

## **The Works of the Messiah**

### **Chapter 5**

#### **A Kingdom of Priests**

To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father. (Rev. 1:6)

This text in Revelation highlights the high priestly ministry of Jesus the Messiah, and indicates that those who have received the cleansing of His blood have become members of His kingdom of priests.<sup>1</sup> The second half of the sentence is the subject of this chapter, and the text readily connects with the words of Peter in his first epistle,

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people, but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. (1Pet. 2:9,10)

That quote, in turn, takes us further back into the Old Testament with the calling of the nation of Israel to be God's own people, and the words of God given to them through Moses,

'Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' (Ex. 19:5,6)

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<sup>1</sup> The phrase in NKJV, "kings and priests" can also be translated, "kingdom of priests," some manuscripts contain the Greek *basileus* which means king, others contain *basileia* which means kingdom. The same is true of Rev. 5:10. "Kingdom of priests" seems more likely and fits with other Scriptures such as Ex. 19:6, where Israel is called to be a "kingdom of priests." See, Notes: (1) under "KING" in *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*.

There are important elements in these scriptures, they reveal to us God's desire to call out of the world a people to be His own, in the Old Testament that people was Israel; in the New Testament it is those, Jew and Gentile, who are born-again through faith in Jesus and thereby constitute the church. There are similarities, with some marked differences, between the two groups:

- In both cases, God's people are described as "special," as "priests" and as a "holy nation." Peter, writing to New Testament believers calls them, "a chosen generation"; Moses speaking of Israel said, "the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself" (Deut. 7:6).
- Both are witnesses: the church by proclaiming, "the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light"; while to Israel, God said, "You are My witnesses," and Israel was called to show that their God was the one, true God (Isa. 43:10-12).
- Israel, as a holy nation, was called out from Egypt under the leadership of Moses; New Testament believers, also called a holy nation, are called out from the world under the headship of Jesus the Messiah (Col. 1:13). Israel was (and still is) a distinct ethnic group, the church is a mixture of all ethnic groups, Jew and Gentile.
- Both groups are covenant people, Israel was called to observe the Mosaic covenant; the church is called to observe the new covenant; the old covenant was ratified with the blood of animals, the new with the blood of Jesus (Heb. 9:16-28).

Such similarities and differences highlight the important Biblical truth that the church is not a separate entity from Israel, or a replacement of Israel; Gentiles are grafted into Israel, while unbelieving Jews are broken off (Rom. 11:17). The church therefore, comprising believing Jews and Gentiles, is a continuation, and a physical and spiritual expansion of Israel, not a replacement of Israel. In this respect, and relevant to our study, is the fact that the new covenant was promised to be made with "the house of Israel and with the house of Judah" (Jer. 31:31). To partake of the new covenant, Christians must therefore, of necessity, be grafted into Israel.

## **Priesthood**

To understand what it means to be a kingdom of priests, we need to examine some of the Biblical teaching on priesthood: At its most basic, the Biblical concept of priesthood is mediatorial and representative. The priest took position between the people and God, he mediated the relationship on behalf of God and the people, acting as representative for both. The necessity of such a function is there, because on one hand there is the absolute holiness of God, and on the other hand the intrinsic sinfulness of humankind, these two aspects make meaningful relationship between the two impossible. God is love, He seeks worshippers (Jn. 4:23), and He desires to show love and give blessing to the people He created; humanity being estranged from its creator finds no lasting relief from its painful and seemingly hopeless experience of life, there is therefore, mutual benefit if the relationship can be restored.

### ***Priesthood Prior to the Law***

Prior to the giving of the law at Sinai, Scripture has little to say about priesthood, and it is difficult to know exactly when and how the concept of priesthood developed. In Genesis chapter 4 we see Cain and Abel going before the LORD to present offerings, indicating that access to God was still possible at that point in time for the sons of Adam. From that time onward, God appears to become more distant from the people of the world, and we find that only certain chosen individuals communicated with Him.

