

HAVE YOU MET MY PRIEST??

What is Your Priest Like?

Get to Know Your Priest!

We All Have One



Buddy Dano, Pastor

Divine Viewpoint

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“He shall build the temple of the Lord, and He shall be a priest upon His throne,” Zechariah 6:13.

A handful of feeble exiles had come back from their captivity. “The holy and beautiful house” where their father’s praised the Lord was burned with fire. There was no king among them, but they still possessed a representative of the priesthood, the other great office of Divine appointment.

Their first care was to rear up some poor copy of the temple, and the usual difficulties that attend reconstruction of any sort, and dog every movement that rests upon spiritual enthusiasm, beset them. Strong enemies, and half-hearted friends, and personal jealousies weakening still more their weak forces.

In this time of anarchy, of toil at a great task with inadequate resources, of despondency that was rapidly fulfilling its own forebearings, THE PROPHET, WHO WAS THE SPRING OF THE WHOLE MOVEMENT, RECEIVES A WORD IN SEASON FROM THE LORD. He is told to take from some of the returned exiles the tribute money which they had brought, and having made of it golden and silver crowns, the sign of kingship, to set them on the high priest’s head, thus uniting the sacred and regal offices, which had always been jealously separated in Israel. This singular action is explained by the words which he is commanded to speak, as being a symbolic prophecy of Jesus Christ, who is the “Branch,” the well-known name which older prophets had used for the Messiah, indicating that in Him were the reality which the priesthood shadowed, and the rule which was partly delegated to Israel’s king as well as the power which should rear the true temple of God among men.

It is in accordance with the law of prophetic development from the beginning, that the external circumstances of the nation at the moment should supply the mold into which the promise is run. The earliest of all Messianic predictions embraced only the existence of evil, as represented by the ser-

pent, and the conquest of it by One who was known but as a son of Eve. When the history reaches the patriarchal stage, wherein the family is the predominant conception, the prophecy proportionately advances to the assurance, “In thy seed shall all the families of the Earth be blessed.”

When the mission of Moses had made the people familiar with the idea of a man who was the medium of revelation, then a further stage was reached, “A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren, like unto me.” The kingdom of David prepared the way for the prediction of the royal dignity of the Messiah, as the peaceful reign of Solomon, for the expectation of one who should bring peace by righteousness.

The approach of the national disaster and sorrow was reflected in Israel’s vision of the suffering Messiah, and that prophets’ announcements of exile had for their counterpoise the proclamation of Him who would bring liberty to the captive. So here, the kingless band of exiles, painfully striving to rear again the tabernacle, which had fallen down, are heartened for their task by the thought of the priest-king of the nation, the builder of an imperishable dwelling place for God.

Today we need these same Truths no less than Zechariah’s contemporaries did. And for every perplexity, these old words still carry the same strength and consolation. If kings seem to have perished among men, if authorities are dying out, and there are no names of power that can rally the world, yet there is a Sovereign.

If old institutions are crumbling, and must still further decay ere the site of a noble structure be cleared, yet He shall build the temple. If “priest” on some lips are of superstitious folly, and on others a synonym for all that is despised as effects its religion, “Yet this Priest abideth forever.” the Guide and the Hope for the history of humanity, and for the individual soul. Let us put ourselves under this Prophet’s guidance, and consider the eternal Truths which He preaches to us now.

1. THE TRUE HOPE OF THE WORLD IS A PRIEST.

The idea of priesthood is universal. It has been distorted and abused. It has been made the foundation of spiritual tyranny. **The priest of our day has not been the teacher nor the elevator of the people. All over the world he has been the ally of oppression and darkness. He has hindered and cramped social and intellectual progress.**

And yet, in spite of all this, there the office stands, and wherever men go by some strange perversity, they take with them this idea, and choose from among themselves those who, being endowed with some sort of ceremonial and symbolic purity, shall discharge for their brethren the double office of REPRESENTING THEM BEFORE GOD, OR REPRESENTING GOD TO THEM.

