

To Be a Priest

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To **him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood** and **made us** a kingdom, **priests to his God and Father**, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (Revelation 1:5b-6 ESV)

Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals,
for you were slain, and **by your blood you ransomed people for God**
from every tribe and language and people and nation,
and **you have made them** a kingdom and **priests to our God**, and they shall reign on the earth.
(Revelation 5:9-10 ESV)

Blessed and holy is **the one who shares in the first resurrection!** Over such the second death has no power, but **they will be priests of God and of Christ**, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.
(Revelation 20:6 ESV)

But **you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession**, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.
(1 Peter 2:9 ESV)

Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, **you shall be my treasured possession among** all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and **you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation**. (Exodus 19:5-6a ESV)

The idea of “a priest” conjures up images reminiscent of scenes from the Indiana Jones movies. Images of strangely garbed functionaries performing pointless ceremonies and droning incantations in some obscure language. Yet, God the Father and Jesus Christ our Saviour hold out to Christians the promise of being “**priests of God and of Christ**”. In God’s eyes, what does it mean “to be a priest”? This promise was actually held out to the people of Israel at the inception of the Sinai Covenant – Israel was to be “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation”. What happened? Clearly God intended more as the promise has passed to the New Testament Church and has been extended to universal scope.

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1. God's Purpose for the Ancient Nation of Israel

When YHWH first sent Moses to inform Pharaoh of Israel's immanent departure, this was the message:

And the LORD said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt ... you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, **Israel is my firstborn son**, and I say to you, "Let my son go that he may serve me.'" (Exodus 4:21-23a ESV)

The designation of Israel as the "firstborn" implies that from the beginning God's intention was to have many "sons". God's intention was that his firstborn son would set an example for all nations and they as "many sons" would come into true worship of the True God:

And he said, "Behold, I am making a covenant. Before all your people **I will do marvels**, such as have not been created in all the earth or in any nation. And **all the people among whom you are shall see the work of the LORD**, for **it is an awesome thing that I will do with you**." (Exodus 34:10 ESV)

Later just before crossing the Jordan to enter the promised land, Moses reminded the people of God's intention for them to be an example to the nations, to bring the nations into true worship:

See, I have taught you statutes and just decrees¹, as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. Keep them and do them, for **that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples**, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, '**Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people**.' For **what great nation is there** that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? And **what great nation is there**, that has statutes and just decrees so righteous as all this [torah]² that I set before you today? (Deuteronomy 4:5-8 ESV)

This is how Israel was to be a "priestly" nation – Israel was to demonstrate to the other nations of the world how living God's way produces peace and abundance. God's intention was that other nations would then follow that example. The most important requirement of God upon Israel, for them to accomplish their intended purpose, was to "be holy" as a reflection of God's holiness:

I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and **be holy, for I am holy** ... I am the LORD who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. You shall therefore **be holy, for I am holy**. (Leviticus 11:44-45 ESV)

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, **You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy**." (Leviticus 19:1-2 ESV)

Consecrate yourselves, therefore, and **be holy, for I am the LORD your God**. Keep my statutes and do them; I am the LORD who sanctifies you. (Leviticus 20:7-8 ESV)

You shall be holy to me, for I the LORD am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine. (Leviticus 20:26 ESV)

To be a "priestly" nation, Israel had to be a holy nation. Holiness can only be imparted by God onto human beings. There is nothing that a person can do to bring oneself into a state of holiness. Holiness is a gift from God put upon human beings by God only under specific conditions set by God. This topic is discussed more fully later in this paper.

The failure of the ancient nation of Israel to fulfill its purpose is documented throughout the Old Testament. In fact, God revealed to Moses prophecies of the failure of Israel even before they entered the promised land:

Now therefore write this song and teach it to the people of Israel. Put it in their mouths, that **this song may be a witness for me against the people of Israel**. For when I have brought them into the land flowing with milk and honey, which I swore to give to their fathers, and they have eaten and are full and grown fat, **they will turn to other gods and serve them, and despise me and break my covenant**. And

¹ מִשְׁפָּט - mish'pat, the fundamental meaning is "justness" as an attribute of the nature of God

