

The Old and New Testament Churches

The Priests of the Old Testament Church

The Levites were chosen by God to be the priests. (Numbers 1:50) But thou shalt appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of testimony, and over all the vessels thereof, and over all things that *belong* to it: they shall bear the tabernacle, and all the vessels thereof; and they shall minister unto it, and shall encamp round about the tabernacle.

The kings came from the tribe of Judah. The only royal priest of the Old Testament was Melchizedek. (Genesis 14:18) And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he *was* the priest of the most high God.

The priests were consecrated to God and received special garments. They were separated for the purpose of representing and serving a holy God. (Exodus 29:4-11) And Aaron and his sons thou shalt bring unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shalt wash them with water. (5) And thou shalt take the garments, and put upon Aaron the coat, and the robe of the ephod, and the ephod, and the breastplate, and gird him with the curious girdle of the ephod: (6) And thou shalt put the mitre upon his head, and put the holy crown upon the mitre. (7) Then shalt thou take the anointing oil, and pour *it* upon his head, and anoint him. (8) And thou shalt bring his sons, and put coats upon them. (9) And thou shalt gird them with girdles, Aaron and his sons, and put the bonnets on them: and the priest's office shall be theirs for a perpetual statute: and thou shalt consecrate Aaron and his sons. (10) And thou shalt cause a bullock to be brought before the tabernacle of the congregation: and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands upon the head of the bullock. (11) And thou shalt kill the bullock before the LORD, *by* the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

The priest's main responsibility was to offer the blood sacrifices to the Lord on the behalf of the people. Therefore, the priests in the Old Testament were a mediator between God and the people. Their responsibility was to reconcile the people to God. (Leviticus 16:15) Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that *is* for the people, and bring his blood within the vail, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat.

Only the High Priest had access into the Holy of Holies where there was access to God Himself. (Leviticus 16:2) And the LORD said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy *place* within the vail before the mercy seat, which *is* upon the ark; that he die not: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat.

The Church Service of the Old Testament

Before daybreak, the priests on duty assembled to cast lots to decide the assignment of the various daily tasks. Then they fill the lavers and prepare the altar. At 9:00 am, they opened the gates and blew the silver trumpets to announce the beginning of the morning service. The service included slaying the sacrificial lamb, salting the sacrifice, trimming the lampstand, burning the incense, presenting the burnt offering and drink offering, blessing the people and blasting the silver trumpets. This was followed by the Psalm of the day, presented by the singers, accompanied by instrumental music. After the morning service, the people would bring in their private sacrifices and offerings. This would continue until 2:30 pm, the time for the evening sacrifice. The evening service was similar to the morning service and ended at about 4:00 pm. On a Sabbath day, there were the weekly renewal of the showbread and an additional burnt offering of two lambs.

A summary of the service:

- The priests fill the lavers, prepare the daily bread, prepare and offer the sacrifices.
- The priests open the service by leading in prayer and blessing the people.
- The singers and musicians lead in worship.
- The priests open the altar for the people to bring their sacrifices. This is a very important part of the service because this is the place where people repent, offer their sacrifices, and are reconciled to God.

A Better Covenant

In the New Testament, everything is better, the ministry, the sacrifice, everything. (Hebrews 7:19, 22) *For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God. (22) By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.*

(Hebrews 8:6) *But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.*

The Kings and Priests of New Testament Church

Jesus Christ took the role of the ultimate mediator.

(1 Timothy 2:5) *For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*

Jesus took the role of the ultimate High Priest.

(Hebrews 6:19-20) *Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; (20) Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.*

(Hebrews 9:11-12) *But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; (12) Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.*

In the New Testament the whole church has been chosen to be a royal and holy priesthood.

(1 Peter 2:5) *Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*

(1 Peter 2:9) *But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.*

We are royal because the King of kings adopted us.

(Romans 8:15-17) *For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. (16) The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: (17) And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*

(Revelation 5:9-10) *And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; (10) And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.*

The consecration of the Old Testament priests took place by means of: #1 a sacrificial sin offering, #2 a ritual washing, #3 the receiving of special garments, #4 the anointing oil was poured on them, #5 the sprinkling with blood. In the same way, the

New Testament believer is consecrated to the Lord to live a life that is holy and acceptable to the Lord.

1. We received the sacrificial sin offering. (Hebrews 9:14) How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?
2. Our washing is in the waters of baptism. (Acts 2:38) Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.
3. Our new robes are the robes of righteousness that is found in Christ. (Romans 6:4) Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.
4. We received the anointing oil when we received the baptism of the Holy Ghost. (1 John 2:27) But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.
5. Daily we receive the sprinkling of the blood of Christ as we daily live for Him. (1 Peter 1:2) Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

The Sacrifices of the New Testament

In the Old Testament the priest were the mediator between God and the sinner as the priest offered the blood sacrifices to God on the behalf of the people. In the New Testament, the blood of Christ is the only sin sacrifice, Hebrews 9:12. As New Testament believers, we are all ordained by God to offer spiritual sacrifices:

1. Spiritual sacrifices, (1 Peter 2:5) Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.
2. Ourselves as living sacrifices, (Romans 12:1) I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service.
3. Sacrifice of service, (Philippians 2:17) Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.
4. Sacrifice of praise, (Hebrews 13:15) By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of *our* lips giving thanks to his name.

