



Are You A Priest?

(And are you living in your full inheritance?)

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Preface

This booklet is written to help those who have a desire to follow the Lord Jesus Christ in a spiritual, scriptural, and practical manner. The purpose of this treatise is to show that priesthood is a gift from God, given to every true believer. Every believer is called to exercise his priesthood as long as he remains on earth.

Primarily, priesthood is a ministry to God; service to man is secondary to a Christian's ministry unto God. It is the desire and work of the Spirit of God to show the Christian the high place of his calling (Ephesians 1:17-19).

'Christ in you' (Colossians 1:27) is what enables the Christian to fulfill his high calling. The Christian's activity in this high calling is to exercise his faith, through priesthood. The gift and understanding of priesthood is one of the most important revelations the believer receives from the New Testament. Ministry to God is the highest calling a Christian can have in this life.

Man's religious systems stand in stark contrast to the inheritance of priesthood given to every Christian. These systems are built on the clergy/laity tradition. In John Alyto's book "Dictionary of Word Origins," is found the genesis of the word clergy. He states that it comes from the Greek word kleros. This word was originally applied to the Levitical Priesthood, and its meaning is 'inheritance or lot.'

In the New Testament it is used in connection with every Christian's identity in Christ. This means that every Christian has the birthright of kleros. Laity is the other side of the clergy/laity system. The English word 'Laity,' is derived from the Greek word 'Laos'. Laos has always meant the common people outside the kingdom of Christ. The implications of these truths will be revealed further in this booklet.

I. WHO IS A PRIEST?

The question, "who is a priest," is a valid question in view of the claims and the practices by the majority of the people in Christendom (professing Christianity) today. As we seek to find the answer to this question, we will start in Genesis 4:3-4. In this passage the two sons of Adam, Cain and Abel, brought forth an offering or gift for a sacrifice to God. Both of them acted in the order of a priest. It should be noted that neither was appointed by any other human to act in this capacity. The position of a priest which they occupied in offering a sacrifice to God was acceptable to Him. God received Abel's sacrifice while Cain's sacrifice was not accepted. Abel's offering was from the firstborn of the flock and a sacrifice of shed blood. His offering looked above and forward to the true sacrifice that God, in the person of the Christ, promised (Genesis 3:15).

Cain's offering was a bloodless sacrifice, based on the work of his own hands from the soil. Cain ignored the example God had shown Adam and Eve, and attempted to gain favor with God through his own efforts. Cain's sacrifice, based on works, shows clearly he had no faith in God's example of shed blood. Previously, God had shown Adam that man needed a covering, based on the death of another (through shed blood) to be acceptable to Himself (Genesis 3:21). This truth is eternal for all time. A man's works will never bring him into favor with God (Leviticus 17:11; Romans 4:1-8; 11:6; Galatians 2:16, 21; Ephesians 2:8-9). These works can be: keeping the commandments, doing good deeds, living so as to not offend or sin, keeping the laws of the land, etc (Luke 18:18-27; Titus 3:5).

God alone would furnish the only acceptable sacrifice in the person of His Son. This is recorded for the first time in Genesis 3:15. In this passage, God said that the serpent's (Satan) head would be crushed. By this simple prophecy, Adam and his descendants were informed that in a future time a Saviour would come. The fulfillment of this prophecy is found in John 1:29; "...Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" This sacrifice of Jesus is spoken to in Hebrews 2:14; "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He (Jesus) also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."

In Genesis 8:20, we are told that after the flood Noah built an altar, and in the order of a priest, he sacrificed both beast and fowl to God. No human had appointed Noah to act in that priestly position. As we move to Genesis 12:7, we read that Abram built an altar to God. Again there was no human appointment. Further on, with the Law of Moses given to Israel, we learn in Exodus 28:1, 3-4, that God selected Aaron and his sons to be priests to minister unto Himself. As we continue through all of the Old Testament, the pattern remains the same. God appointed men to minister to Himself with a blood sacrifice always in view.

In the New Testament we find the pattern has not changed. God has established Jesus Christ as the High Priest (Hebrews 2:17; 3:1; 5:5-10; 8:1-2). God appointed Jesus to minister unto Himself (Matthew 3:17; Hebrews 3:1). The man Christ Jesus was complete in all things; “For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell” (Colossians 1:19). In His priestly office Christ also became the final sacrifice for sin, fulfilling all the types, and shadows of Himself found in the Old Testament (Luke 24:44; Acts 13:38; Hebrews 10:12, 14). These types and shadows were seen in the offerings, new moons, Sabbaths, prophecies, and sacrifices on the altars (Colossians 2:16-17; Hebrews 8:5; 10:1).