² תּוֹרָה - torah, "teaching", "instruction", "direction"; NOT "law" as implied by the English word (ESV has "law")

when many evils and troubles have come upon them, **this song shall confront them as a witness** (for it will live unforgotten in the mouths of their offspring). For **I know what they are inclined to do even today, before I have brought them into the land that I swore to give.** So Moses wrote this song the same day and taught it to the people of Israel. (Deuteronomy 31:19-22 ESV)

The Song of Moses then goes on to reiterate some of the failings of Israel in the wilderness, some of which have prophetic overtones of things to come. The root cause is summarized in two verses:

For they are **a nation void of counsel**, and there is **no understanding in them**.
If they were wise, they would understand this; they would discern their latter end!
(Deuteronomy 32:28-29 ESV)

God had already given Moses understanding of the nature of the problem:

And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them: “You have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land, the great trials that your eyes saw, the signs, and those great wonders. **But to this day the LORD has not given you a heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear.** (Deuteronomy 29:2-4 ESV)

The problem is human nature. We are susceptible to sin. God gave the nation of Israel the opportunity to be a nation of priests to carry the true worship of the True God to all nations of the world; but, in fact, God knew this would NOT happen. Why then is there so much detail recorded in the Old Testament about the Aaronic Priesthood? God was prepared for Israel’s failure, and the Plan of God entails a better way. Since the time of Moses we are privileged to have some 3500 years of history of the unfolding of the Plan of God. God does nothing without purpose.³ The Old Testament is the richest source of information available to mankind to reveal to us the mind of God and what he requires of each of us as an individual Christian. God has given us this revelation so that each of us might partake of that glorious promise to be “priests to our God” and to participate in the first resurrection. The apostle Paul says of this treasure trove:

Now **these things took place as examples for us**, that we might not desire evil as they did. ... Now these things happened to them as an example, but **they were written down for our instruction**, on whom the end of the ages has come. Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.
(1 Corinthians 10:6, 11-12 ESV)

2. The Aaronic Priesthood

In the ancient world the sacrifice of animals was an assumed normal part of life. From the beginning, animals were used in the worship of God. Pagans also used animals in worship. God killed animals to clothe Adam and Eve.⁴ Abel offered “the firstborn of his flock”.⁵ Noah “offered a burnt offering” of all clean animals after the flood.⁶ YHWH instructed Abram how to confirm a covenant with slaughtered animals.⁷ YHWH provided a ram as a substitute for Isaac.⁸ Jacob offered sacrifices at Beersheba on his way into Egypt.⁹

Animal sacrifices were planned by God from the outset of the instructions given to Moses to build the Tabernacle. The most important feature of the court of the Tabernacle was the bronze altar¹⁰ upon which the sacrifices were to be performed. The prescribed offering of sacrifices¹¹ was central to the official worship of YHWH. The offering of these sacrifices was central to the Aaronic Priesthood. The purpose of “sacrifice” as prescribed in the Pentateuch has been much discussed and the literature is enormous.¹² To survey this literature is beyond the scope of this paper. A couple of brief quotations must suffice:

³ Isaiah 45:23, 55:11, Jeremiah 1:12, Psalm 33:4, 147:15

⁴ Genesis 3:21

⁵ Genesis 4:4

⁶ Genesis 8:20

⁷ Genesis 15:9-10

⁸ Genesis 22:13

⁹ Genesis 46:1

¹⁰ See Exodus 27:1-8, 38:1-7, 40:29, and figures 1 and 2 in Appendix 1.

¹¹ See Leviticus chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7.

¹² See the bibliographic references in Wenham. For general information, see also the Wikipedia article “Animal Sacrifice”.

... Israelite sacrifice was concerned with **restoring the relationships** between God and Israel, and between different members of the nation. The Sinai Covenant had created a fellowship characterized by life and order, harmony between God and man and between man and man. ... Anything that disturbed this order ... was a potential threat to the whole community, and sacrifice was the principal means for remedying the disruption ... In Leviticus sacrifice ... is regularly associated with **cleansing** and **sanctification**.¹³

All the laws and regulations in Leviticus have this for their object ... they each and all aim quite as much at the **restoration of an inward fellowship** on the part of the nation as a whole and the individual members with [YHWH] their God, through the expiation or forgiveness of sin and the **removal of all natural uncleanness**, as at the strengthening and deepening of this fellowship by the **sanctification** of every relation of life.¹⁴

