

THE RECOVERY OF THE PRIESTHOOD FOR GOD'S BUILDING

(Saturday—Second Morning Session)

Message Five

The Two Orders of the Priesthood

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

I. The basic significance of a priest in the Bible is that a priest ministers God to man:

- A. The first mention of a priest in the Scriptures establishes the principle of a priest.
- B. The first time the word *priest* is used in the Bible is with Melchizedek, who was a king and a kingly priest—Gen 14:18-20.
- C. The foundational story of the priesthood in the Scriptures is that of a person coming from God and ministering something of God to God's people:
 - 1. Melchizedek came from God and ministered something of God to Abraham.
 - 2. The bread and wine signify God as our enjoyment and God being ministered to us to nourish, refresh, sustain, comfort, and strengthen us.
- D. If we would be genuine priests today, we need to realize that a priest is not only one who serves God but also one who ministers God into man.
- E. If, as priests, we know only how to render service to God without knowing how to minister God to man, the situation among us regarding the priesthood will be quite poor.

II. 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:
 - a. The holy order is an order separated from common things unto the divine things and unto the use of the Lord.
 - b. The holy priests are those who are separated to go to God, to represent God's people—2:5.
 - 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. Christ put away sin by offering Himself to God as the one sacrifice for sins—v. 26; 10:10-12.
 - c. 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.
 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.
 5. As we serve in the practical church life, the real priesthood comes into being when we minister God to others so that eventually they will be God's expression—1 Pet. 4:10; 2 Cor. 3:18.
- 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.

III. The holy priesthood offers spiritual sacrifices to God—v. 5:

- A. The spiritual sacrifices that the holy priests offer according to God's economy are (1) Christ as the reality of all the sacrifices of the Old Testament types, such as the burnt offering, meal offering, peace offering, sin offering, and trespass offering (Lev. 1—5); (2) the sinners saved by our gospel preaching, offered as members of Christ (Rom. 15:16); and (3) our body, our praises, and the things that we do for God (12:1; Heb. 13:15-16; Phil. 4:18).
- B. In particular, the spiritual sacrifices include Christ as the reality of the burnt offering; we can offer Christ to God as our burnt offering only to the extent to which we have experienced Christ in His experiences as the burnt offering—Lev. 1:6, 9; 6:8-13.
- C. God accepts no work that is not a sacrifice, that is not wholly an offering; thus, the question is not “What have I done for God?” but “Has what I have done been done as an offering to God?”
- D. As priests in the holy priesthood, through the unchanging Christ as grace we should “offer up a sacrifice of praise continually to God”—Heb. 13:15:
1. In the church we should offer up through Christ the sacrifice of praise to God.
 2. In the church Christ sings in us hymns of praise unto God the Father, and we too should praise God the Father through Him—2:12:

- a. He and we, we and He, praise the Father together in the mingled spirit—1 Cor. 6:17.
- b. Christ, as the life-giving Spirit, praises the Father in our spirit, and we, by our spirit, praise the Father in His Spirit.
- c. This is the best and highest sacrifice that we can offer to God through Christ—Heb. 13:15.

IV. The kingly priesthood tells out the virtues of God who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light—1 Pet. 2:9:

- A. Virtue (2 Pet. 1:3) is the energy and strength of the divine life that enables us to reach God's glory as the goal; virtues (1 Pet. 2:9) are the excellencies of God, referring to what God is and has.
- B. To tell out is to proclaim abroad; this is to benefit others by proclaiming abroad as the gospel the virtues of the One who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light—v. 9:
 - 1. Darkness is the expression and sphere of Satan in death; light is the expression and sphere of God in life—1 John 1:5.
 - 2. God has called us, delivered us, out of Satan's death-realm of darkness into His life-realm of light—Acts 26:18; Col. 1:13.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

AARON AND MELCHIZEDEK

[Hebrews 5:1-6 and 7:1-3] reveal the two orders of the priesthood. The first order is according to Aaron, and the second is according to Melchizedek. The order of priests according to Aaron was something of man bringing the needs of man to God, because these priests were chosen from among men. But the order according to Melchizedek was one coming from God unto man, imparting something of God to man.

