

The Priesthood of Believers in a Holy God (Exodus 19:6-17)

Soldiers of Christ, please take up your swords. Let's turn to Ex 19 to again see God's kingdom
 - and we'll see the coming of the King to meet His people who'll serve Him as priests.

They need to get ready and prepare the way and themselves

Big idea or main point to listen for: All believers are priests and are to be holy as God is holy.

In Ex 19:6 God says to Israel: *'and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'* *These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.'*⁷ *So Moses came and called the elders of the people and set before them all these words that the LORD had commanded him.*⁸ *All the people answered together and said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do."* *And Moses reported the words of the people to the LORD.*⁹ *And the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I am coming to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe you forever."* *When Moses told the words of the people to the LORD,*¹⁰ *the LORD said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments"¹¹ and be ready for the third day. For on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.¹² And you shall set limits for the people all around, saying, "Take care not to go up into the mountain or touch the edge of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall be put to death."¹³ No hand shall touch him, but he shall be stoned or shot; whether beast or man, he shall not live.'* *When the trumpet sounds a long blast, they shall come up to the mountain."*¹⁴ *So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and consecrated the people; and they washed their garments.¹⁵ And he said to the people, "Be ready for the third day; do not go near a woman" [that means sexually]¹⁶ On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled.¹⁷ Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain.*

This past week over 3 days we learned about God's kingdom,

- and how sinners can meet a holy God through King Jesus. I want to start with a story
- Thousands of years ago God created a holy perfect world where He walked with man
- But Satan fell and tempted Eve who told him she must not touch the fruit lest she die.
- Adam and Eve ate and died spiritually
 - o and could physically no longer live in God's holy presence in the garden.
 - o A holy angel's flaming sword guarded its entrance so any approaching would die.

But God graciously didn't end humanity as sin deserved. He would come down again

- o God's presence started at a mount (Gen 2 says rivers flowed downhill from Eden).

Man was sent down and out in sin, but now God saves and takes man to another Mount, Sinai.

- It's still not safe to approach, unauthorized entering gets you shot (not by gun, by arrow).
- But a holy God takes Israel back up to His presence and makes a way so they can.
- The King saves His people to be in His royal family,
 - o royal priests to the world telling all how sinners can be with a holy God.

That's the big picture in redemptive history and big point in rescuing Israel from Egypt, Ex 9:16

Yahweh's name proclaimed to all the earth is His aim in the Exodus

That's the mission and the main point: All believers are priests and are to be holy as God is holy

Outline:

1. A Royal Priesthood of Believers (God's mission for OT Israel and us in the NT)
2. God's Call to Be Holy as He is (our consecration and cleansing and His coming)

In Ex 19:6 God tells OT Israel *'you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'* Last time we looked at 1 Pet 2 where God tells believers *'you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation...'*

The church isn't Israel's replacement or a geopolitical nation, we're grafted into His one people. As the holy nation Israel was to be, the redeemed race in Christ is to be a holy royal priesthood.

There's the human race and there's a chosen new humanity in Christ (Eph. 2:15)

Under Moses God later established a priesthood through the line of Levi and Aaron.

- But here in Ex 19, all Israel's kingdom was to be priests.

Not 1 holy tribe within Israel, but a holy nation of Israel for every tribe and tongue worldwide.

- God chose all the Jews to be His royal priesthood.

Last time we saw in Rev 1 and Rev 5 Jesus makes every believer to be priests now and forever.

Rev 20:6 in the end *'they will be priests of God and Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.'*

- But most Christians don't think of themselves as priests.
- We don't wear white collars and black clothes, but 1 Peter 2 says we're all to be priests.
- In the dark ages of professing Christianity, the priests were only men who were single.
- That doesn't fit the OT Levitical priesthood as Aaron and his sons were married.

But 1 Tim 4:1 predicted this *'in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons...who forbid marriage...'*

- So to forbid marriage for priests is a departure from the faith and it's a demonic teaching,

But Catholicism tries to be a full replacement theology that replaces Israel with their church.

- Like the tabernacle incense, holy water, priestly ongoing sacrifices (Mass)
- Catholics can't confess to or access God directly, you need a go-between guy in a booth.

In the Reformation of the 1500s, the reformers recovered 'the priesthood of believers.'

- By sola scriptura, or scripture alone, they saw God's people are a kingdom of priests.
- Not just a select few single men, but all believers are priests; women, young people, etc.
- We don't need special clothes, smells and bells or booths, we can all confess to God.
- We can come to God directly by faith alone in Jesus alone

In the NT, His death fulfills all sacrifices and ceremonies as our High Priest and 1 Mediator

But even here in the OT, Ex 19 points us to that.