That is what the world means with absolute and entire unanimity, by a priest, one who shall be sacrificer, intercessor, representative, bearer of man's worship, channel of God's blessing.

How come, that in spite of all the cruelties and lies that have gathered round the office, it still lives, indestructible, among the families of men? WHY? BECAUSE IT SPRINGS FROM AND CORRESPONDS TO, REAL AND UNIVERSAL WANTS IN THEIR NATURE. IT IS THE RESULT OF THE UNIVERSAL CONSCIOUSNESS OF SIN. **Men feel that there is a gulf between them and God. They know themselves to be all foul.**

True, as their knowledge of God dims and darkens, their conscience hardens and their sense of sin lessens, but, **as long as there is any notion of God at all, there will be a parallel and corresponding conviction of moral evil.** And so knowing and feeling that, not because they are rude and barbarous, but because, though rude and barbarous, they still preserve some trace of their true relation to God. And they lay hold upon some people, and say, here, "Be thou for us this thing which we cannot be for ourselves. Stand thou there in front of us, and be at once the expression of our knowledge that we dare not come before our Gods, and likewise, if it may be, the medium which, by which their gifts may come on us, unworthy."

That is a wide spread and all but universally expressed instinct of human nature. Argue about it as you like, explain it away how you choose, charge the notions of priesthood and sacrifice with exaggeration, immorality, barbarism, if you will, **still the thing remains. THAT WANT OF A PRIEST, a representative, is as real and as permanent as the craving of the understanding for Truth, and of the heart for love.**

When men lose it, it is because they are barbarised, not civilized, into forgetting it. On that rock all systems of religion and eminently all theories of Christianity, that leave out the priest and sacrifice, will strike and split. The Gospel of the world must be one which will meet all the facts of man's condition. Chief among these facts is the necessity of the conscience, as expressed by the forms in which for thousands of years the worship of mankind has been embodied all but everywhere, AN ALTAR, AND A PRIEST, STANDING BY ITS SIDE.

The Jewish people who have at all events taught the world the purest theism, and have led men up to the most spiritual religion, had this same institution of A PRIESTHOOD for the very center of its worship.

The New Testament also gives to us its full adhesion to the same idea of priesthood. The Old Testament ceremonies, temple, priesthood, sacrifice, were established for this along with other purposes, to be a shadow of good things to come. Christ's office is not metaphorically illustrated by reference to the Jewish ritual, **but the Jewish ritual is the metaphor and Christ's office the reality. Christ is the Priest.**

And what is the priest whom men crave? The first requisite is oneness with those whom he represents. **Men have ever felt that one of themselves must fill this office,** and have taken from among their brethren their medium of communication with God. **AND WE HAVE A PRIEST WHO "IN ALL THINGS, IS MADE LIKE UNTO HIS BRETHREN."** Having part of their flesh and blood and being, **"IN ALL POINTS TEMPTED LIKE AS WE ARE."**

The next requisite is that these men, who minister at Earth's altars, should, by some il-

lustration, or abstinence, or white robe, or other external sign, **be separated from the profane crowd, and possess at all events, a symbolic purity**, an expression of the conviction that A PRIEST MUST BE CLEANER AND CLOSER TO GOD THAN HIS FELLOW MAN.

WE HAVE A PRIEST WHO IS HOLY, HARMLESS, UNDEFILED, RADIANT IN PERFECT PURITY, LUSTROUS WITH THE LIGHT OF CONSTANT UNION WITH GOD THE FATHER. And again, as in nature and character, so in function. **Jesus Christ corresponds to the widely expressed wants of men, as shown in their priesthoods.** They sought for one who would offer gifts and sacrifices on their behalf, AND WE HAVE ONE WHO IS A "MERCIFUL AND FAITHFUL HIGH PRIEST TO MAKE RECONCILIATION FOR THE SINS OF THE PEOPLE."

