

**General Subject: The New Testament Priesthood for the Fulfillment of  
God's Eternal Purpose**

**Message One**

**The Vision of the Priesthood throughout the Bible**

Scripture Reading: Gen. 1:26; 2:7, 9; 4:4; 8:20-21; 12:7-8; Exo. 19:6; Mark 1:1-3; Rom. 15:16; 1  
Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:5-6; 5:9-10; 20:6; 22:3

**I. The Bible is a book of the priesthood and the entire Old Testament is a record of the priesthood**

- A. The Bible, which is a book on the priesthood, reveals that God created man with the view that He could have a priesthood, a priestly body, to serve Him; God created man with four particular characteristics:
1. First, He created man in His image that man might bear His likeness, expressing Him—Gen. 1:26a; cf. 2 Cor. 3:18.
  2. Second, He gave man His authority for His dominion, which indicates that man is His representative (v. 26b); thus, man expresses and represents God.
  3. Third, He created man with a spirit, and this spirit in Genesis 2:7 is called “the breath of life”—cf. John 4:24; Rom. 1:9; 7:6.
  4. Fourth, God put man in front of the tree of life, indicating that God desired to have a man to receive Him as the tree of life so that man might live God—Gen. 2:9.
  5. These are the four particular characteristics that show God's desire in His creation of man; a priest is a person who bears these four particular characteristics.
- B. In addition to the four particular characteristics in God's creation of man, the priesthood after man's fall required offering sacrifices to solve the problem of man's sin
1. All the animal sacrifices offered by man in the Old Testament were types of the coming Christ, pointing to the coming of Christ as our Redeemer—Gen. 3:21; 4:4.
  2. Abel was the first priest of God, representing all the believers in Christ (1 Pet. 2:5, 9); a priest is a person who offers the sacrifices typifying Christ to God—4:4, note 1.
  3. Noah was also an individual priest; after the judgment of the flood, Noah built an altar and offered sacrifices to God, which became a satisfying fragrance to God—8:20-21.
  4. Later in the history of mankind, the Bible tells us that God called Abraham out of the world of idols to a new land, the land of Canaan; in this land Abraham built an altar and offered sacrifices to God—12:7-8; 22:2, 13.
  5. From this we can see that Abel, Noah, and Abraham were individual priests because they offered something to God; before God ordained the formal, official priesthood at Mount Sinai, there were individuals offering sacrifices to God already.
  6. Abraham's descendants eventually became the nation of Israel, and God delivered them out of the tyranny of Egypt and brought them to Mount Sinai.
  7. At Mount Sinai God revealed His intention for the children of Israel to be a kingdom of priests to Him—Exo. 19:6 note 1
    - a. As God's people remain in His presence, they become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation—Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 1 Pet. 2:9.
    - b. As priests, God's people live in God's presence, enjoying Him as their portion, even as He enjoys them as His treasure—Exo. 19:5.
    - c. The mutual enjoyment between God and His people separates His people unto Himself from everything other than Him, making them a holy nation.

8. God intended that the entire nation of Israel be a priesthood, but because of the worship of the golden calf (32:1-6), they lost the priesthood, and only the tribe of Levi was chosen to replace the whole nation of Israel as priests to God (vv. 5-29; Deut. 33:8-10).

## II. We can also see the priesthood in the New Testament

- A. The New Testament begins with a priest—John the Baptist—Mark 1:1-3
  1. He was born in a miraculous way to Zachariah and Elizabeth; His father Zachariah was a priest, and John the Baptist was born a priest—Luke 1:5-25, 57-80.
  2. We may think that the New Testament begins with Jesus Christ, but actually the record of the New Testament begins with a person who was born a priest.
- B. The New Testament ends with priests who are a kingdom—Rev. 1:5-6; 5:9-10
  1. Revelation 1:5b-6 says, “To Him who loves us and has released us from our sins by His blood and made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father, to Him be the glory and the might forever and ever. Amen.”
  2. According to the grammar of these verses, kingdom and priests are in apposition to each other; therefore, the priests are the kingdom.
  3. Revelation 5:9-10 says that we were purchased for God by the blood of Christ out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and we were made priests to our God.
  4. Revelation 20 tells us that in the millennium all the overcomers will be co-kings with Christ, and these co-kings of Christ will be the priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years—v. 6, note 4.
  5. Revelation 22:3 says, “the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His slaves will serve Him”
    - a. The Greek word *serve* denotes serving as priests; to serve God and the Lamb also will be a blessing to God’s redeemed in eternity.
    - b. Eventually, all the believers will participate in the priesthood for eternity in the New Jerusalem, in which we will serve Him as priests.
    - c. In the New Jerusalem, we shall also reign with Christ in the kingship—v. 5.
    - d. The priests who compose the New Jerusalem will be people bringing God to man and bringing man to God, and they will be absolutely one with God; day and night they will be living a life in Christ’s death, resurrection, and ascension.

