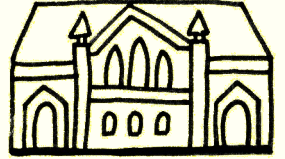


“Basic Priest stuff”



Welcome and introduction

Song: Psalm 100 – Sing to the LORD

Prayer – with Lord’s prayer

Reading – Hebrews chapter 4:14-5:10 – Rosemary

Song: Psalm 2 – God’s Son

Reading – Leviticus 8:1-12 – The Moses-style priests - Mark

Song: 614 “What a friend we have in Jesus”

Prayer for hearing God’s word

Talk – “We have a priest”

Song: 503 “Before the throne of God above”

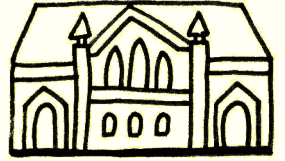
Closing prayer

Play - out “O Lord my rock and my Redeemer”

Psalm 2

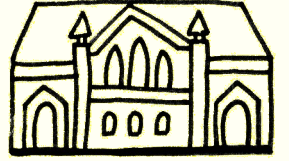


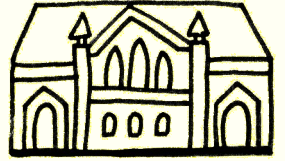
1. Why do the heathen rage?
Why does the world conspire?
The rulers plot against the Lord
and his Messiah:
“Come, let us break their bonds,
and throw their fetters off.”
The Lord enthroned on high looks down
to laugh and scoff.



2 In anger he rebukes,
his wrath with terror fills;
“I have installed my King in Zion,
my holy hill.”
“I’ll tell the Lord’s decree
to me, his chosen one,
‘I have begotten you today,
you are my Son.’ ”

3 “ ‘Ask me, and of the earth,
East, West and everywhere,
and all the nations in this world,
you are the heir.
With iron sceptre rule,
in every land hold sway,
the nations you will break apart
like pots of clay.’ ”





4 Therefore, you kings, be wise,
and serve the Lord with fear
and trembling joy: his anger lies
for ever near.

Now kiss the Son, lest he
destroy you in your sin,
for blessed are all eternally
sheltered in him.

Andrew King (1961-)
CCL 39685

Basic Human Questions

- - who am I?
- - how do I fit into the world?
- - how can I be sure of thriving in a chaotic and hostile world?
- My proposal that the answer to all these lies in a 6 letter word
 - = PR**S*
 - = PRIEST

Basic Priest stuff

We've been looking in the Bible at the letter to the Hebrews.

It has promises and warnings to Christians.

It works on the eschatological basis that there is a future rest, and our job as this present time is so to hear God's word and receive it with obedient faith – that we be careful that we don't fall short of arriving at that rest.

The writer says that this is all headed up (8:1) in the assertion that "we have a high priest = Jesus"

But what is a priest, high priest, how is this important ? ...

Hence look today – not at a paragraph – but at "basic priest stuff"

First lets look in a very general way at "priests"

Q: Where are the priests?

A: there are priests in all sorts of cultures
places ...

- Hindu – priests
- Buddhist – monks/priests
- Christianity – Roman Catholic priests
 - Greek Orthodox priests
- but not Moslem priests (Imam)
- but not Protestant Priests (pastors)

... UK

- don't seem to have priests much at all
 - Why??



First lets look in a very general way at "priests"

Q: So what is a priest?

A: the english word doesn't help very much
- derivation is odd and inconclusive

A: the Hebrew word is "cohen"
- so there are people with the name Cohen
- the photo is the super-cool Jewish
Canadian singer songwriter – the late Leonard
Cohen

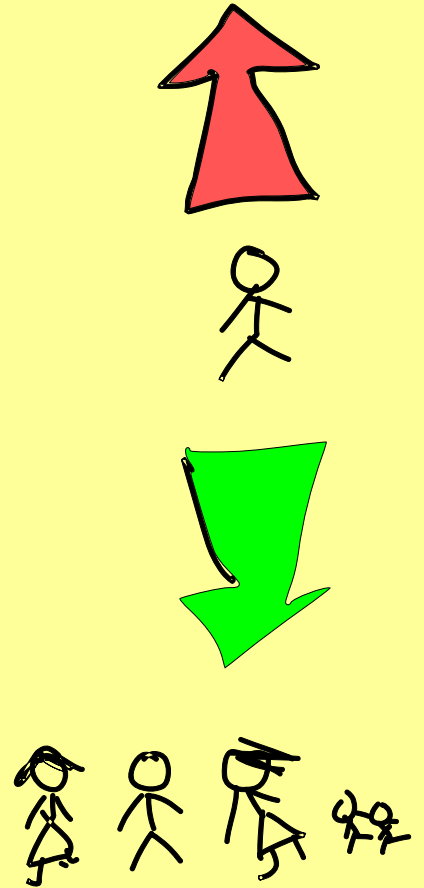


First lets look in a very general way at "priests"

Q: So what is a priest? [continued]

A: the common IDEA of a priest is someone who ...

