***Priesthood - PH92-01
Advanced Bible Doctrine - Philippians 4:14-19***

We continue now on the overall subject of how the Lord has provided financing for His work during this age of the angelic warfare. We have seen that Paul here in Philippians 4 has said that when we bring our money to the Lord's work, it is in the form of a sacrifice. He called it a fragrant aroma sacrifice.

The background of this kind of a comparison of giving finances to God's work as being a fragrant aroma of sacrifice is the Levitical sacrificial system. So we have seen that there were three offerings in this Levitical system that God said were fragrant aroma to Him. They were the burnt offering, the meal offering, and the peace offering. They were fragrant aroma offerings because they portrayed God's precious Son in His work of atonement. They portrayed the beauty of the Son, and they portrayed what this perfect person (this God-man) was doing in behalf of our sins.

However, there were two offerings (the sin offering and the trespass offering), which the Bible says were not fragrant aroma offerings to God. That's because they portrayed sin in its destruction of temporal fellowship. They portrayed sin in terms of the problems that have been created for us, and that caused the suffering of Jesus Christ. Therefore, these were not a pleasant thing for God to observe.

**Priesthood**

However, the sacrifices automatically bring us to another point, and that is priesthood. When you talk about sacrifices, you're going to talk about priests, because you cannot make sacrifices unless you have a priest. To understand the concept of Christians making sacrifices necessitates our understanding the concept of the Christian priesthood. And to understand the concepts of the Christian priesthood, you must again step back and get the overall view from the Old Testament of what the priesthood system was all about. So we need to understand the history of priesthood.

**The History of Priesthood**

Remember that God has always had a priesthood from the very beginning. Satan has also had his counterfeit priesthood. There are many Christians today who are all balled up on this subject of priesthood. They think that there is a twofold division which is placed upon Christians. This twofold division is described by the word "clergy" on the one side, which means those who are the priests who have direct access to God; and, the laity on the other side, which means the rest of the people who are underneath the priest who have no access to God except through the priests.

The word "clergy" and the word "laity", I'm here to tell you, are obnoxious words before God. They are non-sweet savor words. God hates them. He despises them. You should choke on them should you ever use them. There is no such thing in the Word of God. This is part of Satan's satanic priesthood. Anytime you talk about clergy and laity, you know you're talking about the counterfeit priesthood of Satan.

We're not saying that people who go about today saying, "I've been called to be a priest," or "I'm studying for the priesthood" are not sincere people, and that they're not genuine in that. They are just people who've been caught up in a satanic delusion that God hates. So let's look at the history of human priesthood in order to bring you and me to the point of understanding our priesthood as Christians, and what we're supposed to be doing with it. I'll preface this by reading to you Revelation 2:17: "He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit (the Holy Spirit) says unto the churches. To him that overcomes I will give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone (a sign of approval), and in the stone a new name written, which no man knows except he that receives it."

There'll be an examination in heaven, as you know, of believers at the Judgment Seat of Christ, concerning what we did with our priesthood, and what we created with our priesthood. There are a lot of Christians who have not yet caught on to the fact that God wants you to create something with your priesthood. God never intended any believer to appear on the scene of history, and to use up his life, and then for us to bury him without having left behind him something that he created. You should be able to say, "By the providence of God, and the understanding of doctrine, and the exercise of my priesthood, I have created this. And when I die, this is going to stay behind me." If you have nothing that you can look back and say, "This is what I have created with my priesthood through the exercise of my spiritual gifts and the making of sacrifices," then I'm here to tell you that you might get kind of a funny name in heaven. What this Scripture says is that you're going to get a new name as per what you created with your priesthood.

Now, start thinking of names. "Shirker; goofball; goldbrick;" and, several others which I won't mention. It says nobody else is going to know this name, just to give you a little comfort, but you're going to know it, and God's going to know it. So if this was your day for going home, what kind of a name do you think they're going to give you in heaven on the basis of what you have created with your priesthood? What's the new name you're going to get? "Ding-a-ling;" "Good Servant;" "Prince;" "Contributor;" "Healer;" or, "Masterful Teacher?" You're going to have a name. That's what we're talking about. So let's understand priesthood so that you'll understand that God expects you to create something with your priesthood. When you get to heaven, you're going to get a label that's going to be commensurate with what you did with your priesthood. That's part of the Judgment Seat of Christ.

