

Genesis 2:8-17 – Man & Woman in God's Image (part 4) – Sermon Outline

Intro: How is man made in the image of God a priest? We understand prophet and king, but priest?

Need: In Christ, all are redeemed from sin to be restored as guardian priests of His kingdom/Church.

Theme: God created His people to be His priests.

1. Eden was a temple where God dwelt with man and appointed him to guard Eden.
 2. Man fell in Adam, was banished from Eden/God's presence, and lost his guardianship.
 3. God dwells with man again in the tabernacle/temple & institutes guardian priests.
 4. God indwells man in Christ the God-Man, who as High Priest offers His righteous blood to wash away (atone for) our sin, make us His New Temple/Church/Body, & restore us as holy priests.
 5. Christ now leads His Church by appointed guardian Elders who open and close His kingdom by preaching His Word, administering the sacraments, & enforcing church discipline.
- I. REVIEW: Eden was a temple where God dwelt with man and appointed him to guard Eden.**
- A. 8, Note that the garden is planted within Eden. The Garden is connected to Eden but not identical.
 - B. From the article by Daniel Ragusa (https://reformedforum.org/summarizing-biblical-theological-case-eden-temple-garden/#_ftn4):
 1. *"Just as the temple was the place of God's unique presence experienced by the priests, so Eden was the place where God walked with Adam. G.K. Beale notes, "The same Hebrew verbal form (Hithpael) used for God's "walking back and forth" in the garden (Gen. 3:8) also describes God's presence in the tabernacle (Lev. 26:12; Deut. 23:14 [23:15 MT]; 2 Sam. 7:6-7; Ezek. 28:14)."*
 2. *Adam is depicted as a priest with respect to his task, namely, "to work" (עָבַד) and "to keep" (שָׁמַר) the garden, which is the priest's task in the temple (Num. 3:7-8; 8:25-26; 18:5-6; 1 Chron. 23:32; Ezek. 44:14). Adam also donned priestly attire (Ezek. 28:13ff.)."*
 - a. Attending to the needs and doing the work of the tabernacle repeats Adam's duty to work and keep the garden, it is the same Hebrew words that are used, the same phrasing.
- II. REVIEW: Man fell in Adam, was banished from Eden/God's presence, and lost his guardianship.**
- A. Man in Adam fell from priestly service, kingly rule, and prophetic truth telling.
 1. Reformed Forum: *"The cherubim assumed Adam's function to guard the tree of life (Gen. 3:24), which became memorialized in the tabernacle (cf. Exod. 25:18-22)".*
 - a. Two cherubim are made out of gold, atop the mercy seat, covering it with their wings, facing one another, atop the ark which held the Testimony/10 Commandments.
 - b. There God "meets" & "speaks" with Moses from between the 2 cherubim His commands/will.
 - B. We see that true life, then, is in God's glorious presence, where He speaks to us from His word/law.
 - C. Unholy people cannot protect God's domain from unholiness, for they themselves are unholy!
- III. REVIEW: God dwells with man again in the tabernacle/temple & institutes guardian priests.**
- A. 15, So when God "took the man/Adam" and "put him in the Garden of Eden to tend and keep it" He made him a temple-guardian, to cultivate all the earth for God's glory/temple to spread over all things.
 1. As noted above, this reflects the priestly work of the Aaronic priesthood, tending and keeping.
 2. Indeed, In Ex. 19:5-6 God promises what Christ ultimately brings about, that if Israel/God's people are obedient to them, all of them, not just Aaron and his sons, not just the tribe of Levi who assisted, but all God's people would become a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

B. The OT Priesthood and its unique function/office:

1. They were chosen/appointed by God, to be holy to Him, set apart to do this work of offering sacrifices on behalf of the whole congregation of Israel, the whole Church.
2. They drew nearer to the Lord, insofar as they literally were permitted into greater intensity of His presence in the holy place, and the High priest into the unfiltered presence of God once a year in the Holy of Holies, on the Day of Atonement, to offer the sacrifice for the sins of the people.
3. Ref. For.: *“Just as the temple had a tripartite structure of concentric circles of holiness (Holy of Holies > Holy Place > Courtyard), so the garden of Eden had the same (Eden > Garden > Outer World).”*

C. Man without Christ’s blood can offer nothing pleasing, so the whole O.T. system was essentially about bloodshed, blood atonement for their law-breaking.

1. No one in Israel could offer any good works or priestly service, even Aaron’s sons were spending most of their time offering up sacrifices for the sins of the people, and their own sins.
2. They were distanced from God’s presence because they did not have the work of Christ to enter into the holy of holies made without hands, into God’s actual heavenly abode.

IV. God indwells man in Christ the God-Man, who as High Priest offers His righteous blood to wash away (atone for) our sin, make us His New Temple/Church/Body, & restore us as holy priests.

