

WE ARE PRIESTS OF GOD (HOW WE SERVE)

A. Last week we discussed what a person must be to be a NT priest in the priesthood of God.

1. In this lesson we will discuss how we serve as priests.
2. The word “priest” conjures up images of men in majestic robes performing solemn duties in a religious service; men who rarely soil their hands, & who live in comfortable isolation from everyone.

[The common image of a priest is not the image portrayed for us in the NT among the new priesthood of J. Christ.]

II. SERVING AS A PRIEST

A. Sacrifice To The Lord. The major function of the OT priesthood was to offer gifts & sacrifices to the Lord for the sins of the people (Lev 1-7; Heb 5:1).

1. Today, the sin sacrifice has been made once & for all by Jesus (Heb 9:14, 24-28; 10:4, 10-14), & yet God forgave us in Christ & saved us so that we too can offer sacrifices to God.

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

2. If we’re going to live up to our name as priest, we need to be offering up spiritual sacrifices; spiritual sacrifices are the ones acceptable to God.

- Life Must Be Pure According To God.

1. Before an OT priest could offer a sacrifice in the temple, he first had to wash Himself in the basin (Exo 29:4-9; 30:17-21; 40:12-15).

- a. God was laying down a principle, “I only receive worship from cleansed vessels, & pure people.”

2. Eli the priest had two sons who were also priests named Hophni & Phinehas ([1 Sam 2:12-17; 22-36](#)).

a. Because of the impurity of their lives not only did God reject their sacrifices, but He rejected them, & allowed them to be captured & killed for their offenses against Him.

[**Lesson:** God wants his priests to sacrifice, but the sacrifice must come from a pure heart/life.

Can you imagine one of the OT priests stopping off at a tavern to have a few beers with the guys, or hanging out at a night club on the weekends? Or can you imagine him seeking the forms of entertainment that so enthrall us today?]

- *Actions Must Be True According To God.*

1. The OT priests could not decide what sacrifices would please God; they had to follow His law explicitly & do as He desired.

2. Throughout the centuries people have offered sacrifices to God for which He has not asked:

a. They have flogged themselves, crawled on their knees through glass, burned candles, counted beads, worshipped dead saints, started wars - presented dramas & musical concerts, etc.

b. This is illustrated in a terrifying way by the very first priests ([Lev 10:1-3](#))—Aaron's sons, Nadab & Abihu saw a demonstration of God's glory, & in their excitement they took censers to offer up incense to the Lord. But they *"offered up unauthorized fire before the Lord, contrary to His command."* They were sacrificing, but not according to truth, & as a result they were consumed by fire & died before the Lord.

3. A priest's duty is to offer sacrifices that are in accordance with truth, the word of God, those are the sacrifices that are beautiful to Him.

Here are a few...

1. *Sacrifice Of Praise* ([Heb 13:15](#)).
2. *Sacrifice Of Good Works* ([Heb 13:16](#)).
3. *Sacrifice of Supporting God's Work* ([Phil 4:18](#)).
4. *Sacrifice of Life* ([Rom 12:1-2](#); [2 Tim 4:6-8](#); [Rev 6:9-11](#)).

B. [Speak To The Lord](#). Secondly, Priests were not only to sacrifice to the Lord, they were to speak to Him.

1. The altar of incense stood right before the ark of God & symbolized the prayers ascending to God.
2. Zechariah, the priest was offering prayers at the altar of incense when he learned he would be the father of John ([Luke 1:5-17](#)).
3. The OT Priest's had a special access to God. If a Jew wanted to approach God he had to go through the priest.

4. Today, we do not have to go through any other human being in order to approach God.

Eph 2:18 – For *through Him we* both *have access* by one Spirit *to the Father*. **3:12** – *in whom we have* boldness & *access* with confidence through faith in Him.

1 Tim 2:5 – For there is one God & *one Mediator* between God & men, the Man *Christ Jesus*.

1 John 1:19-21 – *If we confess our sins*, He is faithful & just to forgive us our sins & to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ... & if anyone sins, *we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous*.

5. As NT priests, we have a greater right than did the OT priests; we are invited to come boldly into the very presence of God & bring our petitions to Him ([Heb 4:15-16](#)).

[So then, when you're praying for your family, for this church, for the sick or even for your forgiveness, you are conducting yourself as a priest of God, because priests speak to the Lord on behalf of themselves & others.]

C. Speak To The People. A priest had a third responsibility. Yes, he was to sacrifice to God, & he was to speak to God, but then he was to turn around & speak—speak to the people.

