

Counterfeit Priests 07-08-18 AM

According to Scripture, anyone who is in Christ is a priest to God (1 Peter 2:9). As priests there are four important points to consider. First, priests can only be determined by God. Second, priests are to offer gifts and sacrifices to God. Third, priests wear special garments. Finally, priests serve in a holy place at an altar. Since we are a spiritual priesthood, our sacrifices are spiritual (Romans 12:1), our garments are spiritual (Gal. 3:27), and our temple is spiritual (1 Cor. 3:16, 1 Cor. 6:19).

We ought to consider that the Old Testament is much like a priestly handbook for our behavior. *Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come* - 1 Corinthians 10:11. One of the important lessons of the OT is the lesson of counterfeit priesthoods set up during the great division of the kingdoms.

In 1 Kings 12:1-19 we read how the kingdom of Israel was broken into two kingdoms. Solomon's sins were effected in the time of his son Rehoboam. Jeroboam, a general of the army, was crowned the king of the north. 10 of the 12 tribes left Rehoboam and became the kingdom of Israel. But Jeroboam was concerned that since the center of religious worship was Jerusalem, located in the kingdom of Judah, his people might not remain faithful to him. So in 1 Kings 12:25-33 we read that he established a counterfeit of the religion of Moses in the north. He did this using religion for political purposes.

There were three things that counterfeited true religion. First, he made a priesthood from anyone who desired (1 Kings 13:33). This meant he also evicted the Levites (2 Chron. 11:14). Second, he established altars in the high places (1 Kings 13:32). In these high places some worshipped Jehovah and others worship pagan gods (2 Chron. 33:17). He created feast days of worship that he created in his heart (1 Kings 12:32-33).

God's response was not to say "at least you are worshipping Jehovah". God did not point out that "you are very close to what I asked" or "all that matters is your intent". Instead Scripture says "*The LORD rejected all the descendants of Israel, afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of plunderers, until He had cast them from His sight. ForJeroboam drove Israel from following the LORD, and made them commit a great sin*" (2 Kings 17:20-21).

The New Testament points to this because of a prophecy of apostasy (2 Pet. 2:1, 1 Tim. 4:1, 2 Tim 3.1). This falling away includes a counterfeit of true worship. Consider these thoughts in light of the religions around us.

Not everyone who says they are in Christ is in Christ; this is like Jeroboam in that "Priests" who are not called are not priests (Mat. 7). Not everything sacrificed is in fact a sacrifice. Giving up things God does not ask for is in vain (1 Sam 15). Worship not done God's way is offensive. It is better not to do it than do it wrong (Amos 5:21, Isa. 1:13). Finally, like Jeroboam, many are replacing spiritual things with worldly substitutes. Spiritual images become physical; physical worship, physical robes, etc.

God has the right to form our worship; It is for Him, not us. A desire to please Him means doing it His way, since we are HIS priesthood to offer HIS things. What we see in Jeroboam is that there is a repeated pattern in digression. Men take control and offend God.