In Genesis, two priests are mentioned, Melchizedek (Gen. 14); and Joseph's father-in-law, Poti-Pherah (Gen. 41:45); and in Exodus, Jethro, Moses father-in-law was a priest (Ex. 2:16; 3:1). Such mentions show that the need of mediatorial priesthood was recognised even among people groups outside of the patriarchal families, and there must have been among them the concept of a God who was distant and unreachable to the majority, but accessible to certain individuals. Amongst the patriarchs, it seems that the head of the family often took on the role of priest: Noah (Gen. 8:20,21), Abraham (Gen. 15:1ff; 18:1ff), Jacob (Gen. 35:1) and Job (Job 1:5; 42:7,8) are seen on occasions taking up a priestly role, making offerings, communing with God and interceding on behalf of others.

Priests are mentioned in Exodus chapter 19 (vv. 19; 24), before the institution of the Levitical priesthood, and it is not clear just who this group was, it is likely that following the example of the patriarchs recorded in Genesis, Israelite families expected that senior family members would perform some priestly duties such as prayers and offering of sacrifices. It may be a reference to the seventy elders who went up to see God (Ex. 24:1, 9); or to the young men who made offerings to the LORD (Ex. 24:5). Whatever the case, it shows that prior to an established and recognised priesthood, there was recognition of separation from God and the need of an assigned mediatorial role to specified persons.

### ***Mount Sinai***

It is with the background of scriptures leading up to Exodus 19:6, that the Lord's call of Israel to be, "to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:6) should be understood. The promise contained within these words of the Lord is that every Israelite would have access to God. No longer would communion with him be the privilege of a select few, but God would be available to all. What followed in Exodus chapters 19 and 20 however, showed that the children of Israel were not ready for such relationship. There in the wilderness of Sinai at the foot of the mountain the people gathered, washed and consecrated themselves, and got ready to meet with God (Ex. 19:10-17), that meeting proved to be very dramatic,

Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice. (Ex. 19:18,19)

This was an awesome and terrifying spectacle, and the response of the people to it is recorded in Exodus 20:18,19,

. . . they trembled and stood afar off. Then they said to Moses, "You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die."

Called to be a kingdom of priests, but here confronted with the terrifying reality of the presence of the God, the Israelites were overcome with fear, they felt keenly their own unworthiness to stand in God's presence, and they pleaded with Moses to speak on their behalf. They were not ready to be priests, they could not bear to be in God's presence, and so they asked Moses to mediate before God on their behalf. The prospect of relationship with God, and of individual and personal priesthood was too awesome and too fearful for the Israelites to contemplate. With this in mind, we should see God's provision of an appointed, mediatorial priesthood as an act of His grace and mercy, He gave them the law with its statutes so as to make relationship possible, the priests, as mediators, would represent God and act on behalf of the people.

### **Priesthood in the Law**

God called the nation of Israel into covenant relationship with Himself, Exodus through to Deuteronomy give the terms of that covenant, and we see the development of the priestly ministry. Aaron is appointed as high priest, his sons called to minister as priests alongside him (Ex. 28:1), they alone allowed to minister the holy things within the tabernacle. The high priest was the only one allowed to enter the Holy of Holies, and then only once a year on the Day of Atonement. In Numbers we see that the Levites were appointed to the practical aspects of worship, assisting the Aaronic priests; and while it was the family of Aaron who conducted the sacrifices and offerings at the altar on behalf of the people, the Levites also held a mediatorial role, camping around the tabernacle, "that there may be no wrath on the congregation of the children of Israel" (Nu. 1:53).

In summary, certain points should be clear from the preceding examination of priesthood in the Pentateuch:

- God desires relationship with humanity, sin stands in the way of that relationship.
- God will not compromise His holiness.
- The presence of a holy God is terrifying to sinful people, and they cannot stand in His presence.