## III. The New Testament teaches us clearly that all the believers are priests; we are not individualistic priests, but we are priests in a corporation to become a priesthood

- A. The truth concerning the priesthood began to be recovered from 1828 when the Brethren were raised up by the Lord in England; they saw the universality of the priesthood.
- B. Before that time Bible teachers thought that the priests were a particular body of special people; this was the reason that the clergy-laity system was built up; the so-called common believers became the laity.
- C. The British Brethren, however, saw that in the New Testament, according to Revelation 1:5b-6 and 1 Peter 2:5 and 9, every believer is a priest.
- D. From the very beginning of the Lord's recovery among us, we also saw this truth concerning the priesthood, but neither we nor the Brethren pointed out that the priesthood in the New Testament is the priesthood of the gospel.
- E. In the Old Testament the priests were working and ministering to offer animal sacrifices to God, but Paul as a New Testament priest was busy in the gospel of God—Rom. 15:16.
- F. Yes, we all are priests, but we need to see what kind of priests we are; according to Romans 15:16 we are priests of the gospel of God; we all need to declare, “I am a priest of the gospel of God!”

## Message Two

### The Definition of a Priest and the Two Orders of the Priesthood

Scripture Reading: Exo. 19:6; 29:1,4; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10; Gen. 14:18-20; Heb.13:15; 2:12

- I. A priest is a person who lives solely for God's interests and serves Him—Exo. 19:6; Rom. 14:7-8; 2 Cor. 5:15**
  - A. Priests are the most normal and proper persons, those who realize that God's plan is to work Himself into a group of people in order that He might be their life and that they might become His expression—1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6.
  - B. A normal and proper human being is one who is a priest, one who serves God; if we are not priests serving God in all that we do, we are abnormal—5:10.
- II. A priest is one who receives God, who is filled, saturated, and permeated with God, and who has God flowing out of him so that he might be a living expression of God—1 Pet. 2:5, 9**
  - A. God's intention is not to call us merely to work for Him; His intention is that we first open ourselves to Him in order that He may come into us to fill and flood us until He has taken possession of every part of our being—Eph. 3:16-21.
  - B. Our entire being must be saturated, permeated, and possessed by God—1 Thes. 5:23
    1. If this is our situation, we will be one with God and will not only be clothed outwardly with Him as power but also permeated inwardly with Himself as everything—Luke 24:49; Eph. 5:18.
    2. As we are saturated, permeated, and possessed by God, spontaneously He will flow out of us, and we will be built up with others in this flow of life—John 7:38; Eph. 2:21-22.
  - C. Not until we are one with the Lord and possessed by Him can we ever work for Him—3:16-21; 1 Cor. 3:9a; 15:58; 2 Cor. 5:20; 6:1.
- III. A priest is a person who contacts God in the mingling with God—1 Cor. 6:17**
  - A. The priest's passing through the Holy Place and into the Holy of Holies is his contact with God, and this contact is not in himself but in a mingling with God; a priest's contact with God is in God—Heb. 10:19.
  - B. When we as priests contact God, we contact Him not merely objectively but also subjectively; we do not contact God apart from God, but we contact God in God, that is, in the mingling with God—John 15:4-5.
- IV. A priest is one who is absolutely and thoroughly mingled with God—John 14:20**
  - A. God's purpose is to mingle Himself with us so that He becomes our life, nature, and content, and we become His corporate expression—Eph. 3:16-21; 4:4-6, 16
    1. The will of God is the mingling of God with man, and the fulfillment of God's purpose depends on the mingling of divinity and humanity—Eph. 1:5, 9; 3:11.
    2. The Christian life is the mingling of divinity and humanity; to be a Christian is to be mingled with God, to be a God-man—2 Tim. 3:17.
  - B. If we would serve God as priests, we need to see a vision of the mingled spirit—the divine Spirit mingled with our regenerated spirit—1 Cor. 6:17; Rom. 8:4
    1. The Father is in the Son, the Son is the Spirit, and the Spirit is now mingled with our regenerated spirit—John 14:9-10, 16-18; 1 Cor. 15:45b; 6:17.