- Later the Law consecrated sons of Aaron who washed before serving in the tabernacle.
- The royal line was through Judah and priestly duties for Levite 30-50 year old males.

But Ex 19:6 calls all Israel first to be royal priests and in v. 14 all the Israelites are consecrated.

- The end of v. 14 says all the people washed their clothes.
- All the Jews are going to come to God, not just Levites or sons of Aaron.

Both male and female believers, all ages and stages of life approach God's presence as priests.

v. 16b: ***all the people*** in the camp trembled. ¹⁷ Then Moses brought ***the people*** out of the camp to meet God...

Not just priests of a certain age, tribe, and gender, the people as a whole come to God

Moses here had a unique role like the later High Priest Mediator

- but he's an example to Israel as priests to bring people to meet God.
- This was the unique role of the Jews to the Gentiles: bring them to God on His terms.
- The kingdom of Israel was to be a priestly blessing, mediating His message to others.
- Israelites were to give warnings of God's holiness and the way to approach.
- Moses later wrote the priestly blessing for Aaron's sons to say *'the LORD bless you and keep you. The LORD make His face shine on you, And be gracious to you...'*
- That's Num 6, but God always had a multi-ethnic family plan. Ps 67 expands that priestly blessing:

- *'be gracious to us and bless us And cause His face to shine upon us...That Your way may be known on the earth, Your salvation among all nations...Let the nations be glad and sing for joy...Let all the peoples praise You...God blesses us, That all the ends of the earth may fear Him.'*¹

It was never just about the people of Israel, it was always for all the peoples of the world

This was their mission since Gen 12:3, bless all nations with Israel.

- And Gen 14 shows Gentiles can be royal priests, too, like Melchizedek.

In later Law, only Jewish priests offered sacrifices,

- but for thousands of years there were Gentiles offering acceptable sacrifices like priests
 - o (Abel, Noah, Job, etc.).
- In Ex 18 non-Jews joined Israel ('a mixed multitude').
- Some Egyptians feared God and other ethnicities went out with these people (Ex 12:38).
- Father Abraham had many sons, including many without his DNA.
- The priesthood of believers isn't just ethnic Israel

The 'people' at Mt. Sinai hearing Ex 19:6 included a mixed multitude with Jews

Even in the OT, this is connected to Christ. Isaiah prophesied a Messiah to '*sprinkle many nations*' (what a priest did for the nation of Israel).² In the coming kingdom of Christ, God said in Isa 66:19 '*coastlands far away, that have not heard my fame or seen my glory...shall declare my glory among the nations. And they shall bring all your brothers from all the nations as an offering to the LORD...to my holy mountain...just as the Israelites bring their grain offering...some of them also I will take for priests and for Levites, says the LORD.*'

Just like Israelite priests brought offerings, some from other nations will be priests and Levites. We're coastlands far away from Israel and part of the promise to proclaim His glory to nations. Sounds like Rom 11, God grafting us in, all Israel will be saved with fullness of Gentiles, SDG.

Isa 61 promises Gentiles with Jews in v. 5 and says in v. 6: *you shall be called the priests of the LORD; they shall speak of you as the ministers of our God...*

- The priesthood of all believers connects to the ministry of all believers
- Isa 61 connects that prophecy with what Jesus said He fulfilled in their hearing in Lk 4.

Jesus makes us all priests in Rev 1, but He calls only some to be pastors

In Ex 19:7 Moses called for the elders and gave them God's message to give to the people.

- That role of leading and speaking formally was a ministry of elders.
- So the priesthood of believers in v. 6 doesn't negate the place of leaders in v. 7.
- The NT limits pastor/elder ministry to men,³ but priestly ministry is for all.

Don't think animal sacrifices or being in a holy place, 1 Pet 2:5 says '*be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ...⁹ you are a... royal priesthood...that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you...*'

MacArthur Study Bible note: 'OT priests and NT believer-priests share a number of characteristics ... cleansed of sins (Titus 2:14) ... anointed for service ([The Spirit anoints all believers] 1 John 2:20, 27); priests are prepared for service... priests are to honor the Word of God...priests are to walk with God...priests are to impact sinners... and priests are messengers of God...The main privilege of a priest, however, is access to God... [In 1 Pet 2:4 the call to offer up] **spiritual sacrifices**... would include: 1) offering...one's body to God [a living sacrifice] (Rom. 12); 2) praising God (Heb. 13:15); 3) doing good (Heb. 13:16); 4) sharing one's resources (Heb. 13:16); 5) bringing people to Christ (Rom. 15:16); 6) sacrificing one's desires for the good of others (Eph. 5:2); and 7) praying (Rev. 8:3).'⁴

We don't bring physical offerings of lambs, we bring financial offerings to the Lamb of God. Don't go to a confessional, confess sins to one another as all believers are priests (James 5:16). I just read an excellent book The Royal Priesthood and the Glory of God. Genesis to Revelation it sums up priests as instructing, interceding, serving and guarding God's house and His people.