There are two directions, or a "two-way traffic," in these two orders of the priesthood. In the first order, the direction is from man to God, and in the second it is from God to man. Even Christ as our great High Priest has these two orders with these two directions. He is the High Priest according to the order of Aaron and also the High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. According to the order of Aaron, He, as a man, was chosen from among men to go to God with all the needs of man. But according to the order of Melchizedek, as the Son of God He came from God to impart God unto us and to bless us with something of God.

Now let us read Exodus 28:12 and 29. "You shall put the two stones on the shoulder pieces of the ephod as stones of remembrance for the sons of Israel. And Aaron shall bear their names before Jehovah on his two shoulders for a memorial...So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel in the breastplate of judgment on his heart when he goes into the sanctuary, for a memorial before Jehovah continually." Aaron, as the high priest, bore all the names of the people of God into God's presence as a kind of memorial.

Genesis 14:18-20 says, "Melchizedek the king of Salem brought out bread and wine. Now he was priest of God the Most High. And he blessed him and said, Blessed

be Abram of God the Most High, / Possessor of heaven and earth; / And blessed be God the Most High, / Who has delivered your enemies into your hand. And Abram gave him a tenth of all.” Melchizedek came from God with bread and wine to meet Abraham who had fought the battle for God. He blessed Abraham with the bread and wine. This is quite interesting. He blessed Abraham with only these two things, the very same things which we use for the Lord’s table.

In 1 Peter 2 we also find these two orders of the priesthood. In verse 5 we see the order of Aaron, and in verse 9 the order of Melchizedek. “You yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house into a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (v. 5). This is the priesthood according to the Aaronic order, which brings something from man to God.

“You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people acquired for a possession, so that you may tell out the virtues of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (v. 9). The holy priesthood, in verse 5, brings something from man unto God, and the kingly priesthood, in verse 9, brings something from God to declare and tell out to man.

THE HUMAN NATURE MUST BE HOLY

The priesthood is of both the human and divine natures. It is basically something of incarnation, which is the divine nature mingled with the human nature. A priest must be a person fully mingled with God...The human nature, to be mingled with the divine, must be holy. Originally, it was common and worldly, but since it must be mingled with the divine nature for the priesthood, it has to be holy. The word *holy* in Greek means to be separated (unto God). To be in the priesthood we must be separated from the world and from all common things. Otherwise, we can never be a priest.

A priest is one who serves the Lord. If we are not priests, we can never serve Him. We must never think that we are ready to serve the Lord after going to a seminary, Bible institute, or Bible college. That will only make us “professional” priests, not real ones. To be real priests we must be holy; that is, we must be separated from all the things of this world and from all things common.

First of all, our words must be separated. We should not talk as the people of the world do. Our conversation must be separated from all common things. Even our thoughts, concepts, and ideas must be separated. Our thinking must not be so common; it has to be separated. If we are not separated from everything common and worldly, we are bankrupt in the priesthood. Not only our way of talking, thinking, and doing but even our way of spending money must be holy. Many of the brothers and sisters say that they would like to be priests serving the Lord, but according to the way they spend their money, they are out of the priesthood. A priest must be separated in the way he spends his money.

Many times when I visited a brother’s or sister’s home, I was grieved because his home was so common, so worldly. It was not separated. In the last century there were two Gordons: A. J. Gordon and S. D. Gordon. I do not remember which Gordon

it was, but one of them, as a young man serving the Lord, bought a new house. He moved in and completely furnished it with everything. Then he asked his father to come and look at his new home. After his father had seen the home, young Gordon asked him what he thought about it. The father said that everything was very nice, but he had one question: if a stranger came into this new home, would he be able to tell whether it was the home of a son of the devil or a son of God? Gordon's father simply meant that this home was not separated. It was too common and worldly; it was just like so many homes of the people of the world. There was no separation and no holiness.

