

A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD:

A Re-introduction of Sacerdotal
Duties to the Sabbath
Churches of God



By Pastor Bill Shults

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Duties within the Sabbath
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Hungry Hearts Ministries

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	7
The Temple Furniture.....	11
Teaching and Instruction.....	21
Offerings.....	25
Prayer.....	29

Introduction

The Church of Jesus Christ is supposed to form a Priesthood of believers. When God Almighty transformed Jesus Christ into His High Priest, He subsequently enlisted us to serve as priests under Jesus. “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” (1 Peter 2:9). The Temple of God was destroyed in 70 AD, which stopped the Levitical priestly service. In the meantime, the Church is supposed to offer to God gifts, prayers and praise. Those men who served in the Temple of God were dispersed and no longer comprise a body of men who can stand before God. Many of them became believers within the Church of Jesus Christ. “So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7). After centuries of persecution, there is no definitive way to determine what priestly procedures they brought into the Church. How did a newly converted priest offer up prayer, or praise, or offerings in the first century? When did animal sacrifices stop in the Christian age? Pagans continued them for centuries after Christ. Today, there are Rabbi’s licensed to perform animal sacrifice in Israel. (I am not suggesting that we return to animal sacrifice.)

The Pharisees controlled the Synagogues, and to a large extent the new Christian congregations. The Apostle Paul, who set up our system of churches, was a Pharisee. “The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you” (Titus 1:5). The Temple Priests were Sadducees. What has been lost with their demise? There were controversies between the two and those do not have any bearing on this writing. Where does our modern system of church come from? Is it correct? After two millennia, what do we have right and where have we gone astray? Is taking up money as an offering in silence, or with a solo performance, the correct way, or even the only way to take up an offering?

Most churches in America open services with a prayer, a few add some responsive reading, even fewer a poem of some reli-

gious value. Is this the correct way to offer prayer? Some churches have prayer meetings, where various members pray aloud is this the correct way? The early church from which we could draw so much, was persecuted to death, their property confiscated and any documents burned. What record that we have is often tainted with sectarian bias.

Moses and Aaron came out of Egypt was there any pagan influence in how the ancient system was set up? I am not casting dispersion on their direct instruction from the Almighty. But what I am saying is that in the little details, was there any Egyptian influence? For instance how should we make an offering? Should we lift it up, as some do? Where does that come from? What is to be said, or are offerings to be made in silence? In the even more distant past what did Abraham do? "From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD" (Genesis 12:8). Or, how did Jacob anoint the pillar stone and make his vow to God? How were these things said? Was there any procedure to enhance acceptance by the Living God? Now in our time, what are we missing? Is there a way to comb through the Scriptures to glean from God's precious truth how to embrace our calling as priests under Jesus Christ?

What little Bible evidence we have comes from the books of Exodus and Leviticus, which are roughly 3500 years old. They tell us what the Priests were supposed to do, but they do not tell us how they were supposed to do it. In the rest of the Bible there are only snippets of information here and there. I read a book once on the Temple procedures as they related to Christianity, but it did not go into any significant detail. I did glean some clues about the water pouring ceremony. Is ceremony bad? There is a very large church which revolves around it, but does that make all ceremony wrong for everyone else? Is there a balance to be had between ceremony and non-ceremony?

Every church in America follows procedures, even when they are not written. I came from a church without any ceremony, except by repeating the same procedures Sabbath after Sabbath; our procedure became ceremony by default. In that church we recognized Deacons, Elders and Evangelists. In ancient Israel the tribe of Le-

vi was chosen because of their faithfulness. A few families of that tribe were chosen to be priests by ancestry. (Talk about a need for Ancestry.com!) God Almighty did this; therefore, it is good. But, what about for the modern church? What should be said, and who should say it?

From the little Bible evidence that we have, in ancient Israel the priests had specific functions. They tended to the Temple furniture and used the pieces in their work. They made offerings for the people, which included inspecting everything to make sure it was “altar worthy.” They made petition to the Almighty on behalf of the nation and for the people. They lifted praise to the Living God. Priests taught the people the Law of God. (We can sure use this right now!) They made examination for various diseases and affected the Bible remedies for the same. Most of these still apply, but a few do not. The ancients did not have disinfectant and antibiotics. Mold abatement, then and now, is still a problem. The Great Plague in the 1300’s could have been averted just by following the simple rules given by God to His priests.

As modern civilization begins to explore the metaphysical, or the spirit realm, we are beginning to learn that some of those things are affected by human action. Some of those offerings may have affects far beyond our hearing and sight. We are not alone on planet earth and never have been. God Almighty, the Creator, gave Israel rules, procedure and ceremony. Those affect humanity in ways that we still cannot quantify today how might they affect the metaphysical? It is always better to obey first and figure it out later. The God of Israel is always right on time, everywhere and all of the time.