The oft-stated purpose of the sacrifices in Leviticus is 'to atone' ... This verb may be explained in one of three ways: 'to cover' ... 'to wipe away' ... **'to ransom by a substitute'** ... The last seems most in keeping with the theory of sacrifice given in [Leviticus 17:11] 'the life of the flesh is in the blood ... it is the blood that makes atonement for the [life of the offeror] ...'¹⁵

To a modern person, the offering of an animal sacrifice is most naturally perceived to be a ceremonial and symbolic action. To an ancient person, it was an integral part of their existence. The relationship of a committed Israelite with God was of utmost importance to the individual, just as it is today for a Christian. An Israelite could not have conceived of maintaining this relationship without animal sacrifice. God is very clear that Israel was to be a "holy nation" and that the people of Israel were individually to be "holy". **The process of "sanctification" could only be accomplished by the "substitutionary" death of an animal in place of the inherently sinful human being.** The performance of this sacrificial role in Israelite society was essential for the society to function. The Aaronic Priesthood performed this role.

The typology of the various sacrifices is also a much-discussed topic and the literature is huge.¹⁶ In general, all the sacrifices looked forward to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. His death obviated the need for any physical sacrifice on the part of Christians. Christians are required to offer themselves as "living sacrifices".¹⁷

3. The Intercessory Role of the Aaronic Priesthood

The official garment¹⁸ of the High Priest, Aaron initially, was specifically designed to represent the fact that the High Priest stood in an intercessory role between God and the people. **As human beings, we are inherently unclean.** The unclean cannot come in contact with the holy. No human being in this condition can approach to the Holy God. Only through God's grace can human beings be accounted holy and therefore approach God. God's grace was extended to the Israelites through the sacrifices offered by the Aaronic Priests. **This is the intercessory role of the priest.** Aaron's garment had several features designed to bring to remembrance this role. The "ephod" was a tunic worn on the upper body. The "breastpiece" was essentially a pocket attached to the front of the "ephod" which covered the chest area. It was attached at the shoulders by two "onyx" stones upon each of which six of the names of the sons of Jacob were engraved. Similarly, on the front of the "breastpiece" were twelve stones upon each of which was engraved the name of a son of Jacob:

And they shall make the **ephod of gold, of blue and purple and scarlet yarns, and of fine twined linen, skillfully worked.** It shall have two shoulder pieces attached to its two edges, so that it may be joined together. And the skillfully woven band on it shall be made like it and be of one piece with it, of gold, blue and purple and scarlet yarns, and fine twined linen. You shall take **two onyx stones, and engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel, six of their names on the one stone, and the names of the remaining six on the other stone,** in the order of their birth. As a jeweler engraves signets, so shall you

¹³ Wenham pages 25-26

¹⁴ KD1 pages 495-496

¹⁵ R.T. Beckwith, NBD page 1120

¹⁶ See IDB, volume 4, article "Sacrifices", section "A Typology" and Bibliography, pages 147-159.

¹⁷ See Romans 12:1-2, 1 Peter 2:4-5, Hebrews 13:8-16

¹⁸ See Figure 3 in Appendix 1 for an artist's conception of the High Priest's garment.

engrave the two stones with the names of the sons of Israel. You shall enclose them in settings of gold filigree. And you shall **set the two stones on the shoulder pieces of the ephod**, as stones of **remembrance for the sons of Israel**. And **Aaron shall bear their names before the LORD on his two shoulders for remembrance**. (Exodus 28:6-12 ESV)

You shall make a **breastpiece of [justice]**,¹⁹ in skilled work. **In the style of the ephod** you shall make it—of gold, blue and purple and scarlet yarns, and fine twined linen shall you make it. It shall be square and doubled, a span its length and a span its breadth. **You shall set in it four rows of stones**. A row of sardius, topaz, and carbuncle shall be the first row; and the second row an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond; and the third row a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst; and the fourth row a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper. They shall be set in gold filigree. **There shall be twelve stones with their names according to the names of the sons of Israel**. **They shall be like signets, each engraved with its name, for the twelve tribes**. ... **So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel in the breastpiece of [justice] on his heart, when he goes into the Holy Place, to bring them to regular remembrance before the LORD**. (Exodus 28:15-21, 29 ESV)

