

Omega: BIB 109
1st Peter – Always Be Prepared
Lesson 8

1. A Holy Priesthood

→ Based upon culture and the current state of affairs, what's the very first thing you think of when you hear this word: Priest?

- The concept of the Priest has been co-opted by the Catholic Church and other denominational entities.

- This may be a common understanding in our society, but the first thing that should come to your mind when you hear the word Priest is... Me. If you are a Christian, YOU are a priest!

- When you emerged from the waters of baptism, you became a member of a royal priesthood which is spoken of by the Apostle Peter...

1st Peter 2:5,9

5 You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ...

9 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."

A. The Old Testament Priesthood

1. When Peter says we are priests, the only kind of priests he would be thinking about were those of the OT.

2. These consisted of Aaron (Moses' brother) and all his made descendants (Exod. 28:1).

3. What were some of the duties of a priest in the OT?

A. Read Section – Page 145 – in Studies in 1st Peter – Cottrell

4. The burnt offering is a pleasing aroma to the Lord. "Thus the priest shall make atonement for him, and he will be forgiven" (Lev. 4:31).

A. Just by offering the sacrifices, the priests served as mediators between God and sinners, bringing sinners back into fellowship with God. This was the main task. (Hebrews 5:1)

5. Does this help us to understand the nature of our job as a priest? Yes, but we are just getting started. This is only where we Christian priests must begin in our quest to understand our job as priests. The crucial pattern for our priesthood is the following.

B. The Messianic Priesthood: The Priesthood of Jesus

1. Jesus is a priest. This is one of his three "offices" or messianic tasks, the other two being prophet and king.

2. Psalm 110:4 prophesies of Jesus: "The LORD has sworn al will not change His mind, 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.'" (Hebrews 5:6)

3. One of our old hymns says it this way:

Praise Him, praise Him – Jesus our blessed Redeemer!
Heavenly portals loud with hosannas ring.
Jesus, Savior, reigneth forever and ever!
Crown, Crown Him – Prophet, Priest, and King!
Christ is coming, over the world victorious,
Power and glory unto the Lord belong.
Praise Him, praise Him! Tell of His excellent greatness!
Praise Him, praise Him, ever in joyful song!

4. Jesus is not just a priest; He is a high priest. (Hebrews 2:17 & 4:14)

A. The book of Hebrews contrasts Jesus' priesthood with the temporary OT priesthood, the latter being inferior to Christ's marvelous role of High Priest.

1. Hebrews 10:4,11... The OT sacrifices did not literally take away sin and its guilt.

2. The OT priesthood was inferior because it was physical only. The OT sacrifices sanctified only on the level of the flesh. (Hebrews 9:13)

3. It was only symbolic of the real thing. The OT priesthood pointed ahead to Jesus Christ. (Hebrews 10:1)

5. Jesus came to be the one true priest for all mankind, to offer a sacrifice that could truly restore all sinners to God on the spiritual level.

A. Jesus was the sacrifice himself, his own body. He was both priest and sacrifice. (Hebrews 7:27 and 10:10)

6. He offered the sacrifice of his own life on the cross. The cross was the doorway to the heavenly temple. (Hebrews 9:25-26 and 10:12)

7. When Jesus arose from the dead and ascended into the heavenly throne-room (the heavenly temple), he was presenting his own blood on the heavenly altar. (Hebrews 9:24 and 9:11-12 and 10:12)

8. What was the purpose of Jesus' sacrifice? Like the OT priests before Him, He offered the sacrifice to restore sinners into fellowship with God. But He did so not just symbolically, but in reality.

A. The ONE sacrifice for ALL sin for ALL time had already been made, and its blood of atonement has already been applied to the heavenly altar. Christ our High Priest is still there at that altar, seated at God's right hand for us, interceding for us as our one and only High Priest and Mediator. (1st Timothy 2:5)

C. The Christian Priesthood

1. What does all this have to do with our identity as priests?

A. It shows us exactly what our job is in this role. We ARE priests. This is simply a fact. (Rev. 1:6 & 5:10 & 20:6)

2. Like the OT priest and Jesus our Great High Priest, our job is to offer sacrifices. (1st Peter 2:5 and Romans 12:1)

3. Our priesthood is somewhat different, though. Contrary to both the OT priesthood and Jesus' priesthood, we offer LIVING sacrifices.

A. Also, contrary to the OT priesthood, every Christian is a priest. (This is also contrary to the concept of priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church, and even contrary to much Protestantism, which in practice see the "clergy" as a special class of Christians, so designated by special titles such as reverend and pastor.)

4. The main point of our priesthood is this: we offer our sacrifices to God as priests for the very same reason and purpose that OT priests offered lambs and goats, and for the very same general reason and purpose that Jesus offered Himself: TO BRING SINNERS INTO A RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.

5. This means that our sacrifices are not an end in themselves, but are a means to an end. Nor are the sacrifices for our own benefit.

A. We offer sacrifices for the purpose of breaking down the barriers that separate sinners from God, and of leading them into a state of reconciliation and peace with God.

B. There is a word for this: EVANGELISM. "Every Christian is a priest" can actually be equated with "Every Christian is an evangelist."

C. Many will immediately say, "I can't do this!" But we can – and we must!

D. Our next lesson will show how each of us can offer up sacrifices that will bring others to God.¹

¹ Entire Lesson pulled from: Studies in 1st Peter – Dr. Jack Cottrell.