- stands between people (=us) and the divine Powers
- for the benefit, protection and blessing of the people in relation to the Power
 - ==> there is a Power above
 - ==> people below are somehow lacking or disqualified to obtain their own benefit, protection and blessing...
 - ==> this P****t is special and powerful



First lets look in a very general way at "priests"

N.B. "where are the priests in our culture"

a. our culture is muted on recognition of a divine Power

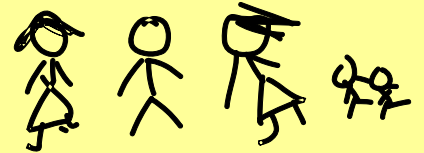
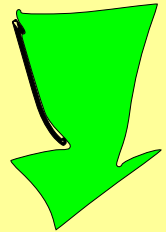
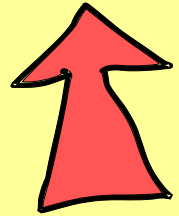
b. our culture is not minded to accept that we have need of help

e.g. to find who we are, how we fit in, how we can thrive

- "we are masters of our own souls"

c. when we do need help who do we turn to?

- Perhaps our priests are scientists, sociology, anthropology, ourselves ??... rather than looking outside and above.



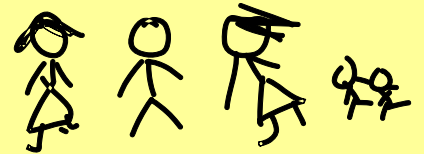
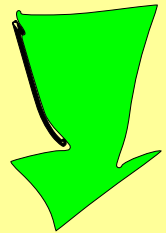
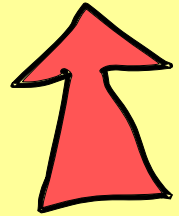
First lets look in a very general way at "priests"
*Can we say any more about the way that
priests (in general) operate?*

Sacrifice: that they generally offer sacrifices to
the Power

- something needed to please, stir, remind,
placate, propitiate the Power

*this gives the Priest a degree of power –
to grant or withhold blessing*

*hence the hatred of spiritual abuse =
priestcraft*

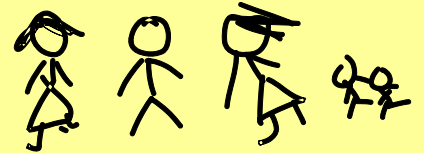
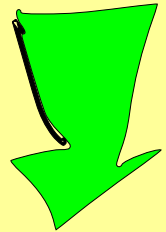
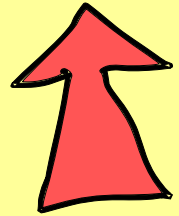


First lets look in a very general way at "priests"

*Can we say any more about the way that
priests (in general) operate?*

Specialness: that they need themselves to be
acceptable to the Power

- thus priests are often revered and feared

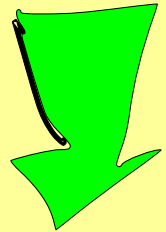
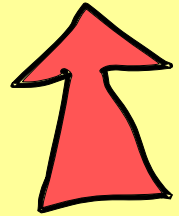


First lets look in a very general way at "priests"

*Can we say any more about the way that
priests (in general) operate?*

Sympathy: that they need themselves to be "on
the side of" the people they represent

*- thus a good priest (even now) is one who
loves and has compassion on his people*



Bible view of "priests"

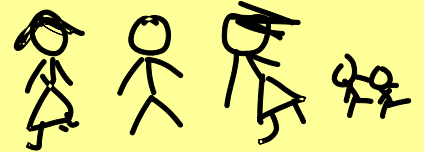
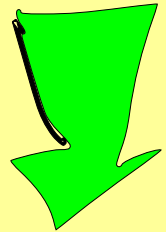
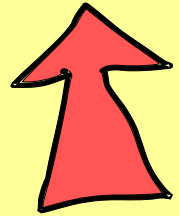
The world has various views of priests but the Bible is very insightful and specific about this situation

Old Testament – Genesis -Exodus – Moses has a lot to say.

