

Priests Before God

Much misconception of priest and their roles, not just animal sacrifices or chanting and hocus pocus.

Priest - A priest is one who is:

- 1.) Called by God to His Service,
and is thus duly authorized to
- 2.) offer acceptable sacrifices, and
- 3.) act as a mediator between God and man.

I. Priests in the Time of the Patriarchs

These are the days when God spoke directly to men, most often to the heads of families and told them what was required of them

A. Called By God To His Service

Abraham received a direct call from God to offer sacrifices.

Gen. 22:1,2,9,13 “Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."

2 And He said, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah; and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.

9 Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there, and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar on top of the wood.

13 “Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind *him* a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son.”

Melchizedek was a priest of God and King of Salem.

Gen. 14:18 “ And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High.”

He was not part of an order of priests, but made a priest by God.

Heb. 7:1-3 “For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham as he was returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him,

2 to whom also Abraham apportioned a tenth part of all *the spoils*, was first of all, by the translation of *his name*, king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem, which is king of peace.

3 Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, he abides a priest perpetually.”

B. Offered Acceptable Sacrifices

Abel offered acceptable sacrifices.

Gen. 4:4,5 “And Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering;

5 but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell.”

This was done by faith.

Heb. 11:4 “By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.”

Noah offered acceptable sacrifices.

Gen. 8:20,21 “Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

21 And the LORD smelled the soothing aroma; and the LORD said to Himself, "I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done.”

Abraham's willingness to offer Isaac and the offering of the ram was accepted.

Gen. 22:15-18 "Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven,
16 and said, "By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son,
17 indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies.
18 And in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

C. Act As Mediator Between God And Man

Job offered sacrifices and prayers for his children.

Job 1:5 "And it came about, when the days of feasting had completed their cycle, that Job would send and consecrate them, rising up early in the morning and offering burnt offerings *according to* the number of them all; for Job said, "Perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." Thus Job did continually."

Job's petitions were needed for his unfaithful friends.

Job 42:7,8 "And it came about after the LORD had spoken these words to Job, that the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends, because you have not spoken of Me what is right as My servant Job has.
8 Now therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, and go to My servant Job, and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves, and My servant Job will pray for you. For I will accept him so that I may not do with you *according to your* folly, because you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has."

It seems that in these days any man could serve a priest who would follow God.

This was not their occupation: they were kings, shepherds, etc. but a role which they had due to faithful service to God.

II. Pagan Priests

These have been active from the first departure to other gods until the present day. The height of it in the western world was 2 or 3 centuries before Christ.

This was a degeneration of Patriarchal Priesthood, or else they would not have gotten anything right.

A. Not Called By God To His Service

They did not even know the true God any longer

Rom. 1:24,25 "Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, that their bodies might be dishonored among them.

25 For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.:

Paul had to stop the priest of from offering sacrifices to Him.

Acts 14:8-18 "And at Lystra there was sitting a certain man, without strength in his feet, lame from his mother's womb, who had never walked.

9 This man was listening to Paul as he spoke, who, when he had fixed his gaze upon him, and had seen that he had faith to be made well,

10 said with a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet." And he leaped up and *began* to walk.

11 And when the multitudes saw what Paul had done, they raised their voice, saying in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have become like men and have come down to us."

12 And they *began* calling Barnabas, Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker.

13 And the priest of Zeus, whose *temple* was just outside the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds.

14 But when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of it, they tore their robes and rushed out into the crowd, crying out

15 and saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you in order that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, WHO MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM.

- 16** And in the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways;
17 and yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness."
18 And *even* saying these things, they with difficulty restrained the crowds from offering sacrifice to them."

B. Did Not Offer Acceptable Sacrifices

Elijah and the prophets of Baal, Worship to Baal not accepted.