The Temple Furniture

When the Almighty told Moses to build the Tabernacle, He also showed Moses the furnishings to go inside. The Almighty gave every detail about the Tent of Meeting and the appliances inside. “They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: “See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain” (Hebrews 8:5). What are these pieces and why does it matter to us today? In the courtyard were the Altar of Sacrifice and the Laver of Washing. Inside the first room, also known as the holy place, were the Table of Showbread, the Menorah and the Altar of Incense. Behind the curtain in the holy of holies was the Ark of the Covenant. What is important for the Church of Jesus Christ is that these pieces lay out the process of salvation. They also lay out the process of personal contact with our God who is Spirit.

The Almighty required animal sacrifice of all ancient peoples and that goes back to the time of Adam. Adam and Eve sinned and animal sacrifice was required to demonstrate contrition. As we covered in What Comes Next, idolatry quickly spread throughout the earth. Anyone could sacrifice anywhere and they began to sacrifice to any god. God instituted a priesthood based on the ancestry of Levi son of Israel. Nevertheless the people continued to offer their own sacrifices. (Much like modern Christians continue to develop their own theologies from extra Biblical sources.) The Almighty used the Levitical priesthood in an effort to turn religious practice back to Himself.

The first piece of Temple furniture is the Altar of Sacrifice. Whenever the Israelites needed to offer an animal, they were supposed to bring it to the Tabernacle and the priest would offer it according to the proscribed procedure. The altar is where those animals were offered. The animals were prepared based on the type of offering and then burned. In several passages it is called an offering made by fire. For some types of offerings both the priest who offers the animal and the person for whom it is offered are given a portion of the animal to eat and the remainder was burned. In every case the blood is sprinkled against the altar and the balance poured on the ground at the base of the altar.

“The LORD said to Moses: ‘Give Aaron and his sons this command: These are the regulations for the burnt offering: The burnt offering is to remain on the altar hearth throughout the night, till morning, and the fire must be kept burning on the altar. The priest shall then put on his linen clothes, with linen undergarments next to his body, and shall remove the ashes of the burnt offering that the fire has consumed on the altar and place them beside the altar. Then he is to take off these clothes and put on others, and carry the ashes outside the camp to a place that is ceremonially clean. The fire on the altar must be kept burning; it must not go out. Every morning the priest is to add firewood and arrange the burnt offering on the fire and burn the fat of the fellowship offerings on it. The fire must be kept burning on the altar continuously; it must not go out’” (Leviticus 6:5-13).

Every morning and evening prior to the burnt offering the priest on duty would clear off the ashes and set up fresh wood. The blood would be washed from the pavement around the altar and the ashes taken to a clean place for disposal. Fire from God used to light the first sacrifice was supposed to be kept alive on this altar in perpetuity; although we know that was not the case. “Aaron’s sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, contrary to his command. So fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD” (Leviticus 10:1-4).

The other piece in the courtyard is the Laver of Washing. Sacrificing animals is a bloody mess, everything needs to be washed. Even the animals require some washing before being offered on the Altar. Certainly the priests require washing from slaughtering so many animals. In Tabernacle times Levites would have to haul water to keep the Laver full. In Temple times the Gihon spring kept water supplied to the Temple Mount. Inside the Tabernacle, and later the Temple, is the Table of Showbread. This table is not very large in proportion to the size of the Bread which is placed on it. Twelve loaves of leavened bread are placed on this table every Sabbath to be set before the Lord every week. Incense was also laid on this Table between the rows of bread. The priests are supposed to eat this bread dai-

ly until new provision is made the next Sabbath. The braided Sabbath Challah bread is supposed to represent the showbread set out every Sabbath on the Table of Showbread.

The Menorah is well known as a symbol of the Jewish nation of Israel. It is also referred to as the seven branch lamp stand. Only the purest oil was to be used in the Menorah within the Temple. The Hanukah story comes from a miracle involving the Menorah and the oil used in it. The Menorah was to be tended twice daily and kept burning continually.

The Altar of incense was placed in front of the curtain separating the holy place from the most holy place. On this altar incense was burned daily. The priest on duty would take coals from the Altar of Sacrifice and place the holy incense on it and burn it on the Altar of Incense before the Lord every time the Menorah was tended.

