

# THE HOLY AND ROYAL PRIESTHOOD

## 1PET.2:4-9

Ed Dye

### I. INTRODUCTION

1. The plan of our study shall be to first identify the body of people referred to by the terms – the holy and royal priesthood – who or what organization is referred to and who or what is not.
2. When this is done, we shall, by the terms used to identify these people, see that they are in a special sense the people of God, and that the verses applied to them as the holy and royal priesthood, ***emphasize the worship and service*** they are to render to God as his people who make up “the house of God, which is the church of the living God” (1Tim.3:14,15), the “spiritual house” (1Pet.2:5), the “holy temple in the Lord, an habitation of God” (Eph.2:21,22).
3. Then we shall examine in outline form the various passages which refer to the holy and royal priesthood, and to the individual Christians as priests in their sacrifices and service as priests of God through Jesus Christ.

### II. DISCUSSION

#### A. DEFINITION OF TERMS AND A BRIEF EXEGESIS OF 1PET.2,5,9, THUS IDENTIFYING THE “HOLY” AND “ROYAL PRIESTHOOD”.

1. Defining the term “priesthood” involves understanding the definition of “hood”.
  - a. Reader’s Digest – Oxford Complete Wordfinder: “A suffix forming nouns, indicating a collection or group (sisterhood, brotherhood, priesthood).”
  - b. Web. Unabridged Dict.: “A suffix denoting (a) state...as childhood, fatherhood, priesthood, (b) collectively, a body or organization; as, brotherhood. It is equivalent to *-head* in such words as *Godhead*.”
2. W. E. Vine, III, 212, HIERATEUMA, “denotes a priesthood, a body of priests, consisting of all believers, the whole church (not a special order from among them) called ‘a holy priesthood,’ in 1Pet.2:5; ‘a royal priesthood,’ v.9; the former term is associated with offering spiritual sacrifices, the latter with the royal dignity of shewing forth the Lord’s excellencies...”
3. Thayer, 298: “the order or body of priests...so Christians are called, because they have access to God and offer not external but ‘spiritual’ sacrifices...”
4. Therefore, in 1Pet.2:5,9, the church collectively is called a “holy priesthood” and a “royal priesthood”.

5. Of course, if the collectivity is a “priesthood” or a “hood of priests”, then the individual members of the “hood” are “priests”.
6. Furthermore the ASV in Rev.1:6 says they are “made to be a kingdom, to be priests unto his God and Father,” and in Rev.5:10, says he “madest them to be unto God a kingdom and priests,” and 20:6 says, “they shall be priests of God and of Christ.”
  - a. Of course, Christians are nowhere said to be kings.
  - b. But collectively, they are a kingdom. And they are a “kingdom of priests”.
7. Priests – all priests, from the High Priest to ordinary priests – are ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices (Heb.8:3); wherefore, it is of necessity that Christians, who are priests in the service of God through Jesus Christ, have something to offer.
8. Jesus Christ, our High Priest of the N.T., offered the one perfect, ever-present, ever-effective sacrifice in its atoning virtue and cleansing power; through that one sacrifice the priests of the spiritual house, the spiritual temple, the habitation of God, offer up sacrifices acceptable to God, which are comprehended under two major headings: praise and obedience in service to God and man!
9. Don’t be misled into believing that offering a sacrifice to God means suffering the loss of something dear and precious and very costly to the one offering the sacrifice.
  - a. Sacrifice primarily denotes the act of offering; then, objectively, that which is offered.
  - b. In Phil.2:17 it is even said of one’s faith: “Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith.” (KJV)
  - c. Goodspeed: “Even if my life is to be poured out as a libation as you offer your faith in a service of sacrifice to God.”