2. The focus of God's economy is the mingled spirit, the divine Spirit mingled with the human spirit—Rom. 8:4.
3. The mingled spirit is both the Spirit of the Lord and our spirit—2 Cor. 3:17; 1 Cor. 6:17.
4. The mingled spirit is a spirit that is one spirit with God and that is the same as God in life and nature but not in His Godhead—1 John 5:11; 2 Pet. 1:4.
5. To live in the mingled spirit is to let Christ fill and saturate us until He permeates our whole being and is thereby expressed through us—Eph. 2:22; 3:16-21.

**V. The two orders of the priesthood are the holy priesthood and the royal priesthood—Rev. 5:10; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9**

- A. The holy priesthood is typified by the order of Aaron; the order of Aaron is the holy order—Exo. 29:1, 4; 1 Pet. 2:5; Heb. 2:17
  1. To be holy is to be separated from the worldly things unto God—1 Pet. 1:16.
  2. The first order of the priesthood—the aspect of the Aaronic priesthood, the holy priesthood—is for the offering of sacrifices to God for our sins; hence, the Aaronic priesthood is mainly concerned with the sin offering—Heb. 10:12
    - a. The Aaronic priesthood solves the problem of sin; Christ's purifying of sins is typified by the work of Aaron—1:3; 7:27; 9:12, 28.
    - b. The Aaronic priesthood was not part of God's initial intention but was added later because of the problem of sin—1:3; John 1:29; Rom. 8:3.
- B. The royal priesthood is typified by the order of Melchizedek; the order of Melchizedek is the royal, the kingly, order—1 Pet. 2:9; Gen. 14:18; Heb. 5:10
  1. The second order of the priesthood—the aspect of the priesthood typified by Melchizedek, the royal priesthood—is for ministering the processed God into us as our enjoyment for our supply—v. 10; 7:1-2.
  2. Christ's sitting down on the right hand of the Majesty on high is according to the order of Melchizedek—Psa. 110:1, 4; Heb. 1:3; 8:1.
  3. As the kingly High Priest, Christ ministers to us whatever we need, dispensing the processed and consummated Triune God into us as our life supply to fulfill God's eternal purpose—*Hymns*, #1130.
  4. In our experience today, the kingly priests are those who come from God to care for God's people, just as Melchizedek came from God to meet Abraham to minister bread and wine to him—Gen. 14:18-19.
- C. The Aaronic priesthood solves the problem of sin, and the kingly priesthood fulfills God's eternal purpose; the Aaronic priesthood took away sin, and the kingly priesthood brought in God as our grace—Heb. 1:3; 4:16.
- D. On the one hand, in the Lord's recovery today we are holy priests, going to God to represent God's people and bring their needs to Him; on the other hand, we are royal priests, coming from God to the people to represent God and minister God to them—1 Pet. 2:5, 9
  1. The holy priests offer something to God for the sake of the people, and the royal priests declare the things of God to people.
  2. We are the holy priests and the kingly priests, going and coming in two directions.

**Message Three**  
**The Experiences of the Priests**

Scripture Reading: Lev. 1—7; Exo. 25:30; Lev. 24:1-8; Exo. 30:6-8; Josh. 3:6-8, 13; Exo. 25:8-9