In two places the High Priest carried the names of the tribes of Israel to represent them whenever he came before YHWH. Aaron was to “bear the names” – he was their intercessor before the throne of God. Aaron’s responsibility was to ensure the people of Israel understood *mishpat* as an attribute of the nature of God:

... the breastpiece of [justice] ... shall be on Aaron’s heart, when he goes in before the LORD. Thus Aaron shall **bear the [mishpat] of the people of Israel on his heart before the LORD regularly**. (Exodus 28:30 ESV)

On Aaron’s head was a turban which contained a band of gold with the inscription “**Holy to YHWH**”: You shall make a **plate of pure gold and engrave on it**, like the engraving of a signet, ‘**Holy to the LORD**.’ And you shall fasten it on the turban by a cord of blue. It shall be on the front of the turban. It shall be on Aaron’s forehead, and **Aaron shall bear any guilt from the holy things that the people of Israel consecrate as their holy gifts**. **It shall regularly be on his forehead, that they may be accepted before the LORD**. (Exodus 28:36-38 ESV)

The word “guilt” is עֲוֹן - ‘awon, one of the most common words for “sin”. So, Aaron in fact carried the sins of the people before YHWH – he took the sins of the people upon himself. In this, he prefigured the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Aaron had to be in a state of “holiness”, clean and sanctified, whenever he approached YHWH. The offerings presented by the people became holy through the process of offering. Aaron, representing the entire priesthood, carried the guilt of sin before YHWH so that the people’s offerings could be accepted as holy.

Chapter 29 of Exodus contains the instructions given to Moses for the consecration of the priests, Aaron and his sons. Leviticus chapter 8 contains the description of the ceremony as it was actually carried out. This ceremony is discussed later in this paper. Chapter 9 of Leviticus then goes on to describe **the first public worship at the Tabernacle** performed by Aaron and his sons:

... **Moses called Aaron and his sons and the elders of Israel**, and he said to Aaron, “**Take for yourself** a bull calf for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering, both without blemish, and offer them before the LORD. And **say to the people of Israel**, ‘Take a male goat for a sin offering, and a calf and a lamb, both a year old without blemish, for a burnt offering, and an ox and a ram for peace offerings, to sacrifice before the LORD, and a grain offering mixed with oil, for **today the LORD will appear to you**.’” And **they brought what Moses commanded in front of the tent of meeting, and all the congregation drew near and stood before the LORD**. And Moses said, “**This is the thing that the LORD commanded you to do, that the glory of the LORD may appear to you**.” Then **Moses said to Aaron**, “Draw near to the altar and **offer your sin offering and your burnt offering and make atonement for yourself** and for the people, and **bring the offering of the people and make atonement for them**, as the LORD has commanded.” (Leviticus 9:1-7 ESV)

Then **Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people and blessed them**, and he came down from offering the sin offering and the burnt offering and the peace offerings. And **Moses and Aaron went into the tent of meeting**, and when they came out they blessed the people, and **the glory of the LORD appeared to all**

¹⁹ מִשְׁפָּט - mishpat, is often poorly translated “judgement” (so ESV), but in this context, “justice” is closer to the actual meaning.

the people. And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the pieces of fat on the altar, and when all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces. (Leviticus 9:22-24 ESV)

This service demonstrated the pattern for subsequent services. Aaron had to offer for himself first so that God would account him in a state of holiness, then he could offer for the people to make atonement for them. This was to be a constant reminder that anyone approaching YHWH had to be in a state of “holiness”. It is not stated what happened in the tent of meeting, but presumably there was some communication from YHWH with Moses and Aaron. After the blessing from Aaron the people responded joyously to the manifestation of YHWH’s pleasure.

4. The Covenant with Levi

The last prophetic book of the Old Testament, Malachi, contains the following statement:

And now, O priests, this command is for you. ... So shall you know that I have sent this command to you, that my covenant with Levi may stand, says the LORD of hosts. My covenant with him was one of life and peace, and I gave them to him. It was a covenant of fear, and he feared me. He stood in awe of my name. True instruction was in his mouth, and no wrong was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many from iniquity. For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. (Malachi 2:1, 4-7 ESV)

Ezekiel prophesizes of the day when the Levitical Priesthood will be restored:

But the Levitical priests ... who kept the charge of my sanctuary when the people of Israel went astray from me, shall come near to me to minister to me. And they shall stand before me ... They shall teach my people the difference between the holy and the common, and show them how to distinguish between the unclean and the clean. (Ezekiel 44:15, 23 ESV)

