

The Priesthood Of God (Part 10) Conclusion

Our Service as Priests

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This sermon is going to be the last sermon in this series of the Priesthood, which is Part 10. As a little bit of review, we explored the ankle-length white coat and its girdle which were actually part of the underclothing. Then there was the calf-length blue robe and the curious girdle that was part and parcel of it, and then there was the intricately patterned gold-scarlet-blue and purple thigh-length ephod.

We also looked at the breastplate of judgment holding the Urim and Thummim, and also it had attached to it the 12 jewels—one for each tribe, and then of course there were the shoulder stones that were attached to that area as well, attached to the girdle, and it too had 12 names, six on each stone—the tribal names of the children of Israel.

Now there are two more pieces of clothing—an adornment worn by the high priest that we will cover, and this is going to be fairly brief because little is said about them in the scriptures.

Turn with me to Exodus 28, verses 36 through 43.

Exodus 28:36-43 "You shall also make a plate of pure gold and engrave on it, like the engraving of a signet: HOLINESS TO THE LORD. And you shall put it on a blue cord, that it may be on the turban; it shall be on the front of the turban. So it shall be on Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things which the children of Israel hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall always be on his forehead, that they may be accepted before the LORD. "You shall skillfully weave the tunic of fine linen thread, you shall make the turban of fine linen, and you shall make the sash of woven work. "For Aaron's sons you shall make tunics, and you shall make sashes for them. And you shall make hats for them, for glory and beauty. So you shall put them on Aaron your brother and on his sons with him. You shall anoint them, consecrate them, and sanctify them, that they may minister to Me as priests. And you shall make for them linen trousers to cover their nakedness; they shall reach from the waist to the thighs. They shall be on Aaron and on his sons when they come into the tabernacle of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister in the holy place, that they do not incur iniquity and die. It shall be a statute forever to him and his descendants after him.

Go now to Exodus 39, verses 27 through 31.

Exodus 39:27-31 They made tunics, artistically woven of fine linen, for Aaron and his sons, a turban of fine linen, exquisite hats of fine linen, short trousers of fine woven linen, and a sash of fine woven linen with blue, purple, and scarlet thread, made by a weaver, as the LORD had commanded Moses. Then they made the plate [the one mentioned in Exodus 28] of the holy crown of pure gold, and wrote on it an inscription like the engraving of a signet: HOLINESS TO THE LORD. And they tied to it a blue cord, to fasten it above on the turban, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

All of these verses describe the head-gear of both the high priest and the ordinary priests. In Exodus 28:40, the term applied not only to Aaron, the immediate sons, but to all ordinary priests that followed in the office of priests.

It is interesting to note that while rendering service at the tabernacle, or the temple, priests were required to wear a head covering. Part of the symbolic reason for this is supplied in I Corinthians, chapter 11 where the subject is hair length. There is no direct connection between the overall subject of I Corinthians 11 and Exodus 28 except for the mention of head covering, that it sends a signal that it is required in some circumstances. Interestingly, the head-covering instruction flows seamlessly out of Paul's instruction right into the Passover, also in chapter 11, which sort of gives you a thought that maybe there is a connection here. I do not know that.

Now having the head covered symbolizes being in submission. That is the only connection between Exodus 28 and I Corinthians 11 between hair lengths: being in submission. Having the head uncovered indicates being in authority. So, if the head is covered, it shows submission. If the head is uncovered, it shows being in authority.

We are going to look at Christ's example, not from the point of head-covering, but mostly just to show that He made it very clear that He was in submission to the Father. We will turn to John 6:38. Remember, Jesus is our High Priest, and He made sure that we understood that He was in submission to the Father.

John 6:38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

He was here because He was under authority, and He was sent by One who had greater authority.

John 8:29 And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him."

This is another strong, direct statement regarding Him being under authority.

We will look at one other scripture regarding this in Luke 22:42. This is at the crucifixion.

Luke 22:42 Saying, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done."