1. Moses commanded the OT priests with these words ([Lev 10:8-11](#)).
 - a. This was a heavy responsibility. Often the priests failed to teach the people the law, & the people began to worship idols.
2. In fact, in the days of king Josiah the Law of God was lost until a priest named Hilkiah found it & read it to the king, & a whole nation was turned back to God ([2 Chron 34](#)).
3. Later after the Babylonian Exile a priest by the name of Ezra turned a dying nation back to the Lord by speaking God's word to the people. He is a great model for us....

Ezra 7:10 – For *Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord*, & to **do** it, & to **teach** statutes & ordinances in Israel

4. Ezra studied to teach God's word, then he practiced what he preached & taught his brethren of Israel to do the same ([Neh 8:1, 5-8](#)).
5. As the Lord's priest, every Christian needs to be teaching the Lord's word to all who would hear.
 - a. When you tell that person at work what the Lord teaches on a subject, you are conducting yourself as a priest of God.
([1 Pet 3:15](#))
 - b. When you mothers (homemakers) teach & show your children what God expects, ...
([1 Tim 2:2](#))
 - c. When you prepare to teach a Bible class, ...
([1 Thess 5:22](#); [1 Pet 2:11](#))
 - d. When you young people tell your friends at school why you won't do certain things, ...

How do we live up to such a high calling? Let me close with an essential attitude of God's priest.]

III. SELFLESS AS PRIESTS

- A. **Inherent in the duties** of a priest is the attitude of selflessness!
1. Priests are set apart to serve, & service requires selflessness!
 2. As priests, our service to the Lord is not about our opinions or our desires, but about our service to others.
 - a. Christians who get this out of order, & make service to God about loyalty to their opinions have lost sight of the true work of a priest.
 3. **When** the OT priests were praying in front of the veil, it was for the people. **When** they were offering their sacrifices it was for the people.
 - a. When priests forgot to serve others they became corrupt & ineffective.

B. **The songs we sing** echo our interests, loyalties, & values (and whether they are for self or for God): is it pop, rock, country, or spiritual (which are we truly interested in singing).

1. This is also true in heaven. What songs are being sung in heaven? Notice the theme song of Heaven's court, which is still being sung today ([Rev 5:9-10](#)).

CLOSING

- A. **If you were asked** by the president to serve your nation in some capacity, would you accept?
- B. **If you were asked** by the mayor of your city to serve your city as its special servant, would you accept?
- C. **God, the Creator**, the One who has offered redemption to you through His Son, is asking you to come to Him & serve Him in this world as His holy priest. Will you accept?

“Speak To The Lord For The People”

GOD’S PLAN FOR OUR SALVATION:

Hear or read the gospel of Jesus Christ: Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2; 3; 13; 17; Rom 10:17

Believe Jesus to be Lord, Christ, Son of God and Savior: Acts 2:36; John 3:16; 8:24; 20:30-31; Acts 4:12; Heb 11:6

Repent and turn from sin: Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30; 1 John 3:4

Confess faith in Jesus Christ: Matt 10:32-33; Acts 8:37; Rom 10:9-10

Be baptized for the forgiveness of sin and salvation: Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Rom 6:3-4; Gal 3:27; 1 Pet 3:21

Obey the word of Christ, He will be your Judge: Titus 2:11-12; Heb 5:9; 2 John 9; Rev 2:10; John 12:48

During the Civil War, a man was sitting on a park bench in Washington, D.C. He was crying. His son had deserted his post in battle & was to be shot by a firing squad. So the father went to Washington hoping to talk to the President & tell his story & see if the President would intervene. But he couldn’t get passed the front gate to the White House. He would go there & be denied access. So he sat crying, fearful about his son’s impending death. Hundreds of people pass him, but no one noticed....

Finally, a small boy noticed him. The boy went up to the man & asked him what was going on. The man was barely able to talk, but told him about his son & what was going to happen. The boy was touched. He said, “Follow me.” He walked up to the front gate, looked up at the soldiers guarding it & said, “It’s okay. He’s with me.” The gate opened. The boy & the man marched right up to the front door of the White House, opened it & walked in. He knew exactly where the President was. He knocked on the door, & he was told the President was in a meeting with his cabinet members & generals discussing war strategy. But the little boy nudged his way through the room full of people, finally reached the President, & jumped up on his lap. The conversation in the room ceased.

The boy said, “Daddy, I want you to meet a man. He needs your help.” The meeting stopped, everyone left the room, & the man was brought into the room so he could tell his story.

After hearing the man’s plight, the President took out his pen & signed a document. He handed it to the man, & written in bold letters it said: “Presidential Pardon. Signed, Abraham Lincoln, President of the U.S.”

The man’s son had been pardoned! His tears of sadness became tears of joy.

As he was leaving he turned to the President & asked, “Why did you do this for me?” Lincoln replied, “I did it because my SON took an interest in your situation!”

Optional Illustration (II. B.)