- 1 Kings 18:20-38** "So Ahab sent *a message* among all the sons of Israel, and brought the prophets together at Mount Carmel.
21 And Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long *will* you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people did not answer him a word.
22 Then Elijah said to the people, "I alone am left a prophet of the LORD, but Baal's prophets are 450 men.
23 Now let them give us two oxen; and let them choose one ox for themselves and cut it up, and place it on the wood, but put no fire *under it*; and I will prepare the other ox, and lay it on the wood, and I will not put a fire *under it*.
24 Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD, and the God who answers by fire, He is God." And all the people answered and said, "That is a good idea."
25 So Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "Choose one ox for yourselves and prepare it first for you are many, and call on the name of your god, but put no fire *under it*."
26 Then they took the ox which was given them and they prepared it and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon saying, "O Baal, answer us." But there was no voice and no one answered. And they leaped about the altar which they made.
27 And it came about at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, "Call out with a loud voice, for he is a god; either he is occupied or gone aside, or is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and needs to be awakened."
28 So they cried with a loud voice and cut themselves according to their custom with swords and lances until the blood gushed out on them.
29 And it came about when midday was past, that they raved until the time of the offering of the *evening* sacrifice; but there was no voice, no one answered, and no one paid attention.
30 Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come near to me." So all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD which had been torn down.
31 And Elijah took twelve stones according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, "Israel shall be your name."
32 So with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD, and he made a trench around the altar, large enough to hold two measures of seed.
33 Then he arranged the wood and cut the ox in pieces and laid *it* on the wood. And he said, "Fill four pitchers with water and pour *it* on the burnt offering and on the wood."
34 And he said, "Do it a second time," and they did it a second time. And he said, "Do it a third time," and they did it a third time.
35 And the water flowed around the altar, and he also filled the trench with water.
36 Then it came about at the time of the offering of the *evening* sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, "O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, today let it be known that Thou art God in Israel, and that I am Thy servant, and that I have done all these things at Thy word.
37 Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that Thou, O LORD, art God, and *that* Thou hast turned their heart back again."
38 Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.
39 And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The LORD, He is God; the LORD, He is God."
40 Then Elijah said to them, "Seize the prophets of Baal; do not let one of them escape." So they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there."

Many offered their children.

- 2 Kings 3:26,27** "When the king of Moab saw that the battle was too fierce for him, he took with him 700 men who drew swords, to break through to the king of Edom; but they could not.
27 Then he took his oldest son who was to reign in his place, and offered him as a burnt offering on the

wall. And there came great wrath against Israel, and they departed from him and returned to their own land.”
Deut. 12:31 “You shall not behave thus toward the LORD your God, for every abominable act which the LORD hates they have done for their gods; for they even burn their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods.”

C. Tried to Act as a Mediator Between God and Man

But they could not do it, and the pagans were still under condemnation, **Rom. 1**.

Just about anyone could set themselves up as one of these priests, but none were pleasing to God.

Being a priest often was their livelihood, but they really should have been doing something else.

III. Priests under the Law of Moses

A. Called By God To His Service

Aaron and his family chosen as priests.

Ex. 28:1 “Then bring near to yourself Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the sons of Israel, to minister as priest to Me--Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons.”

Aaron called by God.

Heb. 5:4 “And no one takes the honor to himself, but *receives it* when he is called by God, even as Aaron was.”

Levites appointed to God's service.

Numb. 1:50 “But you shall appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of the testimony, and over all its furnishings and over all that belongs to it. They shall carry the tabernacle and all its furnishings, and they shall take care of it; they shall also camp around the tabernacle.”

B. Could Offer Acceptable Sacrifices

Fire from the Lord came and consumed the sacrifice, showing its acceptance.

Lev. 9:7,22-24 “Moses then said to Aaron, “Come near to the altar and offer your sin offering and your burnt offering, that you may make atonement for yourself and for the people; then make the offering for the people, that you may make atonement for them, just as the LORD has commanded.”

22 “Then Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people and blessed them, and he stepped down after making the sin offering and the burnt offering and the peace offerings.

23 And Moses and Aaron went into the tent of meeting. When they came out and blessed the people, the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people.

