

## Doctrine of Priesthood of All Believers

1. The universal priesthood or the priesthood of all believers is a Christian doctrine derived from several clear passages of *Scripture*.
2. This doctrine is a foundational concept of Protestantism and distinguishes itself from Catholic theology.
3. Martin Luther referred to the universal priesthood of every believer in 1520 in his work, *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*. Luther wanted to dismiss the medieval Christian belief that Christians were to be divided into two classes: "spiritual" and "temporal" or non-spiritual. He put forward the doctrine that all baptized Christians are "priests" and "spiritual" in the sight of God. Said Luther:

“That the pope or bishop anoints, makes tonsures, ordains, consecrates, or dresses differently from the laity, may make a hypocrite or an idolatrous oil-painted icon, but it in no way makes a Christian or spiritual human being. In fact, we are all consecrated priests through Baptism, as St. Peter in 1 Peter 2:9 says, ‘*You are a royal priesthood and a priestly kingdom,*’ and *Revelation 5:10*, ‘*Through your blood you have made us into priests and kings.*’”

Two months later Luther would write in his *Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1520):

“How then if they are forced to admit that we are all equally priests, as many of us as are baptized, and by this way we truly are; while to them is committed only the Ministry and consented to by us? If they recognize this they would know that they have no right to exercise power over us (*ius imperii*, in what has not been committed to them) except insofar as we may have granted it to them, for thus it says in 1 Peter 2, ‘*You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a priestly kingdom.*’”

In this way we are all priests, as many of us as are Christians. There are indeed priests whom we call ministers. They are chosen from among us, and who do everything in our name. That is a priesthood which is nothing else than the Ministry. Thus 1 Corinthians 4:1: ‘No one should regard us as anything else than ministers of Christ and dispensers of the mysteries of God.’

4. The main Bible passage which sets forth the universal priesthood of every believer is 1 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 marvelous light.*”
5. There are other relevant Scriptural passages that include the following.
  - *Exodus 19:5* Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: 6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

- *1 Peter 2:4 To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, 5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. 6 Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. 7 Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, 8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.*
- *Revelation 1:4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; 5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, 6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*
- *Revelation 5:6 And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. 7 And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. 8 And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. 9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; 10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.*