

An Opinion: The Priestly Role of Israel

1. Original relationship between man and God was personal and intimate, involving no intermediaries, but later involved a priestly role for the head of the family.

Genesis 3:8

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day . . . NIV

Genesis 4:2-4

In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. NIV

Genesis 8:20

Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it. NIV

Genesis 12:7

The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him. NIV

2. Intimacy between God and man fades because of man's sin. The patriarchal priesthood fails, also. Later, all Israel is designated to be a perpetual "kingdom of priests and a holy nation", but very quickly, even this favored calling fails because of unbelief and sin; God establishes the Levitical priesthood within Israel.

Exodus 13:1-2; 11-13

1 The LORD said to Moses, 2 "Consecrate to me every firstborn male. The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites belongs to me, whether man or animal."

11 "After the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites and gives it to you, as he promised on oath to you and your forefathers, 12 you are to give over to the LORD the first offspring of every womb. All the firstborn males of your livestock belong to the LORD. 13 Redeem with a lamb every firstborn donkey, but if you do not redeem it, break its neck. Redeem every firstborn among your sons. NIV

Exodus 19:5-6

Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites." NIV

Exodus 32:25-29

Moses saw that the people were running wild and that Aaron had let them get out of control and so become a laughingstock to their enemies. So he stood at the entrance to the camp and said, "Whoever is for the LORD, come to me." And all the Levites rallied to him. Then he said to them, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Each man strap a sword to his side. Go back and forth through the camp from one end to the other, each killing his brother and friend and neighbor.'" The Levites did as Moses commanded, and that day about three thousand of the people died. Then Moses said, "You have been set apart to the LORD today, for you were against your own sons and brothers, and he has blessed you this day." NIV

Numbers 3:11-13; 44-48

1 The LORD also said to Moses, 12 "I have taken the Levites from among the Israelites in place of the first male offspring of every Israelite woman. The Levites are mine, 13 for all the firstborn are mine. When

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I struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, I set apart for myself every firstborn in Israel, whether man or animal. They are to be mine. I am the LORD." The LORD also said to Moses, 45 "Take the Levites in place of all the firstborn of Israel, and the livestock of the Levites in place of their livestock. The Levites are to be mine. I am the LORD. 46 To redeem the 273 firstborn Israelites who exceed the number of the Levites, 47 collect five shekels for each one, according to the sanctuary shekel, which weighs twenty gerahs. 48 Give the money for the redemption of the additional Israelites to Aaron and his sons." NIV

Exodus 29:8-9

And you shall bring his sons and put tunics on them. And you shall gird them with sashes, Aaron and his sons, and bind caps on them, and they shall have the priesthood by a perpetual (statute. So you shall ordain Aaron and his sons. NAS (Hebrew: perpetual, forever עולם)

3. Even after the chastisement of a forced exile to Babylon, God must sweep away the Levitical priesthood and its Old Covenant because of sin and unbelief. In its place, God instituted a permanent new priesthood, with a new High Priest , and a New Covenant; but He did not sweep away Israel or her promised place of favor.

Mark 11:15-17

And they came to Jerusalem. And He (Jesus) entered the temple and began to cast out those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those who were selling doves; and He would not permit anyone to carry goods through the temple. And He began to teach and say to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a robbers' den." NAS

Christ had cursed the “fig tree” the day before (*Mark 11:12-14*), having already entered the Temple and seen its blasphemy (*Mark 11:11*). This fig tree represent religious Israel, which failed to produce any fruit during the entire three years of Christ’s ministry (*Luke 13:6-9*), and was now being “cut down”. The destruction of the Temple and its ministry was secured because Israel did not recognize the time of their “visitation”. (*Luke 19:44* - Greek: visitation, inspection, superintendence ἐπισκοπή)

Hebrews 8:7-13

7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second. 8

For finding fault with them, He says,

"Behold, days are coming, says the Lord,

When I will effect a new covenant

With the house of Israel and with the house of Judah;

9 Not like the covenant which I made with their fathers

On the day when I took them by the hand

To lead them out of the land of Egypt;

For they did not continue in My covenant,

And I did not care for them, says the Lord.

10 "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel

After those days, says the Lord:

I will put My laws into their minds,

And I will write them upon their hearts.

And I will be their God,

And they shall be My people.

11 "And they shall not teach everyone his fellow citizen,

And everyone his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,'

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For all shall know Me,

From the least to the greatest of them.

12 "For I will be merciful to their iniquities,

And I will remember their sins no more."

13 When He said, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear. NAS

Romans 11:1-2; 11-13; 17-21; 23-26; 28-29

1 I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. 2 God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. . . . 11 Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. 12 But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring! . . . 13 I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, . . . 17 If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, 18 do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. 19 You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." 20 Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. 21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. . . . 23 And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. 24 After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree! . . . 25 I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. 26 And so all Israel will be saved. . . . 28 As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, 29 for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable. NIV

Romans 9:6-8

But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; neither are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, . . . That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants. NAS

1 Peter 2:9-10, quoting Exodus when speaking to the Church.

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. NIV

4. Israel, in continued unbelief, will attempt to re-establish the Levitical priesthood and the Old Covenant through a rebuilt Temple and sacrificial system as an end times event. Antichrist will take this wicked system over for himself.

Daniel 9:24-27

"Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy place. "So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. "Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. "And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the

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middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate." NAS

2 Thessalonians 2:1-4

Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God. NIV

5. Faithful Israel (the “remnant”) finally embraces Christ, at the end of the Age of the Gentiles, the Messianic Kingdom is established, and Israel is first among the nations. Included with Israel are the believing gentiles, added to Christ’s “Church”, who also rule and reign with Christ.

Zechariah 12:10-11; 13:1; 14:9

10 "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son. . . 13:1 "On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity. 14:9 The LORD will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one LORD, and his name the only name. 14:9 The LORD will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one LORD, and his name the only name. NIV

Zechariah 8:20-23

This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Many peoples and the inhabitants of many cities will yet come, and the inhabitants of one city will go to another and say, 'Let us go at once to entreat the LORD and seek the LORD Almighty. I myself am going.' And many peoples and powerful nations will come to Jerusalem to seek the LORD Almighty and to entreat him." This is what the LORD Almighty says: "In those days ten men from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, 'Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.'" NIV

Revelation 5:9-10

"Worthy art Thou to take the book, and to break its seals; for Thou wast slain, and didst purchase for God with Thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. "And Thou hast made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth." NAS

Revelation 20:6-7

Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. And when the thousand years are completed, . . . NAS

Revelation 22:1-5

And he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. And on either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His bond-servants shall serve Him; and they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. And there shall no longer be any night; and they shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them; and they shall reign forever and ever. NAS