

Where Are the Priests?

July 7, 2019
I Peter 2:1-10

Mr. Jay Speights, a Chaplain was serving as a Pastor in Rockville, MD when he was awakened by his phone buzzing at 4:00 a.m. He read the message once, twice, three times before he woke up his wife. He whispered to her “You’re a Princess.” But she couldn’t hear what he said. Pastor Speights had grown up in New Jersey. He was now sixty-six years old.

After receiving the message that morning, he decided to send his DNA to Ancestry.com to be tested. Sure enough; it was true. Pastor Jay Speights was descended from a king who once ruled the Republic of Benin in West Africa when it was known as the Kingdom of Allada. A few months later a visitor from Benin met him at his office in Maryland. And, when asked about the DNA test, he showed pictures of his ancestors. The man gave him the phone number of the present King of Benin. Within days he received a text from the Queen. *“We are smiling as you read this. You are a descendant of King Deka, 9th King of Allada who ruled from 1746 to 1765. We will be delighted to welcome you to your home, dear Prince.”*

This past February 2019, Pastor Speights flew the 5,000 miles to Benin to meet the royal family. When he arrived, he thought he’d be visiting for a few days, get acquainted with his relatives, and do some sightseeing. Instead, he was welcomed with a huge festival, with singing and dancing. He was not only welcomed; he was honored by the people. The following week Pastor Speights was sent to Prince school.” He was enthroned by the king, given white lace robes to signal he is a holy man, and several crowns. At night, an armed guard kept watch outside his hotel door. During the

day, local journalists followed him around with cameras.” He was also given a new name before he returned to the United States. His new name is Videkon Deka. [Found on www.apnews.com “Searching for family history, pastor discovers royal ties” by Merissa J. Lang].

Today, as we prepare our hearts to partake at the LORD’s Table, I want help you discover something that may be brand new to you.

Please open your Bible with me to the ninth chapter of the Book of Hebrews. Hebrews was written to Jewish Christians living in and around the city of Jerusalem who were being persecuted. Many of them were being tempted to forsake Christ. So, Paul wrote Hebrews as an epistle of encouragement.

I’ve titled today’s message “Where Are The Priests?” Shall we pray?

Just like Pastor Speights, I have good news for you. You too are royalty. You are a member of a royal priesthood. You see, you are a priest.

The Apostle Peter wrote these words. I Peter 2:5 *“Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, **a holy priesthood**, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”*

I Peter 2:9 *“But ye are a chosen generation, **a royal priesthood**, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light; ...”*

What comes to your mind when you hear the word “priest”? It is the Roman Catholic priesthood. Or, is it the Jewish priest that comes to your mind? Or is it you? Do you think of yourself, as Peter says it, as a holy and a royal priest?

In the old days, under the Old Covenant, God set apart a man by the name of Levi and told him that his family would become His priests. So, all the descendants of a man named

Levi, the third son of Jacob became the LORD's priests. The Bible calls them Levites.

Can you recall with me the night of the Exodus from Egypt? Do you remember that the LORD consecrated all the firstborn of Israel? And did you remember that there were no priests on the night of the Exodus? It wasn't until all the tribes were situated at Mount Sinai that the LORD set apart the Levites as His priests.

Here's Numbers 3:5 *"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, (6) Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister unto him. (7) And they shall keep his charge, and the charge of the whole congregation before the tabernacle of the congregation, to do the service of the tabernacle.*

(8) And they shall keep all the instruments of the tabernacle of the congregation, and the charge of the children of Israel, to do the service of the tabernacle. (9) And thou shalt give the Levites unto Aaron and to his sons: they are wholly given unto him out of the children of Israel.