**I. The priests experience Christ as the offerings—Lev. 1—7**

- A. All the offerings typify the different aspects of what Christ is to us—1:2, and footnote 1
  - 1. The priesthood must take care of these offerings; thus, to partake of the priesthood today means that we must experience Christ as all the offerings.
  - 2. Only when we have experienced Christ as these offerings can we minister them to others.
- B. We must experience Christ as the trespass offering, realizing that Christ on the cross bore all our trespasses before God—5:1—6:7; 1 Cor. 15:3; 1 John 1:7, 9; *Hymns*, #1003.
- C. We must experience Christ as our sin offering, knowing Christ as the One who died on the cross to deal with our sinful nature—Lev. 4:1-35; Rom. 8:3; 2 Cor. 5:21.
- D. After the experience of the trespass offering and the sin offering, we enjoy Christ as the peace offering; peace always depends upon dealing with all trespasses as well as dealing with our sinful nature—Lev. 3:1-17; Rom. 5:1; Eph. 2:14-17; *Hymns*, #1104.
- E. Following our experience of Christ as the peace offering, we find that He is also the meal offering, our food and constant satisfaction—Lev. 2:1-16; 1 Cor. 5:8; 10:17.
- F. The burnt offering follows the meal offering; Christ is not only our satisfaction but also God's satisfaction; He is not only our food, but He is also God's food—Lev. 1:1-17; John 5:19, 30; 6:38; 7:18; 8:29; 14:24; *Hymns*, #1138.
- G. We also have to experience Christ as the wave offering and the heave offering, as the resurrected One and also the ascended and transcendent One—Lev. 7:30-34; John 11:35; Rev. 1:17-18; Eph. 1:19-23; *Hymns*, #117, #132.
- H. Much time is needed to realize and experience all these offerings, especially by young Christians; when we experience all these offerings in such a way, we will be in the real priesthood.

**II. The priests experience Christ as the bread of the presence—Exo. 25:30; Lev. 24:5-8**

- A. After taking care of the offerings, the priests needed to spread the bread of the Presence in the Holy Place; this means we must experience Christ as our life supply.
- B. When we experience Christ as our inner life supply, we will be able to spread Him before others and God; when we come to the meetings or contact those in other places, we can present Christ to them as the inner life.
- C. We must go deeper with the Lord and not be superficial or outward; Christ is within us, but we must experience Him as the indwelling One and the hidden One within who is our life supply—Col. 3:4; Rom. 8:6-11; Phil. 1:19.

**III. The priests experience Christ as the lamp—Lev. 24:1-4**

- A. With the spreading of the bread of the Presence in the Holy Place, the priests must light the lamp; when we have the experience of Christ as our inner life, this life will be the inner light shining within us—John 1:4.
- B. When we have this experience, we will not just read the Bible by exercising our mind to gain some knowledge, teaching, or doctrine, but something within will be enlightening; this is a deeper item of the priesthood

1. When we read the Bible, we must not exercise our mentality too much to understand it; if we understand it too much, it will become the tree of knowledge to us.
2. We must open ourselves to let the Lord fill us, possess us, and occupy us; then the written word will shine within through Christ as the living word and we will have the inner light, not simply the outward knowledge—cf. 2 Cor. 3:15-18.

**IV. The priests experience Christ as the incense—Exo. 30:6-8**

- A. The lighting of the lamp and the burning of the incense were taken care of at the same time; these two things can never be separated—vv. 6-8
  1. If we burn the incense, we must light the lamp, and if we light the lamp, we must burn the incense—*Hymns*, #813.
  2. This means that to receive light from the Word, we must pray by burning the incense; and if we pray by burning the incense, we must light the lamp by reading the Word; reading and praying must be mingled as one—Eph. 6:17-18; *Hymns*, #811.
- B. The incense is the sweet odor of Christ as our acceptance to God—Exo. 30:7, and footnote 1; Rev. 5:8; 8:3-4
  1. When we experience Christ in such an inner way, He becomes our inner life, our inner supply, and our inner light.
  2. At the same time we have a deep sense that the sweet odor of Christ is going up to God; the preciousness of Christ becomes our acceptance to God.

**V. The priests experience Christ as the ark—Josh. 3:6-8, 13**

- A. The ark is the very testimony of God, which is Christ Himself—Exo. 25:10-22, and footnote 10<sup>1</sup>.
- B. The priests had to bear the ark at all times—Josh. 3:6-8, 13
  1. As the priesthood we must experience Christ as life, as light, and as our acceptance to God, and we must especially bear Christ as God's full testimony.
  2. Christ is the living testimony of God borne by the priesthood; if we are really in the priesthood, we will bear Christ as God's living testimony.