They sought for a man who should pass into the awful presence, and plead for them while they stood without, AND WE LIFT HOPEFUL EYES OF LOVE TO THE HEAVENS "WHITHER THE FORERUNNER IS FOR US ENTERED, EVEN JESUS, MADE AN HIGH PRIEST FOREVER."

They sought for a man who should be the medium of Divine blessings bestowed upon the worshippers. "AND WE KNOW WHO HATH GONE WITHIN THE VEIL, HAVING ASCENDED UP ON HIGH, THAT HE MIGHT GIVE GIFTS UNTO MEN."

THE WORLD NEEDS A PRIEST. **Its many attempts to find such show how deep is the sense of need, and what he must be who shall satisfy them.** WE HAVE THE PRIEST THAT THE WORLD AND OURSELVES REQUIRE.

I think that so-called modern Americans, with the latest results of civilization coloring their minds and molding their character, stand upon the very same level, so far as this matter is concerned, as the savage in the African wilds, who has darkened even the fragment of truth which he possesses, till it has become a lie and the parent of lies.

You and I and all of us alike, need a Brother who shall be holy and close to God, who shall offer sacrifices for us, and bring

God to us. For you and me, and all mankind alike, the Good News is true! "WE HAVE A GREAT HIGH PRIEST THAT IS PASSED INTO THE HEAVENS, JESUS, THE SON OF GOD."

That message quenches the fire on every other altar, and strips the mitre from every other head. It, and it ALONE, meets fully and forever that strange craving, which, though it has been productive of so many miseries and so many errors, though it has led to grinding tyranny and dark superstitions, though it has never anywhere found what it longs for, remains deep in the soul, indestructible and hungry, till it is vindicated and enlightened and satisfied by the coming of the true Priest, "Made not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life."

2. Our text tells us that, "The priest of the world is the king of men." "He, Christ, shall be a Priest upon His throne."

In Israel there were two offices which were jealously kept apart, and when one monarch, in a fit of overweening self-importance, tried to unite in his own person the kingly and the priestly functions, "THE LEPROUSY ROSE UP IN HIS FOREHEAD," EVEN AS HE STOOD WITH THE CENSOR IN HIS HAND AND, "UZZIAH, THE KING, WAS A LEPER UNTO THE DAYS OF HIS DEATH."

The history of the world is full of instances in which the struggle of the temporal and spiritual power have caused calamities only less intolerable than those which flowed from **that alliance of priests and kings which has so often made monarchy a grinding tyranny, and religion a mere instrument of statecraft.**

History being witness it would seem to be a very doubtful blessing for the world that one man should wield both forms of control without check or limitations, and be at once king and priest. If the words before us refer to any one but to Christ, the prophet had an altogether mistaken notion about what would be good for men, politically and ecclesiastically, and we may be thankful that his dream has never come true.

But if they point to the Son of David, who has died for us and declare that because He is Priest, He is therefore King, then they are full of blessed Truth concerning the basis and the nature and the purpose of Christ's dominion, which may well make us lift up our heads and rejoice that in the midst of tyranny and anarchy, of sovereignty whose ultimate resort is force, there is another kingdom, the most absolute of despotisms and yet the most perfect democracy, whose law is love, whose subjects are every one of the children of a King and the kingdom of the Priest-Ruler on whose head is Aaron's mitre, and more than David's crown.

Christ does rule. "The kingdom of Christ" is no unreal, fanciful phrase. Take the lowest ground. **Who is it that, by the words He spoke, by the deeds He did, by the life He lived, has shaped the whole form of moral and spiritual thought and life in the civilized world?**

Is there "One" among the greats of old, the dead yet sceptered sovereigns, who still rule our spirits from their urns, whose living power over thought and mind and deed among the dominant races of the Earth is to be compared with His? And beyond that, we believe that, as the result of His mighty work on Earth, the dominion of the whole creation is His, and He is King of kings, and Lord of lords, that His will is sovereign and His voice is absolute law, to which all the powers of nature, all the confusions of Earth's politics, all the unruly wills of men, all the pale kingdoms of the dead, and all the glorious companies of the heavens, do bow in real, though it be sometimes unconscious and sometimes reluctant obedience.

