

Making My Life A Ministry

02 “The Priesthood of All Believers”

Intro: The Historical Significance of this Issue

- In the NT no individual elder or church leader is ever called a “priest.”
- Early Church to Roman Catholicism; Reformation changes
- History of Protestantism - the tendency
- How the KJV has contributed: Eph 4:11-12 “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”
- Note: 3 clauses beginning with “for” –
- Modern Translations:
 - NAS - And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;
 - NIV - It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up
 - ESV - And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,

Tendency is - pastors like priests

The true biblical NT doctrine of the priesthood of the believer restores the correct perspective.

A) The NT Data – The NT describes the church and its members as a priesthood.

- 1) 1 Pt 2:4-10
 - a. “a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pt 2:5);
 - b. “a royal priesthood” (1Pt 2:9)
- 2) Revelation
 - a. “priests to his God and Father” (Rev 1:6);
 - b. “a kingdom and priests to our God” (5:10);
 - c. “priests of God and of Christ, and they shall reign with him a thousand years” (20:6).

B) As a NT priesthood, what are believers to do?

- 1) **The Right Model neither Christ nor Aaron. Rather, Israel as a whole.**
 - a. Ex 19:5-6 – This calling to be a kingdom (nation) of priests was not as ministers to each other, primarily, but in order to be
 - (1) 1st – a nation of worshippers of the True God and
 - (2) 2nd the mediators of the true God’s revelation and covenantal salvation to the surrounding nations.

The concern here is how God set Israel apart, in order for Israel to be a light and to bring light to the nations (as a continuation of the covenant with Abraham, to be a blessing to the world). In the simplest language, the calling is to worship and to witness.

b. **1 Peter 2:9 (vs 5)** – Peter adopts the description of Ex 19:5-6

- The focal point is the proclamation
- Peter is not presenting a different understanding of the priesthood of the NT covenant people from the Old Covenant people
- The calling is still to worship and to witness.

The worship aspect is explicit in vs 5; the witness aspect is found in the message of proclamation, which is salvation from darkness and from separation from God (vs 9-10).

2) The Chief Practices of the Priesthood of all Believers are Worship and Witness

- a. **Worship** – to offer spiritual sacrifices (I Pt 2:5) and Heb 13:15-16:
Even more primary is the worship of offering ourselves as living sacrifices – Rom 12:1
- b. **Witness** – to make Christ known by proclaiming him to others. This is in accord with the priestly calling of Israel, to be a light to the Gentiles. Paul illustrates this in his understanding of his calling – Rom 15:15-16:
- c. **Reigning?** - best to see this as harking back to protology – first things in creation, when mankind was made to be royal stewards over the earthly creation, then commented on in Psalm 8,

⁵ Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings
and crowned him with glory and honor.

⁶ You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under his feet,

and further commented on in Heb 2:5-9 -

⁵ Now it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking.

⁶ It has been testified somewhere,

“What is man, that you are mindful of him,
or the son of man, that you care for him?”

⁷ You made him for a little while lower than the angels;
you have crowned him with glory and honor,

⁸ putting everything in subjection under his feet.”

Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. ⁹ But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

So, the reign for the church as priests is eschatological in nature, of the world to come in its realized form, but current now, in our being seated with Christ, by our union with Him, at the Father’s right hand.