The Ark of the Covenant is where God Almighty said that He would meet with us. Inside of the Ark were the tablets of stone on which God carved the Ten Commandments, Aaron's staff that budded and a golden jar of manna. The Ark is also called the Ark of the Testimony, because the Ten Commandments are the Testimony of God. In early times in ancient Israel, they believed that the presence of God Almighty went with the Ark. This is why they took it out of the Tabernacle and into battle with the Philistines. They never considered that they should humble themselves and appeal to the Almighty at the Ark within the Tabernacle.

In the book of Leviticus, many types of offerings are listed. The burnt offering requires burning up every thing except the hide and the offal. Other examples like the fellowship offering and some of the sin offerings require certain pieces to be eaten by both the priest who offers the animal and the person who makes the offering. Some offerings are for gratitude, but many are for sin. The Altar of Sacrifice might easily be called the Altar for Repentance. The Altar was where sin was acknowledged and forgiven. As Christians we are told to repent of our sins frequently to receive forgiveness from Jesus Christ. "I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish" (Luke 13:3).

Humility is required to approach the God of Israel. We must acknowledge our sins and seek atonement from the God of Israel.

In the modern American Church, we too often want to gloss over our sins. We justify them with all manner of excuses. We explain them away by refusing to acknowledge parts of the Bible as relevant. Is this why the Living God seems so very distant in our times? Repenting for our sins and then accepting Jesus Christ as our atonement is not a one time, “once and done” event. We have to acknowledge our sins with Jesus Christ daily; even more so, should we decide to seek His face. Does the Almighty make Himself available to you? Maybe it is time to return to our God with tears of repentance, baring our hearts to the God of all men, and crying out for forgiveness.

As mentioned before, sacrifice is a messy business. We need washing. Christians are told to wash in the water of the Word of God. “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to Himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless” (Ephesians 5:25-27). We need to dig deeply into our Bibles and wash away the dirty thinking that moves us into sin in the first place. We need to use the Word of God to clean up our lives. “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says” (James 1:22). Letting the thinking of God permeate our thinking will keep us out of sin. Many offerings were for gratitude and thanksgiving, even then those required some washing. We can use the Word of God to guide our joyous times and our gratitude. Some parts of the Bible are full of great expressions of joy, gratitude and deep thanksgiving. The move from the Holy Spirit within is tangible when you say some of those out loud because of your own joy, gratitude and thanksgiving.

Very few modern Americans get enough Bible in our lives. We need to read it more often, we need to dig into its meanings more deeply, and we need to meditate on it more thoroughly. (Turn that phone off anyone?) Over the years many people will admit to not enough Bible and then fill their lives with relatively trivial pursuits. “Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and

you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare” (Isaiah 55:1-2). Well, our salvation does depend on it. How can you live up to what you refuse to learn? How can you repent of sins that you don’t understand, or even realize? What does God want from you? It is found in the Holy Bible and there alone. It is way past time to get deeply into the Word of God. It is past time to wash your spirit in the Word of God.

After we repent and then wash in the water of the Word, then we are ready to venture into the House of God. There is a golden table piled high with bread. In Hebrew it is Paneh Lechem, or loosely translated “face bread.” Sometimes it is called the Bread of the Presence. The priests were to set this out every Sabbath and then eat it over the week along with their portion of the offerings. “Take fine flour and bake twelve loaves of bread, using two-tenths of an ephah for each loaf. Set them in two rows, six in each row, on the table of pure gold before the LORD. Along each row put some pure incense as a memorial portion to represent the bread and to be an offering made to the LORD by fire. This bread is to be set out before the LORD regularly, Sabbath after Sabbath, on behalf of the Israelites, as a lasting covenant. It belongs to Aaron and his sons, who are to eat it in a holy place, because it is a most holy part of their regular share of the offerings made to the LORD by fire” (Leviticus 24:5-9). In modern Judaism the Challah bread represents this bread. Challah is special bread, which according to their legends is made the way it would have been made for the Temple. They often incorporate this into their Erev Shabbat, or Sabbath Eve service; Hungry Hearts does as well.

The Almighty is revealing to us that He pours out His Presence among us on Sabbath Eve. As the Royal Priesthood of Jesus Christ, we are supposed to “eat” His Presence fresh every Sabbath Eve. We are supposed to take Him in every day as we acknowledge our sins to Him. Using the Bread of the Presence as an analogy, we can become one with Him in Spirit when we repent. Further, we can seek His face because of His Presence

on the Sabbath. In that way we can derive our sustenance from our time in front of “His face.”

