

**GRACE BIBLE CHURCH**  
**Robert R. McLaughlin Bible Ministries**

**The Tree of Life is a weekly teaching summary.**  
**The Tree of Life from the week ending 12/31/06**  
**What it means to be initiated into the secret of the mystery. Part 48.**  
**The uniqueness of the Royal Priesthood of the believer.**

**U**nder the category of what it means to be initiated into the secret of the mystery, we have now noted: 1) The baptism of the Spirit. 2) The indwelling of Christ as the Shekinah glory. 3) The Angelic Conflict. 4) The mystery of adoption. 5) The sealing ministry of the Holy Spirit. 6) The Predesigned Plan of God. 7) The mystery of predestination. 8) The unique equality factor of the Church-age. 9) The Portfolio of Invisible Assets.

Our next category: **Two Unique Royal Commissions for every Church-age Believer.** These two royal Commissions are the royal priesthood and the royal ambassadorship.

As royal priests we represent ourselves before God: ours is a universal priesthood; believers in other dispensations have a specialized priesthood. The universal priesthood of the believer is found in passages such as: 1Pe 2:5-9 *you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For this is contained in Scripture: "Behold I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone, And he who believes in Him shall not be disappointed. This precious value, then, is for you who believe. But for those who disbelieve, the stone which the builders rejected, This became the very corner stone, and, A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."* As a believer, you are to serve as a holy priest offering up spiritual sacrifices [Christ approved lives] up to God.

Your priesthood is the basis for your privacy to live your own life as unto the Lord. It is the basis for effective prayer related to your understanding of Bible doctrine. Your priesthood does not begin to function properly until you attain spiritual self-esteem, and it reaches its peak in spiritual maturity. Every believer, male or female, Jew or Gentile, is a priest in the Plan of God for the Church-age. Gal 3:28 *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all equal in Christ Jesus."* Your royal priesthood shows that God's plan for you in the Church-age as Royal Family is totally unique. Never before the Church-age, and never after the Rapture, is there ever another universal priesthood; it is only for us in the Church-age, the dispensation of personal responsibility.

A priest is a human being who represents people before God. In the Church-age, since every believer is a priest, every believer represents himself before God, and this establishes a system of privacy. Rom 14:1-3 *"Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions. One man has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only. Let not him who eats regard with contempt him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats, for God has accepted him."* We are to welcome fellow believers who may not see everything the way we do; they have their own history to deal with. One believer might well be convinced that he can eat anything on the table, while another, with a different background, might assume all Christians should be vegetarians and eat accordingly, but remember that it was God who invited them both to be guests at Christ's table. Rom 14:4 *"Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand. We have no business crossing people off the guest list or interfering with God's welcome, if there are corrections to be made, God can handle that without our help."* Rom 14:5-8 *"One man*

*regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God. For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's." It is God that we answer to, all the way from life to death and everything in between, not each other. Rom 14:10-12 "But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written, 'As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall give praise to God.' So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God."*

Rom 14:22 *The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.* Cultivate your own relationship with God, but don't impose it on others. Under the royal priesthood, you are responsible for every thought you think, every motive you have, every good decision you make, and every resulting action you take. God is holding you responsible for your own decisions, because He made you a priest so that you could represent yourself before Him. A very vital part of representing yourself before God is to receive what you have been elected to receive. God takes pleasure when He is able to give to you that which He has elected you to receive, fantastic blessing. Acts 20:35 tells us that God derives more pleasure from giving to us than He does from receiving from us.

Although the Apostle Peter's teaching was misunderstood by the Catholic Church, he was really teaching about the royal priesthood of each Church-age believer; he was not teaching about a group of men who would call themselves priests or father. Mat 23:9 says "*And do not call {anyone} on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.*" Peter was the first to teach the doctrine of the royal priesthood of the believer around 65 AD (1Pe 2:5 and 9). John taught the doctrine as well, Rev 1:4-6 "*John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come; and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne; and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us, and released us from our sins by His blood, and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.*" Rev 5:10 says, "*And Thou hast made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.*" As a royal priest, every believer has a direct line to God: he represents himself before God, he evaluates himself, and he can offer prayer for himself. Hence, the privacy of your priesthood is related to the importance of the perception, metabolization, and application of Bible doctrine. You have privacy so that you can learn Bible doctrine yourself; this is why the local church should be an environment where believers can gather together and yet still have their privacy respected. You were formed for God's family; and your personal sense of destiny, under the principle of election, is to identify with His family. Joh 15:5 "*I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.*" The entire Bible is based upon the principle of God building a family who will love Him, honor Him, and reign with Him forever. Eph 1:5 "*His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. And this gave him great pleasure,*"