Jesus made sure that we clearly understood that He was under authority, and this is the One who became our High Priest. Now all priests—both high and ordinary—wore external evidence that they were under the authority of God even though they possessed high ranking in the community. God gave no instruction that they had to wear them everywhere, but there is no doubt to what we just read in Exodus 28, that when they were serving at the tabernacle, which was symbolically God's house, their heads were always covered, thus showing they were under authority of the resident of that house.

The high priest wore what is described as a turban, and this leads to the conclusion that it was a white linen cloth wrapping of the same material as the white coat undergarment. Recall "white" symbolizes righteousness, even all the way back in Revelation, chapter 19.

The high priest also wore what is described as a gold crown across the forehead. I did not emphasize it, but when we were in Exodus 39, it called that band that had "HOLINESS TO THE LORD" a crown. It did not call it a crown in Exodus 28, but it did call it a crown in Exodus 39. That crown was held in place by a blue cord that was attached in the same manner to the turban so that it was all one piece—the turban and the crown that was strapped so that it went across his forehead. It was that crown that had engraved on it "HOLINESS TO THE LORD."

As a little bit of review, we see the uniformity of colors: gold, white, and blue. Do not forget that these all symbolize some aspect of Christ's character—gold indicating divinity; white, righteousness; and blue seems to be divided between grace and/or holiness, but the difference here is that this time it is on the head, and that makes things a bit more interesting. The head rules the body.

Jesus Christ is appointed Head of the church, and He rules over the church. The high priest had to wear, symbolically, blue, white, and gold on *his* head. It is interesting that God designates that the head-covering (whether it was the hat the ordinary priest wore, or whether it was the turban the high priest wore) had to be white. Now biblically, white is also meaningful regarding wisdom.

To get a little bit of a feel of this, I want you to turn to Proverbs 16, verse 31. We see the same things—uniformity—being woven into every portion of the symbolic meaning of this clothing. This pertains to the hair, the head.

Proverbs 16:31 The silver-haired head is a crown of glory, if it is found in the way of righteousness.

So glory and righteousness are associated with the "white."

Proverbs 20:29 The glory of young men is their strength, and the splendor of old men is their gray head.

Let us add one more piece to this and apply it to our High Priest.

Revelation 1:13-14 And in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire;

So old age and gray hair speaks of a life lived, experience gained, and that wisdom is the fruit. You might wonder how this could apply to Christ, but it might help to remember that on at least one occasion in the scriptures He is called "the Ancient of Days," which of course He is.

Here is something else I found interesting; so I put it in my notes. It is said that the British custom of judges wearing white wigs is derived from this very thing—this association in the Bible with gray heads and wisdom.

Now in regard to the priests serving at the temple, the headdress was always a constant reminder that righteousness, age, experience, and wisdom are linked in the coloration that is there.

There is another suggestion, and this is a contrast that can be taken from the combination of the crown and its "HOLINESS TO THE LORD" engraving, especially when you think of where it is worn.

It is worn on the forehead because the forehead is generally thought of as the seat of one's reasoning and will. We are going to chase this out just a little bit because the Bible is not always very kind in description of *our* forehead. This is a contrast with what the high priest was to be, and of course what Jesus Christ is.

For example, in Jeremiah, God says that Israel has a "whore's" forehead, meaning one that knows no shame. In another place He says "Israel is stiff of forehead," suggesting inflexibility. They cannot repent. They are inflexible. He told Ezekiel, "I have made your forehead strong against *their* forehead," meaning that Israel was stubborn and that he was going to have to be just as stubborn for what is right as Israel was stubborn for what is wrong.

Here is another interesting one. Across Babylon's forehead was written, "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." That certainly is not praise-worthy at all.

