

Being A Faithful Priest

Text : **Ezekiel 44: 15-31**

INTRODUCTION :

A. In the beginning God created everything exactly as He wanted it to be.

1. **Gen. 1: 10, 12, 18, 21, 25** “**God saw that it was good.**”
2. In this perfect world God walked with man in the cool of the evening. **Gen. 3: 8**
3. There was no intercessor between man and God, none was needed.

B. That direct contact was slowly removed.

1. God spoke directly to the children of the first couple.
2. Later, it appears that God spoke primarily to the heads of families. (**no verse**)
 - a. God spoke to Noah
 - b. He spoke to Job and Job offered sacrifices for his children.
 - c. God had a direct relationship with Abraham.
(**God called Abraham His friend.** **Isa. 41:8** - cf - **II Chron. 20:7** & **James 2: 23**)

C. A formal priesthood had developed during the life of Abraham.

1. **Gen. 14:18-** **Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High.**
2. A priesthood indicates a formal structure to religion and to worship beyond level of the family.
 - a. His recognizing Melchizedek as a priest indicates Abraham knew priests existed.
 - b. Abraham paying tithes was an act of worship and recognition of Mel’s priesthood.
 - c. **Heb. 7: 7** ... His receiving tithes from Abraham indicated Melchizedek to be of higher rank. (**Rank indicates organizational structure.**)

** To have a relationship with God is to have relationship with organized religion.*
3. As the head of tribes who lived in tents interceded for their clans, Melchizedek interceded for his city. (His city, Jerusalem, eventually became the site of the temple.)

D. Aaron was established as an intercessor before Israel was delivered from Egypt.

1. God assigned Aaron to be the spokesman for the prophet Moses.
 - a. **Exodus 4: 14**
 - b. Aaron relayed the message God gave Moses. **Exod. 4: 27-31**
 - c. Compare ... **7: 1** ... Aaron was the prophet of the prophet Moses, **i.e.**, spoke for him.
2. The priests are never the origin of the message they proclaim.

I. There was a need for a priesthood. (Priests are intermediaries.)

A. The separation between God and His people was formalized at Mt. Sinai.

1. **Exodus 19: 19-25** ... The people were forbidden to approach mountain of God.
2. **Exodus 20: 18-21** ... The people were afraid to have God speak directly to them.
3. **Exodus 24: 1-2** ... Only Moses was permitted to approach God.

B. God ordained that the physical setting be prepared before he ordained priests.

1. **Exodus 25 – 27** ... He gave detailed instructions for a place of worship.
 - a. Tabernacle and Furnishings
 - b. Altar and Cleansing pool
2. **Exodus 28** ... He gave specific instructions for the vestments of the priests.
3. Everything God ordained was the very best which was possible for them to make.

C. After all was in readiness they were consecrated to minister as priests.

1. **Exodus 29** ... As priests they were to minister, **but** ONLY AFTER being sanctified.
2. The sanctification included :
 - a. An elaborate sacrifice.
 - b. Washing to be cleansed.
 - c. Clothing with the priestly garments.
 - d. Ongoing sacrifices.
 - e. Special food.
 - f. Special anointing with oil.

(The sanctification process taught both the people and the priests the truly spiritual significance of the priesthood.)
3. To qualify to be a priest, one had to :
 - a. Be a direct descendant of Aaron.
 - b. Be anointed. (**Chosen and formally appointed**)

D. There were very specific limits to the people's access to God or the holy things.

1. ONLY the priests could go into the tabernacle. (*Made all that was used in tabernacle.*)
Ezek. 44: 16- They shall enter My sanctuary; they shall come near to My table to minister to Me and keep My charge.
 2. ONLY the high priest could go into the Most Holy Place.
 3. The high priest could only go in once each year and not w/o blood to sprinkle.
- * **Thus, the priests stood between man and God.**

Note : Prophets spoke to man for God representing God to man.

Priests represented man to God and taught only what had been revealed.

II. The ministry of the priest is clearly laid out in our text. Ezek. 44**A. They were responsible to maintain the holy things.**

1. Vs. 15- But the Levitical priests, the sons of Zadok, who kept charge of My sanctuary when the sons of Israel went astray from Me, shall come near to Me to minister to Me; and they shall stand before Me to offer Me the fat and the blood," declares the Lord God.
2. Only priests could touch the holy things (remember Uzzah – II Sam. 6)
3. Only priests could enter the holy place.

B. The priests were the ones to offer sacrifice for the people.

1. Vs. 15- and they shall stand before Me to offer Me the fat and the blood," declares the Lord God
2. Compare ... Lev. 1: 1-9

C. They were required to maintain the standard of ceremonial cleanliness.

1. Text ... Ezek. 44: 17-f
2. They were required to wash before entering and to change garments.
3. The presence of God is so holy, the priests were not permitted to expose the common person to the clothing worn inside the holy place.

