

PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS

The concept of a **clergy** (the body of people ordained for religious service) and **laity** (all those who are not members of a given profession or other specialized field) is common among many religions. In many churches the idea of a hierarchy is well-formed and accepted. In some churches the clergy consists of a “**priesthood.**” Priests are individuals who act on behalf of others (i.e., the laity). They offer sacrifices and commune with God on behalf of others. They perform rituals on behalf of the laity. They act in the place of God in the matter of absolving sins or extending God’s pardon to the laity. They serve as the “**go-between**” man and God.

While the Old Testament reveals a priesthood ordained by God for the Israelites, the notion of such a priesthood in the church of Jesus Christ is without foundation. Actually, the New Testament reveals a priesthood, but one radically different from what many think.

1 PETER 2 (NASB)

4 And coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected by men, but choice and precious in the sight of God,

5 you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

6 For *this* is contained in Scripture: “BEHOLD I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER *stone*, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM SHALL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.”

7 This precious value, then, is for you who believe. But for those who disbelieve, “THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER *stone*,”

8 and, “A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE”; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this *doom* they were also appointed.

9 But you are A CHOSEN RACE, a royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God’s OWN POSSESSION, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

10 for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.

[UNDERLINED FOR EMPHASIS]

THE NEW PRIESTHOOD

The Old Testament priesthood is contrasted with new priesthood.

The new priesthood is spiritual in nature, rather than physical.

Temple cornerstone is Jesus Christ.

Building stones are converts.

Priests are the believers (all of them).

They offer spiritual sacrifices.

This is consistent with Rev.1:6, 5:10, 20:6

THE OLD PRIESTHOOD

Hebrews, chapters 5-10 effectively show that the Levitical priesthood has been superseded.

Jesus is the new High Priest, who entered the holy of holies (not the earthly “type” but the “actual” holy place: heaven).

Hebrews 8 (NASB)

1 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.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS

There is no building designated as the “sanctuary.” Joh.4:21

The “temple” is the body. 1Co.6:19, 2Co.6:16

Each member (priest) can approach God directly.

No human intercessor needed or appointed. Eph.2:18; 3:11-12

Believers can enter the “holy place.” Heb.10:19

Each member (priest) is to offer appropriate sacrifices.

Offering of “oneself.” Rom.12:1-2 (Gal.2:20)

Offering up sacrifice of praise. Heb.13:15

However, they do not offer a “sin offering.” (Jesus offered that once for all).

Heb.10:10-12, 18

Each member (priest) is to minister. 1Pe.2:9: (“proclaim the excellencies”)

This involves helping in the spread of the Gospel. Phi.4:18

Each member (priest) is to offer prayers on behalf of others. 1Jo.5:16, Jam.5:16

Each member (priest) is to serve the needs of God’s people. Heb.13:16

Helping the sick, the sin-sick, the weak, the needy, the lonely.

Helping them is tantamount to doing it to Jesus. Mat.25:40

Each member (priest) is to live a holy life. (1Pe.2:11ff)

This “royal priesthood” is the realization of the true (spiritual) temple (body) service, which the physical type foreshadowed.

THE ELEVATION TO PRIESTHOOD

Each priest is one who has been transformed from a sinner to saint by the power of God.

Each priest is to be instructed (in Word of God) concerning the required duties.

Each priest is accountable to God.

Each priest serves under the High Priest: Jesus Christ.

A priest in the church does not hold a position of superiority; but rather a position of service: to God and to others.