Here is another one for you. Israel considered leprosy of the forehead as the worst leprosy of all, and that is exactly where God smote Uzziah when he presumptuously sinned. His sin was that he tried to take the place of the priest, and make the offering himself, and *zap!* God struck him down with leprosy of the forehead, showing those who understood that this man was stupid for doing something like that. God could have given him leprosy anywhere, but He chose to do it on his forehead, showing that Uzziah was dumb for doing such a thing.

Here is another interesting thing. The term "crown" is translated from the same word that is many times elsewhere translated "flower." That word in Hebrew covers far more than what we call "flowers," as you can see, translating it into "crown." It does kind of indicate something beautiful, does it not? It does.

We use "flower" to mean a beautiful blossom. They commonly used it to cover anything that might grow in a field, not just pretty things that we might consider useful. I want you to notice some of these examples. The ones we are going to turn to here first are in the book of Psalms—Psalm 103 where we see a kind of picturesque use of it.

Psalm 103:15-16 As for man, his days are like grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more.

This is showing what man in reality is like in his lack of immortality.

Let us go to Isaiah 28, verse 1.

Isaiah 28:1 Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower.

Isaiah 40:6-8 The voice said, "Cry out!" And he said, "What shall I cry?" "All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, because the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever."

The use of that term as "crown" came to suggest a contrast with the wisdom of our Lord—that at our very best, all we can do is only temporary and constantly fading. "Here today, gone tomorrow," and

therefore we must absolutely not allow ourselves to become filled with self-importance. At our very best, we are like the grass. Everything attached to a man is dominated by brevity: "Here today, gone tomorrow." At our very best our thoughts are feeble, imperfect, and short-sighted in contrast with everything that has to do with God, which is everlastingly pure and perfect.

Turn now to Isaiah 5:8-9. Remember, this is radiating out from the thought of the forehead which is the seat of thinking.

Isaiah 5:8-9 "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."

The holy high priest's crown was intended to be a constant reminder that our thoughts are what direct our actions and will, and that the pinnacle of all thought and action for man is holiness to the Lord. That is what we are to aim for. We will see more of this as we go along. This is the direction for which all of life is to be aimed. All of our intellect and all of our character is to be used in this direction.

The holiness of the Lord must influence our attitudes and what we say, and it must control both the path and the steps in our life, as well as the work of our hand. Peter and Moses put it very directly and succinctly. We are to be holy because our God is holy. So our High Priest, Jesus Christ, is our example, and in our striving to be holy, we are to imitate His righteousness from the inside out, beginning with our thoughts and using His holy wisdom found in His book, and if we do, we are guaranteed to receive God's help.

The blue that represented His grace will be bound within our life's activities because those activities will be firmly anchored to the divine nature that is given to us. You can remember how when we went through there, all these pieces of clothing are anchored to one another, almost like it is making one piece. But they were not one piece. There were nine or ten pieces that made up the clothing, but they were all anchored together, and it became a unity once the high priest put it on, and that is the way it was, is, in the life of Jesus Christ, our example.

A final reminder is that the scarlet, reminding of Christ's humanity, and the purple, which was on the ephod—the blending of scarlet and blue, reminding us that He was God and man at one and the same time.

And then there was the breastplate of judgment, and the shoulder stone, teaching us that the reality is that our High Priest is bearing us. It is His responsibility to bear us into the Kingdom of God. It is His responsibility from the Father to make every effort to get us there. In one place, it is interesting that what Christ is doing is compared to a mother carrying a child. That is a pretty big responsibility, and He is doing it, though, with eternal godly love and wisdom toward "Holiness to the Lord."

We are going to go back to the book of Hebrews and read a number of things that are written there regarding our responsibility. We will begin in Hebrews 7, verse 11 as we are moving towards wrapping up this series of sermons.

Hebrews 7:11-12 Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the

order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law.

In one sense, the whole reason for giving this series is pointing toward this: The priesthood has changed. We read all of these things about the Levitical priesthood because they set a foundation in the patterns that are given within that instruction. It is like they are forerunners, and we are now involved in a priesthood of a much higher rank than the Levitical priesthood, and we are serving under the Melchizedek priesthood under our High Priest, Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 7:12-16 For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law. For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood. And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life.