**VI. The priests experience Christ as the tabernacle—Exo. 25:8-9; Num. 3—4**

- A. The priesthood must also take care of the tabernacle, which typifies the enlarged Christ as the dwelling place of God—John 1:14; 2:19, 21; Eph. 2:22
  1. After we, as the priesthood, richly experience Christ, we must take care of the whole church, the whole Body of Christ.
  2. The church is simply the enlargement of Christ—1:22-23; 1 Cor. 12:12; *Hymns*, #203.
- B. In Numbers 4, the priests take care of the tabernacle—the boards, the coverings, and all the utensils within the tabernacle—vv. 4-14
  1. The experiences of Christ as the offerings, as the inner life, as the inner light, as the inner acceptance, and as the testimony of God are all for the church; the more we experience Christ as the reality of all these items, the more we will be for the Body of Christ.
  2. As the priesthood of God experiencing Christ as everything, we must take care of the church so that the Body of Christ may become God's dwelling place on the earth.
  3. The church life comes out of our experience of Christ as the inner life—John 12:1-2, and footnote 1<sup>1</sup>; Eph. 3:16-21; *Hymns*, #1216.

**VII. We must ask the Lord to bring us into all these experiences and make them real to us.**

## Message Four

### Practicing the Priesthood of the Gospel according to the God-ordained Way

Scripture Reading: Rom. 15:16; John 15:1-2, 4-5, 8, 16

#### I. We need to contact people directly, personally, and continually to bear remaining fruit—John 15:4-5, 16

- A. For many years we were meeting, serving, and preaching the gospel in the old way, in a natural way
  - 1. The natural concept is to have preaching meetings as in Christianity; although this way does work to a certain extent, the Lord has shown us that this way is natural.
  - 2. The personal contact with people is the way that is not natural.
  - 3. Each one of us should make a decision to get one person saved for the church life every year.
- B. We have to learn how to bear fruit and to practice fruit-bearing continually—vv. 1-2, 4-5-8, 16
  - 1. The Lord told us in John 15 that He is the vine and we are the branches (v. 5); He appointed us to go forth and bear remaining fruit (v. 16); we all should desire fruit that remains.
  - 2. As believers, as members of Christ, and as branches of the vine, we must bear fruit; the Lord said that if any branch does not bear fruit, it will be cast out (vv. 2a, 6); this is not to suffer eternal perdition but to lose the enjoyment of Christ in the organic union with Him.
  - 3. Some brothers and sisters have been faithful in the recovery for many years; they love the church and they are for the church, but they have not borne fruit.
  - 4. We should realize that to not bear fruit is a serious thing before the Lord; if all the saints in the church have a spiritual life, go to the meetings, worship the Lord, and live Him, yet no one bears any fruit, the church would eventually die out.
  - 5. The most basic, crucial, and vital thing is for us to bring forth spiritual children—1 Cor. 4:15; Philem. 10.
- C. We must make a serious decision to contact people directly; we should not trust in preachers and in preaching meetings; we should just trust in our direct, personal, continual contact with people.

#### II. We should take a simple way to bear remaining fruit

- A. First, we should make a vow to the Lord
  - 1. We can pray, “Lord, as one of Your branches, I realize that I must bear fruit according to Your charge in John 15. If I cannot get one sinner saved within a year, this is a shame. Lord, every week I will spend two or three hours to contact people for their salvation.”
  - 2. This does not mean that we have to spend two or three hours at one time in one day; we may spend some time to consider how to contact and save certain ones, and we may spend another period of time to pray and make a record of them; this time should be reckoned as part of our two to three hours of labor in the gospel every week.
  - 3. If we labor three hours a week in a concentrated way for one year, surely at least one person will be brought to the Lord.
- B. In order to be fruit-bearing branches of Christ, we need to be revived by the Lord day by day—Hab. 3:2a; Hosea 6:2; Judg. 5:31b; Prov. 4:18

