

Doctrine of the Priesthood of Christ

1. A priest refers to a person who has been appointed by God to minister before His presence in association with sacred rituals and objects.
2. One of the most sacred responsibilities for the priest was to act as a mediator between man and God.
 - *Hebrews 5:1 For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins:*
 - *Hebrews 8:3 For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.*
3. In the *Old Testament* economy several distinct priesthoods were recognized.
 - **Family Priesthood.** Initially there was only the family priesthood. The oldest male member of the household was responsible for disseminating the gospel as Adam taught Cain and Able to worship the Lord which they did. Abraham was a family priest as was Jethro, the father in Law of Moses.

Genesis 4:3 And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. 4 And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering:

Genesis 20:17 So Abraham prayed unto God: and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maidservants; and they bare children.

Exodus 3:1 Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.
 - **Melchizedek's Priesthood.** Melchizedek was a king of Salem (Jerusalem). He is presented in *Scripture* as combining both royalty and priesthood in one individual and thus a type of Christ. *Genesis 14:18 "And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High").*
 - **Levitical Priesthood.** The Law of Moses established the Levitical priesthood through the line of Aaron. According to the will of God the entire tribe of Levi was made priests to minister to the remaining tribes of Israel and maintain the holy objects.

Exodus 28:1 And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office, even Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons.

Numbers 1:49 Only thou shalt not number the tribe of Levi , neither take the sum of them among the children of Israel: 50 But thou shalt appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of testimony, and over all the vessels thereof, and over all things that belong to it: they shall bear the tabernacle, and all the vessels thereof; and they shall minister unto it, and shall encamp round about the tabernacle.

- National Priesthood of Israel. While God ordained the specialized priesthood of Levi, there was a sense in which the divine design was to have the entire nation be considered as priests to the Gentile nations. Every man was to be a minister to God.

Exodus 19:6 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.

Hosea.4:6 "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest (Priest-Nation). Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children".

- Moses' priesthood. As a type of Christ the priesthood of Moses is acknowledged in Scripture by his many intercessions as seen in his repeated intercession on behalf of Israel and in his unlimited access to the Tabernacle (Exodus 32:31-35, et al.).
4. Turning to the *New Testament* the priesthood of Christ's priesthood is emphasized following His ascension into heaven when He sat down on a throne of glory.
 - *Psalms 110:1 The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.*
 - *Hebrews 4:14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.*
 - *Hebrews 7:26 For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;*
 - *Hebrews 8:1 Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;*
 5. The appointment of Christ as the eternal High Priest was made by God the father and confirmed by an oath.
 - *Psalm 110:4 "The LORD [Father] has sworn and will not change His mind, 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek'".*
 6. The priesthood of Christ is eternal and therefore not transferable. The believer has confidence that the love of the Lord for His own will compel Him to function as a mediator before God forever.

- *Hebrews 7:16 Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.*

7. The priesthood of Christ's was anticipated by the priesthood of Aaron. Aaron's priesthood foreshadowed Christ's in that:

- Both were established by divine appointment. *Hebrews 5:4 And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. 5 So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee. 6 As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.*

- Both demanded a sacrifice for sins.

Hebrews 5:3 And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.

Hebrews 7:27 Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.

Hebrews 10:10 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

- Both take into account the infirmity or frailty of humanity.

Hebrews 2:18 For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

Hebrews 4:15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

Hebrews 5:2 Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.

8. Despite the fact the priesthood of Aaron was a type of Christ, the Lord's priesthood is presented in *Scripture* as being superior.

- The priesthood of Christ is superior to that of Aaron's because the Levitical priesthood itself is overshadowed by a more perfect type of Christ in the person of Melchizedek who was both king and priest. And, since Jesus is both king and priest his priesthood can be declared to be after the order or classification of Melchizedek and not after Levi.

Hebrews 7:4 Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils. 5 And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham: 6 But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. 7 And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better. 8 And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. 9 And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham. 10 For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.

- The priesthood of Christ is superior to that of Aaron's because Aaron's priesthood could not produce perfection in those it ministered to while the priesthood of Christ can bring many sons into glory.

Hebrews 7:11 If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?

Hebrews 7:18 For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. 19 For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.

- The priesthood of Christ is superior to that of Aaron's because Christ's was confirmed with an oath to be eternal and not temporal.

Hebrews 7:20 And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest: 21 (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:)

- The priesthood of Christ is superior to that of Aaron's because Christ ministers in heaven while the Levites ministered on earth.

Hebrews 8:1 Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; 2 A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.

- The priesthood of Christ is superior to that of Aaron's because Christ ministers in the sphere of reality, while the Levites served in the shadows of rituals without a full reality.

Hebrews 8:5 Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.

- The priesthood of Christ is superior to that of Aaron's because Christ's priesthood is founded upon "*a better covenant*".

Hebrews 7:22 By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.

Hebrews 8:6 But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

- The priesthood of Christ is superior to that of Aaron's because Christ offered a final and complete sacrifice for sin in contrast to the ongoing sacrifices of the Law had it been allowed to continue. *Hebrews 7:27 Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.*
- The priesthood of Christ is superior to that of Aaron's because Christ ministers according to an endless life.

Hebrews 7:16 Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.

Hebrews 7:23 And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: 24 But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. 25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

9. The uniqueness of Christ as the High Priest is found in the fact that the Lord is both the Sacrifice (the Lamb) and the Priest.

10. In order to minister as the High Priest Christ entered the Holy of Holies of heaven *through* His blood but not *with* His blood.

- *Hebrews 9:12 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.*
- *Hebrews 13:20 Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant.*

11. There is no biblical basis to teach Christ presented literal blood in heaven. While the bloody death of Christ was mandated to be the divine penalty to be paid for sin, while without the shedding of Christ's blood there is no remission for sin, it is the death of deaths in the death of Christ which saves. The literal blood of Christ speaks of a spiritual forgiveness of sin by which the soul is healed by His wounds and by which spiritual cleansing comes to the heart that sins.

- *Isaiah 53:5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.*

- *1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*

12. There are several great ministries that Christ, the God-man, as High Priest performs.

- There is the ministry of intercession. Christ actively intercedes on behalf of others. *Romans 8:34 ...Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us).*
- There is the ministry of securing the salvation of sinners. Jesus saves and preserves all who believe. *Hebrews 7:25 Hence, also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them".*
- There is the ministry of answering prayer. Christ intercedes with the Father on behalf of all who approach *"the throne of grace in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).*
- There is the ministry of divine empathy. Our High Priest sympathizes with *"our weaknesses" (Hebrews 4:15).*
- There is the ministry of divine awareness in order to comfort. The presence of Christ in heaven reassures the believers on earth the struggle for sanctification and eternal life is worth the effort. Christ is our Advocate. *Hebrews 4:13 Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. 1 John 2:1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:*

13. The priestly ministry of Christ is shared with the Church.

- *Revelation 1:6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*
- *1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession...*

14. Because of Christ every believer can offer up spiritual sacrifices to God.

- *1 Peter 2:5 "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".*

15. The spiritual sacrifices the believer can offer to God include the following.

- A bodily 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.*

- 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.*
- The production of good works. *Hebrews 13:16* *But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.*
- Intercessory prayer for self and others. *Hebrews 4:16* *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*