

PRIESTS AND KINGS

As we prepare for Thanksgiving in America, as children of God, we must never forget why and to whom all of our thanksgiving needs to go to – our God. Oh but most definitely, I would like to mention and offer up a word of thanks for and to all those wonderful men and women who have given their lives and those who have continually served in the armed forces, in the past, present and in the future, in protecting and keeping our nation safe and free.

As we all prepare or, depending on when you read this article, have given thanks to our God for all of the wonderful blessings He has given to us, we must never forget the greatest aspect of giving thanks. We have this “greatest gift” only if we truly have accepted and received Jesus as our personal Lord and Savior. We must never forget to offer up to our God our “sacrifice of thanksgiving” for the salvation that He has provided us in and through His Son Jesus.

Through the “final sacrifice” of what Jesus had done, it has allowed all those who have received and accepted that “final sacrifice” (Jesus) the availability of “new life.” It has been, and continues to be, offered because of the love of the Father for all of His beloved creation - man. In accepting and then believing in all that Jesus has done, we are then able to become, and are literally referred to as, “kings and priests” of the Lord. The scriptures refer to the true believers as such.

We read this in 1Peter 2:5-9. This scripture refers to the true believers as both a “holy priesthood” and a “royal priesthood.” Yes, now through the blood of Jesus we all have become “priests” of the Lord. Notice, that it states that we are two types of “priests” – “holy” and “royal.” These refer to the true believer as being both – a “priest” (holy) and a “king” (royal).

These scriptures tell us that as a “holy priesthood” we are to give unto the Lord, no longer “animal sacrifices” but rather we are to offer unto the Lord those sacrifices which truly are unto Him and not for us. What I mean by this is that, in the Old Testament, the priesthood was there, yes to worship God, but most importantly, they were there to make sacrifices on behalf of the people to make themselves and the people “right” with God. They did this through the sacrificial system as found in the Law, the first five books of the Bible commonly referred to as the Pentateuch.

We must remember that in the Old Testament, the Law was broken up into two parts. The sacrificial animal system and the moral aspects of the Law, such as the Ten Commandments and other laws that referred to the lifestyle and right way of living of a true child of God. We know, however, that no one could keep all of the moral aspects of the Law. That is why the sacrificial system was instituted so that, instead of man’s blood being shed for their sins there would be a substitution for the people - the animal sacrifices.

Through Jesus however, that all changed. He took our place. He took the place of the animal sacrifices that represented man and who were sacrificed for mans sins. Jesus became the final sacrifice that took all of the sin that man ever did and will do and He died on the cross as the final punishment for all of mankind’s sin. We know that Jesus took the penalty for our sin when he died and went to the pit of hell. But...three days later, Jesus rose from the dead. He rose out of the pit of hell and ascended to the Father to present Himself, representing all of man, before God and declaring that He paid the punishment for all of man’s sin.

It was at that time that God, the Father declared that all of man’s sin was forgiven. The only thing man must do is to now believe in and accept all that Jesus has done for mankind. Relationship back to the Father was now, and would continue to be available for all of mankind through the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Salvation had come to man.

However, now that salvation had come to man, that was not the end of the story. No, it was just the beginning. Jesus rose from the dead and went unto the Father. He lives!!! Because Jesus lives, all those who believe in Him have also been given new life - eternal life. By believing in what Jesus has done those who have truly accepted Jesus as their own personal Lord and Savior, have been changed. They have been given a renewed spirit. Their spirit was once dead to God but now it is alive unto Him. We have been changed into a totally new species of being – a child of God. Relationship between God and man has truly been restored. We call that new relationship - “fellowship” – and we all can declare, “Thank you, Jesus.”

True believers have been given the legal right to now communicate with the Living God. We have the right to continually draw closer and closer to the true “Lover of our soul.” We become a joint heir with Jesus to everything that is in Heaven and in God’s Kingdom. We are now separated from the kingdom of darkness and the things of this world and have become a part of the Kingdom of God. We are in the process of exchanging our old ways and our old ways of thinking to God's ways and His thinking. We now are living our lives in holiness. That “holiness” is working from the inside out and it brings a deep desire for God's character to be expressed and lived out of each one of His people.

We are now, through Jesus, as I had mentioned previously, “kings and priests” of the Most High God. However, we must remember, and I know that it is difficult, that this does not necessarily mean what we might think it means. No, these mean quite a different way of thinking than what we may be familiar with. As stated previously we are both, a holy priesthood and a royal priesthood, we are priests and we are kings.

Old Testament priests were chosen by God, not self-appointed. They were the men from the tribe of Levi and became known as the Levitical priesthood. In those Levites “God ordained priestly line” and all of the men of that tribe became priests of the Lord and one became the High Priest. All, that is, except the High Priest during the time of Jesus. That High Priest was not truly from the Levitical priestly line of Levi.

No, the High Priest at the time of Jesus was a Sadducee and he was not from the true “priestly” line of Levi. We see that Ananias and Caiaphas were the High Priests at that time. They were father and son and took turns as to who would be the High Priest. There is no coincidence that Jesus came at that time. There was no true Levitical High Priest. Jesus was from the Levitical line through His birth mother Mary and through his non-biological father, Joseph. They were both from the tribe of Levi. That is why we have the genealogies of Mary and Joseph that we find in Matthew and Luke. Jesus came from the true “priestly” line.

The priesthood in the Old Testament served as a picture or “type” of the coming ministry of Jesus Christ--a picture that was then no longer needed once His sacrifice on the cross was completed. When the thick temple veil that covered the doorway to the Holy of Holies was torn in two by God at the time of Jesus’ death (Matthew 27:51), God was indicating that the Old Testament priesthood was no longer necessary.