Ezekiel alludes to a very important passage in Leviticus:

You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean, and you are to teach the people of Israel all the statutes that the LORD has spoken to them by Moses. (Leviticus 10:10-11 ESV)

Teaching and instructing people was integral to the role of a priest under the Aaronic Priesthood. The responsibility was shared among all the tribe of Levi. But what exactly was the “covenant with Levi”? During the Exodus event in lieu of killing the firstborn of Israel, YHWH claimed for himself all the firstborn of Israel:

The LORD said to Moses, “Consecrate to me all the firstborn. Whatever is the first to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast, is mine.” ... When the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, as he swore to you and your fathers, and shall give it to you, you shall set apart to the LORD all that first opens the womb. ... Every firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem. And when in time to come your son asks you, ‘What does this mean?’ you shall say to him, ‘By a strong hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery. For when Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of animals. Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all the males that first open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.’²⁰ (Exodus 13:1-2, 11-15 ESV)

At Horeb, after the Tabernacle was constructed, the Israelites were about to set off on the march. YHWH made a change in his claim to the firstborn. He substituted the Tribe of Levi so that they could provide fulltime service to the Tabernacle:

Thus you shall separate the Levites from among the people of Israel, and the Levites shall be mine. And after that the Levites shall go in to serve at the tent of meeting, when you have cleansed them and offered them as a wave offering. For they are wholly given to me from among the people of Israel. Instead of all who open the womb, the firstborn of all the people of Israel, I have taken them for myself. For all the firstborn among the people of Israel are mine, both of man and of beast. On the day that I

²⁰ See also Exodus 22:29, 34:19-20, Numbers 18:15, Luke 2:23

struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I consecrated them for myself, and **I have taken the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the people of Israel.**²¹ (Numbers 8:14-18 ESV)

As part of the arrangement, the Levites were given to Aaron, who was responsible for the Tabernacle. Aaron and his sons were to deal with all the Holy Things: the tent and its contents and the altar. The rest of the Levites were to guard the court of the Tabernacle and to transport it when Israel was on the march:

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, **“Bring the tribe of Levi near, and set them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister to him.** They shall keep guard over him and over the whole congregation before the tent of meeting, as they minister at the tabernacle. They shall guard all the furnishings of the tent of meeting, and keep guard over the people of Israel as they minister at the tabernacle. And you shall **give the Levites to Aaron and his sons;** they are wholly given to him from among the people of Israel.²² (Numbers 3:5-9 ESV)

The tribe of Levi was to be given no portion of the promised land. Instead, due to their commitment of fulltime service to the Tabernacle, they were assigned all tithes of agricultural production:

To the Levites I have given every tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service that they do, their service in the tent of meeting, so that the people of Israel do not come near the tent of meeting, lest they bear sin and die. But the Levites shall do the service of the tent of meeting, and they shall bear their iniquity. It shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations, and among the people of Israel **they shall have no inheritance.** For the tithe of the people of Israel, which they present as a contribution to the LORD, I have given to the Levites for an inheritance. Therefore I have said of them that they shall have no inheritance among the people of Israel.”²³ (Numbers 18:21-24 ESV)

The covenant with Levi:

- Included both the Aaronic Priests and the rest of the Tribe of Levi,
- Service was the focus of the covenant: the Aaronic Priests served in the Holy things and the rest of the Levites served in managing the tabernacle,
- **Teaching was a paramount duty of all the Priests and Levites.**

The role of teaching is exemplified during Moses’ final address to the people:

Then **Moses and the Levitical priests said to all Israel,** “Keep silence and hear, O Israel: this day you have become the people of the LORD your God.”²⁴ (Deuteronomy 27:9 ESV)

In **Moses’ blessing of the tribes,** he specifically focuses on Levi’s role in teaching:

And of Levi he said ...