D. But, priests were responsible to teach what had been revealed by the prophets.

1. Ezek. 44: 23- Moreover, they shall teach My people the difference between the holy and the profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.
2. Mal. 2:7- For the lips of a priest should preserve knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.

E. The priest were arbiters of disputes.

1. Ezek. 44: 23a- In a dispute they shall take their stand to judge; they shall judge it according to My ordinances. (They properly interpret the law.)
2. This is a position of trust that had to be earned.
(Remember the sons of the prophet Samuel ... I Sam. 8)

F. The priests were to set a standard of Godly living for the people to follow.

1. Ezek. 44: 23b- They shall also keep My laws and My statutes in all My appointed feasts and sanctify My sabbaths.
2. When the priests were corrupted the whole land was cursed by God. Ezek. 22:26

III. Christians have a great high priest, Jesus the Christ.

A. Unlike the priests of Israel, He will never lead us astray.

1. **Hebrews 4: 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.

Note : Remember Aaron's golden calf. The priests of Israel, including their high priests were often lead astray by the desires of the people.

2. Knowing our weaknesses, He comes to our aid. (**Not be lead by our weaknesses**)
 - a. **Hebrews 2: 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.
 - b. **II Pet. 2: 9-** The Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, ...
 - c. **I Pet. 1: 3-5** Blessed be the God ... who ... has caused us to be born again
 4 to *obtain* an inheritance *which is* ... reserved in heaven for you,
 5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

B. Our High Priest is permanently in the presence of God interceding for us.

1. **Heb. 4:14-** Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.
2. **Heb. 8: 1-2** Now the main point in what has been said *is this*: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, 2 a minister in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man.
3. Compare ... **Rom. 8: 33-35a**

C. Our high priest has taught us the whole revelation of God.

1. Jesus promised a full and complete revelation.
John 14:26- But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.
2. The Apostle John said Jesus had fulfilled that promise. **I John 2:20 + 27**
3. **II Pet. 1: 3-** seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

IV. Every Christian is called to be a priest. (Every lesson has an application.)

A. Read ... I Pet. 2: 1-9

B. As royal priests, ALL Christians must perform the ministry of a priest.

1. **I Pet. 2: 5-** ... a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.
 - a. Like Jesus, Christians must first offer up themselves as a sacrifice.
Rom. 12:1- 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.
 - b. We offer up the fruit of our lips as sacrifice to God.
Heb. 13: 15- 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.
 2. We make intercessions to God for those outside the priesthood.
 - a. **I Tim. 2: 1-2a** I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, **2** for kings and all who are in authority,
 - b. We are to pray for our brethren as well. ... **Eph. 6: 18**
 3. We must keep ourselves sanctified and separated from evil of the world.
 - a. **I Cor. 1: 2** ... Christians are those who have been sanctified.
 - b. **James 1:27-** Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.
 - c. **I Tim. 4: 11-12** Prescribe and teach these things. **12** Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but *rather* in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.
 4. We must be advocates proclaiming the word of God. **Why did God call us ??**
 - a. **I Pet. 2: 9b-** so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;
- * The very purpose for your priestly calling is for you to be a proclaimer.**
- b. We have a specific message to proclaim.
Mark 16: 15- And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. (**I Cor. 15: 1-6**)
 - c. The world must be able to look to us for God's message to them.
Mal. 2:7- For the lips of a priest should preserve knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.
- * ALL Christians are the messengers of God, not just preachers, elders, etc.**

d. To this end we are commanded to prepare ourselves for our priesthood.

I Pet. 3: 15- but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;

CONCLUSION :

A. Being a priest under a Great High Priest has its rewards.

1. We have free and unencumbered access to God's throne any time we need Him.

Heb. 4: 16- Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need

2. When our service in this earthly temple is finished, we'll serve eternally in the heavenly temple with our Great High Priest.

B. It is a great honor and a great privilege to be appointed as a priest of God.

1. It's not a commission to be taken lightly.

2. God's priests all give an accounting to the Great High Priest for their ministry.

3. The reward for faithful service is great ... **eternity with God in the Holy of Holies.**

C. God is inviting you to become one of His priests.

1. He wants for YOU to offer up spiritual sacrifices to Him.

2. God wants for YOU to make intercessions for those outside the priesthood.

3. He wants for YOU to keep yourself sanctified, separated and holy in this world.

4. And, He wants for YOU to be His advocate before the world.

What a great honor and privilege to be a priest of God.

INVITATION :

Will you accept His invitation ?