1. The most effective way to live the Christian life is by having a vital, living, active morning revival with the Lord.
  2. We should enjoy several verses from the Scripture to live on every day and then contact people for the Lord in a definite way.
- C. We should practice personally contacting people every week
1. We can contact our relatives, friends, neighbors, colleagues, and classmates.
  2. We need to plan and schedule our time so that we can contact two or three individuals every week.
  3. We need to practice contacting people; when we contact someone without any success or result, we can go to the Lord to repent and open to Him for His adjustment; He will impress us to go back to them in a certain way; when we follow the Lord to contact people according to His way, they will be saved.
  4. As we go out to contact people one by one, we will find out the proper way from the Lord; we will also find out the right persons to visit.
- D. Whether or not this can be worked out depends upon our endeavoring
1. We cannot just encourage others to go out; we ourselves have to go.
  2. We should start by ourselves and then get a companion to labor with us; after a period of time we can bring forth new ones who will labor in the same way that we are.
  3. We need to redeem our time by praying for our acquaintances and relatives, writing them letters, and sending them booklets; then we can make appointments to go see them.
  4. We must have a plan for reaching people; we should make a list of all our acquaintances and study their situation; then we can work on them according to our study; this is the way to gain the proper persons.
  5. We should not leave our bearing of fruit to fortune; it is not a matter of fortune but a matter of labor.
  6. If the saints in the church remain the way they are, we should not blame or condemn them; rather, we should go along with the church and help it to go on; but we ourselves need to labor in a definite way to gain people—Matt. 7:1-2; cf. 1 Thes. 1:5-8; 1 Tim. 4:12.
  7. We do not need to promote what we are doing; we just need to go and do it; then gradually, some will see what we are doing, and they will join us—cf. Prov. 14:23.
- E. We have tried many ways in the past, and they may work, but they do not work satisfactorily; only the way of contacting people directly brings a satisfactory result.
- F. As branches of the Lord, we should give Him some time each week for the gospel; then we can pray, “Lord, lead me, teach me, and give me the wisdom in planning, in scheduling my time, in making appointments, and in talking to people”; then we should practice this directly and definitely; surely, we will gain people for the Lord’s kingdom.

### **III. We need to labor in a personal way for the increase of the church**

- A. For the Lord’s recovery we all need a turn from barrenness to fruitfulness—John 15:2, 4-5.
- B. We need the new ones; we need “new blood,” newly saved ones; all the local churches should pay attention to this.
- C. The only rescue for us is to change our way so that we can gain the increase.
- D. The Lord needs some of His saints to practice the priesthood of the gospel according to His ordained way; then the Lord will have a way—Rom. 15:16.



## Message Five

### The Recovery of the Priesthood for God's Building

Scripture Reading: Rev. 1:5-6; 5:9-10; 1 Pet. 2:5,9; Eph. 2:21-22; 3:16-17a

#### I. The Lord's recovery is realized by the priesthood; actually, the Lord's recovery is the recovery of the priesthood—Zech. 3:1-5; 6:12-13; Hag. 1:8, 12

- A. With the priesthood there has always been failure on the human side and continual recovery on the divine side
  - 1. The Lord Jesus, the Priest, has brought us into His priesthood through His redemption—Rev. 1:5-6; 5:9-10.
  - 2. The whole church should be the priesthood; however, this priesthood has been lost and replaced by the clergy-laity system—2:6, 15.
  - 3. The recovery of the church life is the recovery of the real priesthood; we must be recovered into this priesthood, which means that we need to be brought back into the genuine fellowship with the Lord—1 Cor. 14:26; 1:9; 1 John 1:3.
  - 4. The Lord's recovery is a matter of the priesthood, not a matter of a work, a movement, or of doing things for the Lord.
  - 5. Our responsibility is not to care for any kind of work; our responsibility is simply to take care of the priesthood by learning to be possessed and occupied by the Lord until we are filled, saturated, and permeated with Him—Eph. 3:16-17a, 19.
- B. What the Lord needs today is a group of people who are brought into His presence and even into the Lord Himself until they are one with Him—Heb. 10:19; 2 Cor. 3:18; John 17:22, 24.
- C. When the Lord has such a priesthood—a kingdom of priests—He will have the freedom to flow out and work out His will for the fulfillment of His eternal purpose—Exo. 19:6a; Rev. 1:5-6; 5:9-10; 4:11; Eph. 1:5, 9, 11; Phil. 2:13.

#### II. The building of God's house is related to the priesthood and depends on the priesthood—Exo. 19:6a; 25:8-9; Zech. 6:12-13; 1 Pet. 2:5

- A. The building of the church depends on whether or not the saints will bear the priesthood before God—Rev. 1:5-6; 5:9-10; Heb. 3:6; 6:20; 7:26; 8:1; 10:19.
- B. The priesthood upholds the building of the church; without the priesthood, it is impossible to build up the church—*Hymns*, #848.
- C. If we are willing to come forward to God, fellowship with God, live before God, and allow God to flow through us, we will enjoy the riches of Christ and express the glory of Christ in a full way; in this way we will bear the testimony of the church, and the building of the church will be realized among us—11:6; 1 John 1:3; Eph. 3:8; 2:21-22.
- D. In order to recover the building of God, God must first recover the priesthood—Ezra 1:1-4; 7:1-5.