Bible = expert-book on priests (cohens)

N.B. New Testament

- mentions Jewish priests
- **ONLY** time Jesus is called priest is in Hebrews.
- the idea is present without this vocab!



Bible view of "priests"

First priest in the Bible - Genesis 14:17-20

- Name: Melchizedek

priest v.18

mlk = king

zdk = righteousness

Salem ~ Shalom ~ peace

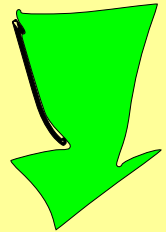
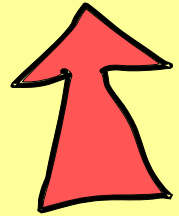
- First => important

combines King and Priest

feeds & blesses Ab., in context of conflict and enrichment (v.18)

Abram recognises his specialness (v.20)

- First ~ sets the ideal model (??)



Bible view of "priests"

First vision of priesthood as destiny of Israel - Exodus 19:6

"I carried you on eagle's wings to myself ...

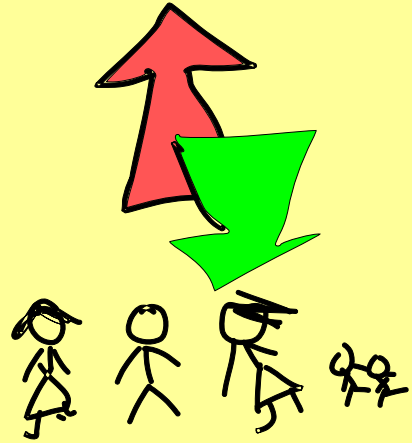
"fully obey and keep my covenant ...

"my treasured possession ..."

"you [not the others] will be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation"

==> founding vision all the people= priesthood:

==> one wonders whether the institution of a limited tribe of priests was ?? second-best??



Bible view of "priests"

First vision of priesthood as destiny of Israel

- n.b. quoted with approval by Peter

"you also like living stones are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" 1 Peter 2:4,5

= a vision of uninterrupted/direct access to God

= each one a priest, they together a priesthood

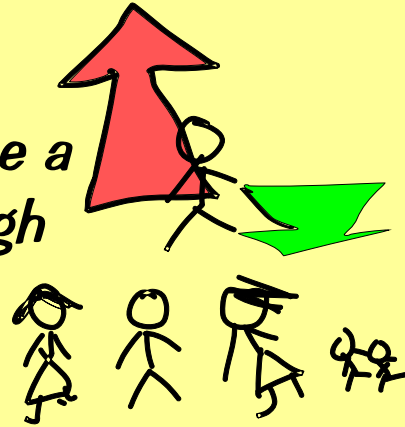
==> not perpetually kept at a distance by a middle-management layer

==> but brought to a place of uninterrupted direct access to God

==> protestant idea "priesthood of all believers"

==> you and I can pray and thank and receive direct – no need for a human priest!!

==> N.B. through Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:5)

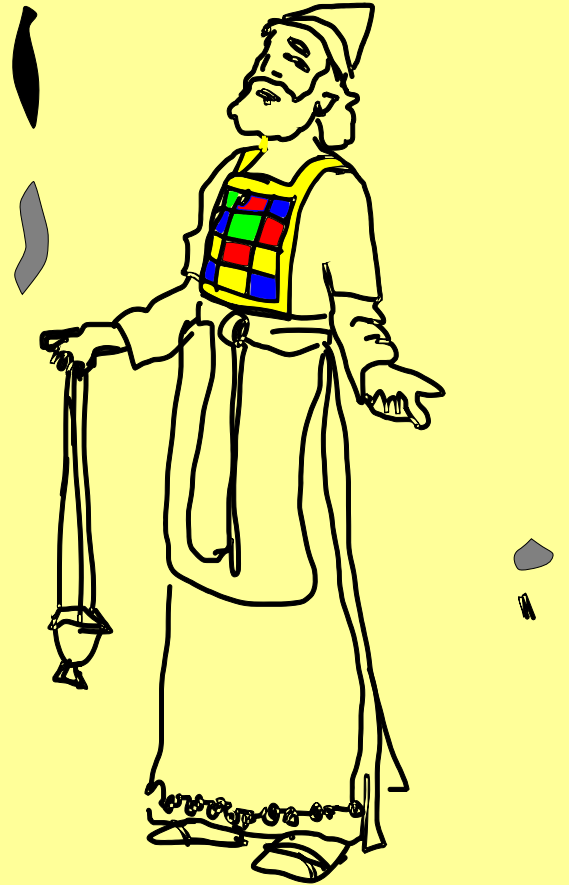


Thus far – priest in general

The word has a realm of meaning across cultures and religions – they are all wrong or misguided in one place or another.