We will now go to Hebrews 8:1-3.

Hebrews 8:1-3 Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man. For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore it is necessary that this One also have something to offer.

What He offered was Himself. We are seeing a new pattern. The Levitical priesthood never offered themselves. They offered animals. Obviously then, if our High Priest offered Himself, those who are going to serve under Him as part of that priesthood are going to have to offer *themselves* as well. This is a radical change.

Hebrews 9:11 But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.

The Melchizedek priesthood is spiritual in nature from top down. We might say from beginning to end. The Aaronic priesthood was physical.

Hebrews 9:12-15 Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

We are part of those who are called, that we might receive an eternal inheritance. Jesus Christ has already been installed for the purpose of preparing those under Him through the processes of salvation. This has interesting angles to it. This new priesthood has several characteristics to differentiate it from Israel and from all others.

Let us go to Hebrews 7:3. Notice what it says about Christ.

Hebrews 7:3 Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually.

The main point here for the purpose of this sermon is that this priesthood is unique from top down. "Without father, without mother"—that is pretty unusual. There is only one High Priest, and that High Priest and all those priests under Him will serve forever. Even as Christ's priesthood is eternal, those under Him will also serve eternally. It is therefore an unchanging priesthood, and also therefore there is an unchanging administration of those offices, so there will be no irregularities of conduct and administration going on. That is really unusual.

Let us look at a second difference in the book of Galatians.

Galatians 3:6-8 Just as Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed."

The key here to this second change is this: In light of the difference or differences in that first one (that it is unique in changing), this one is also universal. This priesthood is universal. Who was the Aaronic priesthood to serve? Only Israel. Only those that made the first covenant, and only those who worshipped God at the temple and the tabernacle. But this Melchizedek priesthood, with Christ as the High Priest, is universal. It will not only operate in behalf of Israel, but all nations. "In you all the nations shall be blessed." So we see this "being blessed" in two ways. Christ is King. Christ is High Priest, and Christ's priesthood under Him will also be serving with Him in both categories.

Let us go to a third difference.

I Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

All I want to pick out of here is another quality that makes it unique, and that is that it is a *royal* priesthood. There was no intimation under the Aaronic priesthood that they were royal in the sense of David's line was royal. The kingly line was royal, but this priesthood is going to be royal. Christ is its Head. He is of the line of David. He is royalty. Now we have it shown here that those who are going to be in that priesthood under Him are also royalty. We see this confirmed in Revelation 5:10 that what lies ahead of us is to be kings and priests—both at one at the same time. That is a *royal* priesthood.

I might offer this...this will kind of add to the royalty angle: we are descended from royalty. There is nobody more royal than God, the Father; and so our royalty actually comes down through Him to the Son, and then on to us.

The fourth is kind of a culmination of all of the others—exceedingly important. It is last, but it certainly is not last in importance. It is a *righteous* priesthood. The priesthood under Aaron was not righteous much of the time. There were some good ones scattered here and there—an occasional

Phineas, an occasional Eleazar—something like that. But this priesthood will always be righteous; and it will uniformly produce peace between God and the worshippers, functioning without faction, with all of these offices teaching the same standard according to the same law. That will really be unique to those of us who are finding out living in the United States that people are now ignoring the Constitution; it is almost as if it does not exist.

What must a priest do in God's behalf before the people? Let me change that. What must *we* do to prepare for what *we* will be doing far more effectively in the future?

When John Ritenbaugh talks about preparing, I am mostly talking about being prepared to carry out our responsibility as a priest. That is going to be one real hands-on job. I do not know enough about what we are going to be doing as kings. I know we are going to be governing, but I know, as a priest, we are going to get down and dirty with the people. It is going to really be a "hands-on" job. So we had better be prepared for doing that.