**The Nature of Priesthood**

Let's look at the nature of priesthood first. After mankind was expelled from the Garden of Eden, it became immediately necessary to establish some means of communication with God. There was a holy God and there was sinful man, and they were completely separated. In the garden they had perfect fellowship; talked to one another; and, met with one another: anytime; without any hesitation; without any hindrance; and, without any problems. Now they were completely separated.

Well, of course, God had explained how to establish this line of communication, and He did. There was a priestly system which was set up in order to join a Holy God with the sinner. A priest always represents the sinner before God. A priest, in the nature of the case, is always a mediator between God and man. The idea of a priest is that he is to propitiate God in behalf of the sinner. He is to satisfy God's righteousness and justice in behalf of the sinner. Then he is to be able to turn to the sinner and give him the encouragement that all is well between him and God. That's the point of a priest – a priest to satiate God's righteous wrath against the sinner. Then, on the other hand, he needs to be able to turn around and say, "Now I'm happy to tell you that God has delivered blessing, and I am here to give you His blessing, because God has been propitiated – forgiveness and cleansing to the sinner on the basis of what the priest has done before God.

**Principles of the Priesthood**

There are certain principles that are involved in priesthood that will help clarify for us the whole role of priesthood:

1. **Divine Choice**

Principle number one is the principle of divine choice. God's priests do not appoint themselves to their office. They are chosen by God. In Hebrews 5:1, we read, "For every priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins." Verse 4: "And no man takes this honor unto himself but he that is called of God (as was Aaron). So immediately we must establish that a priest is not someone who appoints himself. A priest is not elected by the people. Therefore, he is not obligated to them. He is elected by God and obligated to God. So if you are a priest of God, and you are, your first obligation is not to other people, and to what they think, and to what they want. Your obligation is to God who called you.

Jesus Christ, as we shall see, is our great High Priest. He came very definitely by divine appointment. Hebrews 5:5 says, "So also Christ glorified not Himself to be made a High Priest, but He that said to Him, 'Thou art my Son. Today I have begotten you.'" Hebrews 5:10: "Called of God a High Priest after the Order of Melchizedek." So the Lord Jesus Christ, being the Son of God, yet came into his position of a High Priest by divine calling.

Here's where the doctrine of election comes into the picture. You are a priest, too, by divine calling. You did not appoint yourself a priest. But in the providence of God: in the mercy; and the love; in the wisdom; in the judgment; and, in the knowledge of God, you were selected in eternity past to be saved. By that choice, you have been elected to become a priest of the living God.

1. **Representation**

Principle number two to understand priesthood is representation. A priest is to make satisfaction before God for the sins of the people. He acts in behalf of the guilty. In Hebrews, 2:17, we read, "Wherefore in all things, it behooved Him to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." So what a priest does is that He represents the sinner to God. The High Priest of Israel represented the whole nation when he acted. The whole nation was viewed as acting in the priest. Therefore, when the priest sinned, the whole nation sinned. And you remember in our study in Leviticus 4:3, the most expensive offering had to be brought. The young bull ox had to be sacrificed when the priest sinned. And when the nations sinned, the same offering had to be brought because it didn't make any difference. If the spiritual leader sinned, all the people sinned. If the nation (the people) sinned, it was the same thing either way. So the principle of representation is inherent in priesthood.

**Our Priesthood is Private**

Just to tie this up a little ahead of time, you represent only one person. In the age of grace, you represent only yourself. You do not represent anybody else. Therefore, the sphere of the authority of your priesthood goes no further than your own life. Period. Over and out. That's why in the age of grace, priesthood is a very private matter. It is a matter between you and God.