BUT it is the Hebrew Scriptures that set out the teaching on priesthood in the most insightful, authoritative, sophisticated way.

It is very comprehensive, yet points beyond itself to something yet undisclosed.
Look now at the Moses-style priest.



Moses-style priest in more detail

Seen in movies e.g,
Raiders of the Lost Ark
- fictional Rene Belloq the archaeologist assisting the nasty Nazis (Major Arnold Ernest Toht) to unlock the secrets of the Ark of the Covenant.
- Belloq puts on the uniform of a Jewish Priest



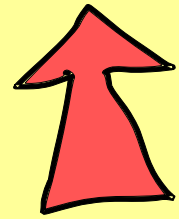
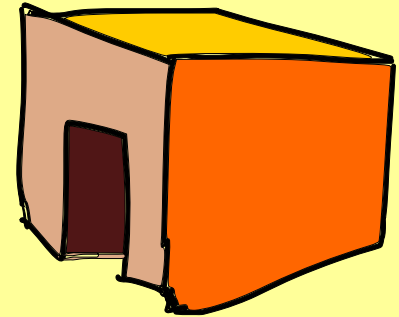
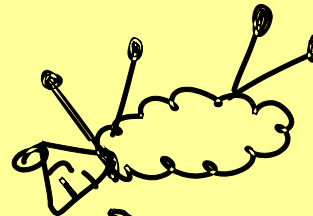
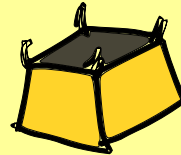
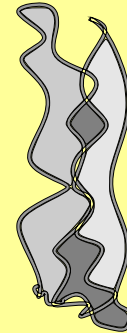
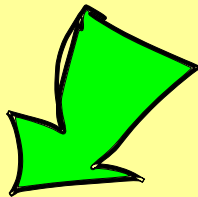
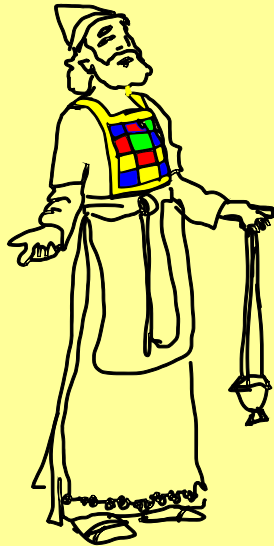
Moses-style priest in more detail

**Seen in movies e.g.,
Raiders of the Lost Ark**
- fictional Rene Belloq the archaeologist assisting the nasty Nazis (Major Arnold Ernest Toht) to unlock the secrets of the Ark of the Covenant.
- Belloq puts on the uniform of a Jewish Priest (close-up)



Moses-style priest in more detail

The basic scheme
- Lord God, -
house/tent, -
people (n.b. 12
jewels), - priest, -
altar, -sacrifice