Here is one of the best descriptions I can find in the entire Bible of what a priest is to do. We are going to go back to the book of holiness—to Leviticus, chapter 10—and we will be spending a little bit of time in this chapter as well. I am going to read this to you from the *Revised English Bible*. It is maybe a little bit more modern, a little bit different from what the *New King James Version* says.

Leviticus 10:9-11 (*Revised English Bible*) "You and your son with you must not drink wine or strong drink when you are to enter the tent of meeting, that you may not die. This is a rule binding on your descendants for all time, to make a distinction between the sacred and the profane [meaning far from the temple], between clean and unclean, and to teach the Israelites all the decrees which the Lord has spoken to them through Moses."

Now what caused Nadab and Abihu's execution was a reckless and presumptuous disregard for God and the office He gave them to fulfill in His behalf before the people. Perhaps alcohol had something to do with their conduct, but one thing is clear, and this is that alcohol lowers a person's inhibition, tends to put the mind to sleep, and it subtly robs one of one's reasoning power. Under its influence, one will do things that one never otherwise would do.

We are going to expand the spirit of God's command here in verses 9 through 11, because the principle applies to this day. He says "for all time," and we are going to be priests. Now listen to this. You know that in Revelation 17 God says the whole world is drunk with the wine of the wrath of the Babylonish woman's fornication. That world was the former habitation of all of us before our calling and conversion.

Have you ever thought that we were drunk when we came to God unconverted? Yes we were. We were drunk with the wine of the wrath of Babylon. The influence of life and that wretched spiritual environment still lingers, motivating us to act at times recklessly and presumptuously in regard to our duties to God and fellowman.

Even though the command in Leviticus 10 directly applies to alcohol, I believe that there is a veiled warning here for all of us to check ourselves often in order to make sure that our conduct in God's behalf is not syncretized with the things brought into God's service from the world. This is very easily done, but we must examine ourselves frequently because we are always before Him in His service, and especially so before His people—that is, each other—as examples, and therefore as teachers. We need to be clearheaded in our thinking, for as Peter says in I Peter 4:7, "Be you

therefore sober." You can see two reasons for him saying that now. He says, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind."

This Nadab and Abihu example shows that God is not going to accept slap-dash effort when we are capable of much better. In our example and teaching, we are to make clear distinctions between holy and profane, the clean and unclean, and we are to teach the laws of God. If our thinking is not clear regarding these things, our example will be misleading, and teaching will be vague and confused.

This charge given the priests required them, and of course us, to be committed and dedicated, striving for holiness through a continuing fellowship with Christ, not the world. So the theme here is that God wants single-minded devotion to what He requires of us.

It is kind of scary, at least in fact, as far as we know, that Nadab and Abihu messed up one time, and God gave an example and wrote it in the Book as an admonition to the spiritual priesthood that was going to come along in the days of Jesus Christ. He does not want us to lose out on our salvation by being careless and presumptuous the way they were. He wants single-minded devotion to what He has called us to.

We are going to go back to the New Testament to I Peter 2:1.

I Peter 2:1-5 Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

When people are converted and they come to Christ (this would include us as well), they are, at the same time, made part of the Family of God and come into the church as newborn babes. Right away, just like newborn babes, Peter focuses on eating; but in this case, he means eating spiritually—"the milk of the word." The place of eating is the church assembly primarily, where they are fed by those who are older in the faith, who are also at the same time preparing for the priesthood.

Peter's metaphor here quickly switches to a building, as if each person is a stone fit into a temple. The word "stone" is not just an irregular lump that is picked up from a quarry or a field, but a stone prepared to be fitted into a particular place. In this case, what is being built is a spiritual house, and for use within it a holy priesthood. "Spiritual house" can be understood as either a house in which a family lives, or it can be understood as a temple in which *God* lives. I believe that in this context the second is the one intended because of the mention of holy priesthood, spiritual house, and spiritual sacrifices. These are functions that do not take place in an ordinary house.

