ephod.”**

Abiathar brought it to him, **and David inquired of the Lord**, “Shall I pursue this raiding party? Will I overtake them?”

1 Samuel 30:7-8 (NIV)

Then in 2 Samuel 6:17 we see David again acting as a priest by sacrificing burnt offerings.

**“They brought the ark of the Lord and set it in its place inside the tent that David had pitched for it, and David sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings before the Lord.”**

## 2 Samuel 6:17 (NIV)

So, what gives? **Why did God not kill David for these acts?**

The reason is because God had given David a revelation of the promised King Jesus who would be both a *king and priest in the order of Melchizedek*.

In fact, it was David who wrote Psalm 110 where he says:

**"The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind: "You are a priest forever [referring to Jesus], in the order of Melchizedek.""**

**Psalm 110:1-4 (NIV)**

**So, who's Melchizedek?**

Well, we're not told a whole lot about Melchizedek except that he was a king, *and also a priest*.

Aha! Now we're getting somewhere.

**Genesis 14:18 says:**

**"And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High."**

Genesis 14:18 (ESV)

But wait, I thought you couldn't be both a king and a priest at the same time in the Old Testament?

That's correct, you couldn't! However, Melchizedek's reign and priesthood was before the time of Moses which was when the Levitical priesthood was established.

So Melchizedek kingship and priesthood actually pre-dated the rules established in the time of Moses regarding priests only coming from the tribe of Levi and kings only coming from the tribe of Judah.

Make sense?

So, what God actually did was show David another priesthood that was different than the Levitical priesthood where you could be both a king and a priest at the same time. God had revealed to David a priesthood that was in the order of Melchizedek, otherwise known as the priesthood of Jesus Christ.

So, what we have here are actually two priesthoods:

1. The Levitical priesthood where you are only a priest (Old Testament)
2. The priesthood of Melchizedek (or better known the priesthood of Jesus Christ), where you are both a king and a priest at the same time (New Testament)

Hebrews 7 says this about the priesthood of Jesus Christ:

**"Another priest [referring to Jesus] arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life.**

**Hebrews 7:15-16 (ESV)**

Note: For more information regarding Jesus being our forever high priest after the order of Melchizedek, **check out Hebrews chapter 7 and 8.** 😊

So, David, knowing his true identity and authority as both a king and priest in the order of Melchizedek, knew that he could rule and reign as king and also enter into the presence of God as a priest.

So, how does all of this apply to us as believers today living out our royal priesthood?

Well, upon the establishment of the church in the book of Acts, Acts chapter 15 declares that the building of the church and the expansion of the Kingdom of God will be done by rebuilding David's tabernacle.

**So, what's David's tabernacle?**

Technically David's tabernacle is no more than a fancy name for the tent he put the Ark of the Covenant in. However, the meaning behind what David's tabernacle represented is significant.

David's tabernacle is a reference to how David renewed the nation of Israel in the worship of Yahweh (God) by his steadfast devotion to the Lord, the establishment of Jerusalem as Israel's capital city, and bringing the Ark of the Covenant back to Jerusalem, which had been lost a generation before.

All-in-all, well done, King David.

However, the most important thing to take note of here is David's tabernacle represents David's kingship where he ruled over Israel as both a king and a priest in the order of Melchizedek.

David's tabernacle was the establishment of a new priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek in anticipation of the future reign of King Jesus as both our King and forever High Priest.

And trivia question, which tabernacle did God declare He would rebuild in Acts 15?

The tabernacle of Moses (representing the Levitical priesthood from the Old Testament) or David's tabernacle (representing our royal priesthood which is available to all believers through the reign of King Jesus)?

That's right, God declared He would rebuild David's tabernacle.

God declared He would expand the Kingdom of God here on earth by rebuilding the tabernacle of David so that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord.

**“After these things I will return, and I will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen, and I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it,  
So that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord,  
And all the Gentiles who are called by My name.”**

**Acts 15:16-17 (NASB)**

So, when 1 Peter says we are a royal priesthood, what that means is we are both a king and a priest at the same time.

We are a king who takes territory and expands the Kingdom of God with authority and influence, and we are a priest who serves God with direct access and fellowship with Him in the throne room of God.

So, if anyone ever asks you what it means to be a royal priesthood, all you have to say is you have access and authority to enter into the presence of God as a priest, and to rule and reign as a king.

Let's recap what it means to be a royal priesthood:

- Believers are called to be both a king and a priest, just as Jesus is both the King of kings and our forever High Priest.
- God said He would rebuild the tabernacle of David (Acts 15:16) where you are both a king and priest in the order of Melchizedek.
- We are a royal priesthood, which means we have direct access and fellowship with God like a priest but are also called to expand the Kingdom of God and influence the world like a king.

#### More Resources to Understanding Your Royal Priesthood

Here are some great books that speak with wisdom on what it means to be a royal priesthood:

- [Supernatural Ways of Royalty by Bill Johnson & Kris Vallotton](#)
- [A Royal Priesthood: Reigning with Christ through Intercession by Dennis Wiedrick](#)
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These books dive deep into what the Bible says about your identity in Christ, and how knowing these truths will quite literally change your life.