A. Hebrews explains that the OT priests were sinful themselves, die, and so the priesthood changes.

1. Heb. 9:11-15, But Christ is the eternal, unchanging Great High Priest who at last has come.
2. He offers up not an animal but His own sinless blood, into the heavenly holy of holies, to obtain eternal redemption for His people, so that we would now “serve”/latreuo the living God.
3. How can unholy man be made holy again, be renewed to take dominion in righteousness, to do the priestly work of dwelling with God in all holiness, guarding it from intruders, etc.? Through Christ.
4. Christ is the only holy man in Himself, and He came from heaven above and was planted like Adam, yet not in a lush garden but the womb of sinful Mary, birthed into a sinful world, and had to face Satan not in a lush garden of pleasures, but a wilderness of sorrows and temptations.
5. He had to cast out Satan, and often cast out Satan’s demons in His earthly ministry. He had to regain guardianship as a man, for His people, by destroying the works of Satan, sin and death.
6. He enthrones Himself in the hearts of His elect people, washes them with His blood, implants His true words in their heart so they keep His law. He is prophet, priest, and king within us!
7. Though we die, yet we will rise with Christ and rule forever under Him as our Great High priest, as His priests, His holy nation, ultimately as the New Jerusalem in glory forever.

B. As Adam was planted in the Garden, so now Christians are planted into Christ, and are new creations.

1. What was lost is regained in Him. But as Adam merely was placed in the Garden and God dwelt among them, now God dwells within us through Christ and His Spirit.
2. We are now His dwelling place. Christ exceeds what was lost in the Fall, not just with us but in us.
3. Col. 1:26-29: *“The mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.”*

4. Because Christ is risen to heaven above in human flesh forevermore, and we are united to Him, we can never fall again, sin again, die again, but will always rule and reign with Him. Our status as holy will never be forfeited, our duties as His image bearers will never cease to be perfectly performed!
- C. Redeemed man forms God's holy people/church, comprises a holy nation, and regains guardianship.
1. In Christ we are now raised to be seated with Him in the heavenly places, forget even the copy of the earthly holy of holies, but the real thing in heaven above. Adam in Eden did not yet possess this.
 2. As Ephesians 2 says, we are created, born again in Christ for the purpose of good works, priestly service, bearing the fruit of the Spirit, etc.
 3. His Church in our time is the New Temple, and Christ's holiness radiates through us, His temple.
 4. The new covenant is far better than the old covenant, because Christ's blood has now been shed, and sprinkles us clean, and gives us fellowship with God beyond the veil, into heaven itself!
 5. Sacrifices are completely done away with, why? B/C Christ's sacrifice stands forever & pleads for us.
 6. It is absurd that some say Reformed/Presbyterians see nothing better in the new covenant, since it can still be broken/fallen away from. Rather, we see it translates us to heaven and includes our kids!
 7. Arise My Soul Arise hymn: Christ ever lives above for me to intercede, His all redeeming love, His precious blood to plead, His blood atoned for every race & sprinkles now heaven's throne of grace.
- D. Do you see the giant leap forward from the old to the new covenant?
1. Our worship is bloodless, but full of prayers and good works that go up into heaven itself and are received by the Father through Christ the Son, in the power of His indwelling Holy Spirit.
 2. Old Testament worship and fellowship with God was hardly worthy of being called fellowship.
 3. It was a high fortress that restricted Israel from the Lord. The wall, the veil, would only be torn down through the flesh of Christ. Where Israel subsisted with the Lord and only the priests drew near, we all dwell with Him, not just with Him but within Him, and He within us, in heaven through Christ!
 4. Indeed, as 1 Peter 2:4-10 shows, we are now living stones, and when we come together for worship we comprise the New Testament Temple of God, the Church, His body.
 5. We are called a spiritual house, a house indwelt by the Holy Spirit, a holy priesthood, all offering spiritual sacrifices, Holy Spirit sacrifices, gifts and fruit of the Spirit that are "acceptable to God through Jesus Christ". The glory is that this is not to the Jew only, but also the Gentile.
 6. The true believer in the old covenant in some sense had God's work upon them and a renewed heart, but did not have the indwelling of the Spirit as we have it now that Christ has risen.
 7. Yes, the OT saints/true believers had a bond, a union to and with the Triune God, but it was not as blessed, it needed the work of the incarnate Jesus Christ to deepen and enrich it.
 8. Did the OT saints get a brand new union/relationship to God after Christ came, shed His blood, ascended, and poured out His Spirit? No. It was the same bond, but greatly enriched by the Spirit.
 9. Christ's disciples were not born again twice, saints living in Christ's day did not have to get saved twice, first under the old covenant and then under the new covenant. There is one salvation.
 10. So at root, there is one covenant, greatly enlarged and enriched under the administration of the new and living way of Christ's blood. It is called the "new" covenant because of Christ's work/renewing it.
 11. But in its essence it is not different from what we call the "old" covenant. Both administer salvation to God's people through Christ the Son and the work of His Spirit upon them. But the new does so in a far superior way, through the new and living way of Christ's shed blood, entering into heaven itself!