God is love, and He treasures relationships. His very nature is relational. This is why He identifies Himself in family terms: Father, Son, and Spirit. The Trinity is God's relationship to Himself, and the perfect pattern for relational harmony. God has always existed in a loving relationship to Himself, so He has never been lonely. He didn't need a family, He desired one, so He devised a plan to create us, bring us into His family, and share with us all He has. This gives God pleasure, and makes your spiritual family more important than your physical family because it will last forever. Our families on earth are wonderful gifts from God, but they are temporary and fragile, often broken by divorce, distance, age, and inevitably death. On the other hand, our spiritual family will continue throughout eternity. The moment you were spiritually born into God's family, you were given some astounding birthday gifts: The family name, family privileges, family intimate access, and the family inheritance. The Bible teaches that you are a child of God, and everything He has belongs to you. Gal 4:7 "*Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through*

God.” Here on earth we are given the riches of His grace, kindness, patience, glory, wisdom, power, and mercy, but in eternity we will inherit even more. Eph 1:18 *“I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,”* That inheritance includes: Being with God forever, being completely changed to be like Christ, being freed from spiritual death, sharing in Christ's glory. What an inheritance!

Gal 4:1-2 *“Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything, but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father.* In the ancient world, as long as the heir was a minor he had no advantage over the slave, though legally he owns the entire inheritance. He was subject to tutors and administrators until whatever date the father had set for emancipation or freedom. Gal 4:3-7 *“So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world. But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba Father’ Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.”* That privilege of intimate conversation with God (calling Him Father) makes it plain that you are not a slave, but a child of God, and if you are a child, then you're also an heir, with complete access to the inheritance. Part of that inheritance is found in Heb 4:14-16 *Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.* We don't have a priest who is out of touch with our reality; He's been through weakness and testing, experienced it all, except the sin. So, take the mercy, accept the help; as children of God we get to share in the family fortune. You have the opportunity, through understanding that you are a royal priest, to enter into a deep union with God. Some say that this deep union with God cannot happen in this life; however, your spirit can be deeply touched and be united with God's spirit while you live in your human body, called the body of humiliation (Phi 3:20-21). This is experienced but not actually seen in the physical realm. When you fully enter into the presence of God through understanding your royal priesthood, you shall fully see all that you now have by faith. Your spiritual life is a journey toward Christ, and this begins by understanding you are a royal priest.

Under the privacy of your priesthood, you must be able to define your life in terms of the PPOG, which means you must learn the technical language and vocabulary. Once you do, you can analyze and evaluate your own life, and your own problems, and apply doctrine and make corrections all under the privacy of your own priesthood. God wants you to become spiritually self-sustained; therefore, the privacy of the priesthood demands that we learn doctrine so that we can define our situation at any given time. Any self-improvement program or agenda based on the advice and counsel of others is really a setback. The Royal priesthood is designed by God to function under the concept of thought. No believer can think, apply doctrine, or solve problems through the mind or the personality of another Christian; this is why each one of us is a priest. Initially, there is a place for giving advice to new believers, a time for asking questions, but as you grow you should begin to handle your own life and solve your own problems. You should know when you're wrong and when you're right, and you should be able to utilize all the doctrine you have learned so you can advance to maturity, because only in spiritual maturity will you truly glorify God.

Under the privacy of your priesthood, you have the right to assemble with other believers in a group, where your privacy is respected, to learn doctrine from your right pastor-teacher. The privacy of your priesthood permits the function of both your positive volition toward doctrine plus the right to metabolize and apply that doctrine to your own experience. The danger is the tendency to get arrogant, and want to apply it to everyone else's experience. The only human dependence of the royal priesthood is the divine provision of your very own pastor-teacher, and consistent positive volition under his teaching ministry. This is why your pastor should not bully you or intrude upon your privacy (unless, of course, you intrude on someone else's privacy); he should communicate and teach doctrine

faithfully. Faithful Bible teaching demands your faith perception, metabolization, and application of that teaching to your own life as a royal priest. You cannot advance to maturity on your own; you must be trained by a man who has the gift of pastor-teacher.

Major functions of the royal priesthood include: 1) Rebound as the basic technique for the recovery of fellowship. 2) A consistent prayer life. 3) Perception, metabolization, and application of doctrine to your own experience. 4) Worship, which includes giving as a part of your priesthood. 5) The sacrifices of life, such as praise, which is your doctrinal momentum resulting in spiritual adulthood and the manner of operating of virtue-love. Heb 13:15-16 *Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. And do not neglect doing good and sharing; for with such sacrifices God is pleased.* God takes pleasure in those acts of worship which are directed toward Him. 6) Divine viewpoint mental attitude from metabolized doctrine. It is what you think from metabolized doctrine that counts. 7) Self-motivation from metabolized doctrine. If you depend on others for motivation, then you are borrowing their inspiration, and when you are under adversity, you will have no motivation to keep driving.