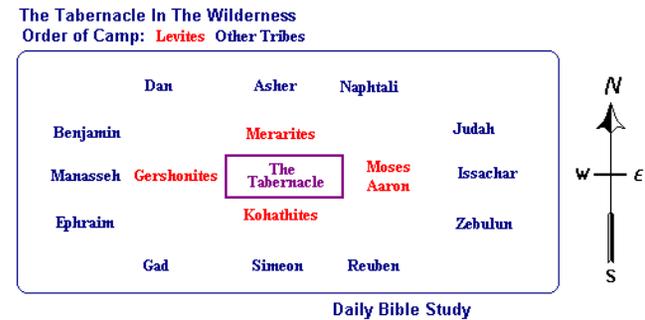
(10) And thou shalt appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall wait on their priest's office: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death. (11) And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

(12) And I, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of all the firstborn that openeth the matrix among the children of Israel: therefore the Levites shall be mine;

(13) Because all the firstborn are mine; for on the day that I smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I hallowed unto me all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast: mine shall they be: I am the Lord."

God made a choice that day at Sinai. He chose His priests, not from the firstborn males, but with the tribe of Levi. You see, the LORD separated the tribe of Levi (all of them) for Himself. Deuteronomy 10:8 *"At that time the Lord separated the tribe of Levi, to bear the ark of the covenant of the Lord, to stand before the Lord to minister unto him, and to bless in his name, ..."*

So, the priests were the ones God set apart to come between the ordinary people and Himself. They were the ones who were the closest to the LORD. Now, the three sons of Levi were Merari, Gershom, and Kohath.



[Picture found on Daily Bible Study by Wayne Blank on www.keyway.ca].

In the days of the Old Covenant, if you wanted to come before the LORD, you had to go to a priest. This was true when they served in the Tabernacle as well as later when they served in the Temple in Jerusalem.

Now, who were the priests in the days of the Jesus? The priests were the Sadducees? And did you know that two of them, Annas and Caiaphas, the two chief priests that year; they were the ones who decided that Jesus had to be crucified?

So, one very large thing characterized the Old Testament Saints. If you wanted to come before the LORD, you needed a priest. God *spoke* to His people through the *Prophet*. But, in order for the common ordinary Jew to come to the LORD, he or she had to first go to the *priest*.

But something even larger characterizes the New Testament Saints. Something changed 2,000 years ago and that was this. The ordinary person, the ordinary Christian, you and me; we are His priests. We can now come directly to the LORD. Here's I Peter 2:5 again. I Peter 2:5 *"Ye also, as*

lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”

I Peter 2:9 “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light; ...”

And who did the LORD set over the priests while the first covenant was in force? He set a man who was designated the high priest.

Now, find with me Hebrews 9:1 “*Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary. (2) For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the showbread; which is called the sanctuary (the Holy Place). (3) And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all (the Holy of Holies);*

(4) Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid roundabout with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; (5) And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy seat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.

(6) Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle (the Holy Place), accomplishing the service of God. (7) But into the second (the Holy of Holies) went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people:

(8) The Holy Ghost thus signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: ...”

But, as you know, the first covenant has been done away and the first tabernacle is no longer standing; verse eleven. Hebrews 9:11 “*But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; (12) Neither by the blood of goats*

and calves, but by His own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

(13) For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: (14) How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”

That brings us to today. Today we have priests. We have a priesthood. And we have a High Priest. Here it is. I Peter 2:5 “*Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”*

I Peter 2:9 “*But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light; ...”*

So, where are the priests? And are they offering up spiritual sacrifices? Are they showing forth the praises of the One Who called them out of darkness into His marvelous light?

In the old days; in the days of the first covenant, things always revolved around the Temple and the priests of the Temple. Today, it's much different.

Today we have the Priesthood of all Believers. Today, we have a priesthood made up of every single Christian. We are a holy priesthood and a royal priesthood. We are the priests of God today. We, you and me, are His holy priesthood. Every Believer in Christ stands in that unique position of being a priest of the Most High God.

So, where are the priests? Right here in this room. Every single one of you who have come to Christ for forgiveness for your sins, you are the LORD's priest.

And you have a High Priest over you. And what has your High Priest done? He, your High Priest, Jesus Christ, has

entered the Perfect Tabernacle, the one in Heaven, with His own blood, something an earthly High Priest could never do. And with that blood, He gained something, not for Himself, but for you. He bought eternal redemption with His blood and He's given that redemption to you and me.