By the same token, you're in a lot of trouble if you don't handle your priesthood, because I can't step in to do it for you; your parents can't step in and do it for you; your children can't step in and do it for you; your friends can't do it for you; your husband can't do it for the wife; and, the wife can't do it for the husband. Everyone is his own priest. If you don't handle your representation, you're in very bad trouble. Don't ever forget that the first act of a Christian priest in representing himself before God is to perform the act of maintaining temporal fellowship. That is the first; the uppermost; and, the primary responsibility of representing yourself as a priest before God – to keep your temporal fellowship operational. If you don't do that, then anything else you do as a priest is done in the flesh, and everything else is useless. That's why the technique of the confession of known sins is the most critical function of the Christian priesthood.

1. **Sacrifices**

Then, of course, there is a third principle. Obviously, if you're a priest, you make sacrifices. So a priest has the business of sacrificing.

Incidentally, some of you may not have attended Berean Memorial church very long, but you will very quickly realize that we make references to doctrines as we move along here, like the technique of confessing sins, which is a very great doctrine in itself, and we don't explain it. You have to have some frame of reference and some background. Most of the people do, and those who don't, call your attention to the fact that these doctrines have already been taught; they have been recorded; and, they are available in our audio recording room, as well as in .MP3, Word, and text format on the Internet. So if you hear us say something, we can't stop to explain these things. We can't stop even to explain the terminology. But there are ways to get the full set of instruction on it, and to get yourself briefed.

So let's look at the principle of sacrifice. Offering animal sacrifices was, in the past, the means for symbolically reconciling a sinner to God. It was a representative atonement for sins. In Hebrews 5:1, we have reference to these sacrifices for sins, namely animal sacrifices. In Hebrews 8:3 we read, "For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices." Therefore it says it is necessary for this Man to have somewhat also to offer, which was referring there to Jesus Christ. But if you're a priest, you have to have something to sacrifice.

Without a sacrificial system in effect, no one could be a priest. You would have no ground by which to approach God. That's the whole point of the sacrifices. This is my means for approaching God. In applying this again to ourselves, the sacrifice has been made by our high priest. That has laid our approach to God. But there was more that a priest did than just approach God. He also served God. It is this point at which we serve God. It is a series of spiritual sacrifices, which we will look at in detail in the future. It is a series of sacrifices which we as Christian priests are to make that constitute our ministry. That gives us the full-sided picture of the priesthood. Our high priest has performed the sacrifice that has given us the ground of being able to approach God once and for all. The veil has been torn open. We can go through anytime to the other side. What we do with that life, and what we create with our priesthood is done via these sacrifices.

Therefore, it is necessary for you to be able to click off in your mind what the spiritual sacrifices are. I don't care what problems you have in your life, you are never going to go beyond those problems until you understand how to function in the Christian priesthood. If you do not know how to function as a Christian priest, you've got the same problems today that you had several months ago, and last year, and the year before. It is the characteristic of people who are not functioning in their priesthood that they have the same problems. Whereas those who are functioning in their priesthood have gotten over their hangups. They have new hangups and new problems to cope with, but they are resolving those as they did the ones in the past.

As a mature spiritual believer, you should have behind you a trail littered with solved problems. Instead, it is a sad commentary on Christians today that most of us look back and all we can see is the same problems back there that we've got right here today. We have made no forward motion because we are not functioning in our priesthood. One of the main problems in not functioning in our priesthood is not understanding how to make spiritual sacrifices. That will knock you out immediately.

Sacrifices in the Old Testament represented realities that God was in the future going to perform. The spiritual sacrifices that we perform today are just as real.

1. **Divine Choice**

Then there's a fourth principle involved in priesthood, and that is intercession. That is appealing to God in behalf of yourself and of others for forgiveness and for a blessing. It is the duty and the role of a priest to be an intercessor. The very act of bringing a sacrifice was an act of intercession. It implied that you were coming to God in behalf of the needs of a sinner – in behalf of the needs of someone else. That is the role of intercession. This is the ministry which our high priest, Jesus Christ, is now performing so nobly and so magnificently in behalf of all of us in heaven.

Hebrews 7:25 says, Wherefore He (Jesus) is able also to save them to the uttermost." That means that He is able, once you are born again, to keep you from ever being lost again. I hope you understand that expression, "save them to the uttermost." He is not only able to do it, but He does do it. "Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives is to make intercession for them." This is a priest whose intercession is unending.

