

# Ordained of God

by William MacDonald

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*William MacDonald emphasizes the priesthood of all believers, urging Christians to actively fulfill their roles as priests in a modern context that often reverts to outdated models of church hierarchy.*

**Scripture:** Exodus 19:6, Matthew 28:19, Acts 2:41, Romans 6:3-10, Romans 12:1, Hebrews 13:15-16, 1 Peter 2:5, 1 Peter 2:9, Revelation 1:5-6

**Topics:** "Priesthood of Believers", "Worship and Sacrifice"

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## Description

William MacDonald emphasizes the priesthood of all believers, contrasting the Old Testament priesthood with the New Testament understanding that every believer is a priest. He highlights the responsibilities of this sacred office, including offering spiritual sacrifices, prayer, and care for others, while also recognizing Jesus as the Great High Priest. MacDonald critiques the modern church for reverting to a hierarchical priestly system reminiscent of Judaism, urging believers to embrace their roles as priests in a collective and individual manner. He calls for a church that embodies the New Testament principles of priesthood, worship, and community service, ultimately reflecting the true nature of the body of Christ.

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## Transcript

### THE PRIESTHOOD OF BELIEVERS

The seventh and final truth concerning the Church which we listed at the outset was that all believers are priests of God. Every local assembly should witness to this truth practically by refusing any other priesthood and by encouraging every believer to exercise the privileges and responsibilities of this sacred office, both individually and collectively.

#### 1. A Contrast

In the old Testament, the law of Moses set aside the tribe of Levi and the family of Aaron to be the priests of the nation. These men had distinctive dress, were given special privileges, and stood as a separate caste between God and the congregation of Israel. They alone could enter the holy place, and only they could offer the sacrifices prescribed by the law.

In Christianity all this changed. Now all believers are priests, according to the New Testament. 1 Peter 2:5 states, "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." 1 Peter 2:9 says, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal

priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people: that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." Revelation 1: 5, 6 declares, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

Martin Luther earnestly contended for the truth of the priesthood of all believers. He wrote: "All believers are altogether priests, and let it be anathema to assert that there is any other priest than he who is Christian; for it will be asserted without the Word of God, on no authority but the sayings of men, or the antiquity of custom, or the multitude of those that think so."

## 2. Our Sacrifices

Among the important duties of a priest is that of offering sacrifice. In the old Testament the sacrifices usually consisted of slain animals. Today, a believer offers the sacrifice of his body (Romans 12:1). This is not a dead offering, but "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God." He also offers his material resources (Hebrews 13:16). "But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

Then, too, there is the sacrifice of praise (Hebrews 13:15). "By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks unto His Name." This sacrifice of praise should be both individual and collective. The latter-collective worship-in which believers are at liberty to take part in public praise has been practically eliminated by the stereotyped, controlled services of our day. The result is a generation of silent priests in the gatherings of God's people.

## 3. Other Priestly Duties

Other duties of a priest include prayer, testimony for God, and care for His people. Thus, believers should continually be exercising this sacred office. Eric Sauer says: "The teaching of all Scripture on this subject (Romans 8:14; Galatians 5:18; John 16: 13), makes clear that it has to be applied to our whole life from morning till evening, and every day in the week, not only the Lord's Day. It is certainly not limited to the beginning and ending of church gatherings, such as meetings for worship, Bible reading, or prayer, but includes the whole man, not only in but also outside the meeting-rooms, halls, chapels, and church buildings. In this full sense of the word the whole New Testament people of God is 'a kingdom of priests and a holy nation' (Exodus 19:6; 1 Peter 2:5-9).

## 4. Our Great High Priest

Although it is true that all believers are priests, it is also true that every Christian needs a priest. He finds that need fully met in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Epistle to the Hebrews sets forth that blessed One as the Great High Priest, One who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities because He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15).

## 5. What Christendom Has Done

Every local church then should recognize the Lord Jesus as the Great High Priest, and every believer as a holy and royal priest. But is this what we find in Christendom today? On the contrary, we find that the Church has gone back to the priestly system of Judaism. While professing to believe in the priesthood of all Christians, many churches have set up a distinct priesthood of their own, based largely on the Mosaic system. Thus we have a separate class of men set apart for divine service, a hierarchy of church officials

with high-sounding titles that distinguish them from the laity, and distinctive garb to set these men apart as being of a different order. In addition, the church has borrowed from Judaism such concepts as consecrated buildings with their elaborate altars, ecclesiastical adornments, and material aids to worship, an impressive ritual that appeals to the natural senses, and a religious calendar with its holy days and seasons.