When we put all of these metaphors together, the picture that forms is of individual Christians who make up the building, but at the same time also work within the building as priests. Keen, is it not? Very interesting. This house, this temple, is the dwelling place of God. It is *the* central place of the worship of God.

Now without saying it directly, Peter is saying God lives in us. We *are* the temple. This is really fascinating. We are *His* temple. He lives in us. The temple in Jerusalem is not even needed, as Jesus told the Samaritan woman. He said, "*But lady, in little time you will not go to Jerusalem to worship*

anymore." The temple is not needed. He also alluded to this same thing in John 2 when He prophesied that following His crucifixion *He* would be the temple.

Paul adds to this temple imagery. We are going to look at these scriptures in Ephesians 1, verses 22 and 23. We can see that all of these pieces are being woven together by God when we begin to see the design that is going on here and the fascinating life that we have been called to.

Ephesians 1:22-23 And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

A little bit of wording there, but what Paul is saying is that we fill Christ out. He is the Head, and we fill the rest of Him out. Remember, this fits right into what Peter said, that God is fashioning a spiritual house, God is fashioning a temple. Christ is the temple. Christ is the Head of the temple. We fill out Christ's body. *We* are the temple.

In Ephesians 2, verses 19 to 21, he brings the temple back into the picture here.

Ephesians 2:19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

He brings another picture into this: God's family. We are part of His family. We are part of the temple. We are part of Christ. God is in us. *We are* the temple.

Ephesians 2:19-22 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

We are not only consecrated as a temple in which God lives, but we are employed as serving within its precincts.

Now keeping things in context with I Peter, among the very first things Peter charges the priests with appear just a little bit earlier. So back to I Peter again, to chapter 1, to some very familiar scriptures that we will touch with this because it contains a poignant phrase.

I Peter 1:13-16 Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts [which we learned in the world], as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."

This is a broad overall responsibility of every priest regardless of whether he is young or old in the faith. We must not be of this world. We must be in the character image of the mind and conduct of our High Priest.

Now what does the holy priesthood do in this temple? In chapter II Peter makes it very clear.

I Peter 2:5 You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

So what does a holy priesthood do in a temple? It offers up spiritual sacrifices. More specifically, what *are* these sacrifices that we need to practice in preparation for the Kingdom of God?

We are going to go to the one that is the biggest one, the most time-consuming one—the one that burns the most energy, the one that we are called upon to make most frequently on a day-to-day, minute-by-minute basis, and this appears in the book of Romans, chapter 12, verse one.

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

I mentioned maybe about fifteen or twenty minutes ago that one of the major differences between Jesus Christ as High Priest and the Aaronic high priest is that Jesus Christ offered Himself. *He* was the sacrifice, and now we are going to see directly that God is requiring of all the priests He has called to serve under Jesus Christ that they offer *themselves* as the sacrifice. That is what it says. You are to present your bodies a *living* sacrifice, which Jesus did continuously until finally He was crucified, and that part of the process ended.

Now it does not show up here, as far as I know, in any translation from the Greek that Paul wrote in, that Paul used the same terminology here, writing in the Greek that appears in the Septuagint—the Greek translation of the sacrifices of the book of Leviticus. Same terminology. The essential understanding one must have regarding the tabernacle and the temple sacrifices is not the death of the animal at all, but rather what we are supposed to get from it, which is the giving of a life in *service* to God. In other words, the giving of a life lived, not the end of a life in death.

I do not know how familiar you are with especially the first three of the sacrifices: the burnt offering, the grain offering, and the peace offering. You can read until you are blue in the face, you will never ever see "sin" mentioned in relation to any one of these three sacrifices. Do you know why? Because they do not depict the giving of a life as a sacrifice for sin. They depict giving of a life in service.

Jesus Christ's life was given to God totally, completely. He was burned up, as it were, without reservation. That is what the first of the three offerings means. It teaches us actually, in practical ways, the keeping of the first four commandments totally, completely, sinlessly a life given to God.