#### III. The building of God's house as the dwelling place of God is the priesthood; the holy priesthood is the spiritual house—Eph. 2:21-22; 1 Pet. 2:5; Exo. 28:1, note 1

- A. In the sequence of the divine record in Exodus, the priesthood follows the tabernacle—25:1—29:46
  - 1. In typology, the priesthood and the tabernacle are one entity, signifying the church composed of God's redeemed people as a spiritual house and a holy priesthood—1 Pet. 2:5 and note 7.
  - 2. That the tabernacle is mentioned before the priesthood emphasizes the need of the believers to be built up to be God's dwelling place that they may serve God as a corporate, coordinated priesthood—see Rom. 12:1, note 7

- a. The service of the believers is an issue of the growth in life described in the foregoing chapters [of Romans]; it indicates further that this service must be in the Body, the church—*Hymns*, #913.
  - b. This corresponds with the types in Exodus and Leviticus, which show that the service of the priesthood rendered to God was not established until after the Tent of Meeting was built.
- B. The Greek word for *priesthood* in 1 Peter 2: 5 and 9, *hierateuma*, refers to the assembly of priests, a body of priests, a priesthood; the coordinated body of priests is the built-up spiritual house.
  - C. In verse 5 Peter uses the terms *spiritual house* and *holy priesthood* to indicate the church life
    - 1. It is not the spiritual life lived in an individualistic way, but the spiritual life lived in a corporate way, that can fulfill God's purpose and satisfy His desire—Eph. 1:5, 9, 11; 3:11; Gen. 1:26.
    - 2. God wants a spiritual house for His dwelling, a priestly body, a priesthood, for His service.
  - D. *Spiritual* denotes the capacity of the divine life to love and grow; *holy*, the capacity of the divine nature to separate and sanctify—v. 5:
    - 1. The house of God subsists mainly by the divine life; hence, it is spiritual.
    - 2. The priesthood subsists mainly by the divine nature; hence, it is holy.

#### IV. In our ministry as priests, we need to be one with the building and builded God to build God into man and man into God—Eph. 3:16-17a; John 14:2, 23

- A. "Building God and man in one / Is their [the priests'] work before the Lord"—*Hymns*, #849.
- B. God's New Testament economy is for the processed and consummated Triune God to be wrought into us to become our life and our being—1 Tim. 1:4; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 3:16-17a; Rom. 8:9-10, 6, 11
  - 1. God's economy and goal according to His heart's desire are to build Himself into man and to build man into Him—2 Sam. 7:12-14a; Eph. 3:17a.
  - 2. God's intention in His economy is to build Himself in Christ into our being—2 Sam. 7:12-14a; Eph. 3:17a; John 14:20.
  - 3. God in Christ is within us to build Himself into our being and to build us into His being—2 Sam. 7:12-14a; Matt. 16:18; John 14:23; Eph. 3:17a.
- C. The Christ who is built, constituted, into us is both God's house and our house; this house is a mutual abode, where God and we, we and God, are mingled together as one entity—John 14:2, 23; 15:4a.
- D. In every aspect of our work—preaching the gospel, feeding the believers, establishing churches, perfecting the saints—the intrinsic element must be that we minister the building and builded God into others—Matt. 16:18; Eph. 3:17a
  - 1. If we realize that God desires to work Himself into His chosen people, then the goal of our work will be to minister the building and builded God into others so that the Triune God may build Himself into their being—v. 17a.
  - 2. We should reconsider the work we are doing for the Lord and ask how much of Christ as the embodiment of the Triune God has been wrought into those whom we have brought to the Lord—Gal. 4:19; Col. 1:28.
  - 3. We need to practice one thing—to minister the processed and consummated Triune God into others so that He may build Himself into their inner man; we need to pray that the Lord will teach us to work in this way—2 Cor. 13:14; 1 Cor. 3:9a, 10, 12.
  - 4. When we build the church with the processed and consummated Triune God, it is not actually we who are building; rather, God is building through us, using us as priests to dispense Himself into others—Acts 9:15.
- E. If we minister the building and builded God to others for their growth in the divine life, we are building up the Body of Christ, which will consummate the New Jerusalem—Col. 2:19; Eph. 4:15-16; Rev. 21:10.