They shall teach Jacob your [mish^apat] and Israel your [torah] (Deuteronomy 33:8, 10 ESV)

Moses uses two very important and broad reaching terms with regard to Levi’s teaching responsibilities. The fundamental meaning of *mish^apat* is **“justness” as an attribute of God’s divine nature.** From there, the range of meaning extends all “justice” in personal and community relationships – including the legal administration of justice. **“To be just” is a character attribute required by God of any person** ancient or modern who would consider himself a true worshipper. The word *torah* means “teaching”, “instruction”, or “direction”. **The Ten Commandments are the basis of God’s torah.** The Pentateuch and in fact the whole Bible, especially the New Testament, are an elaboration of the Ten Commandments. **The torah teaches the way to live – the way to peace, prosperity, and freedom.**

5. Israel as an Example Nation

God held out to Ancient Israel the opportunity to be an example nation to bring other nations into the true worship of the True God. Israel failed miserably as documented by the prophet Isaiah as part of the preface to the compilation of his prophecies:

Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the LORD has spoken:

“Children have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me.

The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master’s crib,

²¹ See also Numbers 3:40-51 for the mechanics of the separation.

²² See also Numbers 1:47-53, 4:1-49, 8:19, 18:1-7, Deuteronomy 10:8-9

²³ See Numbers 18:1-20, 25-32 for a discussion of the remuneration for the Aaronic Priests.

²⁴ See also Nehemiah 8:2-9, Deuteronomy 31:9-11, 25-26, Jeremiah 18:18

but **Israel does not know, my people do not understand.**"

Ah, **sinful nation**, a people laden with iniquity,

offspring of evildoers, **children who deal corruptly!**

They have forsaken the LORD, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, **they are utterly estranged.**

(Isaiah 1:2-4 ESV)

In 539BC, with the fall of the city of Babylon to the Persians, Daniel observed the completion of the seventy years of Babylonian hegemony predicted by Jeremiah.²⁵ In hope of fulfillment of the prophecies of Jeremiah for a contemporary restoration,²⁶ Daniel then offered a prayer of repentance to YHWH on behalf of the nation:

Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the LORD my God and made confession, saying, "O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, **we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled**, turning aside from your commandments and [just instruction]²⁷. **We have not listened to your servants the prophets**, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. (Daniel 9:3-6 ESV)

"To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us open shame, as at this day, to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all Israel, those who are near and those who are far away, in all the lands to which you have driven them, because of **the treachery that they have committed against you**. To us, O LORD, belongs open shame, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against you. (Daniel 9:7-8 ESV)

"To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, for **we have rebelled against him and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God by walking in his [teachings]**, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. **All Israel has transgressed your [teaching] and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice**. And the curse and oath that are written in the [Teaching] of Moses the servant of God have been poured out upon us, because we have sinned against him. He has confirmed his words, which he spoke against us and against our rulers who ruled us, by bringing upon us a great calamity. (Daniel 9:9-12a ESV)

"For under the whole heaven there has not been done anything like what has been done against Jerusalem. As it is written in the [Teaching] of Moses, all this calamity has come upon us; **yet we have not entreated the favor of the LORD our God, turning from our iniquities and gaining insight by your truth**. Therefore the LORD has kept ready the calamity and has brought it upon us, for the LORD our God is righteous in all the works that he has done, and **we have not obeyed his voice**. And now, O Lord our God, who brought your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and have made a name for yourself, as at this day, **we have sinned, we have done wickedly**.²⁸ (Daniel 9:12b-15 ESV)

So, the nation of Ancient Israel was destroyed for its acknowledged failure to live up to God's requirement that it be a holy nation as an example to the other nations of the world. **Yet there are many prophecies of Israel actually fulfilling this requirement:**

It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and it shall be lifted up above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it, and many nations shall come, and say:

"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths."

For **out of Zion shall go forth the [teaching], and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem**.

He shall judge between many peoples, and shall decide disputes for strong nations far away; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore;

²⁵ Jeremiah 25:11-12, 29:10a

²⁶ Jeremiah 24:4-7, 27:21-22, 29:10b, 32:42-44

²⁷ mish'pat here applies to the instruction on God's way specifically in the Pentateuch, but generally the whole Bible.

