

WELCOME TO THE PRIESTHOOD!

Embracing the Privilege of our Calling

Lesson 1

INTRODUCTION (Bible Study Facilitator): We are super excited that you are taking part in this 6-week study, *Priests in Blue Jeans: Motivating and mobilizing the body of Christ to take the love of God to the streets*. You're in for a major blessing that we believe the Holy Spirit is going to use to transform you and hopefully a few others around you.

- **Prayer:** Invite the Holy Spirit to illuminate God's truths to your spirit.

ICEBREAKER QUESTIONS: When you hear the word "priest," what is the first thought that comes to your mind?

(If you're doing this study with others discuss the reasons why we have such impressions).

*"This word priest should become as common as the word Christian"
because all Christians are priests.* Martin Luther

The Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude: Preached and Explained.

Bible Study and Conversation: Read the scriptures below that make up the foundation for the entire Priests in Blue Jeans ministry.

As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you **yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ**. For it stands in Scripture:

"Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a **cornerstone** chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the **cornerstone**," and "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

But you are a chosen race, **a royal priesthood**, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, **that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light**. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. **1 Peter 2:4-10 (ESV)**

Peter informs these believers that, like Christ, they too are living stones that God will use to build a *spiritual house* (not a brick & mortar structure). And like the temple of former days, it will be run by a holy priesthood. Yet, these priests don't have to be from the tribe of Levi as was true under the Old Covenant. No, this priesthood is made up of anyone who has put their faith in the **chief corner stone**. Notice what the Apostle John records in his revelation;

Jesus freed us from our sins and made us a kingdom of priests! Rev. 1:6, 5:9,10

Six Questions to Consider:

1. Who is Peter alluding to when he speaks of the living stone that the builders rejected?
2. Who do you think the builders being referred to are, and how did they reject the living stone?
3. Peter informs these believers that as priests, they are to offer up "spiritual sacrifices" acceptable to God through Jesus. Can you think of some ways that you can offer up spiritual sacrifices to God in your everyday life? (Well look at these sacrifices in more depth in future lessons)
4. What do you suppose Peter means in verse 9, "that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light"? And who do you suppose the priest are to proclaim these excellencies to?
5. How does it make you feel to know that God has called you out of spiritual darkness and into his priestly work of building his spiritual house?

6. Do you think that priests should live different lives than those who are not?

(Holy is a word that means to be set apart)

Closing Remarks: Brothers and sisters, we are in for a great spiritual ride together over the next several weeks. May you reflect daily on the truths unpacked in this study. Please keep your heart open to the voice of the Spirit, as expressed in the Scriptures and get ready to start living your ordinary lives with extraordinary purpose!

CLOSE IN PRAYER: (If you're doing this as a group study we encourage several people to pray). Thank the Lord for his calling in your life and ask your High Priest and Cornerstone, Jesus, to use you to build his spiritual house.

BIBLE STUDY NOTES FOR THOSE WHO WANT MORE DEPTH

The Recipients of this letter: The audience that the Apostle Peter is writing to is both Jew and Gentile, believers in Christ. Peter is instructing these believers in order to help them understand their new identity in Christ, which he says includes being called holy and royal priests who God is using to build his spiritual house (the Church).

The Jewish believers Peter is writing to would have been familiar with “temple talk,” as well as, the role priests served in the temple. Most likely, even the gentile believers would have had some second-hand knowledge about these things. In fact, the Jewish temple was still in operation at this time.

The Priesthood Under the Old Covenant: The priesthood under the Old Covenant was established during the time of Moses. Most of the biblical information about the priesthood is found in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy. The priesthood was exclusively made up of men from the tribe of Levi.

All priests were Levites, but not all Levites were priests. The Levites were the sons of Levi, one of the twelve sons of Israel. God designated the Levites to serve at the tabernacle and the temple. Only a small portion of the Levites were actually designated priests.

Only the sons of Aaron were accepted as priests to actually serve in the sanctuary, offering sacrifices, keeping the lamps lit, replacing the bread and so forth (Lev.21).

The rest of the Levites were designated for such tasks as moving the tabernacle, singing at the temple and so forth. Their fellow Levites were assigned to all the other duties of the tabernacle, the house of God. But Aaron and his descendants were the ones who presented offerings on the altar of burnt offering and on the altar of incense in connection with all that was done in the Most Holy Place.

All the priests had to go through a ceremonial ritual to cleanse themselves before entering the temple.

There was only one priest (the High Priest) who was permitted to go into the “holy of holies” and offer up a sin sacrifice for the nation of Israel. This priest served as the overseer of the priesthood.

The High Priest was mandated to wear a special robe which had bells sewn into its lower hem so that when he went in or out of the holy of holies (the most sacred room in the temple) it was no secret (Ex.29:35) This robe also had twelve stones sewn in which represented the twelve tribes of Israel. When this High Priest got dressed each day he was reminded that he was serving all of Israel.

What’s important to recognize about the priesthood under the Old Covenant is that it was merely a foreshadowing of a better priesthood that would be established under Jesus Christ, the ultimate High Priest who ever lives to make intercession for the people of God. Yes, when Christ sacrificed himself on the cross for the sins of the world, the temple curtain that blocked entrance to the holy place was ripped down the middle. The implication, now people from every tribe kindred and tongue are welcome to serve and worship as God’s royal and holy priests; sanctified by his blood and robed in his righteousness.

Beautiful truths to consider in this context:

- As High Priest, Jesus originated from a much holier line than Aaron, for God was His Father.
- As High Priest, Jesus needed no ceremonial cleansing, for he never sinned.(2Cor.5:21)
- As High Priest, Jesus robbed us in His righteousness. (2Cor.5:21)
- As High Priest, Jesus did not need to offer up a sacrifice for himself, yet he became the sacrifice for all men, for all time.
- As High Priest, Jesus permits anyone who embraces his spiritual sacrifice to serve in the priesthood. (1Peter2:4-5)
- As High Priest, Jesus invites all of God’s people into the presence of His Father and encourages them to step boldly into his holy presence where we will find help and grace in our time of need. (Heb 4:16)