- To deal with sin, and effect relationship, God, in His grace, initiated priesthood and atoning sacrifices as part of the covenant with Israel.
- The Levitical priesthood, operating between God and the people, representing both parties, and by conducting the atoning sacrifices and rituals, ensured the covenant relationship was maintained.
- The Mosaic law limited priesthood to the tribe of Levi.

God's desire was that the nation of Israel would be a kingdom of priests, a people who would have intimate relationship with Him, and the law gave partial fulfillment of that desire. However, from the human side, the prospect of relationship with God remained fearful. From God's side, the people retained sinfulness, the blood of animals could not take away sins (Heb. 10:4); a level of relationship was possible, but intimate, personal interaction was possible only with a few individuals. God's plan was for something better, which He promised through the prophet Jeremiah,

"Behold the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah - not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

"No more shall every man teach his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." (Jer. 31:31-34)

Concerning this study, the relevant part of this promise in Jeremiah's prophecy is that "all shall know Me," this promise is fulfilled through the ministry of Jesus the Messiah, our great High Priest who is not of the tribe of Levi, but He is of the "order of Melchizedek."

## **A New High Priest**

Jesus the Messiah is unique because He is both priest and king. In Israel, the high priests (Lev. 8:12) and kings (1Sam. 16:1; 13) received anointing at the outset of their ministries; but no one could hold both offices, the two roles were kept distinct, and neither priest or king was allowed to assume the duties of the other. This is clearly illustrated on the occasion when King Uzziah took it upon himself to undertake priestly function and burn incense in the temple, Scripture records that by doing so, "he transgressed against the LORD his God"; he was struck with leprosy because of this sin, and had to spend the rest of his days in an isolated house (2Chron. 26:16-21). Jesus as Messiah however, is anointed (Lk. 4:18) to be both priest and king: through Mary He had natural descent from King David (Mt. 1:1; Lk. 3:31), and so had right to the throne; but according to the law, priests were of the tribe of Levi, and from within Levi, only Aaron and his descendants could be appointed high priests. Jesus' birth made Him a member of the tribe of Judah, He was not descended from Aaron, but Jesus' priesthood is not Levitical, His priesthood is of another order - the order of Melchizedek.

## ***The Order of Melchizedek***

Psalm 110 is very important, it is a recognised Messianic psalm and contains the promise that the Messiah will be, "a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek" (v.4). Melchizedek is mentioned in only three places in the Bible, yet he is of huge significance when it comes to understanding the ministry of the Messiah. The first mention of Melchizedek is in Genesis chapter 14, where he meets Abraham who is returning after defeating four kings, and from whom he had rescued his nephew Lot. Melchizedek translates as "king of righteousness," and he was given the titles, "king of Salem," and, "priest of God Most High." Abraham honours him by giving him a tithe. This event is taken up in Hebrew chapter 7 where the writer shows that Melchizedek, being a king and a priest, was a type of the Messiah.

The Mosaic law appointed high priests specifically from the line of Aaron, Jesus could not therefore be a priest according to the law; but now that Jesus has been revealed to be both king and priest according to the order of Melchizedek, as prophesied in Psalm 110, the stipulation in

the law that priesthood could only be undertaken by the tribe of Levi is no longer valid, and so, the priesthood is changed, and along with it a change of the law (Heb. 7:12). The old covenant is “annulled” (Heb. 7:18), and there is the bringing in of a “better hope” through which “Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant” (Heb. 7:19; 22).

Because Jesus’ priesthood is not according to the law, but of the order of Melchizedek, all those who through faith belong to the kingdom of Jesus, and know Him as their High Priest and their King, are not subject to the stipulation in the law that priesthood is only from the tribe of Levi. Believers in Jesus are therefore able to serve as priests in His kingdom, and can justifiably be called “a royal priesthood” (1Pet. 2:9), and a “kingdom of priests” (Rev. 1:5; 5:10). It is important for New Testament believers to understand that their priesthood is not a Levitical priesthood, and therefore it is not undertaken according to the rules contained in the Mosaic law (though, as we shall see, there are similarities and shadows contained within the Levitical priesthood). The most obvious aspect of this is in the area of atoning sacrifices, Jesus as High Priest gave Himself, once for all, as the perfect sacrifice for sins (Heb. 10:10), there is no longer any necessity for any other sacrifice, and Levitical priesthood is therefore rendered irrelevant.