God, in giving instructions to Moses concerning the tabernacle and the articles that were to be placed inside, made no provision for a resting place for the priest. This

was because the sin question was never answered or finished, in any of the work that the priests did. Sin was never totally put away until Christ was made the sacrificial Lamb (Hebrews 10:6-10). However, as the only acceptable sacrifice for sin, Jesus has satisfied all that the Law of Moses demanded (John 19:30; Hebrews 1:3). The full penalty of man's sin was put upon Jesus (Isaiah 53:6, 10), which God accepted. The sacrifice of Jesus was the only recompense able to make full payment for man's sin (1 John 2:2; Hebrews 10:12). While on the cross Jesus said, "...it is finished" (John 19:30). Judgment for sin has been fully satisfied forever (Hebrews 1:3; 10:12). This work of God in Christ has perfected the believer forever (2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 10:14). Now for the first time, Jesus as the High Priest sits at the right hand of God (Hebrews 8:1; 10:12).

What is the practical place for a Christian in the knowledge of these truths? According to the Revelation 1:6, Christ Jesus has made every Christian a priest to his God and Father. In 1 Peter 2:5, 9; Revelation 1:5-6, the Christian position is made clear, in that the Christian has become part of a holy and royal priesthood. This is not by the hand of man, but by the work of God in Christ Jesus. The gift (priesthood) which God has placed in every Christian is the highest calling in this world. Priesthood can neither be given nor taken by men, as it is a gift of God (Romans 11:6-7, 29; 1 Peter 2:9-10).

II. WHAT IS NOT A PRIESTLY POSITION

We have seen that by a “work of the grace of God,” sinners become saints and priests through faith. This has been accomplished through the cross of Christ, apart from man’s abilities or works (Ephesians 2:8-9; Revelation 1:5-6).

What then about those “special positions” that are commonly called priest, pastor, reverend, minister, father, doctor of divinity, etc? These positions answer to the name of clergy. In this world the natural man looks to his own glory (John 7:18). However, in the kingdom of Christ, the glory of Christ alone, revealed by the Holy Spirit through the Scriptures is the ground of truth. The difference between the kingdom of Christ and the religion of man is seen in Matthew 23:8. Here, Jesus shows His disciples that they are not to take (religious) titles on themselves. Jesus, as the Son of God and the firstborn of many brethren, is to be honored and all others are to be equally subservient. Because many violate this truth, it needs to be understood that what is practiced in the churches, may be acceptable with men, but very grievous to the Holy Spirit. The practices of men in religious systems do not always show us the ‘mind of God’ for His people. In Christ and Him alone is truth. The appropriate question of a Christian should be; “Are these clerical church positions given from God or

man?” The answer to this question is that God works only with what He has created in and through His Son.

Clericalism does not function for the release of the Spirit in God’s people to operate in their priestly capacity, but for a promotion of a law system of religion.

It must be stated however, that many men of faith have and do operate in this man-ordained system. God has in some cases honored their faith, even if they are unaware of the full privileges of their inheritance. Elihu the Buzite stated in Job 32:9, “Great men are not always wise, nor do the aged always understand judgment” (JND).

It is also important to know that Christ Jesus gave gifts to His Church. These gifts are found listed in Ephesians 4:11. They are listed in this order: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. True spiritual gifts are given and anointed of God for, the equipping of the saints, the work of ministry, and the edifying of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:12 JND).

Other gifts are also found in the epistles. Spiritual gifts are given to the saints for their growth and edification, and are always to function towards the person of Christ for His glory.

It is important for the reader to understand that all the gifts spoken of in Ephesians 4:11 and in other epistles written to the other assemblies, are authorized by God and given to individual Christian men; to be used in dispatching

their priestly responsibilities and building up the entire body of Christ. Denominational, and independent churches and the like, are a creation of man and are not author-ed or authorized in Scripture by the Spirit of God. Thus all men and women who hold positions of authority in any man created Christian institutions are not following God's desire for his people. These "church systems" have robbed the participation of Christians of the opportunity and responsibility of functioning in their gift as a priest. God has given this "system" a name; it is called Nicolaitanism and is spoken of in the Revelation, chapter 2:6, 15. God says He hates both the works and the doctrine of Nicolaitanism. Satan has used this "system" to steal the spiritual birthright of every Christian who desires to practice his or her priesthood according to Scripture.

What is not a 'priestly position' then would be; a position of authority in a church system created by man, with the purpose of building a religious system after the heart of man, to reach out to God.

III. WHAT IS A PRIEST'S FUNCTION TODAY?

A Christian's purpose as a priest is many fold. The following are some of the primary functions:

A. To be Led of the Holy Spirit: To walk after the Spirit, so that the praise of the glory of God may be the Christian's complete dwelling place (Ephesians 1:6).