From the book of Revelation, it is revealed that the Menorah represents the seven fold Spirit of God. The Menorah was tended every morning and every evening. It was to be kept burning always. We need to tend the Spirit’s fire within our hearts daily. We need to fill ourselves to the brim with the Holy Spirit. In Isaiah 11 the seven aspects of God’s Spirit are listed. “The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him--the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD--and he will delight in the fear of the LORD” (Isaiah 11:2-3). Knowing that God’s Spirit lives within our hearts should not be a metaphorical, feel good understanding. The Spirit of the God of all that exists should give us the power to obey Him, the power to pray both fervently and effectively, the power to open our understanding of His Word and the power to contact the Living God. Tending to the Spirit of God is a daily exercise and an exercise of the first importance. “Do not put out the Spirit’s fire” (1 Thessalonians 5:19). The fire used to light both the Menorah and the Altar of Incense comes from the Altar of Sacrifice. “For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands” (2 Timothy 1:6). The fire and passion from our repentance to God is the fire to empower us in the Holy Spirit.

Placed before the curtain separating the Presence of God in the Temple from the holy place was the Altar of Incense. This altar was tended by clearing the ashes and supplied with fresh fire and incense twice daily when the Menorah was tended. “He is to take a censer full of burning coals from the altar before the LORD and two handfuls of finely ground fragrant incense and take them behind the curtain” (Leviticus 16:12). On the Day of Atonement blood from the goat slain to make the atonement was placed on the horns of this altar to cleanse it from the sins of the people. In the book of Revelation it is recorded that one of these stands before the God of all Creation. “Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar before the throne. The smoke of the incense,

together with the prayers of the saints, went up before God from the angel's hand" (Revelation 8:3-4). On the altar in Heaven the prayers of all people are offered to Almighty God.

The incense on this altar was to be "beaten fine." We need to think more about what and how to pray. We need to "beat fine" the ideas and work them over before we offer them. Prayer is important for every believer. In this hyper modern world we do not pray enough. We live at the end of this age of time, prayer is more urgently needed than at any time in the past. Even so, our time is used up by so many demanding things. As Christians our duty is to pray for our country, our leaders, our lives, our churches, our families and our selves. "I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone--for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness" (1 Timothy 2:1-2). As the Royal Priesthood who serves under High Priest Jesus Christ, we need to offer prayers to support His work on this earth. We need to offer prayers to facilitate His message among the people of this world. "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God" (Philippians 4:6). We need to offer prayers to support the people who have taken refuge in Him.

Behind the curtain was the Ark of the Covenant. The Almighty said that He would meet with us from between the cherubim on its cover. "There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the Testimony, I will meet with you and give you all my commands for the Israelites" (Exodus 25:22). This Ark was hidden in the days of Jeremiah the Prophet from the invading Babylonian army. The High Priest could only go into the holy of holies once a year on the Day of Atonement. He would go in twice on that day, once to make atonement for himself, and then to make atonement for the people. Before he went in, the high priest would have to offer much incense, filling the holy of holies with smoke. To make the atonement, He would sprinkle bull's blood for himself, then sprinkle goat's blood for the people.

Before the High Priest could make the atonement for the nation,

he had to receive atonement for himself. We have to repent before Jesus Christ and receive forgiveness from Him before we can intercede for others. “How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!” (Hebrews 9:14). Before the High Priest could sprinkle the bull’s blood to atone for his own sin, he had to fill the holy of holies with smoke from the incense. We need to carefully think out prayers concerning our transgressions and our desire to be one with God and then flood the altar in Heaven with our heartfelt desire to put away our sin and rebellion to be close to God. Then we can repent for our own sins and ask for forgiveness from Jesus Christ. Afterwards, we can go before the Lord to intercede for others.

Modern Christianity has made a curiosity of the Old Testament. The Apostle Paul called the histories in the Old Testament examples for us. “These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come” (1 Corinthians 10:11). The procedures and protocols in the Old Testament are still valid. The Almighty never rescinded them. We can use them in the Holy Spirit. These procedures give us an outline of how to use prayer, praise and repentance to find better access to the Living God.

The Priests of old were also the custodians of the Temple Treasury. They took up offerings, some was used to supply their needs and some was used for the repair and upkeep of the Tabernacle/Temple property. In Exodus, the Almighty commanded that the first born had to be redeemed with 5 shekels of silver. “Redeem every firstborn among your sons” (Exodus 13:13). This money was given to the priests in Num 18:16. When the Israelites were numbered, every man had to make atonement for his life by paying a ransom of ½ shekel to the priest. “When you take a census of the Israelites to count them, each one must pay the LORD a ransom for his life at the time he is counted. Then no plague will come on them when you number them” (Exodus 30:12). This money was to be used for the care of the Tabernacle/Temple. The Tithe was given to the Levites

for their livelihood. “Instead, I give to the Levites as their inheritance the tithes that the Israelites present as an offering to the LORD. That is why I said concerning them: ‘They will have no inheritance among the Israelites’” (Numbers 18:24). The Levites in turn would give a tithe of the tithe to the priests for their livelihood. This was a very simple and elegant way to finance everything.

