

The Priesthood

Bill Brinkworth

During Old Testament times, there were priests that served as mediators between God and man presenting their prayers and sacrifices to Him. Before Moses, the priests' duties were often done by the head of a household as did Job, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. During Moses' day, God appointed priests from the Levite lineage, and this practice was intended to continue until the perfect priest came, Jesus Christ.

The Old Testament priests were not perfect. Their limitations were because:

- ☞ They were ordained ("appointed by") by men, although they were of an ancestry ordered by God (Hebrews 5:1).
- ☞ They had to go to God with sacrifices and gifts (Heb. 5:1, 3). The offerings were not a one-time gift. They were only temporary appeasements to a Holy God.
- ☞ The priests themselves were sinners. They also had to give an offering for themselves (Heb. 5:2, 3).
- ☞ Soon the priesthood stopped. The sacrifices halted. Intercessory prayers and gifts



to God ceased, but man was still in desperate need of a mediator between him and God.

☞ God then sent man the perfect priest. He was not appointed by man. He only had to make one offering for all of man's sins. That sacrifice covered sins past, present, and even into the future. This priest was not of Levi's lineage. He was very much like a priest of Abraham's time — Melchisedec. Like Melchisedec, whose name means "king of righteousness", this God-appointed priest was the real King of righteousness. This priest was the only God-appointed priest. This priest was God's only begotten Son — Jesus! Jesus' one-time sacrifice, that never had to be re-offered, was His own life.


Unfortunately, many have not allowed God's High priest to be the sacrifice for their sins. Too many have rejected Jesus and are still appointing their own priests. No matter what those sincere people offer to God, it will be refused by the Creator. They are doing it their way and are refusing the one-time sacrifice Jesus made for them on Calvary's cross.

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The Ten Commandments

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I. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

Exodus 20:3

II. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any

graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:"

Ex. 20:4

III. "Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."

Ex. 20:7

IV. "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy." *Ex. 20:8*

V. "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee."

Ex. 20:12

VI. "Thou shalt not kill." *Ex. 20:13*

VII. "Thou shalt not commit adultery." *Ex. 20:14*

VIII. "Thou shalt not steal." *Ex. 20:15*

IX. "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour." *Ex. 20:16*

X. "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his

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By Faith

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To early believers, obeying the Old Testament laws were part of their life and upbringing. If they were Jews, the commandments of the Old Testament Law were drilled into them since their youth. Those laws were even a part of the gentiles' (non-Jews) upbringing. The morality of those laws had done what God introduced them for: to teach

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maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's." Ex. 20:17

There are many more than ten commandments; some say 603; some say 613. The complete Old Testament Law includes commandments on accidental deaths, fighting, crime, diseases, slavery, punishment, marriage restrictions, tolerances, dietary, dress, witchcraft, injuries, sexual restraints, and other categories.

Following these commandments does not get anyone saved! The purpose of these laws was to teach mankind he is a sinner! Like a teacher, it taught we are not as smart, or as good, as we think we are. The laws also pointed man to trust Christ alone as Saviour, when He came the first time.

"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." Gal. 3:24

Without these Ten Commandments, people could not live together without having many problems. These are God's moral laws for mankind. The ri-

se of crime and social problems of today is mainly be-cause of disobedience to these commandments.

Although we are not under obedience to the entire set of Old Testament laws today (Gal. 3:25), they still have a purpose. Since God does not change, they still give us an idea of what God likes and dislikes. With this knowledge, we can please Him better, keep from sin, and even have a healthier life.

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many what was right and wrong (Galatians 3:24). Even today, with few even attending church or reading their Bible, the law has still done its work in many hearts. It still convicts many to know what is right, and what is not.

When Christianity started spreading, its message was different to what many of the religious had heard previously. Instead of the strict enforcement of the Old Testament Law, its message had all to do with

"faith". They had to believe something that was not written down at the time, was talked negatively about in their temples, and could not be seen or proven. It was an "invisible" trust on their part.

Faith was an old concept, but many never realized it was part of the Old Testament lives. When it was emphasized in the early church teachings, there were some questions and doubts. The Jews did not quite realize that much of what Abraham (Gal. 3:9), Moses, and other Old Testament figures did was done by faith on their part. Those saints had to step out and follow God when there was no evident direction or sign. Their faith that the Almighty would deliver or help them was what allowed them to get closer to God and to be used by Him.

Now the early Christians had to step out and trust what Jesus said and commanded them to do. They had to believe that His words were also God's commandments. With the pull of what they used to do for hundreds of years, by sight and obedience to the law, they now had to understand that it was more important for them to trust Jesus' finished work on the cross (Gal. 3:26).

I imagine their feelings were much like the feelings of one saved from an unbiblical religion today. People may be used to lighting candles, reciting prayers, telling their sins to a man in a confessional, and following other

teachings of their church. However, after they got saved, they realized that those practices were not scriptural, and that they were not to do them anymore. They had to step out, by faith and believe Jesus' words and trust Him, and forget what they had done in the past.

Faith can be difficult for some to let lead them. Laws seem easier and more secure for many to follow. That is why so many try to hang on to both sides. They try to follow the laws they also learned previously, and also try to live by faith. It cannot be both. Trusting in something other than faith is not faith (Gal. 2:12). We can only be justified ("pardoned or cleared of sin's guilt") by faith in Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:27).

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The Old Testament priesthood was for another time — a time before the perfect Priest had been sent by God. Today we have the privilege of going to that High Priest, who is not sitting in some earthly temple or church, but is sitting at the right hand of the Father in Heaven. We can accept His offering on the cross to cover all our sins. After we have accepted Him as our Saviour, we can go to Him anytime with our prayers and needs. We no longer need an imperfect middle man. We have the perfect mediator — Christ Jesus.

"BUT THE SCRIPTURE HATH CONCLUDED ALL UNDER SIN, THAT THE PROMISE BY FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST MIGHT BE GIVEN TO THEM THAT BELIEVE. BUT BEFORE FAITH CAME, WE WERE KEPT UNDER THE LAW, SHUT UP UNTO THE FAITH WHICH SHOULD AFTERWARDS BE REVEALED. WHEREFORE THE LAW WAS OUR SCHOOLMASTER TO BRING US UNTO CHRIST, THAT WE MIGHT BE JUSTIFIED BY FAITH. BUT AFTER THAT FAITH IS COME, WE ARE NO LONGER UNDER A SCHOOLMASTER. FOR YE ARE ALL THE CHILDREN OF GOD BY FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS." *Galatians 3:22-26*