There would no longer be a need for an intermediary between God and Man. Jesus has and still does fulfill that role. He has opened the door for our direct access to the Father now through our acceptance of what Jesus did. People can now come directly to God through the great High Priest, Jesus Christ (Hebrews 4:14-16). There is now no longer any need for any earthly mediators between God and man. (1Timothy 2:5).

However, as the priests in the Old Testament once offered animal sacrifices in the Temple, it is clear that now, we as believers in Jesus are to offer up “spiritual sacrifices” which are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. The first sacrifice is our very own selves – our lives. It tells us in Romans 12:1, *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”* What this simply means is that we are to give everything we are and present it to Him as a sacrifice to be used for His purposes. It means that my life is no longer my own but that it is God’s. Paul simply refers to it as the only reasonable thing that we can do. Hmmm.....

1 Peter 2:5-9 speaks of two aspects of the “holy priesthood” of the believer. The first is that believers are privileged to be called the children of God. To be chosen by God to be a priest was a privilege because the Levites were set apart with no other responsibilities but to serve God and then His people. Now, all believers have been chosen by God. We are a “chosen generation...His own special people” (verse 9).

Because of Jesus’ death upon the cross of Calvary and His resurrection to the Father, all believers now have direct access to the throne of God through Jesus who was and still is our great High Priest (Hebrews 4:14-16). What a privilege that has now been given to all believers. We all now have access to the very throne room of God - directly. What a privilege for all of us who were once “not a people” and who were once “without hope” and were all “destined for destruction” because of our sin.

The second aspect to the believer as being a part of the “holy priesthood” is that we are chosen for a purpose. We are now “holy” – not because of anything we have done but it is simply because of what He has done and what He has given to us. As mentioned previously, we are now to offer up “spiritual sacrifices” onto Him. These “spiritual sacrifices” are the “sacrifice of praise,” the “sacrifice of joy,” the “sacrifice of thanksgiving” and the “sacrifice of righteousness.” We offer each of these to declare and proclaim who our God truly is to this lost and dying world.

As we have mentioned we are not only a “holy priesthood” (priests) but we are a “royal priesthood” (kings). Through Jesus, He has given us “privileged status” as heirs to the kingdom of the Almighty God. We, in essence have the ability to rule and reign over every situation and circumstance that comes our way. Now, we must understand that this does not mean that we will have it easy and everything will “go our way” as we go through this life. Actually, the opposite may take place. We may experience much trouble and much persecution.

As we stand on the principles of God as we get closer to the end times, we most likely will experience much persecution. However, as we stand on the Word and on God’s precepts, God will be with us and He will see us through. We may not look as if we are “kings” here on this earth but we will surely be decked out with the robes of righteousness in the spirit realm and we will be kings in the spirit realm. We will ultimately be victorious as we remain faithful to the Father and to Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit. We will be victorious for His Kingdom and for His purposes that will and shall be accomplished.

We as believers are not called priests because of our salvation. Our salvation is not merely “fire insurance” - an escape from hell. As priests and kings of the living God, we are all to give all of our worship to the One who has given us the great gift of His Son’s sacrifice on our behalf. Our response to all that He has done for us is that we are to now share this wonderful gift of God’s love, grace, mercy and peace with others.

We must never forget that the Kingdom of God is actually a “kingdom of priests.” Remember, under the Old Covenant, the priests were chosen from the tribe of Levi and were separate from the rest of Israel. But when Jesus was crucified, the curtain in the Temple between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies was split from top to bottom representing that **all** believers now have direct access to God’s presence. We approach God through faith in the blood of Jesus instead of the blood of animals. We now have confidence that we may enter into the Most Holy Place, the Holy of Holies, God’s presence, by the blood of the final sacrifice – Jesus.

The death of Jesus ended the Old Testament priesthood, replacing the endless animal sacrifices with one final, perfect sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Now forgiveness is offered freely to all who believe in the risen Lord Jesus Christ as our sacrifice for sin. There is a new priesthood – a priesthood of all the believers in Jesus - the Messiah, the Son of God. That is the Gospel message—the Good News—that is what we as believers now have as “priests and kings” of God’s kingdom.

As we celebrate at this time of year, both Thanksgiving and the birth of Jesus at Christmas, let us never forget what our God has done for us. Each of us was lost and on our way to hell. Jesus gave His life so that He would be the final and complete sacrifice that would satisfy the punishment for all of mankind. In that we see the graciousness of God the Father. When Adam sinned, it should have been over. But God...

Yes, but God... When man blew it, God declared and made a way for man to get back into right standing with Him. God declared in Genesis 3:15, *"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."* This was the first Messianic promise that God had declared over mankind. God immediately expressed His love for His most beloved creation. The Father would send His Son, Jesus to die on that cross to pay the punishment for Adam's and man's sin. But God didn't stop there.

The Father has opened the door for all men to not just be forgiven but to also have the opportunity to be raised from the dead and have eternal life, a born again spirit. For three days later, Jesus would rise from the grave meaning that new life would now become available to men. It would be available to anyone who would believe God and His Word and accept Jesus for all that He had done.

All those who now believe and continue to believe in Jesus, as well as the truth of all that He has done and will continue to do, have now been made a priest on to our God and a king to rule along with Jesus over this earth. Yes, as children of God, each of us are now His. All of us are now, also, both **priests** and **kings** of the Most High God. It tells us this In Revelation 1:6 and Revelation 5:10.

- *"And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."*
-Revelation 1:6
- *"And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."*
-Revelation 5:10

Let us all give thanks, rejoice and be glad in this.