We have lost the concept of tithing in America. Some of it stems from pastoral abuse of church funds. Some of it is the endless attention to buildings and programs. We need buildings and programs, but we need to evangelize more. We reap what we sow, meaning that we receive for our tithes, the things on which our tithe was used. That is not an excuse to not tithe, it is a call to examine church finances. God won’t bless a mess. The priests in ancient Israel were to administer the Tabernacle/ Temple finances. When honest men of integrity were the priests, everything went well. When dishonest men were in charge the nation suffered horribly. We do not have that system in the USA. We can vote with our feet if the people in charge do not have the integrity to properly handle our tithes.

As a Royal Priesthood of Believers, we have the duty to learn how to approach the True and Living God in the manner which He proscribed for His people. We have to learn how to handle the holy things, such as tithes, with integrity. We have to learn how to revere the Lord in personal holiness, in how we handle His business, in how we handle His offerings and in how we handle His holy Presence.

Teaching and Instruction

In Temple times, the Bible consisted of the Torah, or the first five books of the Bible. The priests were instructed to learn, know and teach this book. “So Moses wrote down this law and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel” (Deuteronomy 31:9). They were to instruct the people about the Law of God, teaching them how to live by it. They would instruct the judges and later kings of Israel how to govern the nation by the Law of God. Every seventh year they would read the Torah aloud to the people of Israel during Sukkot. “At the end of every seven years, in the year for canceling debts, during the Feast of Tabernacles, when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place he will choose, you shall read this law before them in their hearing” (Deuteronomy 31:11). The Torah contains rules for living, rules for constraining crime and rules for Tabernacle holiness. The people of Israel were to be the people of the True God. They were to follow the rules that facilitate the Presence of the Almighty within their midst. The Church of Jesus Christ is supposed to be the people of the True God. We are supposed to follow those same rules to facilitate the Presence of the Almighty in our midst. Americans do not live by those rules.

We teach the Ten Commandments all over these United States, but we only follow the ones that we like. As the famous journalist, Ted Koppel, once said: “they are the Ten Commandments, not the ten suggestions.” How can we know God, if we won’t even follow the Ten Commandments? If you have any interest in fulfilling your place in the Royal Priesthood, then this is the place to start. For each one of the Ten Commandments, there are corollaries, additional instructions supporting that Commandment. In addition there are judgments based on the people’s failure to follow the Ten Commandments. These are God Almighty’s rules for human conduct. Since humanity has tried everything else, and nothing we’ve tried has worked, maybe we should try living God’s way?

This is not an exposition on the Torah, every reader of this work should have a Bible; I suggest that you read those first five books. I want to continue with the rules for clean and unclean. We asso-

ciate soap and water with clean and that is usually true for holiness also. “But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy’” (1 Peter 1:15). Some things are inherently unclean to the Almighty. God is Spirit; everything in our physical realm does not have an equal application in the Spirit realm. Many animals are unclean in and of themselves, why? Some are available to eat and some are not available to eat, why? God Almighty doesn’t give us a reason, He only tells us what is clean and what is unclean. He commands His priests to distinguish the difference and to teach His people the same. “They are to teach my people the difference between the holy and the common and show them how to distinguish between the unclean and the clean” (Ezekiel 44:23). Are you in?

It is the same with holy and common. There isn’t a definition of holy, God Almighty tells us what is holy and everything else is common. A quick review of His instruction reveals that His Presence makes common physical things holy. For example, contact with parts of the offering, as and after it is offered, temporarily makes holy something common; as in the blood of an animal offered on the altar becomes holy. The ashes of offerings burned on the altar are holy. These things require disposal in a “clean” place. Sometimes handling something holy makes the person holy for the day and sometimes as in the disposal of ashes, it makes a person unclean for the day.

The priests had to examine the people for certain diseases. These diseases made the person “unclean” and unable to bring an offering to the Tabernacle/Temple. The priest had to sequester the person until the malady had passed and then make the required offering to restore their basic “cleanness” to worship. (Numbers 5:1-4) In ancient times they did not have medical care, quarantine was pretty much the only thing that they had. All of this is to demonstrate the holiness of God. In effect our American way of church has reduced the things of God from holy to common.

