

Priest

In the past few blogs, we have looked at what a Christian is. We have seen how a disciple learns about God and His Son. Learning brings about belief in Jesus and His Father. As belief grows strong and becomes a fervent faith, obedience takes place, and a saint rises from the waters of baptism. The one who obeys has done what is necessary to be chosen, elected, by God as His child and added to God's family. As in all families, there is work to do. Peter suggests the work as He wrote: *"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"* (1 Peter 2:9).

The Law through Moses defined the Levitical priesthood, led by the High Priest, with many priests, each having assigned duties. We read of these duties in portions of Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy. Although the Law of Moses provided atonement for the people, it was deficient and intended to be a shadow of the future and final Priesthood of Christ. The Hebrew writer mentions the fact that the Law did not remove the debt of sin (Hebrews 10:4). He earlier cited the need for a replacement this way. *"Now if perfection was through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people received the Law), what further need was there for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be designated according to the order of Aaron?"* (Hebrews 7:11).

(Hebrews 7:12) reminds us that with a change of Priesthood, there must be a change of Law. (Hebrews 7:24) concludes that since the High Priest, Jesus the Christ, lasts forever, His Priesthood and Law will also last forever. As the Levitical Priesthood had priests to do the work, there are priests to do the work in the Priesthood of Christ. *"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"* (1 Peter 2:5).

The Levitical Priesthood offered physical animal sacrifices on a regular, perpetual, schedule. The priests today offer spiritual sacrifices beginning with self. *"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. 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"* (Romans 12:1-2). Paul commends those of Macedonia because "they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God" (2 Corinthians 8:5).

Continuing in Romans 12:4-8, Paul talks about the work of new priesthood and says, *"...Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness."* Referring again to Peter, the last part of (1 Peter 2:9) gives the primary mission of members of the church as Priests. *"So that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."* Can you see that God has created a Priesthood by Jesus Christ to praise and glorify God and spread the gospel of Christ to the world?

In writing to the church in Corinth, Paul says, *"Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body"* (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). When we put the

temple and priesthood together and compare them to the Law of Moses, a better understanding of our duties emerges. Since our High Priest, Jesus, completed all sacrifices with His pure sacrifice, they are gone. But the responsibility to pray instead of burn incense (1 Thessalonians 5:17), to give up worldly things we find precious instead of animal sacrifice (Matthew 19:21), and spread the light of the gospel instead of keeping the candles burning (Matthew 5:16), are all ours to do.

Christ gave the task of making disciples, believers, and saints to His priests before His ascension as He spoke to His chosen disciples, and it is applicable to us as well. *"And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20).*

Are you a faithful priest of Christ?