As Christians we express our identity as a 'kingdom of priests' and as 'a royal priesthood' whenever we offer ourselves to God for his service.

As prayer and worship was a priestly activity, all believers in the New Testament have this same ministry. The priests of the Old Testament offered incense during the time of prayer. The incense is a symbol of prayer. In the New Testament, the prayers of the believers are the sweet smelling incense that goes up before God.

(Psalm 141:2) Let my prayer be set forth before thee *as* incense; *and* the lifting up of my hands *as* the evening sacrifice.

(Revelation 5:8) And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four *and* twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.

As financial giving was a priestly activity in the Old Testament, it also is in the New Testament. As Christians we express our identity as a 'kingdom of priests' and as 'a royal priesthood' whenever we give of our finance or possessions out of a genuine love for God. We do not leave giving to the pastors only; it is the responsibility and privilege of every believer. By defining financial giving as 'a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God' Paul identifies it as a priestly activity. (Philippians 4:18) *But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.*

Access into the Holy of Holies

In the Old Testament, only the High Priest had access into the Holy of Holies, which symbolized the presence of God. Even then this access was only once a year, and under strict conditions. In the New Testament every believer has confident and constant access into the very presence of God.

(Ephesians 2:6) *And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*

(Colossians 3:1) *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.*

(Hebrews 4:15-16) *For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*

(16) *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

(Hebrews 10:19-22) *Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, (20) By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; (21) And having an high priest over the house of God; (22) Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.*

Every Member Has a Responsibility

The church is made up of many members, but one body. In the body every member has a responsibility.

(Romans 12:3-8) *For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. (4) For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: (5) So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. (6) Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; (7) Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; (8) Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.*

(1 Corinthians 12:7) *But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.*

(1 Corinthians 12:11) *But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.*

(1 Corinthians 12:18) *But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.*

(1 Corinthians 12:28) *And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily*

prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

(Ephesians 4:7) But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

(Ephesians 4:11-12) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; (12) For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. God has placed the five-fold ministry in the church for the building of the church. These ministries have a special calling by God, qualifications, and a training period.

It was the responsibility of the priests in the Old Testament to intercede for the people. This ministry is carried over to all believers in the New Testament.

(Romans 8:26) Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

(Ephesians 6:18) Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.

In the Old Testament, the priests by offering sacrifices worked to establish reconciliation between sinners and the Holy God. In the New Testament the blood of Christ reconciles us, then the whole church receives the ministry of reconciliation as we speak the Gospel of Christ to others. (2 Corinthians 5:18-20) And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; (19) To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. (20) Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us: we pray *you* in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

As New Testament believers, we all have the responsibility to go and speak this gospel to those around us; this is the ministry of reconciliation. As New Testament believers we all receive power from God to pray for, and minister to the world. (Mark 16:15-20) And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. (16) He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. (17) And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; (18) They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. (19) So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. (20) And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with *them*, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

The New Testament Church Service

First we will take a look into the Old Testament service again, and then compare it to the New Testament service.

A summary of the Old Testament service:

- The priests fill the lavers, prepare the daily bread, prepare and offer the sacrifices.
- The priests open the service by leading in prayer and blessing the people.
- The singers and musicians lead in worship.
- The priests open the altar for the people to bring their sacrifices. This is a very important part of the service because this is the place where people repent, offer their sacrifices, and are reconciled to God.

The New Testament Service

- The pastor will see to it that the baptistery is filled and ready for use. The pastor also makes ready the bread of God for the congregation; this is the Word of God, the sermon that is preached to the congregation.
- The pastor will lead in the opening prayer.
- The music leader will lead in worship.
- The pastor will minister in the Word of God to build and edify the congregation.
- The pastor opens the altar service where people come to repent, be prayed for healing, deliverance, and other needs. Here people are baptized as they repent and surrender their lives to Jesus. The altar service is a very important part of the service because this is the place where people are reconciled to God and make life-changing decisions.

Summery of Some Main Points

A summery of the things that all believers can be a part of:

- Access into the presence of God.
- Offer the sacrifices of prayer, praise, and worship.
- Offer ourselves as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God.
- Offer ourselves as a sacrifice for service to the Lord.
- Intercede for people.
- Be a part of the ministry of reconciliation as we teach, preach, and testify to others.

A summery of our consecration to God

- We received the sacrificial sin offering.
- Our washing is in the waters of baptism.
- Our new robes are the robes of righteousness that is found in Christ.
- We received the anointing oil when we received the baptism of the Holy Ghost.
- Daily we receive the sprinkling of the blood of Christ as we daily live for Him.

Looking at the New Testament Church, where do you see yourself?

Where would you like to be spiritually one year from now?

What steps should you take to get there?

Remember, all believers have a place in the church.

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