**B. N.T. PASSAGES EMPHASIZING AND REVEALING THE LIFE AND THE SACRIFICES OF THE PRIESTS OF THIS PRIESTHOOD ACCEPTABLE TO GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.**

1. 1Pet.2:4-9: Christians as the spiritual house, the temple of the Lord, the habitation of God.
  - a. They are the material of the true and spiritual temple.
    - (1) They are built in and upon the divinely chosen Corner-stone, Jesus Christ himself, v.6. Cf. 1Cor.3:11.
    - (2) They are, individually, living stones, built up a spiritual house, an holy temple of the Lord, and habitation of God, v.5. Cf. Eph.2:21,22.
  - b. They are the priesthood of the true and spiritual temple.

- (1) This is affirmed of the whole body of the faithful, the chosen of God, and precious, as lively (living) stones, vv.4,5.
  - (2) The character of this priesthood is stamped as “holy”.
  - (3) The office of this priesthood is specified: spiritual sacrifices are to be offered.
    - (a) Though not specified here, other N.T. passages leave us in no doubt as to what they are.
    - (b) They are comprehended under two headings: praise and obedience, which we shall notice as those passages are discussed.
  - (4) The acceptance of such spiritual sacrifices is assured through the intercession of Jesus Christ, our high priest.
  - c. The blessed obligation of this chosen generation, this royal priesthood, this holy nation, this peculiar (purchased) people: “That (in order that) ye should show forth (proclaim, publish abroad, give wide publicity to) the praises (virtues, excellencies and gracious dealings) of God” exhibited in his great scheme of human redemption, v.9.
    - (1) This is the purpose, design or end to which you have been chosen made priests and purchased,
    - (2) Of course, this can only be done through our priestly function of a life of continual sacrifice and service acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.
2. Heb.13:15,16 is another N.T. text emphasizing and revealing the life and sacrifices of believers who are priests.
- a. The ones who are to offer these sacrifices: “Let us offer...” – Christians.
  - b. The One to whom these sacrifices are to be offered: “To God.” Cf. Mt.4:10.
  - c. The nature and kinds or classes of the sacrifices which are required of Christians, which are twofold:
    - (1) There is to be the sacrifice of prayer and praise to God – the fruit of our life which make a confession of thanks to his name.
      - (a) These sacrifices are not expiatory or atoning, but eucharistic – praise and thanksgiving.
      - (b) The great atoning sacrifice in all its perfection has been offered. To it nothing can be added.
      - (c) But we should continually praise and confess the name of God, and gratefully acknowledge his great goodness to us, and celebrate his infinite perfection.

- (2) There is to be the sacrifice of beneficence to man: “to do good and communicate forget not”
    - (3) “For with such sacrifices God is well pleased.” Cf. 1Tim.6:17-19; Heb.6:10.
  - d. The medium through which these sacrifices are to be offered.
    - (1) “By him therefore let us offer...” or “through him let us offer...” i.e., through the mediation of Jesus Christ.
    - (2) Through no other or no other medium can they be offered and accepted. Cf. Ac.4:11,12; Jno.14:6.
  - e. The time when these sacrifices should be offered.
    - (1) The sacrifices to God should be offered “continually” – it’s a life-long occupation and obligation.
      - (a) It’s a daily sacrifice, an abiding disposition of the soul.
      - (b) It must not be an occasional exercise.
    - (2) The sacrifice of beneficence to men should be offered according to opportunity and ability.
  - f. The favor with which these sacrifices are regarded by God.
    - (1) With them God is “well pleased”.
    - (2) He not only accepts them, but is gratified by them.
    - (3) He regards such acts as done to him, Mt.25:40.
    - (4) Not even the least of them escapes his notice, or will fail of his reward, Mt.10:40; Heb.6:10.
- 3. Rom.12:1, the Christian’s living sacrifice in worship of and service to God through Jesus Christ.
  - a. Consider the motive the apostle urges in order to induce the sacrifice required.
    - (1) “I beseech you therefore...by the mercies of God”
      - (a) He entreats or appeals by the loving kindness of God.
      - (b) He, no doubt, includes in this God’s spiritual favors bestowed upon them mentioned earlier in the epistle.
  - b. Consider what he enjoins us to present to God and how this presentation is regarded.
    - (1) “Present your bodies a living sacrifice to God”
      - (a) It is a living sacrifice, not the bodies of brute animals, not the blood of bulls and goats, but our bodies – our very bodies – gratefully and willingly laid as a sacrifice upon the altar to God.
      - (b) Our bodies presented as a sacrifice and service to God, replete with life and energy to God’s will. Cf. Rom.6; 2Cor.6:17-7:1.

