

Come to Understanding

They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding,
and they that murmured shall learn doctrine. — Isaiah 29:24

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A Kingdom of Priests

Yahweh (the LORD) promised Israel that they would become a kingdom of priests* (which is also translated through the Greek language into English as a “royal priesthood”). His promise to Israel, however, was conditional. It was based on their obedience to His word and keeping His covenant:

- 5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth *is* mine:
6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These *are* the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. -Exodus 19

The first priest mentioned in the Bible was Melchizedek, who was a unique priest of Yahweh, for he was *both* a king and a priest. He came to Abraham (then called Abram) with bread and wine:

- 18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he *was* the priest of the most high God. -Genesis 14

Under the law that He had given to Moses, Yahweh ordained priests from the lineage of Aaron, who was a de-

*The priests offered sacrifices to God on behalf of the people. The priests of Yahweh offered animal sacrifices. The priests of pagan gods, such as Baal, also offered human sacrifices. They believed that they had the power to call down the god, which became incorporated in the sacrifice, of which they ate a portion.

The Hebrew word for “priest” is כֹּהֵן (kohen), which is based on the root word “Kahan” or “Cahn.” Cahna (*the* priest) is the emphatic form of Cahn (*a* priest). Thus a priest of Baal (which is also called Bal or Bel) is also known as a Cahna-Bal, from which the modern word “cannibal” is derived.**

When the people of Israel ate sacrifices offered to Baal, they greatly angered Yahweh:

- 2 And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.
3 And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel. -Numbers 25

**Sources: *Strong's Concordance* and Alexander Hislop, *Two Babylons*, p. 232

scendent of Jacob's son, Levi. Aaron and his descendents served as priests under the law of the Old Covenant:

- 30 And thou shalt anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that *they* may minister unto me in the priest's office. -Exodus 30

Thus, through Aaron, the Levites were anointed as priests of Israel. As such, they offered animal sacrifices to Yahweh on behalf of the people:

- 8 And the priests, Aaron's sons, shall lay the parts, the head, and the fat, in order upon the wood that *is* on the fire which *is* upon the altar:
9 But his inwards and his legs shall he wash in water: and the priest shall burn all on the altar, *to be* a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD. -Leviticus 1

As they continued their ritualistic practices of animal sacrifice, many of the priests became corrupt. The sons of Eli, for example, served as priests, although they did not even know Yahweh:

- 12 Now the sons of Eli *were* sons of Belial; they knew not the LORD. -1 Samuel 2

They used their priestly office corruptly to take advantage of the people for their own personal gain:

- 15 Also before they burnt the fat, the priest's servant came, and said to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the priest; for he will not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw.
16 And *if* any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, and *then* take *as much* as thy soul desireth; then he would answer him, *Nay*; but thou shalt give *it me* now: and if not, I will take *it* by force.
17 Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD: for men abhorred the offering of the LORD. -1 Samuel 2

In spite of the corruption of some of the priests, the Levitical priests continued performing ritualistic sacrifices to Yahweh. Many were unable to see that what they were doing was a “figure” of that which was to come. Even though their imperfect rituals and sacrifices could not cleanse them from sin, they were to continue performing them “until the time of the reformation.”

So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense,
and caused them to understand the reading. — Nehemiah 8:8

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- 8 The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing;
- 9 Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;
- 10 Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation. -Hebrews 9

If the priestly rituals and sacrifices were true, then they would have been sufficient to cleanse the people of their sins. Therefore, no more sacrifices would have been needed. However, it was not possible for the blood of the animals they offered to take away sin. Their actions were only a “shadow of good things to come.”

- 1 For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.
- 2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.
- 3 But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.
- 4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. -Hebrews 10

A perfect sacrifice was needed. However, a perfect sacrifice can only be offered by a perfect priest. The Levitical priests were imperfect. They functioned under the ordinances and traditions of an imperfect law.

The priest who could offer the sacrifice was *the* “priest of the most high God.” He is the righteous priest, who had no beginning and no end. Therefore, He is not *made* a priest but He *is* a priest. This fits the description of Melchizedek. His name means, “my king is righteous.” Therefore, Melchizedek is the King of Righteousness and the King of Peace:

- 2 To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after

- that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace;
- 3 Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually. -Hebrews 7

Only Yahshua the Messiah (Jesus the Christ) could fit this description. He is the high priest after the order of Melchizedek. He is the righteous Priest and King. God took away the imperfect so that He could establish the perfect. Instead of continually offering sacrifices, which did not take away sin, Yahshua, as the perfect high priest, made one offering, which was His own body. Because that offering was perfect, there is no need for imperfect priests to continue making offerings for sins:

- 9 Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.
- 10 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.
- 11 And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:
- 12 But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;
- 13 From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.
- 14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. -Hebrews 10

Thus, He is the mediator between God and men:

- 11 But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;
- 12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. -Hebrews 9

By one perfect sacrifice, Yahshua opened the way for us to have direct access to God. As our High Priest, the offered the perfect and final sacrifice. Thereby, we are granted *conditional* access to God. We must *believe* that the perfect sacrifice has been offered:

- 3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.
- 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. -Romans 10

By faith that the perfect sacrifice has been made, we rest from the works of the law and enter into the presence of God. As “peculiar people,” we are a “kingdom of priests,” which is called a “royal priesthood,” having direct access to God:

- 9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: -1 Peter 2

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Institute for Biblical and Historical Studies

Kerby F. Fannin, Ph.D., Director
P.O. Box 260, 114 East Main Street
Addison, Michigan 49220 U.S.A.
biblical@ibiblical.org
517-547-7494

You may view this and past editions online at:
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