That was not true in the Old Testament. Priests were always dying, and a new priest was taking their place. Priests in the Old Testament never could sit down. There were no seats in the tabernacle. There were no seats in the area of worship. Everything was done by walking on your feet. Why? Because it was continual. They were never able to satisfy God against our sins. But what does Jesus Christ do? Our high priest does His job. He is in heaven, and what is He doing? He is seated at the right hand of God the Father, because there is nothing more to do. There is no more sacrifice. There is no more carrying on as a priest to propitiate God. It's been done. Now He is seated, and He proceeds, in that seated position, to be our advocate; to defend us against Satan's attacks; and, to pray. He intercedes in our behalf.

So one of the great principles, again, for yourself as a Christian priest is the responsibility of prayer. It is the responsibility of being an intercessor. The reason some of the people in the circle of your acquaintance are having trouble of one kind and another is because you don't ever bother to pray for them. And some of your fellow believers get shot down in the spiritual combat because you don't bother praying for them. You don't respect the horrendous weaknesses that are in them as in ourselves. You don't respect the roaring lion quality of the old sin nature. Jesus Christ does. He respects it. He knows what it's like. Therefore, He never ceases for one second to be praying for all of us that we shall be victorious in facing that lion of the old sin nature.

So here are the four basic principles that guide all priesthood, and that have guided God's priesthood from the very beginning.

**Stages of Priesthood in History**

1. **Family Priesthood**

The first classification of priesthood that we have in Scripture we would call a family priesthood. Originally it was a family matter. In patriarchal times, the head of each family was the priest for his household. Thus, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all built altars, and they offered animal sacrifices to God. As a matter of fact, Adam did this. It's obvious that Adam taught his sons, Cain and Abel, how to make these sacrifices, because God had taught them how to do this. The Bible tells us that Noah offered sacrifices after the flood. Job, we're told, made sacrifices regularly for his family. Each of them was acting as a family priest as head of the family. Later on, Moses exercised the priestly function for the whole nation of Israel. It was God's plan, however, for the Jewish people to make all of them priests. Many times we forget that that was in the plan.

In Exodus 19:4-6, we read, "And you have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you unto Myself. Now, therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasurer unto Me above all people, for all the earth is mine. And you shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak unto the children of Israel."

So Moses comes back to the people of Israel and says, "We've had family priests. We've had people representing us. Now God is going to do a tremendously unbelievable thing. He has carried us on eagles' wings out of the grasp of the pharaoh, and He has planted us here on the other side safely. He has our faces turned toward the Promised Land, and we're going to go in, believe it or not, every one of us, as a priest of God. It will no longer be just the head of the family in this select position. All of us are going to go in as priests of God.

What did Israel do? They blew it. They turned to idolatry. They turned to immorality. They turned to their sex orgy party while Moses was up on Mount Sinai. The result was that God denied them the privilege of being a nation of priests. However, he does indicate in the Word of God that that will yet be fulfilled for the Jewish people. For Isaiah 61:6 says, "But you shall be named the priests of the Lord (speaking to the Jewish people in the millennium). Men shall call you the ministers of our God. You shall eat the riches of the nations, and in their glory shall you boast yourselves." So in the millennium, finally, the Jews will, as a nation, individually become priests.

So to begin with, priesthood, first of all (and I'm talking about the real thing – God's priesthood) was a family affair. A father was responsible for his family. Now, along with this, at the same time, you had Satan with this counterfeit priesthood working alongside of this.

1. **Aaronic Priesthood**

Then the next stage in priesthood was the Aaronic priesthood. This priesthood was established after the exodus from Egypt, and with the giving of the law on Mount Sinai. Here, the priesthood was now limited. Because the nation failed, they could not all be priests. Then God said, "OK, in the nation of the Jews, only one family is going to be priests. That is Aaron's family. You can't just be born into the tribe of Levi, of which Aaron was a part and Moses was a part. You have to be born into the tribe of Levi, but you also have to be born into the specific family line of Aaron to be a priest." So the priests were limited to the descendants of Aaron. Aaron himself was the first high priest.