So your priesthood demands that you live your own life as unto the Lord and take the responsibility for your own decisions. This is your equal privilege under election. 1Co 4:5 *Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God.* When He comes, He will bring out in the open and place in evidence all kinds of things we never even dreamed of, the inner motives and purposes and prayers. Only then will any one of us get to hear the "Well done!" of God. These inner motives and purposes and prayers are all manifestations and results of your royal priesthood. This is why you can receive and enjoy Christ without seeing Him face to face. 1Pe 1:8 *"and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,"* When you stand before Him you will have the clear vision of God in addition to the happiness of being His. 1Jo 3:1-2 *"See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is."* What marvelous love the Father has extended to us! Just look at it, we're called children of God! That's who we really are, but that's also why the world doesn't recognize us or take us seriously, because it has no idea who He is or what He's up to. Our temporary blindness in time does not and should not stop our true enjoyment of God nor the communication of His Word to our spirit. This experience comes from the richness of a deep and lasting union with God, and will be testified to by all who have experienced it. This is where your royal priesthood will lead you. Paul said 2Co 4:7-8, *"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves; we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing;"* If you only look at your problems, what you're going through, you might miss out on the brightness of the treasure. We carry this precious Message around in the unadorned clay pots of our ordinary lives, and that's to prevent anyone from confusing God's incomparable power with us. We've been surrounded and battered by troubles, but we're not demoralized, and at times, we're not sure what to do. 2Co 4:9-10 *"persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body."* We've been spiritually terrorized, but God hasn't left our side; we've been thrown down, but we haven't broken. 2Co 4:11-12, *"For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death works in us, but life in you."* Job 36:15 *"He delivers the afflicted in their affliction, And opens their ear in time of oppression."* All these things drive us to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need, and all of these things are designed to strengthen our royal priesthood.

There is no doubt that when you first receive Him you are united to Him, but there is much work that He must do in you to make you perfectly fitted for Himself. This fitting process takes a long time and must occur before God can fully communicate Himself to you; in fact, your goal is to allow God to possess you without holding anything back from Him. True union with God is permanent and

lasting because it is inward and spiritual. Complete union with God is your final destination. Your spirit can be poured into Him as He becomes the center of your life. In Him your spiritual life can be transformed. God, in creating you, made you a partaker of Himself. 2Pe 1:4 *For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature.* He made you to be reunited with Him, and He gives you an inner desire toward that reunion. Your spiritual life is perfectly made to be united and transformed into God. Your spirit can be united to God in this way because that is what it is made for. 2Co 3:18 *“But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”*

All of us need to understand that there is nothing between us and God, and so we are being transformed into the same image, much like the Messiah. Our lives gradually become brighter and more beautiful we become more and more like Him.

True fellowship with God takes place only when you begin to understand the privilege of your Royal priesthood and surrender your self-nature to God. Joh 12:24 *“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.”* Unless a grain of wheat is buried in the ground, which means to be dead to the world, it is never any more than a grain of wheat, but if it is buried, it sprouts and reproduces itself many times over. Joh 12:25 *“He who loves his life loses it; and he who hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal.”* In the same way, anyone who holds on to life just as it is destroys that life, but if you let it go, you'll have it forever, real and eternal. There is a deep fellowship in your royal priesthood where you stop preserving the self-life, and lovingly and absolutely begin to fellowship with God. Our union with Christ and the privilege of your royal priesthood is the greatest achievement of God's love and omnipotence. But because man is created free, he has the power of shutting off his relationship with God and sheltering himself in the cosmic system. What a sad commentary on the rejection of the privilege of your royal priesthood. For when a believer knows and then turns his back on such privileges, he heaps hindrance upon hindrance upon himself unless he reaches out to the mercy of God. Remember that as a believer priest, you have the right to reach out to the mercy of God. When a believer does this, God removes some of the obstacles He had put in the way, and then we are encouraged to turn towards Him back in fellowship as royal priests. The more open the soul is to God, the more abundant is the release of His grace mercy. Instead of believers enjoying the privilege of their royal priesthood, they are wrapped up in the cosmic system, looking to it for answers. One of the incredible gifts we have is insight into our sorrows, difficulties, and trials, and how all of them can strengthen and develop our royal priesthood. Under disastrous conditions, God can manufacture good out of the suffering. Sooner or later, you are going to run into some disastrous situation, and the only way you will be ready for it is to strengthen your royal priesthood with God.