24 Then fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the portions of fat on the altar; and when all the people saw *it*, they shouted and fell on their faces.”

Not all that they did was acceptable however.

Lev. 10:1,2 “Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them.

2 And fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD.”

The could offer acceptably only what the Lord told them to do.

C. Acted As Mediator Between God And Man

He made offerings for the people after (vs. **8**) he made offering for himself.

Lev. 9:15-18 “Then he presented the people's offering, and took the goat of the sin offering which was for the people, and slaughtered it and offered it for sin, like the first.

16 He also presented the burnt offering, and offered it according to the ordinance.

17 Next he presented the grain offering, and filled his hand with some of it and offered *it* up in smoke on the altar, besides the burnt offering of the morning.

18 Then he slaughtered the ox and the ram, the sacrifice of peace offerings which was for the people; and Aaron's sons handed the blood to him and he sprinkled it around on the altar.”

He also blessed the people for the Lord.

Numb. 6:22-27 “Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

23 Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, 'Thus you shall bless the sons of Israel. You shall say to them:

24 The LORD bless you, and keep you;

25 The LORD make His face shine on you, And be gracious to you;

26 The LORD lift up His countenance on you, And give you peace.'

27 So they shall invoke My name on the sons of Israel, and I then will bless them.”

Only those of tribe of Levi could serve as Priest, descendant of Aaron as High Priest.

This was their primary livelihood and they held the Office of Priest.

IV. Christ The Great High Priest

A. Called By God To His Service

Christ was a priest according to the order of Melchizedek by the will of God

Heb. 5:4-10 “And no one takes the honor to himself, but *receives it* when he is called by God, even as Aaron was.

5 So also Christ did not glorify Himself so as to become a high priest, but He who said to Him, "THOU ART MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN THEE";

6 just as He says also in another *passage*, "THOU ART A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK."

7 In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety.

8 Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.

9 And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation,

10 being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.”

Prophesied that this would be.

Ps. 110:4 “The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind, "Thou art a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek.””

Christ was of Judah and could not be a priest under the Law, but was under this order.

B. Offered Acceptable Sacrifice

The only One who ever offered Himself.

Jesus came and laid down His life for us.

Jn. 10:17,18 “For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again.

18 No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father.”

He offered a sacrifice for our sins and is now a great and merciful high priest.

Heb. 2:14-18 “Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil;

15 and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

16 For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham.

17 Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

18 For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.”

He made a perfect sacrifice.

Heb. 7:26,27 “For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens;

27 who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins, and then for the *sins* of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.”

Heb. 10 Speaks at great length about His sacrifice.

Blood of Bulls and Goats could not take away sins

4 “For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.”

His was the perfect sacrifice.

10 “By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”

14 “For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.”

18 “Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer *any* offering for sin.”

His blood, which he offered, is the perfect sacrifice.

20-22 “by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh,

21 and since *we have* a great priest over the house of God,

22 let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled *clean* from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”

C. Acts As Mediator Between God And Man

Our High Priest helps us, so we can have confidence.

Heb. 4:14-16 “Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are*, yet without sin.

16 Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.”

Christ Mediates for us.

1 Jn. 2:1 “My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous

1 Tim. 2:5,6 “For there is one God, *and* one mediator also between God and men, *the* man Christ Jesus, **6** who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony *borne* at the proper time.”

Only the one who fulfilled the prophecies and could offer the perfect sacrifice could be the Great High Priest

He is our great intercessor.

Isa. 53:12 “Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, And He will divide the booty with the strong; Because He poured out Himself to death, And was numbered with the transgressors; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, And interceded for the transgressors.”

Rom. 8:34 “who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.”

Heb. 7:25 “Hence, also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them”

V. We Are Priests Today - Through Christ

A. We're Our Own Priests

Many religious leaders today claim to be priest for their followers, but that is not what the N.T. teaches.

We no longer need a special class to approach God for us, we can do it ourselves under this law of grace

Heb. 10:19,20 “Since therefore, brethren, we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, **20** by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh”

We can go to the Holy Place - spiritually, through prayer through Christ.