A priest in Israel was a very important person. He was second actually only to the king in influence and in dignity. The priest actually shared in the government and in the guidance of the nation. The reason for this was that the priests understood the divine institutions. The priests understood responsibility, or volition, or freedom – that first divine institution. They recognized that this was God's order to be preserved, and that what God had meant when He gave us responsibility, or when He gave us freedom of volition, was that we are to create something with our lives. From the very beginning, God said, "Everybody who comes into my family is expected to create something with his life. And when you come into My presence, you are going to be evaluated for what you have created with your life (with your priesthood).

Priests understood this divine institution. They knew about marriage. They knew about family. Most importantly, perhaps in some respects, they knew about government. It was the priests who knew the integrity that God expected of governmental leaders. It was the priest who clearly understood that it was not the role of government to be producing good for people, but it was the role of government to be protecting society from evil-doers. Government was to be negative in its actions so that the people would be free with their capacities that God has given them to produce good things. They understood that.

Because of that, the nation of Israel just could not help but prosper. The people just prospered; they became rich; and, they became richer. It was a nation that was the envy of the ancient world. Why? Because they had everything their hearts desired. They had everything they could ask for because they were functioning on these divine institutions. Who was it that was standing in the breach guarding it? It was the priest? And when the priests did their job, and the people responded, the nation prospered, and it could not help but prosper. That's true today. Any nation or any society that respects the divine institutions is going to prosper under God. Any nation who violates the divine institution of government, where government is used as an instrument of producing things that people need and want, that nation is on its way down to destruction. There has never been a nation in the history of the world where government has stepped in to provide for people, and thus violating God's divine order, that has not gone to destruction.

Some of us can remember the mighty lion of England when it stood in its heyday, and when its mane was full blown and majestic. Now the lion of Britain is a scrawny little rat, stripped down and destroyed. When Britain was at war, 45% of the gross national product was taken from the people. When Britain was at war, the nation had to take 45% of what the people produced. Now the nation is at peace, and the nation takes 65%. If you need a cataract operation in England, you have to wait two years to get it, because they have the wonderful thing of national health insurance. We are on the verge of getting national health insurance. We are on the verge of getting many things in this country that our government is going to give to us and provide for us. This nation should be wept over today because we do not have in government believers who understand the divine institutions. We may have believers, but they are the most ignorant believers of doctrine, and that is the sad thing about prostituting priesthood. But when Israel listened to its priests who understood these institutions, Israel prospered.

The priest was important in Israel because he was the indispensable source of divine viewpoint information. The priest was the teacher. Therefore, people looked to the priest, and he was respected. He was not treated with contempt when he opened his mouth. He was listened to. When he violated, as sometimes the priest did, his office and his calling, the people knew full well that God would wreak vengeance upon that priest. And sooner or later He did. It was inevitable. So the people knew that God would not permit their channel of divine viewpoint to be contaminated by some human priest who was getting out of line. That principle is still true today.

**Consecration**

So the first thing to recognize is that the priesthood under the Mosaic system was very important. There was a system of consecration to the priesthood. Please remember that the word "consecration" is an act of God setting aside a person to a divine purpose. You cannot consecrate yourself. This is an act of God. There was a whole ritual that the ironic priesthood went through as they were put into office. There was a whole ritual as they were inaugurated into their office to portray the consecration of God. This showed that it was God who was calling them, and it was God who was putting them into this position. It was God who was setting them in this position of authority and in this position of service.

So don't fall into the trap of Christians talking about consecrating themselves. Christians can only dedicate themselves. You can only dedicate your life. You can only direct it to a certain purpose. But you cannot consecrate yourself. That is a holy act, and only God can do it.

Those of you who are acquainted with Christian Service Brigade know that there are seven points of valor that are the summary, or the epitome, of the character of a Christian person. One of those used to be consecration. Over two decades ago, when Christian Service Brigade was getting reorganized and operational on the expanded basis that it functions on today, we wrote the national organization.