Sometimes the way different brothers and sisters dress simply causes others to question: "Are these Christians, or are they people of the world?" There must be a separation from the style of this age, or we will never have the priesthood. The priesthood must have the holy separation.

As men in the priesthood we must go to the Lord continually with all our needs and the needs of others. According to Hebrews 5, even the high priest himself has needs, and because he is encompassed with the same weaknesses, he can sympathize with others. Since we are all human, we can sympathize with all the human needs and weaknesses. As those who are in the priesthood, we must go to the Lord continually with all these needs.

However, to contact the Lord in His presence requires our separation. Anything common will hinder our fellowship with the Lord. It will be like a veil covering us, separating us from the presence of the Lord. Before we can stay in the Lord's presence with all man's needs, we must be separated. If there is anything common covering us and separating us from the presence of the Lord, we are veiled. I like the hymn, "Nothing Between, Lord, Nothing Between." If we are going to contact the Lord, there must be nothing between. Anything between us and the Lord is a veil that must be rent. We must be separated from that particular thing. We think that the Lord is so big, but sometimes He is very small. Sometimes the Lord will struggle with a person just about a pair of shoes. We may like them, but the Lord does not.

When I was young, I was dealt with by the Lord in so many small things. There were even times when I would buy a spiritual book and would have to return it. The Lord would tell me within that I should not buy this book because I needed the money for some other purpose, but I would go ahead and buy it. After coming home I could not eat or sleep well. I would say, "Lord, You are not so small; You are so big. Why do You care for such a small thing?" There was a real struggle. I could not even pray or minister. Eventually, I would be forced to return the book. I believe that many of us have had this kind of experience. To contact the Lord, we must be separated. We must ask the Lord to show us that from which we must be separated. We will know within. In fact, we already know.

Thus, the first aspect of the priesthood is to go to the Lord with all the needs of man. As the Aaronic priesthood we must bear man and his needs upon our shoulders and breast. This means that we must bear them with strength and love. Whenever the high priest went into the presence of the Lord, he was clothed with the priestly garment with the names of the twelve tribes inscribed in stones upon

his two shoulders. Twelve precious stones bearing the names of the twelve tribes were set in the breastplate. This signified that the high priest bore the people of God into His presence. We must spend time to bring all our own needs, the needs of the brothers, and the needs of the whole church into the presence of the Lord and remain there for some time. This is the holy priesthood.

KINGLINESS COMING OUT OF HOLINESS

The human nature must be holy in order to be mingled with the divine nature, which is kingly. As long as we have the divine nature, we have the kingship, for anything divine is kingly. It is easy for us to be kingly if we are holy. If we are willing to be utterly separated unto God without any reservation, we will be kingly. The more we are separated unto God, the more we are holy and kingly.

After staying in the presence of the Lord for a certain time as holy, separated priests, we come out from the Lord's presence with something divine. We went to the Lord with something human, but we come out of the Lord's presence with something divine. We come out as the kingly priesthood. We must be holy in order to be kingly. When we come to others, after staying in the presence of the Lord, they sense something divine and kingly in us. This is the kingly priesthood. We now have something of Christ to impart to them. Christ is typified by the bread and wine, which show the One who died for us and gave His body and blood for our enjoyment. The bread and wine typify the redeeming Christ who gave Himself for us.

Before we reach the unbelievers, we must be holy priests in order to be kingly priests. We must first go into the presence of the Lord with all the names of our unbelieving friends and tell the Lord all about their needs. In doing this, we are ministering in the presence of the Lord as holy priests. But many times when we go to the Lord with such a need, the Lord will first point out something in us which has to be dealt with. If we are not willing to meet the Lord's requirements, we are finished and are discharged from the priesthood. But if we are willing to be dealt with, we will be able to stay in the presence of the Lord as holy priests for our unbelieving friends. After staying in the Lord's presence again and again for some time, the Lord will guide us to go out of His presence to our friends. Then we will go with the divine nature and the divine kingship. We do not go simply as a human being, but also as a divine being. We go to them as kingly priests, imparting something of God into them. That impartation into them will be the redeeming Christ. This means that we bring the bread and wine to our unbelieving friends. Whatever we minister to them will be something of the bread and wine. Then, eventually, some of our friends will be saved.

