

A Primer on the New Testament Priesthood

High Priest
 Ministerial Priesthood
 Common Priesthood

Assertion	Scripture	Comments
The High Priest is a New Testament office. This Old Testament office of the Levitical priesthood is fulfilled by Christ.	Hebrews 5:5 – So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest but was appointed.	Christ is a royal high priest of the Order of Melchizedek.
The High Priest must have a sacrifice to offer.	Hebrews 8:3 – For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; hence it is necessary for this priest [Christ] also to have something to offer.	No high priest is ever empty handed.
Question: What is the sacrifice Christ offers? Answer: Himself, he is victim and priest	Hebrews 9:12 – [Christ] entered once for all into the Holy Place taking not the blood of goats or calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.	Christ entered heaven with his bloody sacrifice.
Christ’s sacrifice is not repeated but instead perpetually present in heaven. Perpetual means it is done ONCE and remains FOREVER. The bloody Lamb of Revelation is not a repeat of Calvary.	Revelation 5:6 – And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb <i>standing</i> , as though it had been slain.	Protestant commentator David Chilton notes that “standing” can mean “continual” ¹
The priesthood of all believers is established in the NT. It is a fulfillment of the OT priesthood, originally intended for Israel but transferred to the Levites. Israel’s priesthood while universal, had a class of sacrificial priests (Exodus 19:22). The same was true of the Levites.	Revelation 1:6 – [Christ] made us to be a kingdom of priests. 1 Peter 2:9 – But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people (quoting Exodus 19:6) Peter’s quote is important. It takes the text that established the Israel/Levite priesthood and links it to the NT priesthood.	The NT priesthood was not created out of thin air. It is a fulfillment of the OT type. As we will see, it was made up of 2 segments.
Within the Levitical priesthood, only the line of Aaron could offer sacrifices. They made up 1 segment of the priesthood. Today the Church calls this the ministerial priesthood; ordained priests.	Exodus 40:14, 15 – You shall bring [Aaron’s sons] also and put coats on them and anoint them as you anointed their father...[to] serve me as priests.	In fulfilling this OT type, ministerial priests offer the Eucharist and the sacraments. Not the laity priesthood.
Christ ordained the apostles into their priestly office at the Last Supper when he said “Do this...”	1 Corinthians 11:24 – [speaking of the Eucharist] Do this in remembrance of me.	The Eucharist is a sacrifice and therefore requires a ministering priest.
Christ’s unique, not repeated sacrifice in heaven is made present on earth in the Eucharist. It is one single sacrifice. The earthly priest stands in for Christ (persona Christi), the only true priest (see the Catechism paragraph 1548).	Revelation 5:6 – And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb <i>standing</i> , as though it had been slain. (in heaven) 1 Corinthians 5:7, 8 – For Christ our Passover <i>has been sacrificed</i> . Let us therefore celebrate the festival. (on earth)	The Greek text does not say Christ “was” sacrificed but “has been”; a timeless act ² per Revelation 5:6
The OT and NT ministerial priesthoods were both initiated with foot washing. If filmed, these washings would have looked very similar.	Leviticus 8:6 – And Moses brought Aaron and his sons and washed them with water John 13:6 – Then [Christ] poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciple’s feet.	Moses’s washing included washing the priests feet “lest they die” (see Exodus 30:21)
The common priesthood was composed of Levites not descended from Aaron. This is the 2 nd segment of the priesthood	Numbers 4 – This chapter describes the role of the Levites not of Aaron’s line. They assisted with the liturgical worship but they did not offer sacrifices.	The laity make up the common priesthood.
As members of the common priesthood the NT laity offers spiritual sacrifices.	Romans 12:1 – Present your bodies as a living sacrifice...which is your spiritual worship.	Worshiping God is a spiritual sacrifice.

¹ David Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation*, (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1987), page 172. “Phillip Carrington suggests that the Greek word standing (hestekos) is a rough Greek translation of the Hebrew Tamid, which means standing or continual and refers to the daily burnt-offering in the Temple.”

² The Greek tense is called Aorist (which means unbounded or indefinite), an act “pure and simple” (not bound to past, present or future).