Another duty of the priests was the examination for mold. Mold abatement is also a big modern problem. (Leviticus 14:33-57) Not only would mold make the people “unclean” it might well

kill them. The priests had to apply various remedies. For the jealous husband, there was the application of bitter water. (Numbers 5:11-31) This was to prove whether or not the woman with child was faithful. There was also the water of purification for cleansing after contact with a dead body. (Numbers 19)

After careful consideration of these many and varied remedies for human conditions, it comes down to our reverence and respect for the holiness of God Almighty. We the people lost our reverence for God Almighty in the Garden of Eden and have never regained it. A few people have achieved it, some here and some there, but human beings to this day do not revere the God who created them. Many of the rituals, which priests were required to make, do not make sense, and some do not even seem to apply. In a couple of rituals, scarlet yarn is thrown into the water; what could scarlet yarn do? Evidently something important in the Spirit realm, something which we do not understand. Nevertheless, the Creator prescribed these things to remove spiritual conditions from the people, whether or not we understand them.

In 2023 we live in a world of frightening technological innovation. They are talking about implanting computer chips into people. But, humanity's problems are not technological, they are theological. We don't need mass unemployment, or to be sold for our "data." We need to return to our Creator. Priesthood is about facilitating that return. We have to "clean up" before we approach the Holy God. There are physical things, washing and the like; there are spiritual things, some of these rituals; but most importantly there must be a change of heart and mind. Before anyone could offer an animal to repent for their sin, they had to be cleaned up.

In all of those areas, illness, child birth, uncleanness, what needs to be said and who needs to say it? For most intents and purposes valid ministers of Jesus Christ are supposed to perform the functions of priests. Since we are not going to kill animals, what words can be said in place of that? The Bible is a big book full of great words and phrases. I found lots of great phrases for many of those things. In the Hebrew prayers, said in every Synagogue in America, are lots of great ways to approach the Al-

mighty with the proper reverence and respect. We put together a set of words to say, to “clean up” people to approach the Living God.

Offerings

The book of Leviticus starts with the offerings. There were offerings of money, but most offerings involve the taking of a life. We repent with words, but it took the life of Jesus Christ to forgive our sins. We forget that. Because repentance costs us very little (our pride); it puts very little brake on our behavior. When we focus on what Jesus went through to give us forgiveness, we should slow down our bad behavior. In the Old Testament, they had to kill a lamb; it was expensive.

Both John the Baptist and Jesus Christ proclaimed: “Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand.” In modern America we give an altar call and those who respond “give” their lives to Jesus Christ. Is that all that there is to this? Don’t we have to say some words? Don’t we have to acknowledge some wrong doing? Doesn’t the minister have to say something? Shouldn’t we “offer” this new convert to Jesus?

A lot of the offerings concerned restoring right standing with God by making a sacrifice for sin. As the write of Hebrews said: “Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins” (Hebrews 10:11). Because the sacrifice of Jesus Christ fully takes away sin, we should say something. We should more fully acknowledge our sins to Him and demonstrate some real gratitude in our words. In the Holy Days, He has given us two times per year to come clean with Him on a more intense basis: Passover and Atonement. We should approach these two seasons with the humility which comes from realizing that we’re all sinners saved by grace. At Hungry Hearts we make out lists of our sins for both of these two Holy Days. We say something over them and burn them together.

Some offerings are for the first fruits offering of produce, or in modern times something that we made. The first item, or handful of grain was brought to the Priest so that God would bless the whole batch. For the wave sheaf offering, the first sheaf of cut grain was brought to the High Priest and waved before the Lord to bless the whole harvest.

In the New testament we are given things to do: baptism, communion, weddings, funerals, blessing the little children, etc. Very little is said about how to perform these sacerdotal duties. Every church in America does them differently. What is the right way? Many of the priests joined the church in the early years. What did they bring over from their Temple service? Records from the earliest church are virtually non-existent. For the Sabbath keeping Churches of God, how should we take the sacerdotal duties of our faith and reconfigure them to offer everything to God in an acceptable way? That is a big job.

In the churches who have continued the work of Herbert W. Armstrong, we made a ritual of no ritual. One ancient church is full of pomp and circumstance, but teaches lies. Therefore, we shunned all ritual. Sometimes ritual can be useful, if done properly; ritual can also add credibility to the proceedings. The task at Hungry Hearts Ministries was to pull together some blessings in Hebrew to the time honored services of the former World Wide Church of God and use those Hebrew blessings to offer everything we do first to Jesus Christ and then to God the Father.