B. Thanksgiving: To offer up by the fruit of the lips a sacrifice of praise continually (Hebrews 13:15).

C. Act in Mercy: To intercede to God for man (1 Timothy 2:1; 1 John 5:16).

D. Communicating the Gospel: Using the Christian's ministry of reconciliation to bring the knowledge of Jesus Christ to man (2 Corinthians 5:19; 2 Timothy 4:2, 5).

E. Giving: Using all our substance for the purpose of Christ (Romans 12:13; 2 Corinthians 9:7).

F. Crucified with Christ: The living sacrifice of the Christian's body for enhancement of the kingdom of Christ (Romans 12:1; 1 Corinthians 6:13).

The priestly exercise of the above is in the singular and individual walk of the Christian.

Next, we will look at some of the primary corporate practices of a priest in the assembly of the saints. The Christian has the privilege of direct access into the temple of God, the Holy of Holies (Hebrews 4:16; 10:19). This is shown in Acts 2:42 at the inception of the Church. In Acts 2:42 we see the four foundations that are the pillars of meetings for the Church. They are: breaking of bread (worship), apostles' doctrine (study of the apostle's teaching), prayers (prayer meeting), fellowship (rejoicing in the person of the Lord Jesus). The following are the normal privileges of a Christian, practicing his priestly gift in an assembly among the saints.

A. Worship: The primary implementation of priesthood is in the assembly and practiced in the exercise of worship (John 4:23; Ephesians 1:12).

B. Remembrance: Worship in its highest form is in the remembrance of Jesus in His death. This is accomplished in the breaking of the bread and drinking of the cup (Luke 22:14-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26). For the Christian, this is to enter into the Holy of Holies (Hebrews 6:19; 10:19).

C. Prayers: The gathering together of the saints for offering prayers of rejoicing to God in worship, or a simple prayer meeting on behalf of the assembly, or prayers for the needs of God's people, authorities, government, etc (Acts 2:42).

D. Apostles' Doctrine: Of greatest importance is that the apostles' doctrine be taught to the assembly. A Christian learning, and speaking the truths of the apostles' doctrine, increases the revelation and knowledge of Christ among the saints (1 Corinthians 14:37; 1 Thessalonians 2:13).

E. Fellowship: Gathering with the saints in the fellowship of Christ, is the desire of the Spirit, and the joy of the Christian (Acts 2:42, 46; Hebrews 10:25).

The Spirit has given us Him who is the Father's delight as our heart's object and joy. This enables us to give the joy and pleasure of our hearts to the Father, for the completed work of the Lord Jesus; in prayers, hymns, praises, blessing, and reading of Holy Scripture, etc. This union with the Father and the Son is without barriers. What we give in strength or in weakness are equal before the Father in worship. Exercise of our priesthood in this place has nothing to do with a spiritual gift or permission from a class of humanly appointed clerics, but brothers and sisters in Christ, in simplicity of heart gathering around the Lord Jesus.

IV. WHERE IS THE PLACE OF A PRIEST TO BE EXERCISED?

The practice of priesthood today is anywhere that the Holy Spirit may lead the Christian in his life's pilgrimage, to use what has been given him. This is especially true as the assembly gathers in corporate worship, where all the brethren of the Lord may bring something that speaks to the glory of the Lord Jesus (1 Corinthians 14:23-40). Not as in the Protestant or Romanist law systems, where men function under a Levitical priesthood, but where the Holy Spirit is free to choose whom He will, apart from the systems of men.

The Christian's priesthood is not the same as Aaron's priesthood, which operated after the law that was laid down in the Pentateuch (Law of Moses). The type of priesthood the Lord Jesus functioned within and fulfilled is recorded in Psalms 110:4. It is that of Melchizedek (Hebrews 5:6). The Melchizedek priesthood, given of God, is without beginning and without end. The Christian being 'IN CHRIST' has been given the spiritual heritage of this priesthood. For example, in the corporate coming together of the saints in worship, every brother has the privilege of leading the assembly in worship (1 Corinthians (11:18; 14:23). As the Christian functions in this priesthood, the Holy Spirit is free to choose among the brothers whom He will to articulate the majesties of the Lord Jesus (1

Corinthians 14:26). In this way the Lord Jesus in the midst of His brethren (Matthew 18:20), receives that which is due Him (Revelation 5:9-14).

A Christian's priesthood is not subject to men, even though he is to be subject to the Lord's brethren (1 Peter 5:5; Hebrews 13:7). Much of Christendom has used the grace of God to bring believers into the law system. However, the law system in any form is still the law.

