

THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS

(Part 18 – series on Baptist Distinctives)

TEXT: Revelation 2:6,15; John 20:23; Matthew 23:8,9

INTRODUCTION: We now leave our study of the **devotional** implications of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers to the more obvious **polemic** implications. Baptists share with historic Protestants in their repudiation of the Roman Catholic heresies spawned by the institution of the hierarchy of a human priesthood. Christ is the only “*mediator between God and men*” (1 Tim. 2:5), and the fact that believers collectively constitute a “*royal priesthood*” does not contradict Christ’s unique prerogative. We must not fear to expose and renounce all unscriptural hierarchies that have become entrenched as a result of the misunderstanding and abuse of this doctrine.

OUTLINE: Let us avoid the extremes associated with the “equal brotherhood of all believers” and have a balanced Biblical view of it.

- I. **The Meaning of New Testament Priesthood**
- II. **The Qualifications of a New Testament Priest**
- III. **The Responsibilities of a Believer-Priest**
- IV. **The Repudiation of Unscriptural Hierarchy**
 - A. The two extremes
 1. The error and doctrine of the Nicolaitans (Rev. 2:6,15)
 2. Laodicean rule, or “rule of the people” (Rev. 3:14-20)
 - B. The disastrous results
 1. Confession to human priest
 2. Priestly absolution (forgiveness)
 3. Transubstantiation
 4. The “infallibility” of the Pope (Matt. 23:8,9)
 - C. The biblical view of ordination
- V. **The Implications of New Testament Priesthood**
 - A. Congregational polity
 - B. Unified mission
 - C. Related matters, cautions

1. Soul competency vs. “right of private interpretation”
2. Soul liberty

CONCLUSION: A God-called pastor will not “lord” it over God’s heritage, but will lead and feed his flock with the heart of a shepherd. His authority comes from God and is a spiritual authority. It will be used for building up, not tearing down. While we as Baptists reject the unscriptural hierarchy of other denominations and stress the equality of the brotherhood, let us not quibble to “follow the man who follows Christ.” If he “rules” well, he is worthy of “double honor [esteem]” (1 Tim. 5:17).