²⁸ Through Daniel's other revelations, he was in a position to know that the contemporary restoration was critical to the unfolding of the Plan of God leading to the establishment of the Kingdom of God. For a discussion of some of Daniel's revelations see "An Exegesis of Daniel 9:24-27 The Seventy Periods Prophecy" on www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

but they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid, **for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.** (Micah 4:1-4 ESV)

In that day **Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria**, a blessing in the midst of the earth, whom the LORD of hosts has blessed, saying, “Blessed be **Egypt my people**, and **Assyria the work of my hands**, and **Israel my inheritance.**” (Isaiah 19:24-25 ESV)

With the ancient nation gone, God clearly has a plan for a New Nation of Israel. This will be accomplished after the Second Advent through the Second Exodus:²⁹

Therefore, behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when it shall no longer be said, ‘As the LORD lives **who brought up the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt**,’ but ‘As the LORD lives **who brought up the people of Israel out of the north country and out of all the countries** where he had driven them.’ For I will bring them back to their own land that I gave to their fathers. (Jeremiah 16:14-15 ESV)

In that day **the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant that remains of his people**, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Cush, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea.

He will raise a signal for the nations and will **assemble** the banished of Israel, and **gather** the dispersed of Judah **from the four corners of the earth.** (Isaiah 11:11-12 ESV)

The New Israel will be comprised of converted individual, who have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit – the continuation of the New Testament Church.³⁰ New Israel will be God’s holy nation to set an example for the other nations of the earth:

But now hear, O **Jacob my servant, Israel whom I have chosen!**
Thus says the LORD who made you, who formed you from the womb and will help you:
Fear not, **O Jacob my servant, Jeshurun whom I have chosen.**
For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground;
I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.
They shall spring up among the grass like willows by flowing streams.
This one will say, ‘I am the LORD’s,’ another will call on the name of Jacob,
and another will write on his hand, ‘The LORD’s,’ and name himself by the name of Israel.”
(Isaiah 44:1-5 ESV)

Through the New Israel the nations of the world will learn of the righteous ways of the True God:

In the path of your [justness],³¹ O LORD, we wait for you;
your name and remembrance are the desire of our [life].
My [heart] yearns for you in the night; my spirit within me earnestly seeks you.
For when your [just decrees]³² are in the earth, **the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.**
(Isaiah 26:8-9 ESV)

The New Israel will be a holy nation and a nation of priests:

... but you shall be called the **priests of the LORD**; they shall speak of you as the ministers of our God;
(Isaiah 61:6a ESV)
And they shall be called **The Holy People**, The Redeemed of the LORD; (Isaiah 62:12a ESV)

6. Holiness

The concept of “holiness” is discussed throughout the Bible, but it is the entire focus of the Book of Leviticus.³³ To understand “holiness”, one needs to be familiar with the Book of Leviticus. For commentaries, I recommend Keil and Delitzsch, and Wenham (see Bibliography). For the purpose of this paper, I will survey the Book of Leviticus pointing out certain specific features related to “holiness”.

²⁹ For more scriptures on this topic see “The Remnant & Second Exodus” on www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

³⁰ Jeremiah 31:31-34, 32:37-41, Ezekiel 11:17-21, 36:24-29a

³¹ mish’pat – here meaning an attribute of God’s nature

³² mish’pat – here meaning the teaching of God

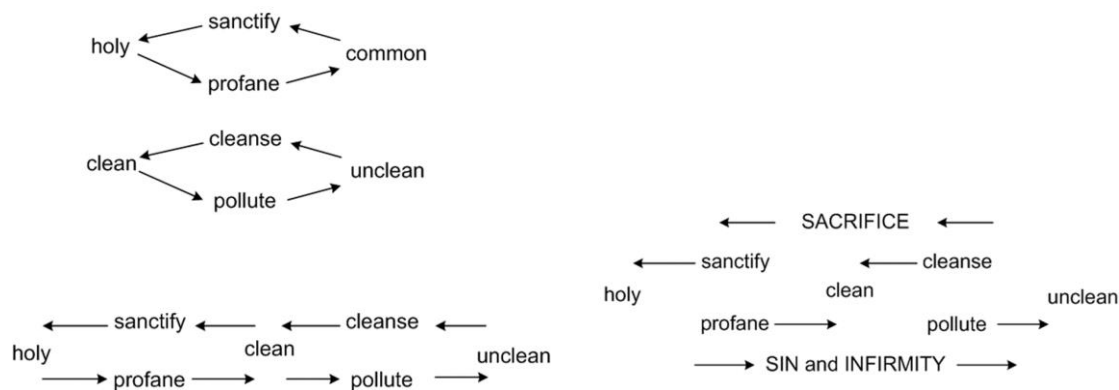
³³ See Appendix 2 for an outline of the Book of Leviticus.