When I began to research the Bible for words to say, I found in the Psalms plenty of words to use in offering all of our sacerdotal duties to God. Further, I found many verses to use in setting up the several parts of our services to the same end. You might ask me why use Hebrew, since none of us speaks Hebrew. That is true, but the Bible is written primarily in Hebrew and even much of the Greek was written by Hebrew speakers. Hebrew is a sacred language, because of its predominant use in the Bible. Framing the service with some Hebrew amplifies the move in the Holy Spirit.

A long time ago we decided to bless our tallits in Hebrew before we put them on. We also decided to use the Hebrew Sabbath candle blessing when we lit our Menorah. These items added some seriousness to the start of our service. Later we learned the shofar blessing and began to use it when we began to open the service with our shofars. (I know it is shofarot.) Guests would sometimes ask me for something to be said to open and close the service. From a World Wide Church of God background, we didn't say anything, to open, to close, or to shift from part to part, we said nothing.

During this time we met in the basement of the local Jewish Temple and from time to time we would visit with them. Their services consist of a series of Hebrew prayers and some associated readings. A number of these prayers seemed to be a very good way to frame the minds of the members to the service at hand. We are assembled to praise God and pray to Him and to worship Him and to be taught. As time went on it became apparent that our former way of conducting services did not put enough importance and focus on God. Rather, we seemed to focus mostly on our message. How then, do we shift the focus back to God without diluting the message? The Hebrew prayers are a very effective way to focus the first part of the service on God, lift the worship up to God and then present the message under the anointing full strength and full time.

We used Psalm 141:2 to offer the prayers up to God in the service. We used Psalm 66:19 to close out the Hebrew Prayers. We used Psalm 95:6 to offer up worship and Psalm 99:9 to close out worship. We used the Lord's Prayer and the Aaronic blessing in Hebrew to begin praying in the services. We used Psalm 115:14 to bless the people at the close of the service. This combination allows us to offer the service up to Almighty God and close it with His blessing on the people. It allows us to offer the prayers to God and then to offer our worship to God. We kept the message at seventy five minutes which is the full time on the CD recording. In the same way we assembled something important to say and some good Hebrew scriptures to offer up every sacerdotal duty in the church. In this way everything is offered to Jesus Christ and God the Father.

It's not an offering if you don't offer it. When we bring an offering it represents many things in our modern life. We often do not raise sheep, cattle, goats, wheat & fruit. We work and are then paid in currency. So the currency which we put into that envelope represents our first fruits, our thank offering, fellowship offering, etc. In ancient times the Priests would say something to offer the gift to God and then the silver trumpets from Numbers 10 would be blown over the offering. At Hungry Hearts we have decided to say something to offer our gifts to God and then we blow the silver trumpets over them. We do this for New Moon

and Holy Day celebrations. We use salutations for Yeshua and God the Father from both Old and New Testaments.

During Sukkot, we offer the various parts of our lives and churches on different days of the Feast. We praise Elohim for the blessings which we've been given and offer them with our deepest gratitude. We present our lives, churches and missions to Elohim as tribute to our King. We parade before their thrones with music, singing and flagging with the Torah leading the procession and the shofarot a blowing. In this way during the biggest celebration of the year it is all focused directly on Yeshua and the Father.

Prayer

Priests are supposed to offer up prayers for the nation, for the leaders and for the people. Priests serve at the Temple of God for this purpose. Offering prayers at various places based on the need at hand. When the nation needs to repent, they prayed between the altar and the laver. Other times they poured out their prayers at the altar of incense. On the day of Atonement, the High Priest would make intercession in the Holy of Holies.

As the Priesthood of believers we can pray from home, but we should still take prayer just as seriously. Paul instructed us to pray for our leaders so that we could live peaceable lives. We live in dangerous times, with several nations becoming openly hostile. We need to pray for our nation and for peace. With crime becoming rampant we need to pray for protection from crime and safety. With the rise of rampant sin in this country we need to pray for our church members and our families.

In times of war the priests are supposed to pray for the nations warriors. The High Priest was supposed to address the army before they went into battle, to encourage and strengthen them. “When you go to war against your enemies and see horses and chariots and an army greater than yours, do not be afraid of them, because the LORD your God, who brought you up out of Egypt, will be with you. When you are about to go into battle, the priest shall come forward and address the army. He shall say: ‘Hear, O Israel, today you are going into battle against your enemies. Do not be fainthearted or afraid; do not be terrified or give way to panic before them. For the LORD your God is the one who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory’” (Deuteronomy 20:1-4).

