

## A Royal Priesthood

1 Pet. 2:9

### Introduction:

1. This passage is set in a context contrasting those who believe in Jesus Christ with those who disbelieve.
2. Those who disbelieve have rejected the chief corner stone of God's spiritual house (2:5).
3. Those who accept Him, 2:5 says, are "living stones being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices."
4. What does it mean to be a holy priesthood and a royal priesthood? What are these spiritual sacrifices that we are to offer up?

### Discussion:

- I. This N.T. concept of priesthood finds its type/anti-type correspondence in the priesthood of the O.T.
  - A. We are most familiar with this correspondence through what is said in the book of Hebrews about the Levitical priesthood and the priesthood of Christ, but this is not our focus in this lesson.
  - B. The focus in 1 Pet. 2 is on the correspondence between Israel as a kingdom of priests and believers as a kingdom of priests.
    1. In Ex. 19:6 God said to Israel, "You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."
    2. This found expression in the Levitical priesthood.
  - C. The work of priests is identified in Deut. 33:8-10.
    1. They were to minister at the altar, burn the sacrifices and teach the law.
    2. Their task is further elaborated upon.
      - a. Aaron was to "teach the sons of Israel all the statutes which the Lord had spoken through Moses" (Lev. 10:11).
      - b. Israel was supposed to "diligently observe and do all that the Levitical priests taught" (Deut. 24:8). They did not teach their own thinking, but what the Lord had commanded through Moses.
      - c. Of the tribe of Levi it was said, "They shall teach Your ordinances to Jacob, and Your law to Israel. They shall put incense before You and whole burnt offerings on Your altar" (Deut. 33:10).
      - d. The role of the priest paralleled that of the prophet (Hos. 4:1-6). When the priesthood failed Israel failed (Hos. 4:7-10). This is made clearer still in Mal. 2:4-9 in the contrast between Levi and the priests of Malachi's day.
      - e. Priests were not just offering sacrifices and performing services in the temple. They were teaching, and corruption in teaching resulted in corruption in the people.

3. Defilement rendered priests unfit for service (Lev. 21 and 22). Priests need to keep themselves pure (Cf. 1 Pet. 2:11-12).
- D. Israel as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex. 19:3-6) had been called out from all the people. They were separated apart and so God came to live among them as represented in the tabernacle and the temple (Ex. 25-31, 35-40).
- E. Like Israel we are called out from all the people (1 Pet. 2:9-10). We are separated apart to God. He lives in us and we proclaim His excellencies.

II. Peter identifies believers as a “**royal** priesthood.”

- A. Being a “**royal** priesthood” ties in with being a “**kingdom** of priests.” Cf. Rev. 1:6.
  1. We do not often think of ourselves as royalty. We may see ourselves as citizens in the kingdom. But not as royalty.
  2. But believers are spoken of as reigning with our King (Cf. Dan. 7:18, 27; Rev. 11:15; 2 Tim. 2:12). But before we focus too much on our status, understand that this royalty involves service, submission and suffering (Rev. 1:5-6; 1 Pet. 2:13-5:11).
  3. In our communication of His will and in our own submission to it we reign with Him.
- B. This may give us insight into Jesus’ prayer in Matt. 6:10: “Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”
  1. Often interpreted in light of Acts 2 and the manifestation of the kingdom there. Correct, but if we discourage praying for the kingdom to come, we may be missing the point.
  2. It comes as God’s will is done on earth as it is in heaven. The priesthood advances the kingdom through its work of teaching.
  3. Note what Paul says in Rom. 15:16: He refers to himself as “ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable.”
    - a. As a priest he teaches the gospel.
    - b. The Gentiles hear and respond in faith. They are his priestly offering.
  4. Zacharias prayed for the accomplishment of God’s purpose (Lk. 1:13-17, 68-79). Priests we tasked with burning incense before the Lord (Deut. 33:10). The burning of incense was associated with prayer (Psa. 141:2; Rev. 5:8; 8:3-4).

III. We are to offer up spiritual sacrifices. What are these sacrifices?

- A. Paul sees those taught as an offering (Rom. 15:16). See II.B.3 above.
- B. Heb. 13:15-16 speaks of our offering up a sacrifice of praise, lips that give thanks to His name, of doing good and sharing, “for with such sacrifices God is pleased.”

- C. Rom. 12:1 speaks of presenting our bodies as a living and holy sacrifice. Chapters 12 and following identify the behaviors associated with this.

Conclusion:

1. First, as a kingdom of priests we ought to receive the communication given by the King. This is where those of Malachi's day failed. "You have turned aside from the way; you have caused many to stumble by the instruction; you have corrupted the covenant of Levi" (2:8).
2. Second, as a holy priesthood we should keep ourselves pure, separated apart to God. Defilement rendered priests unfit for service (Lev. 21-22; 1 Pet. 2:11-12).
3. Third, as priests true instruction should be in our mouths. We should preserve knowledge and act as the messengers of the Lord of hosts (Mal. 2:6-7).
4. Fourth, like Zacharias our prayers should be for the accomplishment of God's purpose in our generation.
5. Fifth, we should offer up spiritual sacrifices.
  - a. Those that we teach.
  - b. Sacrifices of praise.
  - c. Lips that give thanks.
  - d. Do good and share.
  - e. Abide by the ethical standards of truth, justice and holiness that characterize our God.
6. We are a royal priesthood. We reign through the instruction given by the King.