There are several offices in the church today.

Eph. 4:11,12 “And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers,

12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ”

But there is no office of priests.

But there are priests of God today on earth: You and Me (but not special class)

Isaiah prophesied that this day would come.

Isa. 61:6 “But you will be called the priests of the LORD; You will be spoken of *as* ministers of our God. You will eat the wealth of nations, And in their riches you will boast.”

We have direct access to God, we can address him as Father.

1 Pet. 1:14-19 “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts *which were yours* in your ignorance,

15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all *your* behavior;

16 because it is written, “YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.”

17 And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay *upon earth*;

18 knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers,

19 but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood of Christ.*”

We are a kingdom of priests.

Rev. 1:5b-6 “To Him who loves us, and released us from our sins by His blood,

6 and He has made us *to be* a kingdom, priests to His God and Father; to Him *be* the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

Built into a house of priests for God

1 Pet. 2:4,5,9 “And coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected by men, but choice and precious in the sight of God,

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*, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light”

The N.T. teaches the “priesthood of all believers”

B. Called By God To His Service

The Lord shall call those who will receive the blessings

Acts 2:39 ““For the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself.”

The call has gone forth to all through the gospel.

2 Thess. 2:13,14 “But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.

14 And it was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

C. Can Offer Acceptable Sacrifices

We are to living, holy sacrifices to God, this is acceptable to Him.

Rom. 12:1 “I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship.”

Praise, good deeds and sharing acceptable sacrifices to God.

Heb. 13:15,16 “ Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.

16 And do not neglect doing good and sharing; for with such sacrifices God is pleased.”

Helping in spread of the Gospel acceptable worship and sacrifice to God.

Phil 4:15-18 “And you yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone;

16 for even in Thessalonica you sent *a gift* more than once for my needs.

17 Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account.

18 But I have received everything in full, and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from

Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.”

D. May Act As Mediator Between God And Man

On our own we have no standing to plead before God.

1 Sam. 2:25 “If one man sins against another, God will mediate for him; but if a man sins against the LORD, who can intercede for him?” But they would not listen to the voice of their father, for the LORD desired to put them to death.”

But because we our His adopted children, we are promised the privilege of access through prayer.

1 Pet. 3:12 “FOR THE EYES OF THE LORD ARE UPON THE RIGHTEOUS, AND HIS EARS ATTEND TO THEIR PRAYER, BUT THE FACE OF THE LORD IS AGAINST THOSE WHO DO EVIL.”

We do some mediation as brethren, friends and concerned companions. In and by Christ, we are given the assurance that our prayers help others.

1.) For Ourselves

We pray to God on our own behalf.

Acts 8:22-24 “Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you.

23 For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity.”

24 But Simon answered and said, "Pray to the Lord for me yourselves, so that nothing of what you have said may come upon me.”

Simon as the apostles to pray for him too. And so we should.

2.) For Others

1 Tim. 2:1 “First of all, then, I urge that entreaties *and* prayers, petitions [intercessions] *and* thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men”

Pray for each other that you may be healed

Jas. 5:16 “Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.”

Our prayers will help each other

1 Jn. 5:16 “If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not *leading* to death, he shall ask and *God* will for him give life to those who commit sin not *leading* to death. There is a sin *leading* to death; I do not say that he should make request for this.”

1 Thess. 5:25 Paul commanded “Brethren, pray for us.”

This is just like Jeremiah constantly did, until due to the people’s evil, he was told to stop.

Jer 7:16 “As for you, do not pray for this people, and do not lift up cry or prayer for them, and do not intercede with Me; for I do not hear you.”

Today all who heed Gods call and offer acceptable sacrifices through Christ can serve as priest
Not an office of Priest, or our livelihood, but one of our spiritual benefits in Christ

So today we are a kingdom of priests through Christ our great High Priest.

We should live as priest - called by, and dedicated to God, Continually offering acceptable worship, and Petitioning God on behalf of ourselves and other men.