The foundation of His rule is His sacrifice, or in other words, no truer though a little more modern in their sound, men will do anything for Him who does that for them. **Men will yield their whole souls to the warmth and light that stream from the cross**, as the sunflower turns itself to the sun. He that can give an anodyne which is not an opiate, to my conscience, He that can appeal to my heart and will and say, **"I have given Myself for thee,"** will never speak in vain to those who accept His gift when He says, **"Now give thyself to Me."**

IT IS NOT THE THINKER THAT IS THE TRUE KING OR MAN, AS WE SOMETIMES HEAR IT PROUDLY SAID. WE NEED ONE WHO WILL NOT ONLY SHOW BUT BE THE TRUTH, WHO WILL NOT ONLY POINT, BUT OPEN AND BE THE WAY, WHO WILL NOT ONLY COMMUNICATE THOUGHT, BUT GIVE, BECAUSE HE IS, THE LIFE.

Not the rabbi's pulpit, nor the teacher's desk, still less the gilded chairs of earthly monarchs, least of all the tents of conquerors, are the throne of the true King. HE RULES FROM THE CROSS. The one dominion worth naming, that over men's inmost spirits, springs from the one sacrifice which alone calms and quickens men's inmost spirits. "Thou are the King of glory, O Christ, for Thou are the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world."

His rule is wielded in gentleness. Priestly dominion has ever been fierce, suspicious, tyrannous. "His words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords." But the sway of His merciful and faithful High Priest is full of tenderness. His scepter is not the warriors' mace, nor the jewelled rod of gold, **but the reed, emblem of lowliness of His heart, and of authority guided by love.**

And all His rule is for the blessing of His subjects, and the end of it is **that they may be made free by obedience, emancipated in and for service, crowned as kings by submission to the King of kings, consecrated as priests by their reliance on the only Priest over the House of God, whose loving will rests not until it has made all His people like Himself.**

Then amidst all the anarchic chaos of this day, when old institutions are crumbling or crashing into decay, when the whole civilized world seems slowly and painfully parting from its old moorings, and like some unwieldy raft, is creaking and straining at its chains as it feels the impulse of the swift current that is bearing it to an unknown sea, when venerable names cease to have power, when old truths are flouted as antiquated, and the new ones seem so long in making their appearance, when a perfect babel of voices stuns us, and on every side are pretenders to the throne which they fancy va-

cant, let us joyfully welcome all change, and hopefully anticipate the future.

Lifting our eyes from the world, let us fix them on the likeness of a throne above the firmament that is above the cherubs, and rejoice since there we behold "The likeness as the appearance of a man upon it," "Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem, Behold, Thy King cometh unto thee."

3. Our text still further reminds us that the Priest-King of men builds among men the temple of God.

The prophet and his companions had become familiar in their captivity with the gigantic palaces and temples which Assyrian and Babylonian monarchs had a passion for rearing. They had learned to regard the king as equally magnified by his conquests and by his buildings.

Zechariah foretells that the true King shall rear a temple more lasting than Solomon's, more magnificent than those which towered on their marble-faced platforms over the Chaldean plain. **Christ Himself is the true Temple of God.** Whatsoever that shadowed Christ is or gives, "In Him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead."

"The Glory" which once dwelt among the cherubim "tabernacled among us," in His flesh. As the place of sacrifice, as the place where men meet God, as the seat of revelation of the Divine will, the true Tabernacle which the Lord has pitched in the manhood of our Christ.

Christ builds the temple. By faith, the individual soul becomes the abode of God, and into our desecrated spirits there comes the King of Glory. "Know ye not that ye are the temples of God?" BY FAITH, THE WHOLE BODY OF BELIEVING MEN ARE "BUILDED TOGETHER FOR AN HABITATION OF GOD THROUGH THE SPIRIT."