### **A Better Priesthood**

New Testament believers are called to be a kingdom of priests, but not according to the terms of the law of Moses, their priesthood is according to the order of Melchizedek, from which Jesus is their forerunner (Heb. 6:20). There are significant differences and similarities between the two, and while the order of Melchizedek has replaced the Levitical priesthood, there are within the Levitical statutes “copy and shadow of the heavenly things” (Heb. 8:5). These things are instructive and assist in understanding of the ways of God.

#### ***Differences:***

***Atoning sacrifices are no longer necessary.*** Jesus, by offering up Himself has made the one perfect sacrifice for sins. The law required continual sacrifices year after year (Heb. 10:1), Jesus offered Himself as “one sacrifice for sins forever” (Heb. 10:12), therefore those sacrifices required in the law no longer have any validity.



***There is one Mediator, Jesus.*** Aaron and his descendants died and were replaced by others, there were many priests. Jesus lives forever and is now the, “one mediator between God and men” (1Tim. 2:5).

***Jesus’ high priestly ministry is eternal.*** Jesus lives eternally and sits at the right hand of God, interceding on behalf of His people, and so He is able to “save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him” (Heb. 7:24,25).

***Jesus’ blood is more efficient than the blood of animals.*** God ordained that, “without shedding of blood there would be no remission” (Heb. 9:22); and under the law, things and people were cleansed by the blood of animals. The blood of animals could not take away sins, and the worshippers were not perfected. Jesus’ willing offering of Himself as a man accomplished that which the law could not, and those who come to God through faith in Him, are cleansed fully, even to the conscience (Heb. 9:14), and are said to have been “perfected” by His one offering (Heb. 10:14).

***There is no fear in God’s presence.*** We saw in Exodus chapters 19 and 20 how the presence of God brought fear and trembling to the people of Israel. That fear of God remained even to New Testament times. Zacharias the priest, in his prophecy, looked forward to the Messiah’s salvation which would be proclaimed by his son, John, and saw that the time had come that they,

Might serve Him [the Lord God of Israel] without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life. (Lk. 2:74)

Zacharias realised that there would be redemption and complete remission of sins available through the Messiah’s ministry, a salvation that would bring peace (Lk. 2:76-79). Those saved through faith in Jesus have, “boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us” (Heb. 10:19); and can, “draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith” (Heb. 10:22), for them, there is no fear on entering the presence of God.

**All have access to God.** According to the terms of the law, only the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies once a year on the Day of Atonement. Only certain privileged individuals, such as prophets, heard the voice of God on a regular basis. Now, according to the new covenant, all believers have free access to God at all times, and all can have deep intimate communion with Him.

These differences are significant and may be summed up by the words, “one,” “eternal,” “perfect” and “better.” Under the new, everlasting covenant, there is one perfect high priest, whose ministry is eternal; He made one perfect offering, which gives perfect eternal salvation; those who receive His salvation are being made perfect; all the benefits of the new covenant are so much better than those of the old.<sup>2</sup>

### ***Similarities:***

Looking closely at the Levitical priesthood, there are certain characteristics, which while specific to the regulations of the law, also contain elements which are clearly applicable to New Testament believers. These characteristics are shadows in the old covenant, and they point to spiritual realities experienced in the present dispensation by disciples of Jesus:

**Chosen.** Aaron and the Levites were chosen by God for their roles in the priesthood (Ex. 28:1, Nu. 3:12); New Testament believers have also been chosen by God (Eph. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13).

**Service.** The Levites were chosen and called by God to serve Him and the people (Nu.3:5-13); New Testament believers are also to serve, called by God to be, “His special people, zealous for good works” (Titus 2:14); they are exhorted to present their bodies as living sacrifices to God as an act of “reasonable service” (Rom. 12:1), and to serve one another in love and humility (cf. Rom. 12:3-16).