As the new, updated, expanded manual was in production, we said, "Here is one point in the seven points of valor that is not doctrinally consistent. We should not teach boys to consecrate themselves, but we should teach them to respect the fact that Almighty God consecrates them, and they have nothing to do with it. All they have to do is to find out what God has chosen for them to do, and what God has already set them aside to do. You're already set aside to do something. But we should teach boys that their response to God's consecration is to say, "OK, I dedicate myself to that consecration." So the national organization said, "We agree," and they changed that word. To this day, that seventh point of valor is no longer consecration, but is "dedication," which is much more scripturally accurate.

**Washing**

But the Levitical priesthood was very definitely something that God set aside. You can read about this in detail in Exodus 29 and in Leviticus 8. Here was the procedure. First of all, they took the priest and they gave him a complete bath. He didn't give himself a bath. Somebody else gave him a complete bath. In Exodus 29:4, we read, "And Aaron and His Sons thou shall bring unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shall wash them with water." Why? It had a ceremonial symbolic point.

We have that explained in John 13:8. This is the incident where Jesus knelt down and washed the feet of His disciples the day before He was crucified: "Peter says to Him, 'You shall never wash my feet.' Jesus answered him, 'If I don't wash you, You shall have no part with Me.' Simon Peter said to Him, 'Lord, not my feet only then, but also my hands and my head.'" Peter said, If Your not washing my feet keeps me from having part with You, then I want You not only to wash my feet, but I want to be washed all over. Peter was probably thinking about this consecration act of God of washing the priest completely – bathing the priest before he was consecrated to his office. "And Jesus said to him, 'He that is washed needs only to have his feet washed, but is entirely clean, and you are clean, but not all of you.'"

Now, there's an interesting play of words here in the Greek, and we're not going to go into it. But it's the play of words between a word for washing that means a whole bath and a word for washing that means just partial cleaning of your hands or washing your feet. You will remember that in the tabernacle, again, you had the brazen altar. Then there was the laver. That laver was simply a pool of water. Every time the priest was going to go into the tabernacle to minister, he had to go from the brazen altar, which was surrounded by blood. They administered barefoot in the courtyard area, and the blood was splattered all over the ground, and all over himself, and on his hands in handling those sacrifices. Now he was going to go into the tabernacle itself. He always had to stop at the laver to wash the hands and the feet. This was symbolic of 1 John 1:9. That's what the laver stood for.

This is what Jesus meant when he said to Peter, "If you've got a whole bath (How? By being born again – by trusting Christ as Savior), you've been completely washed. You don't ever have to be washed again." Do you see what Jesus is saying? "Once saved, always saved." "You don't ever have to be washed again, but all you need is partial washing, for the contamination of sin that has broken temporal fellowship." That's what Jesus was symbolizing to them: "I'm washing your feet to remind you that your complete walk with Me is going to be dependent upon your maintaining temporal fellowship with Me as the priest of God.

So this washing that the priest had represented regeneration. In Revelation 1:5, we have this spoken about the work of Jesus Christ in behalf of all of us. Revelation 1:5: "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth, unto Him that loves us and washed us from our sins in His own blood. Jesus did for us what the priest had done to himself by that washing of his body. If you're here today, and you have never been washed (putting it in the phrase) in the blood of Christ (you have never taken Him as your personal Savior), then you do not stand in the family of God. You've never experienced regeneration. The first thing a sinner needs is to be washed over completely from head to foot. He has to have a bath, and that bath comes through trust in Christ as Savior.

After the bath, the priest was clothed with the priestly garments. We will not go into details, but each of those garments had a significant meaning in itself relative to his consecration by God to the office and to the ministry that he was being appointed to. Then they poured holy oil on his head to symbolize the sanctification by the Holy Spirit. They just poured a little bit of oil out on his head, and then a ram was sacrificed. The blood of this ram sacrificed here on this altar was then applied to the priest's right ear; it was applied to his right thumb; and, it was applied to the big toe on the right foot. This was just a smear of this ram's blood.