'God's story of royal priesthood is larger than any theater can capture. Indeed, only the entire cosmos in all of human history is able to reflect the glory of the royal priesthood that God is establishing in Christ. This priestly narrative covers the entire Bible, and its drama repeats every time churches gather...whether or not they think of themselves as priests, their actions identify who they are. In worshiping God, serving one another, sanctifying God's house with prayer and church discipline, baptizing...Lord's Table...offering praise, speaking the word to one another and blessing the nations with the gospel, they are priests living in the kingdom of Christ.'⁵

That takes us to the last part of today's message as priests: God's call to to be holy as He is

- **BE CONSECRATED.** Ex 19:10 *the LORD said to Moses, 'Go to the people and consecrate them ...'* This is the verb we get the noun 'holy' from, same root word in v. 6 where it's translated 'holy'

In Lev 11:44 God puts it together like this '*Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy.*' We need to 'take time to be holy' by praying often to the Lord, and spending time in His Word.⁶ To consecrate is to dedicate as holy to God, to purify or sanctify or set apart from common use.

We sing 'take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord to Thee...take my moments and my days...take my hands...my feet...my voice...my lips...my will...my heart...my love...'⁷ But notice it says *Moses consecrated them.* In the NT, Jesus is the Mediator High Priest who prays in Jn 17 for us '*I consecrate myself, that they may also be sanctified...sanctify them in the truth, your word is truth.*'⁸ His Word consecrates and sanctifies. Eph 5:25 '*Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word...that she might be holy...*'

Moses may have consecrated Israel with a sacrifice, it doesn't say exactly how, but we know exactly how Jesus sacrificed Himself to consecrate and cleanse from sin, washing by the Word

Regeneration is one-time but sanctification is over time growth in holiness

- **Which takes us from BE CONSECRATED to BE CLEANSED to be holy as He is**

Ex 19:10b '*...and let them wash their garments...¹⁴ So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and consecrated the people; and they washed their garments.*' Washing clothes is connected to a purifying cleansing from sin in Num 8:21: '*the Levites purified themselves from sin and washed their clothes, and Aaron...made atonement for them to cleanse them. And after that the Levites went in to do their service in the tent of meeting*

...

So this isn't just about hygiene or sanitation, it's about holiness and symbolic purification

- They needed washed clothes to meet God, atonement to cleanse from sin.
- The OT later called sinners to be washed white from sin that leaves crimson stains⁹

Here it calls to abstain: ¹⁵ *And he said to the people, "Be ready for the third day; do not go near a woman."*

- Even normal sexual relations of a man and wife now set aside,
- and normal clothes need to be made white.
- God's point isn't "cleanliness is next to godliness."

The point is that you can't come to God just as you are, and God must supersede all relations.

Privately as well as publically they need to give God pure undivided attention

How does v. 15 fit with verses like Pr 5:18 where it says let your wife and her body *'fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love'*? The NT also honors the marriage bed (Heb 13:4) and it says in 1 Cor. 7:3 *The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband ... Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.*

Ex 19 is one of those times for a limited time, mutually putting the spiritual above the physical. But God's Word isn't against sex. It's God's wedding gift and beautiful in a biblical marriage.

GCBC What We Teach:¹⁰ ““marriage” has only one meaning and that is marriage sanctioned by God which joins one man and one woman, as created by God, in a single, exclusive union (Matt. 19:4-9), in a public, formal and officially recognized covenant (Mal. 2:14, Prov. 2:17), to picture Christ and His bride, the church (Eph. 5:22-33). We teach God designed sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other (Heb. 13:4), and that departures from God's design are sinful, including adultery, fornication, homosexual or bisexual or transsexual conduct, incest, pornography, etc. (1 Thess 4:3-8; Matt. 5:28; Rom. 1:24-32; 1 Cor. 5:1, 6:9-10; Lev. 18:1-30; Deut. 22:5). We teach while these and other sins are offensive to God, there is redemption and forgiveness through Jesus Christ for all who confess and forsake their sin to follow Christ, and we teach every forgiven sinner "in Christ" is a "new creation" (1 Cor. 6:9-11; 2 Cor. 5:17; Acts 3:19-20; Pr. 28:13; Ps. 103:3, 12; Col. 2:13-14, 3:5-10). [We'll study that more in Ex 20:14: *'you shall not commit adultery'*]