Concerning this mixture of Judaism and Christianity, Dr. C. I. Scofield commented: "It may safely be said that the Judaizing of the church has done more to hinder her progress, pervert her mission, and destroy her spirituality, than all other causes combined. Instead of pursuing her appointed path of separation from the world and following the Lord in her heavenly calling, she has used Jewish Scriptures to justify herself in lowering her purpose to the civilization of the world, the acquisition of wealth, the use of an imposing ritual, the erection of magnificent churches, the invocation of God's blessing upon the conflicts of armies, and the division of an equal brotherhood into 'clergy, and 'laity.'

## 6. What Should Be Done?

Is not God calling upon His people today to-separate themselves from this religion of types and shadows, in order that they might find their sufficiency in the Name of the Lord Jesus?

Only such a church is fully realizing its share in the New Testament general priesthood which is, to quote Erich Sauer, "A local church with Spirit-filled, regularly well-attended prayer meetings;

"A local church with members who are practical helpers and fellow-workers with the Lord's servants in the world-wide harvest field;

"A local church with persevering, energetic activity in the preaching of the Gospel, by tract distribution, personal witness, and, wherever possible, open-air meetings;

"A local church with a warm-hearted, spiritual atmosphere of love, where everyone tries to help the other by mutual care and charity in a prayerful spirit, considering one another to provoke unto love and good works.

"In such a local church the gatherings and services also will be under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, as distributed by the Lord Himself, will be developed in their God-appointed variety, in brotherly fellowship, in dependence upon Christ, and thus in holy freedom of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 14:26). And when the church is gathered together at the Lord's Table praising the priestly sacrifice on Golgotha, priestly worship will rise up to the heavenly Sanctuary, thus crowning the privilege of the general priesthood of the church."

## 7. Looking Ahead

With this section on priesthood, we bring to a close our study of seven vital truths concerning the universal Church which every local church should seek to portray and practice. Needless to say, other truths could be mentioned, but these are sufficient to show that the assembly should be a replica or miniature of all that is true of the entire body of Christ. In the pages to follow we shall deal with the ordinances of the church, the prayer meeting, the bishops and deacons, the finances of the church, and the ministry of women. There will be a concluding lesson entitled, "Let Us Go Forth Unto Him!"

## BAPTISM

The two ordinances of the Christian Church are baptism and the Lord's Supper. We find these instituted in the Gospels (Matthew 28:19; Luke 22:19, 20); practiced in the Acts (Chapter 10:47, 48; 20:7); and expounded in the Epistles (Romans 6:3-10; 1 Corinthians 11:23-32).

### 1. Three Baptisms

In considering the subject of baptism, we should notice at the outset that there are three main forms of baptism in the New Testament.

First of all, there is the baptism of John (Mark 1:4). As the forerunner of the coming King, John called upon the nation of Israel to repent and to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance (Matthew 3:8). Those who came to him, confessing their sins, were baptized unto repentance, and they thus separated themselves from the ungodly condition of the nation. The Lord Jesus was baptized by John, not because He had sins of which to repent, but in order to identify Himself with the repentant remnant of Israel, and fulfill all righteousness (Matthew 3:15).

Secondly, there is believer's baptism (Romans 6:3, 4). This signifies identification with Christ in His death, and will be discussed in detail later.

Thirdly, there is the baptism in the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13). The baptism of the Holy Spirit is that act of God whereby all believers are baptized in one Spirit into the body of Christ.

### 2. Significant Contrasts

In connection with these three baptisms, it should be carefully noted that John's baptism is not the same as Spirit baptism. These are clearly distinguished in Matthew 3:11. John's baptism is not the same as believer's baptism. Acts 19:1-5 shows that those who were already baptized as John's disciples were re-baptized with Christian baptism. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not the same as believer's baptism. Many have a vague idea that water baptism is a picture or portrayal of Spirit baptism. Actually they are entirely distinct. Spirit baptism speaks of incorporation into Christ's body, whereas believer's baptism is a type of death. In short, all these three forms of baptism are different, and should not be confused.