- (2) A living sacrifice means a constant, continuous sacrifice.
  - (a) Not just an occasional dedication of one's body.
  - (b) Not for today, then take it back into one's own hands to do his own thing tomorrow and the next day.
  - (c) It means to keep on living for God on a daily basis. Cf. 1Th.5:17.
- (3) A living sacrifice means a sacrifice of one's body wherever the body is.
  - (a) A particular or some certain place is not required for this.
  - (b) It's to be done at home, abroad, on the job, on vacation, at a neighbor's house, facing the enemy in the battle for souls, both your own and others.
- (4) A living sacrifice means one lives for God by faithfully serving God in harmony with his revealed will, and at all times sacrificing one's own fleshly, selfish desires in the interest of serving God's holy requirements whatever they are.
  - (a) God's will comes first with him. Cf. Mt.6:33.
  - (b) Such an one does not pollute, dirty, nor contaminate one's self with the sins and corruptions of this world: neither the lust of the flesh, nor the lust of the eyes, nor the pride of life. Cf. 1Jno.2:15-17; Jas.4:4.
- (5) Presenting our bodies a living sacrifice to God means total dedication to the worship and service of God and his Son Jesus Christ
  - (a) Anything less than total devotion to God is short of God's glory, which is sin.
  - (b) It demands dedication of our bodies, our very lives, body and soul. This dedication:
    - (1) Is not to be made to self: living as one wishes; doing one's own thing. Cf. Mt.16:24-26; Lk.6:46.
    - (2) Is not to be made to others: living for family, wife, husband, children, parents; or for friends, or employer. Cf. Mt.10:37-39; Lk.14:36,37.
    - (3) It is not to be to something else: material things, houses, lands, money, cars, profession, recreation, luxury or beds of ivory, power, recognition, fame, or retirement.
- (6) Such living sacrifices are holy and spiritual in character.
  - (a) Even the animals offered under the O.T. law were to be "without blemish."

- (b) A sprinkled body is not sufficient; a pure heart and a contrite spirit are required.
  - (c) When it meets these conditions it is a sacrifice “acceptable unto God,” and carries God’s blessings to the offerer.
- C. This sacrifice is represented as your “reasonable service” (KJV), “spiritual service” (ASV).
- (1) Though the body is said to be offered, its presentation is the expression of inner spiritual worship and service; it’s from the heart or the soul or spirit of man.
  - (2) It’s not merely mechanical or formal.
  - (3) It’s not substitutionary, nor representative, but personal.
  - (4) It’s a sacrifice of our feelings and our affections for a loving God.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

1. The holy, royal priesthood is made up of priests of God, who offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, and of beneficence to men according to opportunity and ability.
2. “A holy priesthood” is associated with offering “spiritual sacrifice” to God.
3. “A royal priesthood” is associated both with offering “spiritual sacrifice” and with the “royal dignity” of doing so.
4. They, as priests of God, do it gratefully and willingly, imitating the perfect example of Jesus the High Priest, who willingly gave himself as the one perfect, ever-present, ever-effective sacrifice in its atoning virtue and cleansing power, through whom they serve God.
5. To identify the holy and royal priesthood and to emphasize the worship and service – the sacrifices – to be offered by the individuals of that priesthood, we cited and examined 1Pet.2:4-9; Heb13:15,16; Rom.12:1.
6. Basically, the nature, kinds and classes of sacrifices required are two-fold.
  - a. There is to be the sacrifice of prayer and praise to God, with all that entails.
  - b. There is to be the sacrifice of beneficence to men, with all that includes.