The grain offering pictures a life given to mankind in service to mankind—the keeping of the six final commandments perfectly, which Christ also fulfilled.

The peace offering pictures the fruit of carrying out that responsibility. So we see the priest, God, and the offerer enjoying one another's fellowship in complete harmony and unity. There is peace. There is an interesting allusion of this in the Passover service, and every year we read these verses, and every year I wonder if we understand what Paul is saying in I Corinthians 10, verse 16.

I Corinthians 10:16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion . . .

Do you know what this "communion" means? It means the fellowship. It means the sharing. That is what the *peace* offering is. It is a sharing of the sacrifice.

I Corinthians 10:16-17 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we [the church], though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.

It is picturing a harmony. Verse 18 says:

I Corinthians 10:18 Observe Israel after the flesh: Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?

He is picturing, there, the peace offering—that which is produced as a result of the sacrifices of Jesus Christ, and the sacrifices of Jesus Christ, the giving of His life as an offering in that way would have been to no avail if He had not already fulfilled the burnt offering and the grain offering before that ever occurred, because those two together produce the peace between God and man. That is one thing you have to keep in mind for those three offerings. The sin offering does not even come into the picture until Leviticus 4 and 5, and then offerings are made for sin.

Now back to Romans, chapter 12. The exhortation in this verse from Paul actually begins with "Therefore." It is a conjunction, and it means, in this position, that as a result of what God has freely given us in forgiveness, faith, and hope, and especially in regard to His bountiful mercy that Paul taught in the first eleven chapters, it is reasonable that we must do this. So Paul wrote all these chapters leading up to here.

In chapter 12 a new section begins in his epistle, and he says that what he is writing from this point on is what we must do as a result of everything he wrote in the first eleven chapters. The word "Therefore" gathers everything together, and he used that word "therefore" to lead us in this direction. What he means then, in summary, is that as a result of what God has freely given us in forgiveness, faith, and hope, and especially in regard to His bountiful mercy, it is reasonable that we must do this.

You will see the word "reasonable" the next to the last word in the English version. "It is your reasonable service." But before he gets there, he references your body. When he uses that term, he means everything that the body represents in its entirety from top to bottom—meaning our brain, and therefore our intellect, our eyes, our ears, our tongue, our arms, our hands, our legs, our feet, our sexual organs—everything as it is used in religious life, family life, playing and at work. They are to be devoted to serving God as a life lived entirely in reference to our calling, because our calling now, brethren, is our vocation. That is what Paul says in Ephesians. It is our work. It is our job. Our calling is our job on earth before God. I know that in a way that is hard for us to accept, but I cannot change what it says here.

The term "reasonable" is then put in there, because I am pretty sure that Paul felt, as he was writing, that people are going to think this is unreasonable that we should devote ourselves in this way in sacrifice to God, and so he inserted that word "reasonable." Some Bibles will translate that word "rational." Some Bibles will translate it "spiritual." All three are correct. Any one of these could be used there.

This is interesting. The underlying Greek word appears in only one other place in the New Testament, and guess where it is. It is in I Peter 2:2, where in modern translations it is always translated "spiritual." All three of those words are correct, so regardless of what your Bible has, it has

the correct one. I will give you what the word is. Transliterated, it is an adjective—*logikon*. That ought to begin to sound familiar to you. The root is *logos*—the word that is translated "word." Jesus is the *Logos*. This is an adjectival form of the word *logos*. Now *logos* literally means "expression of thought." That is where the thought of a word comes from. You have the thought, and you say the word. You have the thought, and you do something. It is the expression of thought.

Now *logikon* is the adjective that describes the thought that Paul wrote in Romans 12:1, and he ends it by saying, "This may sound weird to you, but it is logical, it is reasonable, it is spiritual." He used the word *logikon*. So they translated it in English as "reasonable." Here we have it from our Creator, saying, "I am not asking too much. This is reasonable." He is kind of telling us, "Go ahead. Accept it. It is right." It is hard to do. It is hard to be a living sacrifice. This is our difficulty, but see, somebody went before us and did it. Christ showed it can be done, and God accepted it as *the* sacrifice for sin.