1 Cor 6:9 lists those sins and adds *'neither...idolaters...¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.¹¹ And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified...'* (same language as Ex 19:14, consecrated to God and cleansed, to a new identity now). Israel cleansed their bodies and washed their garments with water, the NT says to the church in 2 Cor 7:1 *'let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.'*

David committed adultery and murder, but prayed in light of Ex 19: *'Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!... Purge me with hyssop [that's from Ex 12] and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow... Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me'* (Ps 51:2, 7, 11). The New Covenant promised cleansing all sin as water washing by the Spirit and a new heart (Eze. 36). 1 Jn 1:9 *'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness...⁷ But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.'* So fellowship with Him and others, confessing sin, is key to cleansing.

Heb 10:22 *'let us draw near...to cleanse us from a guilty conscience...washed with pure water...let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.'¹¹*

- **HE IS COMING!**⁹ *And the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I am coming to you in a thick cloud..."¹¹ and be ready for the third day. For on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people...¹⁶ On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled.*

We'll look at His coming more next time, but this is holy God coming down on the mountain for all Israel to see. He's the coming King before whom *'kings and nations tremble at His voice [we sang]... behold our God.'* It's deadly if you're not ready when He comes. Are you ready? This isn't the last time Moses sees His glory come in a cloud and a thundering voice on a mount
Not just in his lifetime but beyond his lifetime even

1500 years later Moses and Elijah appeared in glory on a mount at the transfiguration of Jesus. Lk 9:31 says they ‘*spoke of his departure [Greek exodus], which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem... a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is my Son...listen to him!” And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. Other gospel writers say He was ‘as white as the light...His garments...**exceedingly white**, as no launderer on earth can whiten them...they became terrified[at God’s voice]...they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid.’*

Moses on the mount of transfiguration spoke with Jesus about His exodus coming in Jerusalem. Another deliverance from slavery was about to happen in His death and resurrection. There’s another Exodus, another thick cloud, another trembling. His garments washed white as no man can, only in Him can man see God and live. The thundering voice says *this is my Son, hear Him*

That’s a preview of kingdom glory, but His full glory will come another time to another mount. Zech 14 ‘*the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him...On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives...And the LORD will be king over all the earth.*’ Revelation says there will be a lot of thundering and trembling then. At that 2nd coming Jesus said all the earth will see ‘*the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory...as the lightning comes...so will be the coming of the Son of Man...And he will send out his angels with a **loud trumpet call**, and they will gather his elect...from one end of heaven to the other...you must also **be ready**, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.*’¹² We need to be ready, are you?

In Ex 19:13 a trumpet sound called the people up to meet the Lord. Paul says ‘*at the last trumpet...the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised...and we shall be changed.*’ And ‘*the Lord himself will descend from heaven...with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air...*’¹³ Are you ready?

He’s coming. We need to be consecrated and cleansed holy priests. We will all meet Him, some here will meet Him in death this year, it could be today. You’re only ready trusting Christ alone

*When He shall come with trumpet sound, O may [you] then in Him be found
Dressed in His righteousness alone¹⁴*

¹ NASB95.

² Isaiah 52:15, clearly speaking of Christ to come in Isaiah 53.

³ 1 Timothy 3:14-15 explain Paul is writing how things are to be done in the church, including qualifications for overseers/elders in v. 1-7 (“he/him/his” repeatedly and “husband of one wife” or literally “one-woman-kind-of-man”). See also 2:11-12 in church context, but Titus 2 does speak of the important ministry of women teaching younger women.

⁴ John MacArthur Jr., ed., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 1941–1942.

⁵ David Schrock, *The Royal Priesthood and the Glory of God*, Short Studies in Biblical Theology (Crossway, 2022).

⁶ William Longstaff, “Take Time to Be Holy.”

⁷ Frances Havergal, “Take My Life and Let It Be.”

⁸ John 17:19, 17 ESV.

⁹ Isaiah 1:16-18.

¹⁰ [Gold Country Baptist Church: Shingle Springs, CA > What We Teach - Doctrinal Distinctives \(gcb.church\)](http://gcb.church)

¹¹ NIV84.

¹² Luke 21:27, Matthew 24:27, 31, 44.

¹³ 1 Corinthians 15:52, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18.

¹⁴ Edward Mote, “The Solid Rock.”