

A Future Journey with Christ

A Priesthood of Believers

Rev. 1:4-6

INTRODUCTION:

We are continuing a voyage through the book of Revelation. My intent is to go through the book with broad strokes and try not to get bogged down in too much detail in the text. If we get too bogged down with too many details we are likely to miss the larger picture. We will not be able to see the forest for the trees. However, occasionally we will hit a passage of scripture that we must take the time to understand because it is critical in our Christian life.

What is the reason that we read the Bible and come to church? Is it not that we are trying to determine from the scriptures the purpose for our life? Is it not to remember what Christ has done for us? Is it not that we want to know what God expects from us in order to truly be one of His children? Our faith **MUST** be more than just head knowledge or it is not faith! We must not only **know** what God expects from us, but we must be willing to put that knowledge into **action**.

All Stand and Read Scripture

Revelation 1:4-6 (NASB)

⁴ John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. (Give glory) **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.**

Prayer

Last week we read this same passage and showed how John unveiled God, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus Christ. But we only briefly commented on the second half of verse 5 and verse 6 which describes what our response should be for what God has done for us.

(Give glory) **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.**

Who is a PRIEST here this morning?

Whenever the word priest is used it is almost always associated with the Roman Catholic priest. Most of us see in our minds a man dressed in black having a white collar around his neck.

It is not only the pastors or leaders who are priests. You are NOT just a child of God, but a priest! Every single person who has been saved through Jesus Christ is a priest – man and woman. There is no division or exclusion, if you are saved this morning, then you are a priest in the kingdom of God.

BODY:

I. GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE.

In order to fully understand this priesthood this morning, we have to go back to the Old Testament. The Old Testament is a shadow of the New Testament.

The Jews were God's chosen people. The Israelites had to offer sacrifices to God every year in order for their sins to be forgiven. They did not have direct access to God. It was the responsibility of priests to go on their behalf and carry out spiritual tasks in the Holy Place. They did this as representatives for all the people.

Most of the things spoken about in the New Testament bear reference to things that happened in the Old. We see an example of this in our scripture this morning.

Verse 6. "He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father."

He has made us to be priests! We were promised that in the Old Testament. Exodus 19:3-6.

Exodus 19:3-6 (NASB)

³ Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel: ⁴ 'You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, **and how I bore you on eagles' wings**, (Rev. 12) and brought you to Myself. ⁵ Now then, **IF** you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; ⁶ and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel."

God told the Israelites that "**IF** you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples,"

It is important to understand how God called Israel to be His people and how they failed to fulfill that calling. As the seed of Abraham, the children of Israel were chosen by God to be a separate people, holy to the Lord. Instead, the Israelites chased foreign gods and failed to obey God. But God Who knew they would do this, had already promised to restore His kingdom to Israel after they rebelled and then eventually repented. So God sent His Son, preceded by John the Baptist, to invite Israel to repent.

Matthew 3:1-10 (NASB)

³ Now in those days John the Baptist *came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, ² "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." ³ For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said,

“THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, ‘MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT!’”

⁴ Now John himself had a garment of camel’s hair and a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵ Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea and all the district around the Jordan; ⁶ and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins.

⁷ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸ Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance; ⁹ and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham for our father’; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham. ¹⁰ The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

When Jesus revealed Himself as the promised Messiah who would restore Israel, He was rejected by the Jews, exactly as Isaiah had prophesied. Jesus therefore called His disciples to fulfill Abraham’s commission to bless the nations by preaching the gospel of the Kingdom to all nations.

Matthew 28:18-20 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

¹⁸ And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

II. THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE.

Jesus came to fulfill all that was written in the Law and the Prophets. He accomplishes what the Law required.

Matthew 5:17-18 (NASB)

¹⁷ “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. ¹⁸ For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

Jesus came to this earth and led a sinless life. He became our ultimate and final sacrifice by dying on the cross for our sins. Annual animal sacrifices were no longer needed.

1 Peter 3:18 (NASB)

¹⁸ For Christ also died for sins once for all, *the just for the unjust*, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;

Matthew tells us that when Jesus died the veil in the temple split from top to bottom.

Matthew 27:50-51a (NASB)

⁵⁰ And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. ⁵¹ And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom;

The veil in the temple was a constant reminder that sin kept mankind unfit for the presence of God. The fact that the sin offering was offered annually and countless other sacrifices repeated daily showed graphically that sin could not truly be atoned for or

erased by mere animal sacrifices. Jesus Christ, through His death, has removed the barriers between God and man.