### 3. Believer's Baptism

There is no mention in the New Testament, after the day of Pentecost, of any persons being baptized except those who were believers in the Lord Jesus. Note the following--"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized," (Acts 2:41). "When they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women" (Acts 8:12). It is true that households are mentioned as being baptized (Acts 16:15; 1 Corinthians 1:16); but there is no evidence to suppose that these households included anyone, young or old, who had never trusted the Lord Jesus.

### 4. The Significance of It

The principal meaning of believer's baptism is most fully developed in Romans 6:1-10. We might summarize the teaching of that passage as follows. When Jesus died, He went, as it were, under the waves and billows of God's wrath (Psalm 42:7). He did this as our Representative. Because Christ really died in our place, we can say that when He died, we died. By dying, He settled the whole question of sin once and for all. Therefore, we too have died to the whole question of sin. Sin no longer has any claim on

us. God sees every believer as having been crucified with Christ. All that he- was as a sinner in the flesh has been nailed to the cross. In baptism, the believer gives a dramatic illustration of what has already taken place. In going under the water, he is saying in effect, "Because of my sins, I deserved to die. But when Jesus died, I died too. My old man, or old self, was crucified with Him. When Jesus was buried, I too was buried, and I now acknowledge that my old self should be put away from God's sight forever as a matter of daily practice." Then just as Jesus arose from the dead, so the believer arises out of the waters of baptism. In so doing, he signifies his determination to walk in newness of life. No longer will he live to please self, but rather he will turn over his life to the Savior so that He can live His life in the believer.

Thus we might say that baptism is an ordinance signifying the end of the former way of life. It is a public act of obedience to the will of the Lord (Matthew 28 :19, 20), picturing the believer's death with Christ. It has no saving merit, but is for those who are already saved.

## 5. The Method

Endless controversy has arisen over the question as to how baptism should be administered -whether by sprinkling or by immersion. The following facts are helpful in seeking a solution. The word "baptize" comes from a Greek word meaning "to dip, plunge, wash." In connection with the baptism of Christ, we read, "And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water," (Matthew 3:16). John himself was baptizing in Aenon, near to Salim, "because there was much water there" (John 3:23). At the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch, the Scripture is careful in noting that "they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip . . ." (Acts 8:38, 39). We saw above (Romans 6:3) that baptism is a likeness or picture of burial. Sprinkling does not convey any likeness of burial, whereas immersion does so most accurately.

## 6. The Important Thing

But even more important than the mode of baptism is the heart condition of the person being baptized. There are thousands of persons who have been immersed in water, but who have not been really baptized. The truly baptized person is the one who has not only gone through the outward ordinance, but whose life shows that the flesh, or old nature, has been put in the place of death. Baptism must be a matter of the heart, as well as an outward profession.

This may be expressed rather pointedly by paraphrasing Romans 2:25-29 to refer to baptism instead of circumcision.

"Baptism indeed profiteth if thou be an obeyer of the Gospel; but if thou be a refuser of a Gospel-walk, then baptism is become non-baptism. If therefore, an un-baptized person obeys the Gospel, shall not his non-baptism be reckoned for baptism? And shall not un-baptized persons, if they obey the Gospel, judge thee, who with the letter and baptism, art a refuser of a Gospel-walk. For he is not a Christian who is one outwardly, nor is that baptism which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Christian who is one inwardly, and baptism is that of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter, whose praise is not of men but of God."

## 7. Administering the Rite

The idea that a man must be an ordained minister in order to baptize is unscriptural. Any man who is a believer may baptize others.

## COUNTING THE COST

In the early days of the church, when a believer was baptized, he was often persecuted and murdered in a short time. Yet whenever others were saved, they unhesitatingly stepped forward to fill up the ranks of the martyrs by being baptized.

Even today in certain areas, baptism is often the signal for the beginning of terrible persecution. In many countries, a believer is tolerated as long as he only confesses Christ with his lips. But whenever he publicly confesses Christ in baptism and severs his ties with the past, the enemies of the cross take up their battle against him. Yet whatever the cost may be, each one who is baptized enjoys the same experience as the Ethiopian eunuch, of whom it is written, "He went on his way rejoicing."

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