Christ builds the temple because He is the Temple. By His incarnation and His work, He makes our communion with God and God's dwelling in us possible. By His death and sacrifice He draws men to Himself, and blends them in a living unity. By the gift of His Spirit and His life, He hallows their wills and makes them partakers of His own

likeness, so that "coming to Him, we also are built up a spiritual house."

Christ builds the temple, and uses us as His servants in the work. Our prophecy was given to encourage faint-hearted toilers, not to supply an excuse for indolence. Underlying all our poor labors, and blessing them all, is the power of Christ. We may well work diligently who work in the line of His purposes, after the pattern of His labors, in His strength, of His power, under the watchfulness of His eyes.

The little band may be few and feeble, let them not be fearful, for He, the throned Priest, even He, and not they with their inadequate resources, shall build the temple.

Christ builds on all through the ages, and the prophecy of our text is yet unfulfilled. Its fulfillment is the meaning and end of all history. For the present there has to be much destructive, as well as constructive work done. Many a wretched hovel, the abode of sorrow and want, many a den of infamy, many a palace of pride, many a temple of idols, will have to be pulled down yet, and men's eyes will be blinded by the dust, and their hearts will ache as they look at the ruins. Be it so.

The finished structure will obliterate the remembrance of poor buildings that cumbered its site. The "Emperor" of ours may indeed say that He found the city of brick and made it marble. Have patience if His work is slow. Mourn not if it is destructive. **Doubt not, though the unfinished walls, and corridors that seem to lead nowhere, and all the confusion of unfinished toils puzzle you, when you try to make out the plan.**

See to it that you lend a hand and help to rear the true temple, which is rising slowly through the ages, at which successive generations toil, and from whose unfinished glories they dying depart, **but which shall be completed because the "true Builder" "ever liveth,"** and is a "Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." Take heed above all that you are yourselves builded in that temple.

Travellers sometime find in a lonely quarry's long abandoned or once worked by

a vanished race, great blocks squared and dressed that seem to have been meant for palaces or shrines. But there they lie, neglected and forgotten, and the building for which they were hewn has been reared without them. **Beware lest God's grand temple should be built up without you, and you be left to desolation and decay. Trust your soul to Jesus Christ, and He will set you in the spiritual house which the King greater than Solomon is building still.**

In one of the mosques of Damascus, which has been a Christian church, and before that was a heathen temple, the portal bears, deep cut in Greek characters, the inscription, "Thy kingdom, O Christ, is an everlasting kingdom and Thy dominion endureth throughout all generations." The confident words seem contradicted by the 12 centuries of Mohammedanism on which they have looked down. But though their silent prophecy is unheeded and unheard by the worshippers below, **it shall be proved true one day**, and the crescent shall wane before the steady light of the sun of righteousness.

The words are carven deep over the portals of the temple which Christ rears, and though men may not be able to read them, and may not believe them if they do, though for centuries traffickers have defiled its courts, and base-born usurpers have set up their petty thrones, yet the writing stands sure, a dumb witness against the transient lies, a patient prophet of the eternal Truth.

When all false faiths, and their priests who have oppressed men and traduced God, have vanished, and when kings that have

prostituted their great and God-like office to personal advancement and dynastic ambition are forgotten, and when every shrine reared for obscene and bloody rites, or for superficial and formal worship, has been cast to the ground, **then from out of the confusion and desolation shall gleam the temple of God, which is the refuge of men, and on the one throne of the universe shall sit the "eternal Priest," our Jesus the Christ.**

Men always crave a priest. It is quite obvious with all the so-called priests among us, **but there is one true Priest who has interceded for us, the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you know your Priest? Get to know Him. Accept Him as your Saviour Priest.**

"Wherefore also it is contained in Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner Stone, elect, precious: and He that BELIEVETH on Him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe He is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the Stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the Head of the corner, And a Stone of stumbling, and a Rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the Word, being disobedient: where unto also they were appointed. 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 marvelous light," 1 Peter 2:6-9.

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