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<sup>2</sup> For further study, see the use of these words in The Epistle to the Hebrews:

“One”: 10:12; 10:14

“Eternal”: 5:9; 6:2; 9:12; 9:14; 9:15; 13:20

“Perfect”: 2:10; 5:9; 7:19; 9:9; 9:11; 10:1; 11:40; 12:23; 13:21

“Better”: 1:4; 8:6; 9:23; 10:34; 11:16; 11:35; 11:40; 12:24

**Cleansing.** The Old Testament priests were washed with water before they could enter into service (Ex. 29:4); the blood of the Messiah cleanses the “conscience from dead works to serve the living God” (Heb. 9:14). The washing experienced by the believer in Jesus, is not merely outward, there is a deep inner cleansing, Paul speaks of the “washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5), and Hebrews talks of “hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and bodies washed with pure water” (Heb. 10:22).

**Clothing.** The priests wore the garments prescribed in the law (Ex. 29:5-9); believers in Jesus, have, “put on the new man, which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph. 4:24), they have the armour of God (Eph. 6:11) and will wear fine linen, pure and white at the marriage supper (Rev. 19:8); such are their garments of salvation (Isa. 61:10)

**Anointing.** The high priest was anointed with the holy anointing oil (Lev. 8:12); believers have been, “sealed [anointed] with the Holy Spirit of promise” (Eph. 1:13).

**Consecration.** The priests were presented to God and went through the rituals of consecration by which they were set apart (or “hallowed,” Ex. 29:1) and were to be wholly devoted to their ministry (Lev. 8). Believers in Jesus, are also to present themselves to God: they are saved and called with a “holy calling” (2Tim. 1:9), that they may be “instruments of righteousness” (Rom. 6:13), and “vessels of honour, sanctified and useful for the Master” (2Tim. 2:21). This setting apart is a separation from all that is worldly, fleshly and demonic, and so to be holy and completely dedicated to God and His purposes, in this way believers are a “holy nation.”

### **New Testament Priesthood**

Having looked briefly at some of the background regarding Biblical priesthood, we who know Jesus as our High Priest and King, can make practical application to our own function as a kingdom of priests.

Now that the Messiah has come and fulfilled His ministry according to the order of Melchizedek, we understand that the Levitical priesthood has no practical application for our lives as disciples of Jesus. Aaron, his

descendants and the Levites stood as representatives of the people and of God, and mediated between both sides. Now that in Jesus, all believers have personal access to God, there is no need for a defined group of priests.

A major part of the Levitical priesthood was taken up with the offerings and sacrifices for sin, now that Jesus has made the once for all sacrifice, there is no need for this aspect of priesthood. Jesus fulfills His priestly ministry from heaven, from there mediating salvation on behalf of all who through faith receive Him as their Saviour.

Though there is no practical application for us of the Levitical priesthood, the shadows contained therein point to our priestly function as New Testament Christians. The fruition of these can be seen in the following areas:

### ***Reconciliation***

Priesthood was necessary because of the enmity between humankind and God, and relationship being impossible while sin was present. The priests were God's ordained mediators between Himself and humankind. Now all believers in Jesus are reconciled to God and brought into a new and wonderful relationship with Him. Every believer can fulfill a ministry of reconciliation, witnessing and testifying to their salvation and leading others to the Saviour (2Cor. 5:18-20).