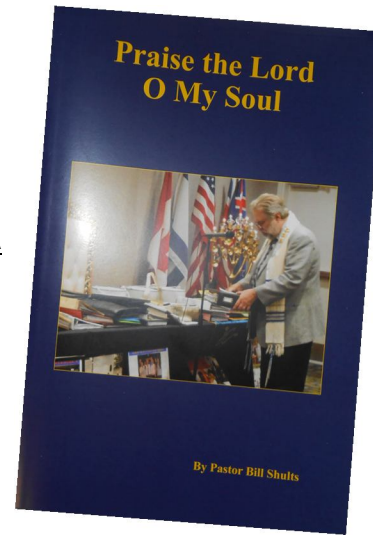
On Holy Days the High Priest would address the nation to encourage them to serve the Lord. “So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand. He read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law” (Nehemiah 8:1-3).

Serving the Lord means to participate in services. In ancient times that would include singing, playing instruments, bringing a sacrifice, contributing money, listening to teaching and instruction and feasting. “All the Levites who were musicians--Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun and their sons and relatives--stood on the east side of the altar, dressed in fine linen and playing cymbals, harps and lyres. They were accompanied by 120 priests sounding trumpets. The trumpeters and singers joined in unison, as with one voice, to give praise and thanks to the LORD. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals and other instruments, they raised their voices in praise to the LORD and sang: ‘He is good; his love endures forever.’ Then the temple of the LORD was filled with a cloud, and the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the temple of God” (2 Chronicles 5:12-13). The High Priest would also pray for the nation before the whole assembly.

We need a durable plan to intercede for our nation, for our leaders and for our churches. We need a procedure to think out the various needs and reduce our ideas for intercession to writing. Reducing ideas to writing focuses our thinking and our efforts on areas of importance. It helps us to weed out weak ideas and to trim away frivolity. When we are going to approach the deity, we need to have our ideas clearly delineated. The serious pray-er will not want to bring half thought out or ill prepared prayers before the Almighty. But, rather bring to the Almighty a well thought out and carefully composed prayer.

Praise the Lord O My Soul

The Companion book to A Royal Priesthood: A Re-introduction of Sacerdotal Duties to the Sabbath Churches of God.



Explore Praising God from Your Heart

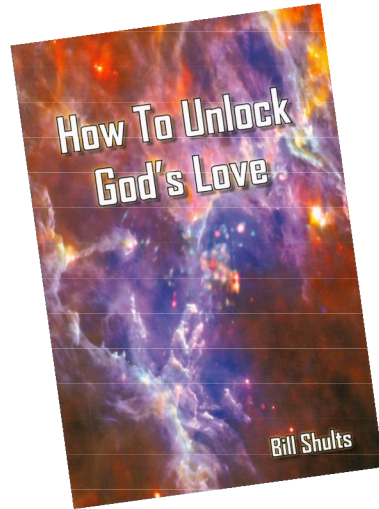
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For more information about Hungry Hearts Ministries visit us on the Web, like us on facebook, email us at Hungryheartsmin@aol.com, or write us at PO Box 10334, Jackson TN 38308.

Meet Pastor Bill Shults

Elder Bill Shults oversees Hungry Hearts Ministries and the local churches from Jackson TN. Bill was baptized in 1986 in the World Wide Church of God. The Truth of the Living God was taught there, including the return to the Torah of God. In many ways the old World Wide Church of God sparked a revolution back to the Christianity of the Bible. In 1995, Bill helped to start the Jackson Congregation of the United Church of God. Bill was ordained a Deacon on the Day of Atonement in 1996. Bill went independent in 2001 and started the Fifth Sabbath in West Tennessee, an outreach of the various Sabbath observant groups. Bill was ordained an Elder in 2002 in Tupelo MS. As a result of that ordination, Bill Started Hungry Hearts Ministries to promote the combination of Torah observance and Holy Spirit Baptism.



Elder Bill Shults has started churches in Jackson TN, Murfreesboro TN, Cookeville TN and Corinth MS. Elder Shults also directs a World Wide Ministry with churches in the USA, Pursuit Magazine, Feast of Tabernacles and Passover Celebrations and Missions Overseas. This is an active Ministry reaching out to those who share the vision of deep commitment to the Truth.

Elder Bill Shults is the author of twelve books: Holy Time With God, Freedom Under the Law of God, Come Away With Me, Do You Know God?, What God Wants From You, What Comes Next, Teshuvah: the Season of Repentance, The Key to God's Heart, Careful Stewardship of God's Rich Blessing, How to Unlock God's Love, Rise and Shine Like the Stars, and Praise the Lord O My Soul.



The Apostle Peter said that the church is a Royal Priesthood. It is time to re-examine the ancient sacerdotal duties of priests in light of modern Sabbath keeping Christianity. Many of the ancient priests joined the early church, what kinds of things might they have brought into early church observance. And, how might we apply them today.