Of course, this ram's blood again represented the cleansing of Jesus Christ through His work on the cross. Putting it on the ear represented cleansing of what you hear. This priest was to deal in holy things. This priest was to be careful of what he listened to. Putting it on his thumb represented the fact that this priest had a life to create something with in service. He was to use that life in a holy way. Putting it on the right toe separated his feet (his daily walk) unto God. His walk was to be clean. His feet were not to take him to dirty places. His mind was not to be exposed to that which was evil. So the ear was not to listen; the hands were not to serve; and, the feet were not to go to that which is evil. These things were to be separated by the cleansing that had been established on them by the washing of the death of Christ. It was cleansing of hearing, service, and walk. The priest would wash his hands and his feet only at this laver each time he entered the tabernacle to minister, picturing 1 John 1:9, the confession of sins.

This priest had to be physically perfect to begin with, because he represented again Jesus Christ, the ultimate mediator between God and man. So if a person was born deformed, even if he was in Aaron's family, he could not be a priest. Again, sinlessness is the issue. He also he had to abstain from certain things. A priest could not do some things that other people could do. He could not eat certain things. He could not drink certain things under certain conditions. He was to maintain ceremonial purity. All of this was symbolic of the holiness of one who was handling holy things.

The ministries of the Aaronic priesthood were in behalf of sin, and in the nature of this priesthood, it never ceased. Continually they had to minister. No matter how many sacrifices they made, it was never over. It was never finished. I want you to realize that that's one of the important features about the Aaronic priesthood. It never settled anything. But we're going to learn of another priesthood that you are a member of that has settled things once and for all.

So Hebrews 10:1-2 says, "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not of the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make those who come to it perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? Because the worshipers once purged should have no more consciousness of sins." If what these priest did at this altar would have settled the issue of sin between God and man, they would never have made another sacrifice.

So the problem of the Aaronic priesthood was that it constantly lacked a sacrifice which was qualified to atone for the sins once and for all. So they had to keep bringing them. You'll remember that the fire on the brazen altar was originally started by God from heaven. Thereafter, they were told that they must never allow this fire to go out. It burned continually. Once God struck it from heaven, it burned continually. The priest constantly fed it wood, and constantly fed it animals, and there were never enough animals to handle the sin problem.

Furthermore, they lacked the priest who was both divine and human so that He could be the final mediator between God and man. To be a true mediator, and to really settle an issue, He has to be party to both sides. Therefore, a mediator had to be God, but He also had to be human, otherwise, He couldn't bring the things together. Aaron was only human. All of his priests were only human. Therefore, they were imperfect in the very thing they were trying to accomplish. The Aaronic priesthood themselves were sinful men. Therefore, they could not be the final priesthood.

All of this indicates that some place along the line, God must have another answer. What they had done this far simply held back the wrath of God, providing they did it right. Nadab and Abihu, two of the sons of Aaron, got the cute idea at one time that they would come in here and burn some incense on the golden altar on their own. So they brought a censer of fire, but not from the brazen altar where it was to come from. They brought what the Bible calls "strange fire," and they brought it in to burn that incense at that altar. They were, after all, priests. They were in Aaron's line. They could do it their way, and they died dead. God killed them on the spot because they did not approach in the right way. His wrath was not held back.

So all Aaron could do was hold back the wrath of God, like somebody standing and holding a dam that's about ready to break you. You were just holding it, and every one of those sacrifices; all of these rituals; all of this ceremony; all of the garments; all of the sprinkling of blood; all the holy days; and, everything was just holding it back. This was the case until God came up with a totally different kind of priesthood. You and I do not belong to the temporary Aaronic priesthood that was such a monumentally ineffective priesthood because it just didn't have the stuff to work with.

Instead, we are members of another priesthood that is just as monumentally effective because it has everything we need to work with, not only for our personal eternal welfare and salvation, but for eternal happiness, and to create something with our lives so that when we get to heaven, they're going to give us a name we'll be proud of, and not a name that we'll be ashamed of, and that we'll never want anybody to hear. We'll look into that priesthood, because that's the one you need to know how to function in.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

[**Back to the Advanced Bible Doctrine (Philippians) index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/philippiansdanish.htm)

[**Back to the Bible Questions index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/allarticles.htm)