Now, some of you might just have a wrong view of the priesthood. And that it this. Some see the Pastor and the people. And the Pastor does the work. He's the one who worships and prays and carries out the ministry. Actually, you might even say, the Pastor is the minister, implying that you are not in the ministry. You think you are not qualified for the ministry. But what does God say? Where are the priests? The priests are right here. There is no hierarchy. Rather, you are His priesthood. You serve as a holy priest and a royal priest as the LORD's house.

One day the disciples got to arguing among themselves? Can you recall the day the disciples argued over who'd be greatest in the LORD's kingdom? Jesus overheard them. And, do you remember what Jesus said to them? Mark 10:42 *"But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. (43) But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: ..."*

Have you ever heard this? *"All Christians are priests and all priests are Christians. Anathema to him who distinguishes the priest from the simple Christian."* Who said this? Martin Luther [*Be Captivate Babylonica Ecclesiae (Opera Latina Lutheri, Frankfurt, 1886, V.)*].

Now, by way of application, what does the priest do?

Keeping in mind the role of the priest, first, he offers himself to the LORD. How? He offer his body as a living sacrifice. 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."

Your first sacrifice is your daily sacrifice. It's the sacrifice of your body to the LORD. Just like the priests of the first covenant were set apart and belonged only to the LORD, you too belong to Him. I Corinthians 6:19 *"What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? (20) For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."*

First, you offer the LORD your body as a living sacrifice.

Second, you offer the LORD the continual sacrifice. And what is that? It's the sacrifice of constant praise.

Here's Hebrews 13:15 *"By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. (16) But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.*

(17) Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."

Think about it like this. A Christian is a Priest. And the Christian Priest offers at least these two sacrifices; your body and your heart. And have you ever noticed that the only things you can sacrifice to God are things that already belong to Him? Both your body and your heart are His through the work of Christ.

Here's how one man puts it. Mark 12:33 *"And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."*

All the whole burnt offerings and all the sacrifices are replaced with the heart of the Christian loving the LORD whole-heartedly and loving your neighbor. So, where are the priests?

Now, as we come to the LORD's Table, let me ask you this "when do you offer the sacrifice of praise"? Is it when things are going well for you or when they are not going well for you? If it's a sacrifice, it's an offering made to the LORD when things are not going well for you.

To be your offering of praise to the LORD, make it an offering of praise when things are the most difficult in your life. Now, that might be today. Today you might be having a very difficult time. You, though, as one of His priests. So, what are you doing with that rough experience? Are you letting it go to waste? Or, are you offering praise to Him for it? If so, that's your sacrifice of praise. Hebrews 13:15 "*By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.*"

First, you offer the LORD your body as a living sacrifice.

Second, you offer the LORD the continual sacrifice. And what is that? It's the sacrifice of constant praise.

And third, you offer the LORD the things you share with others. Here's Hebrews 13:16 "*But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.*"

To do good and to share what you have is also the sacrifices of the LORD's priest. Can you think of a way to do good today? Can you think of something you have that you intend to share today?

Have you shared your food lately? How about your finances? How about your time? How about your spiritual gift? Folks, each time you do this, you display your calling as one of the LORD's priests.

And notice what these offerings do. They please God. And, as you know, whenever you offer to the LORD and whatever you offer Him, in order to be pleasing to Him, it must be offered in faith. The living sacrifice, your body, the sacrifice of continual praise and the things you share with others must be offered to the LORD in faith.

So, along with my question, "Where are the priests?" I'm asking this "Where are your offerings today?" Have you offered the LORD your body? Have you offered Him your praise? And have you offered Him those things you shared with others?

So, what, then, will you do, both today when you come to this Table and tomorrow, when you go to work? Will you fulfill your role as His priest? In light of all Christ has done for you in being your Great High Priest, and in light of what His Word says, what will you do? Will the Bible make any difference to you this week?

Can't you see how important you are to the LORD? Can you see yourself as His priest? Can you see yourself as a member of His priesthood?

Folks, we are the Priesthood of Christ. What have you offered Him today?

Shall we pray?

Hymn # 676 "Oh Jesus, I Have Promised"