Above all, the tearing of the veil at the moment of Jesus' death dramatically symbolized that His sacrifice, the shedding of His own blood, was a sufficient atonement for sins. It signified that now the way into the Holy of Holies was open for all people, for all time, both Jew and Gentile.

III. THE FULFILLED ISRAEL.

Since Israel repeatedly worshiped idols and did not obey God the promise was given to the church.

What does I Peter call us?

1 Peter 2:9-10 (NASB)

⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation (Exodus 19:6), 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; ¹⁰ for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

What is this saying? If John says that through the work of Jesus, He has made us a kingdom and priests, what is He saying? We are the fulfillment of the promise in Exodus 19:3-6! We are that fulfillment.

People will say "This is replacement theology! You are replacing Israel with the church."

No we're not! We are NOT replacing. Now Israel and the church are the same. Because we have kept the promised heritage alive that they have abandoned. So the title does not go with them. The title, by definition, is the people of God. The Jews are not anymore. Why? Because Jesus bought us with His blood. He came to establish a kingdom. And when He left, it was called the church. He got twelve disciples, not because He could not find the thirteenth, and not because he had eleven and saw another person straggling along and chose him also, but because He was establishing a new Israel. Not new in the sense of brand new created out of nothing, but new in the sense that they are continuing what the Jews have abandoned. This is fulfillment theology, not replacement theology.

Thus the Jews today are a mission field that the church needs to reach. Because they are lost without Jesus. Because circumcision of the foreskin means nothing. It is circumcision of the heart through the Holy Spirit that defines you as a part of the people of God. Because Jesus could create out of the rock, children of Abraham. So your heritage means nothing to Me. Because at the foot of the cross there is neither Jew or Greek, male or female, slave nor free.

Do you see what is happening here?

This whole notion of honoring this nation that was fabricated in 1948 through the genocide of the Palestinians is not God's chosen people. The church is! If they want to become a part of God's chosen people they need not rely on their genealogy, but rely on Jesus. It is called conversion.

Romans 9:6-8 (NASB)

⁶ But *it is* not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are *descended* from Israel; ⁷ nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "through Isaac your descendants will be named." ⁸ That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.

This is very clear in Romans 9 where Paul says you are a child of God if you belong to Jesus. **Not** if you are circumcised and your mommy and daddy happen to be born of the right people. IT IS CALLED BEING **BORN AGAIN!**

This is not just a random thought that you see in Revelation 1:6 and following. This is the message of the New Testament.

Galatians 3:23-29 (NASB)

²³ But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. ²⁴ Therefore the Law has become our tutor *to lead us* to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. ²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. ²⁶ For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

Who are we? We are fulfilled Israel. Jews are still Jews. Gentiles are still Gentiles. Men and women are still men and women. What Christ abolished is any distinction to such differences. Everyone who comes to Christ must come the same way through faith and submission. Therefore I can claim as my forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Not because I can trace my genealogy to them, **but because I have been drafted into the tree!**

Romans 11:17-21 (NASB)

¹⁷ But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree, ¹⁸ do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, *remember that* it is not you who supports the root, but the root *supports* you. ¹⁹ You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." ²⁰ Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; ²¹ for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either.

That is why in Revelation 2: 9 and Revelation 3:9 when He is talking about the Jews that are persecuting the Christians, he says they are Jews who are claiming to be Christian, but are not.

How can you claim to be Jew, but not really be one? You can claim through circumcision and genealogy. But the reality is that you have no Spirit. You do not have the Spirit of God if you have not submitted to Jesus.

Therefore we are doing the nation of Israel a disservice by telling them that they have a "Get Out of Jail Free" card because they were born of the right people. Because when they face God in judgment, they may not be too happy with what we have told them. What did Romans 11:19 say? "**They were broken off for their unbelief.**"

CONCLUSION:

God has done His part to offer a path to salvation and eternal life with Him. So as a Priest of His kingdom, what does God expect from us?

1 Peter 2:1-5 (NASB)

2 Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, ² like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, ³ if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

⁴ And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is 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.

The Old Testament priests offered animal sacrifices for forgiveness of sin. These are no longer required since Jesus was the final Lamb offered for sin. But as priests in God's kingdom, the **sacrifice we offer to God** is that of ourselves.

Romans 12:1-2 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

12 Therefore I urge you, 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*. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

How are you serving Christ? As a priest are you offering prayers for your family and friends and the nation, or are you just praying for yourself. As a priest are you sharing your faith with others, to reveal Christ to them.

Jesus Christ is the only sinless person, and that sinlessness is given to us when we repent and are washed in the blood of the lamb. Then your sins are forgiven and you receive the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. God will see you as a perfect person because of Jesus.

Revelation 1:5b-6 (NASB)

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.

He is Lord!