

Sabbath School Today
With the 1888 Message Dynamic

“Feed My Sheep”*: *First and Second Peter
Lesson 3. A Royal Priesthood

If you believe, like many evolutionists, that you are only an animal and not a “son of God,” then you have no self-respect. Neither do you have any real hope. You will live in squalor and filth (as do millions of people) and instead of doing something about it to improve your life, you will “forget” about your “misery” by drinking. This is exactly what is happening to millions of people. They are content to drink themselves deeper into “poverty and unhappiness.”

True Bible teaching shows that in Christ all men and women are “kings.” Before his fall, Adam was the king of the earth and was called “the son of God” (Luke 3:38). But by his sin he lost his exalted honor and passed into a condition of servitude. All we, his descendants, have fallen “in Adam,” through sin.

The important point is that God has not left us in that low position. Christ has redeemed what was lost and has recaptured that “first dominion; the kingdom” (Micah 4:8). He conquered Satan and wrested the lordship from him. In so doing, Christ had to become one of us, a man. He is thus our Brother and He shares the kingship with us. “In Christ,” therefore, we are all kings. This immediately gives a tremendous sense of self-worth to anyone who will believe this truth.

This is why Peter says that we are “a royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2:9). The Lord promised every individual Israelite that each should share in this gift of royalty: “Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests” (Ex. 19:6). John says that Christ “hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father” (Rev. 1:6). Those who believe the good news will live and reign with Him (Rev. 20:4).

Especially helpful is His promise that if we who are so heavily tempted will overcome: we shall sit with Him on His throne, “even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father on His throne” (Rev. 3:21). It is not that we shall be “kings” someday; we are now kings and “joint-heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:17). “If ye be Christ’s, then are ye ... heirs according to the promise,” that is, “heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him” (Gal. 3:29; James 2:5).

It doesn’t matter how unworthy we feel, or how many mistakes we have made, God’s glory is that He loves and honors worthless sinners. “Whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16) and the “everlasting life” is not that of everlasting slavery or servitude, but that of kings sharing the lost “first dominion.” “They shall inherit the earth” (Matt. 5:5).

As one of God's "royal priesthood," a "joint-heir" with Christ, you are important. Already, your exalted position gives you responsibility and influence. Someone is looking to you for guidance and example. Already, as a child of God, your word is "law" to Satan and his evil angels, for "in Christ" you have authority over the evil one. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7), because you are a "king" "in Christ." "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet" (Psalm 91:13). You can already exercise your kingship and royal priesthood by saving someone else through the word of Christ.

Our lesson raises the question of the covenant—a key theme of the 1888 message. Did God's people in Old Testament times have to live under the old covenant? Was all that horrible apostasy in ancient Israel something necessary because the people were living at the wrong time? Did God withhold something from them that He later on relented about, and then gave them the new covenant? Poor people! Was He being fair to them?

These are questions stirring the Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Adventist churches. Never can the Christian Church lighten the earth with the glory of a final message of good news (like Rev. 18:1-4 speaks of) unless this problem of the old covenant with respect to the new covenant gets cleared up. Confusion paralyzes the finest church on earth.

Lukewarmness, apostasy, backsliding, are impossible to a church that is living in the knowledge and experience of the new covenant. Too strong to say? Unless this is true, the gospel is forced logically to become a contradiction in terms—confusion, a failure.

The reason is that the new covenant gospel is "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16), not a program to failure or backsliding. Backsliding is due to the old covenant imported into the heart—9/10ths new covenant and 1/10th old covenant = failure.

No, ancient Israel were not programmed to failure. Their beginning was "the father of us all," Abraham (Rom. 4:16). God gave him the new covenant in those seven promises in Gen. 12:1-3. All his descendants should be "children of faith" as Isaac was. They would become the greatest nation on earth, always the head, never the tail (Deut. 28:13), always "a kingdom of priests," meaning, a nation of spiritual geniuses (Ex. 19:6). They were to be God's missionary nation through whom "all families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. 12:3).

They would evangelize the world! But they fastened themselves under the old covenant in Exodus 19:3-8. That thinking kept popping up in their up and down history.

True theology is the simple teaching of Jesus as found in the Bible. Take any sinful, selfish, worldly, lustful human being and add to him or her that pure, true teaching of Jesus, and the result is a pure, unselfish, kind, honest, loving person (provided of course that he believes that teaching; salvation is by grace through faith).

The church is many such believers forming a corporate body, which Jesus is pleased to acknowledge as His “body” on earth. It’s His intention that His church “escape the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Peter 1:4), “kept by the power of God through faith” (1 Peter 1:5). Its members are to be “holy in all manner of conversation” [lifestyle] (vs. 15). The entire church, not just its clergy, are “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar [different] people. ... honest among the Gentiles” who will have no evil media “report” of any kind against them (2:9, 12). The clergy are to be “ensamples to the flock,” totally loyal to “the chief Shepherd” (5:3, 4). True theology in a church produces that result.

—*Paul E. Penno*

Notes:

Pastor Paul Penno’s video of this lesson is on the Internet at:

<https://youtu.be/-zZKtixqhco>

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