### ***Worship***

Jesus stated that God seeks worshippers who worship Him in spirit and truth (Jn. 4:23). The Levites were involved in all aspects of worship around the tabernacle and later in the temple. Among them were musicians, teachers, treasurers, scribes, evangelists and those who undertook the practical aspects of care for the house of God. The Hebrew word, "*abad*," and the Greek word, "*latreuo*" are often translated "worship," both contain the thought of service, and we should not think of worship being confined to singing or praying, true worship involves every area of life, and includes the surrender of life to serve the living God. As disciples of Jesus we are exhorted to, "present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1). As the priests and Levites were called to a life of service to God, so too are we as followers of Jesus, and all we do, practically and spiritually ought to be done as an act of worshipful devotion to Him,

Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. (Col. 3:17)

### ***Access to God***

Under the dispensation of the old covenant, only the high priest had access to the Holy of Holies once a year, there to make atonement before God for the sins of the people. Now in Jesus, every believer has access to the Holiest by the blood of Jesus (Heb. 10:19). We need to see this as a wonderful and tremendous privilege. From the beginning of creation God has desired a people with whom He could have deep and personal relationship. God is love, and He desires to pour out blessings on the people He created, and Scripture hints at the anguish He feels when sin comes between Himself and people (e.g. Ezk. 18:31,32). God determined to do something to restore the relationship, He gave the law to Israel, and in the fulness of time, He sent His Son to pay the price for our sins so that the relationship could be fully restored, and redeemed people could receive His love and blessings. What a price He was prepared to pay! For us, who have received Jesus as our Saviour it means we can have experience of unimaginable, intimate relationship with the God of the universe; at His feet, in His throne room we may hear His voice and present to Him our own petitions. And we may do that boldly and without fear, because our sins are forgiven and the blood of His Son has cleansed us completely, the barrier, represented by the veil before the Holy of Holies, is completely removed. In that place of communion we may fulfill a priestly ministry of intercession, interceding on behalf of the lost, praying for those in need and supporting one another in our desire to serve the Lord. The apostle Paul undertook such ministry, praying for the saints (Eph. 1:15-21), and appreciated those who did the same for him (Eph. 6:18-20).

### **No Fear**

In the Messiah's kingdom of priests, there is fulfillment of the longing expressed in Zacharias' prophecy that, "we might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life" (Lk. 2:74,75). Zacharias was himself a priest descended from Aaron, and perhaps as he served in the temple he felt the uncertainty and the fear of trying to serve a living and holy God, and maybe his thoughts sometimes

troubled him: Had he fulfilled all he was supposed to do? Could he be sure all his sins were forgiven? Would God accept Him? Had he made any mistakes and erred from the law? Zacharias' son proclaimed the way of salvation, pointing to the Messiah, the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world. From that time, all who believe in the Messiah, have been grafted into Israel (Rom. 11:17); and so become fellow citizens of the commonwealth of Israel, partakers of the new covenant and the promises; the middle wall of partition is broken down, and together believing Jews and Gentiles are reconciled to God and are at peace with God. They are able to fulfill their priestly ministry, because, through Jesus the Messiah, they all have access by one Spirit to the Father (Eph. 2:14-18).

Hebrews 12:18-29 provides a comparison between the Israelites who in the past met God on earth at Sinai, and those of us who today commune with Him in the heavenly city, and (here briefly stated) it provides a fitting conclusion: We have not come to the mountain which burned with fire, the sight of which terrified Moses and those with him, but we have come to Mount Zion, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, which is far better. At Sinai, God spoke on earth, now He speaks from heaven, we should not refuse Him; with grace we should serve Him acceptably, not with terror, but with reverence and godly fear. We are reminded that God is a consuming fire, and there is something of a warning for us in these verses: Yes, we know God and have relationship with Him in a wonderful way because of Jesus and the price He paid for us, and we have wonderful spiritual blessings. However, we are not excused from service, rather, we are exhorted to serve Him with far more diligence and fervour than those of the old covenant. There is a spiritual principle, mentioned by Jesus, that to whom much is given, much will be asked (Lk. 12:48); God has given us so much, in sending His Son to effect reconciliation, should not we who understand these things, respond, not because we are terrified of him, but in loving thankfulness, with the giving of our all in return?

Let us rejoice and appreciate all that God has done in order to make us a kingdom of priests; and like the priests of old, spend our lives in serving the living God, declaring His praises, for His honour, and to the glory of His name, knowing that this is what He has called us to do.