Some believers may be fearful with this amount of freedom, but it is God's deepest desire for all believers to abide in the full freedom of the Spirit of Christ (John 8:36; Ephesians 5:18-20). Without this freedom a believer-priest will only know Jesus in a limited or carnal (fleshly) way. The Apostle Paul teaches us that; "...Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer" (2 Corinthians 5:16).

V. WHY DOES A CHRISTIAN NEED TO EXERCISE THIS GIFT?

God desired that all Israel would become a kingdom of priests (Exodus 19:6). God's blessing for Israel was the same blessing that He had promised to Abraham. However, Israel did not take the same spiritual path as Abraham took, which was to believe God. This is shown in Psalms chapter 106. Israel chose the Law of Moses, (Exodus 19:8; 24:7) rather than to live by every Word that

proceeds out of the mouth of God (Deuteronomy 8:3). Israel's memory was short concerning their 400 years of enslavement in Egypt. During the time God was delivering them from Egypt, they practiced lusting, idolatry, immorality, murmuring, tempting God and forgetting the complete deliverance of God through His grace. Therefore only a select few ministered unto God, in the Levitical priesthood, as given in the Law of Moses.

All Christians are priests as an absolute gift of God (Revelation 1:6). This gift is not given on the basis of our abilities, performance or works. It is not conditional but positional, tied up in our identification with our High Priest. Every one in Christ is in this place. "As He is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17). God has put every Christian in oneness with Himself through Christ Jesus (John 14:23; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 2:6).

Exercising our priesthood according to the leading of the Spirit of God will increase us in Christ. Without using our gift (priesthood) we will always go to a law system to relate to God. Most believers are already in a law system (Protestantism, Romanism), their gift is used limitedly, and this is not the heart of God for His people. Ephesians 1:5-6 teaches us that in His grace, He created the Christian for the praise of His Glory. This means that our focus is to be on the Son of God, as this will reflect the glory of God through our faith (Romans 8:29). The best place for a Christian is

to function is in this priesthood, joying in God our Saviour while the Spirit reflects His Glory through us (2 Corinthians 9:14-15).

VI. WHICH DO YOU CHOOSE?

God has brought us into His very presence by giving us this unspeakable gift of priesthood through Christ (2 Corinthians 9:15; Revelation 1:6). The choice before the Christian is, to put his affections on Jesus as brought forth in Scripture, to use what God has given him (priesthood), or to be subservient to the religious law systems of churches in our day. The effect on a Christian, of being in subservience to churches that are based on a law system, results in a loss of the identity in Christ. The Christian will only discover the kingdom of God as he finds and walks in his identity in Christ. The world, the flesh and the devil will attempt to take from the Christian the preciousness of the portion he has in his union with the Lord Jesus.

The primary purpose of God for the Christian is for him to be functioning continually in his gift of priesthood. As he puts into practice its function, the Holy Spirit will be free to activate God's will within the Christian. Choosing the Truth revealed in Scripture and the power of the Holy Spirit, through faith in Christ Jesus, may bring many sad occasions in our pilgrimage in this world. Our example is the Lord Jesus Himself as seen in Hebrews 12:2: "...Who for the joy

that was set before Him endured the cross despising the shame.” The same joy of God in Christ is set before us. The flesh is weak but even in our weakness God’s presence is always within the Christian. Taking hold of our gift of priesthood is the only normal Christian life.

VII. WHOM DO YOU FOLLOW?

The honest inquirer needs to ask these questions:

1. Am I free to function up to the capacity of the new creation of Christ in me? (2 Corinthians 5:17).

First, this freedom includes my individual walk of faith.

Second, is the Holy Spirit free in assembly gatherings where I gather to function through the priesthood of any or all of the Lord’s brethren?

2. Do I want the full freedom that God has provided in His Son? (John 8:36). Jesus told the religious Jews that they were not free. The Jews’ response to Jesus was not an answer from God’s perspective. The Jews stated that they were not in bondage to any man (John 8:33). This twisted statement is being repeated today by Christians. Christians who are attending religious systems that resist the place of freedom of the Holy Spirit, and deny the full practice of priesthood to the Christian, are not walking according to God’s word.

3. Am I willing to allow the Holy Spirit, to lead me into all truth, allowing only the Scriptures to be the ground of truth? (John 16:13; 2 Timothy 2:15).

4. Do I want to believe God or Man? (Romans 3:4). If God, then reach for your full inheritance. By faith in Jesus alone, put away the things that hinder. The clerical structure in Christendom today aims the Christian away from practicing his priesthood in fullness.

The clerical system is only one of the many problems for the Christian who desires to freely exercise his gift (gifts). If our hearts are set on the religious systems of men, our freedom in Christ will remain incomplete (Galatians 5:1). If our hearts are set on Jesus, God knows how to deliver us unto His purposes, and Himself (Psalms 33:18-21).

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