Keeping the first three sacrifices is what prepared Christ to be the sacrifice for sin of Leviticus 4 and Leviticus 5. Those things are put right in the order they need to be: burnt offering, meal offering, peace, sacrifice for sin to take care of it. It is really a wonderful plan, form, or whatever. It is so simple in a way, and so logical, and so now we are called to work under Jesus Christ, and we are called to imitate Him as closely as we possibly can by being a living sacrifice. We have got quite a job before us. It is nothing to sneeze at.

In Colossians 3 it is very plain, but it shows a way of making sacrifices. It takes it into more specifics.

Colossians 3:1-5 If then you were raised with Christ [which we were], seek those things which are above [the responsibility to seek heavenly things, spiritual things], where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind [be sober] on things above, not on things on the earth. [He is charging those who are preparing for the priesthood.] For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. [Therefore we owe Him something. It is our duty, our obligation.] When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death [sacrifice] your members which are on the earth [Put them to death.]: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

Now that is a negative side to this sacrificing. Jump down to verse 8. Here comes a positive side.

Colossians 3:8-10 But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.

That is pretty awesome, so clear. This is how we sacrifice. We do it while we are alive. And what are we sacrificing? The sins that are clinging to the members of our body that we used in a wrong way and does not glorify God.

Let us go to another place—just awesome when looked at in this direction.

Philippians 2:5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. . .

That is a sacrifice, allowing the mind of Christ to be part of our life, part of our mind, and then using it in life.

Philippians 2:5-7 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

What is he talking about here? The mind of Christ is a humble mind. It is a submissive mind to the One who is in authority over Him—the Father.

Philippians 2:8-11 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him [the positive response from the Father as a result of Christ offering Himself as a living sacrifice] and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Paul is now showing us that there is an awesome reward, if you can put it that way, that awaits us who are willing to sacrifice our lives the way Christ did, to follow His example.

Philippians 2:12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;

Do you see this in its context where Paul makes this statement? It has to do with sacrificing our life humbly as Christ did to God.

Philippians 2:13-16 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.

Listen to how Paul closes off this section.

Philippians 2:17-18 Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.

This passage here in Philippians 2 counterbalances the hard implications of Romans 12:1 and Colossians 3:1-8. Paul uses the dedicated sacrificial life of Jesus Christ as the example he holds forth to us to follow, and this passage shows how clearly, how seriously Paul took his own exhortation given in Romans 12:1. He wrote this epistle from prison upon hearing the news that he responded to in his epistle. The congregation in Philippi was strong, but it was also undergoing a great deal of persecution, and the passage shows the positive fruit of the dedicated life of a priest.

The object at first is to present Christ as our model of dedicated humble service despite Him being truly aligned and equal with God, and despite this, He took no opportunity to flaunt His rank before

others. Instead, He laid His rank aside and essentially became nothing but a servant. Instead, He yielded himself in perfect obedience to God. He never shrank from what that might have involved. As a result of this, He is now highly exalted with a name above every name.

Paul then urges the Philippians and us to follow that example in working out our salvation, and this is given as the reason we should make effort to be saved. This is very important because people mistakenly believe that if God is working for us there might be no need for us to work at all, to make effort. But that word "work" means to be active, produce, and so Paul is urging us to be active, to cooperate with God who is also working in us. It is so interesting, that in the last couple of verses there, Paul shows that he most certainly did not take negatively the services and sacrifices of priesthood he was going through despite possibly an impending beheading in martyrdom. He was actually looking forward to Christ's return when he would have displayed before him the fruit of the sacrifices made in the flesh in the Philippians' behalf, because he laid out his life for them, and eventually his life was taken.