V. **Christ now leads His Church by appointed guardian Elders who open and close His kingdom by preaching His Word, administering the sacraments, & enforcing church discipline.**

- A. Especially in the office of Elder under Christ we see this, The Elders have a priestly function over the rest of the Church, even though the whole Church participates in the priesthood of all believers.
- B. But the Elders particularly guard the presence/access to God, exercising the keys of the kingdom, to promote the body of Christ offering its spiritual sacrifices of good works, keeping things holy in word and deed, etc. Thus their lives especially are to be marked by holiness, and it is a scandal when it isn't!
- C. Matt 16:17-19: "Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. **And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.**"
- D. Jn 20:21-23: "So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. **If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.**" [note the connection to receiving the Holy Spirit for the purpose of leading/exercising the keys, etc.]
- E. WCF CHAPTER 30: Of Church Censures
1. *The Lord Jesus, as king and head of His church, hath therein appointed a government in the hand of church officers, distinct from the civil magistrate. [note also, 2 kingdoms theology historically, unlike the Radical 2 Kingdom nonsense today, saw Christ as King of His Church, and King of the Earth.]*
 2. **To these officers the keys of the kingdom of heaven are committed, by virtue whereof they have power respectively to retain and remit sins, to shut that kingdom against the impenitent, both by the word and censures; and to open it unto penitent sinners, by the ministry of the gospel, and by absolution from censures, as occasion shall require.**
 3. *Church censures are necessary for the reclaiming and gaining of offending brethren; for deterring of others from like offenses; for purging out of that leaven which might infect the whole lump; for vindicating the honor of Christ, and the holy profession of the gospel; and for preventing the wrath of God, which might justly fall upon the church, if they should suffer His covenant, and the seals thereof, to be profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders.*
 4. *For the better attaining of these ends, the officers of the church are to proceed by admonition, suspension from the sacrament of the Lord's Supper for a season, and by excommunication from the church, according to the nature of the crime, and demerit of the person.*
- F. HEIDELBERG CATECHISM QUESTIONS 83-84:
1. Q.83 What are the keys of the kingdom of heaven?
 - a. *ANSWER: The preaching of the holy gospel and church discipline. By these two the kingdom of heaven is opened to believers and closed to unbelievers.*
 2. Q.84 How is the kingdom of heaven opened and closed by the preaching of the gospel?
 - a. *ANS: According to the command of Christ, the kingdom of heaven is opened when it is proclaimed and publicly testified to each and every believer that God has really forgiven all their sins for the sake of Christ's merits, as often as they by true faith accept the promise of the gospel.*

- b. *The kingdom of heaven is closed when it is proclaimed & testified to all unbelievers & hypocrites that the wrath of God and eternal condemnation rest on them as long as they do not repent. According to this testimony of the gospel, God will judge both in this life and in the life to come.*
3. Q. 85: How is the kingdom of heaven shut and opened by Christian discipline?
- a. ANSWER: Thus: when according to the command of Christ, those, who under the name of Christians, maintain doctrines or practices inconsistent therewith, and will not, after having been often brotherly admonished, renounce their errors and wicked course of life, are complained of to the church or to those who are thereunto appointed by the church; and if they despise their admonition, are by them forbidden the use of the sacraments; whereby they are excluded from the Christian church and by God Himself from the kingdom of Christ; and when they promise and show real amendment, are again received as members of Christ and His church.
- G. The whole church exercises the priesthood of all believers under the guidance of the Eldership:
1. In word: Hebrews 10:19-25 *“Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, **let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith (priestly work coming to God boldly, in prayer, etc.)**, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us **consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching** [priestly insofar as we concern ourselves with one another’s holiness, enter the kingdom of heaven at Christ’s return as the Day of judgment approaches, etc., also prophetic function as we are exhorting one another, speaking God’s Truth in love, etc.]”*
 2. Matthew 18 process begins not with the Eldership but individual Christians. If your brother sins against you, you don’t rush off to the Elders and tattle, you seek to win or restore your brother, exercise your priesthood in a sense. And your prophetic voice of rebuke, you are commanded to rebuke him/her, and if they repent, like a priest you forgive them.
 3. Elsewhere Paul tells the whole congregation not to eat or fellowship with one under church discipline, I Cor. 5:11ff., for the good of the one being judged, to understand that the kingdom of heaven is closed to them, and fellowship with its citizens, the priests of His kingdom, etc.
 4. We all are filled with the Spirit, gifted by the Spirit, and are bearing fruit of the Spirit. We together are the temple of God, priests of God, and the holy nation that belongs to God.
 5. **Romans 12:1-2:** *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your [spiritual worship, ESV]. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*
 6. **Ephesians 2:19-22:** *Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.*
 7. **1 Peter 2:9-12:** *“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once*

were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation. **Let us pray.**