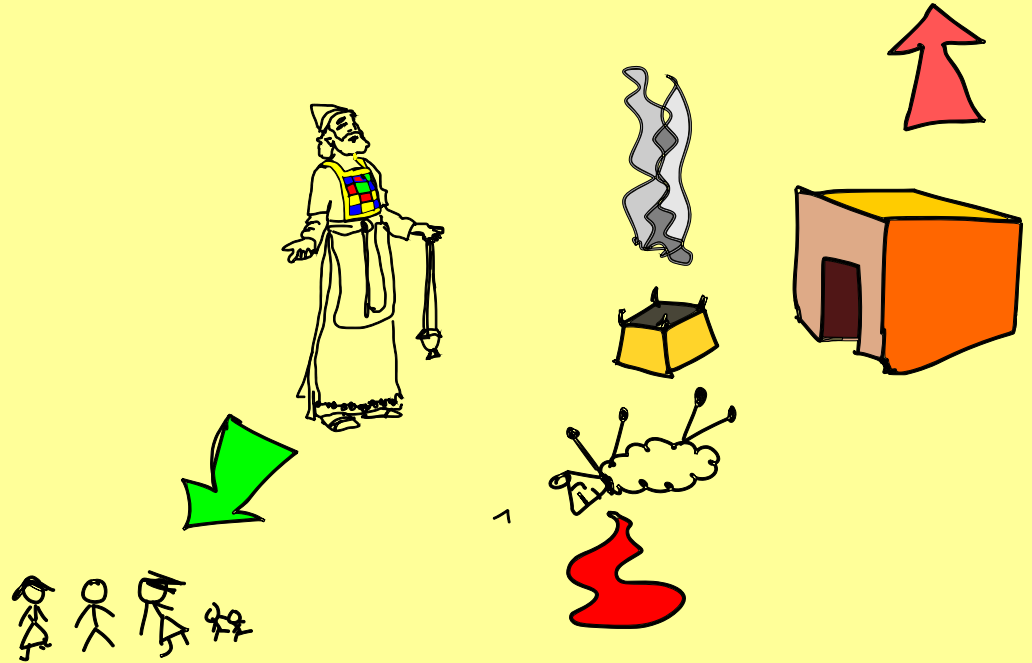


Moses-style priest in more detail

The religions get priests wrong ... the Bible gets it right!

1. The basic need
2. the extreme difficulty
3. the effective provision

(briefly)



1. The basic need

Without the Bible cultures don't get this quite right ...

Priest stuff teaches basic need = shame and guilt of sin

- humanity IS needy ... NOT basically good and OK, just needing reassurance. But
- **outside**, separated from God, NOT OK
- **unclean** ... like coming to sit down on nice chairs all covered in oil and manure
- **guilty** ... like the prisoner in the dock facing a death sentence
- **unforgiven** ... like the bad atmosphere until you say "I was wrong, I'm sorry, will you forgive me"

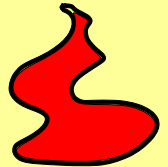
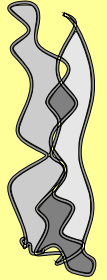
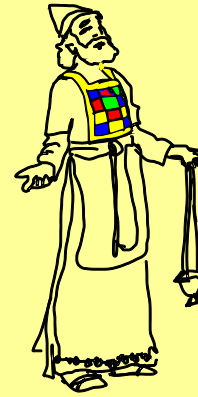
==> that is you and me ... until we get that, we haven't started



2. The extreme difficulty

The Moses-style priest

- top to toe gear and equipment ... head, chest, legs, feet
 - unlike trying to climb Snowdon wearing flip-flops
 - not empty handed
 - very specific set of sacrifices ; animal, vegetable, thanksgivings, prayers ...
- ==> the right Priest is vital
- ==> the right sacrifice is vital
- ==> Jesus ... appointed by God to be Saviour



2. The extreme difficulty

Dangers:

- not the wrong incense (Nadab and Abihu) , not wrong animals (Malachi) , not the wrong attitude (Malachi)

==> the source of this is the mismatch between our sin/guilt and God's holiness

==> like entering a radioactive nuclear site – God's holiness is so extreme as to be deadly

==> who can possibly bring people like us into the presence and blessing of Almighty and Holy God

==> only Jesus!

3. the effective provision

Encouragement!

- it's God's idea to dwell with his people!
- priestly system is God's provision, not our guess, or instinct
- he provides the effective solution

i.e. - complete covering (=matching) for sins!

 - complete removal of uncleanness ... like Cinderella we
can go to the Ball (and it is not a temporary fix)

 - comprehensive guarantee of blessing procured: God will
never look on his people with hatred, indifference, wrathful
punishment – but is totally persuaded to make them thrive

Summary - Basic priest stuff

Jesus is the absolute number #1 priest (we can think of him like that)

- 1. basic need – of sin forgiven, guilt removed, uncleanness cleansed
- 2. extreme difficulty – he is extremely competent – more another time,
- 3 effective provision – he does not fail to bring us to God, he will not fail to get us the help and mercy that we need

Through Jesus we have the help from heaven we need, to be his people, to serve in the place he wants us, to live in blessing in a world of trial and temptation

==> we have a great high priest, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess

First lets look in a very general way at "priests"

N.B. "where are the priests in our culture"

Our culture is a product of the Reformation

- which says by the grace of Jesus Christ we all approach the same way, and have no need of a human priest. Equal approach to God.

the Enlightenment

- which says the human beings are able to answer all profound questions themselves, and have no need of Divine Power