In the ten days before Pentecost, Peter with the hundred and twenty prayed and prayed in the upper room. At that time they were the holy priesthood. For ten days they were fully and absolutely separated unto the Lord. They brought all the needs of man into the Lord's presence. After ten days, on the day of Pentecost, they came out of the presence of the Lord declaring unto the people what the Lord Jesus had done. Then they were the kingly priesthood. Even the people looked upon them as kings, not as fishermen. As Peter stood there speaking, the people sensed

something weighty, something divine, and something heavenly and kingly. He was a kingly priest, imparting Christ as bread and wine to those in need.

When Melchizedek came to meet Abraham, he came out of the presence of God and ministered something of God as the bread and wine to strengthen Abraham. Abraham had been fighting the battle for a long time and was very tired and needy. He needed the bread and wine to sustain him. Therefore, Melchizedek came from God and came with God to minister the bread and wine unto him. This is the kingly priesthood.

As priests we must realize that whenever we go into the presence of the Lord with our needs and the needs of others, we are holy priests. This is why we must be separated from so many common things. When we get right with the Lord and are saturated with His glory, we will come out of His presence as royal, kingly priests unto the people. Then we will minister unto them Christ Himself as the redeeming One, typified by the bread and wine. We are separated from the world, and we are saturated with His presence. This is both the holy and royal priesthood.

ONLY THE HOLY AND ROYAL PRIESTHOOD CAN BUILD THE CHURCH

In the church life we must be holy priests in our private lives and kingly priests in the meetings. Day by day we must be in the presence of the Lord to bring our needs and all the brothers' and unbelievers' needs to Him. Every day we must spend time in the Lord's presence as holy priests. Then when we come to the meetings, we will impart something of Christ to the needy ones. In this way we will function in the church as the holy and royal priests.

The holy and royal priesthood is what the Lord needs today. But look at today's Christianity. Nearly all the believers would not be separated unto God as holy priests, and when they "go to church," they have nothing of Christ to impart as kingly priests. They just look to a prophet. Everyone sits quietly in the pew. They are not priests; they are laymen, sitting and waiting for a "good" message. This is the poor situation in today's Christianity.

There will never be a proper building up of the church until the priesthood is recovered. Every one of us must learn the lesson of being a holy priest in our private life. We must be wholly separated unto the Lord in everything in order to bring ourselves and others into the Lord's presence. Then when we come to the meetings, we will spontaneously be the kingly priests to bring forth something of Christ as the bread and the wine to many tired and needy ones. This will bring in the building of the church. Then the prophets will be "jobless"; they will have nothing to do. This is the only way for the church to be built up.

The Lord Jesus builds His church not as the Prophet but as the Priest and King. Zechariah 6 clearly tells us that Christ, the Shoot, will build the temple as the Priest and King, not as the Prophet. The tabernacle, Solomon's temple, and the recovered temple were built up by the priesthood and kingship.

The principle is the same today for the building up of the church. We may need a prophet to come and encourage us when we are disappointed, just as Haggai the

prophet came to encourage Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel the governor. But the direct building of the church does not depend upon prophets. Rather, it depends upon the priesthood and the kingship. We must learn to be priests and kings, that is, to be the holy priesthood and the kingly priesthood. We must be burdened to cry to the Lord until we see in every locality brothers and sisters functioning as holy priests in the presence of the Lord and as kingly priests unto the people.

The building of the church does not come by any kind of teaching. It comes by the two orders of the living priesthood. We must pray specifically unto the Lord that in our city, and in every place, a group of believers will be raised up to function as living priests according to the order of Aaron and according to the order of Melchizedek. (*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1966*, vol. 1, "The Priesthood," pp. 459-466)