6.1 Only God Can Make Anything “Holy”

Axioms on “holiness”:

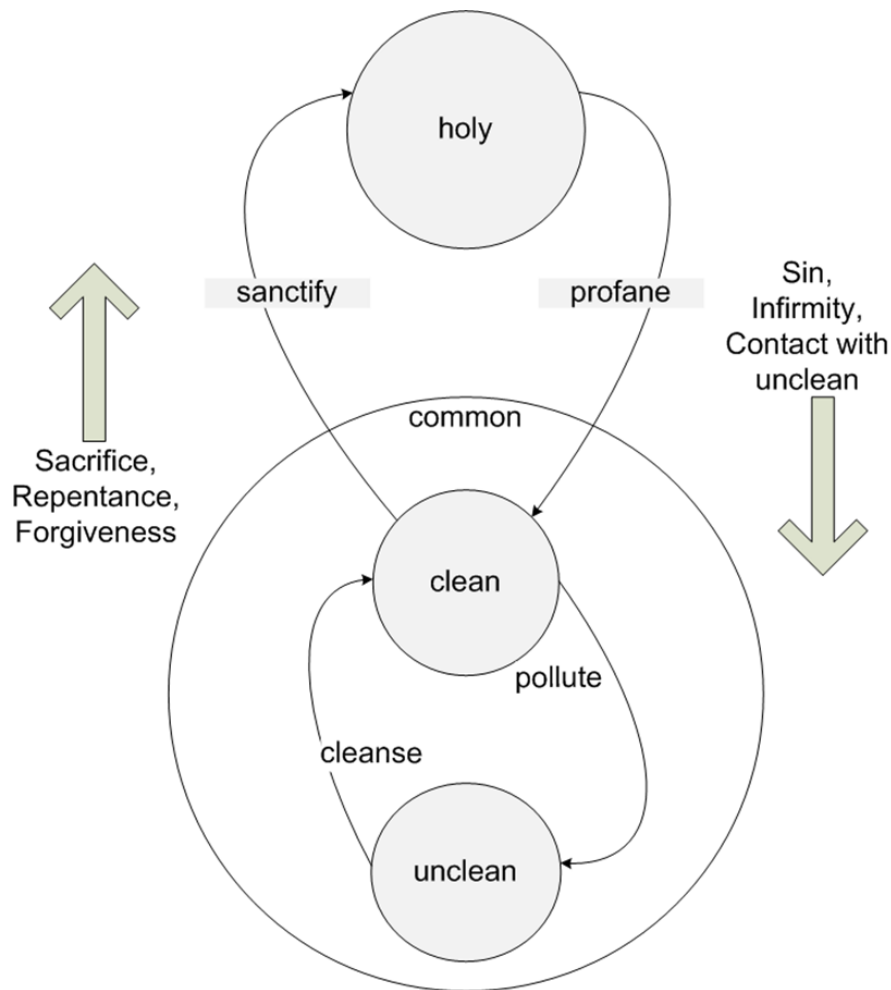
- All things that are NOT holy are “common”.
- The process of making something “common” into something “holy” is called “sanctification”.
- Something “holy” can be reduced again to “common” by being “profaned”.
- Things that are “common” can be “clean” or “unclean”.
- No “unclean” thing can be “sanctified”.
- Some “unclean” things can be “cleansed” and made “clean”.
- Any “clean” thing can be “polluted” and made “unclean”.
- Animal sacrifice served to take a person from an “unclean” state to a “clean” state, and to “sanctify” a person who is “clean”.
- Sin and infirmity profane a person who is “holy” and render a “clean” person “unclean”.
- Most importantly, no “unclean” thing can come in contact with something that is “holy”.

The following diagrams, taken from Wenham,³⁴ summarize these concepts:



³⁴ Pages 19 and 26

The following diagram combines these concepts:



Leviticus 10:10 "You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the clean and the unclean."

6.2 The Book of Leviticus

The Book of Exodus closes with the glory of YHWH, the "*k^ebod*", filling the Tabernacle:

Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and **the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle**. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and **the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle**. (Exodus 40:34-35 ESV)

The Book of Leviticus commences with YHWH speaking to Moses within the Tent of Meeting:

The **LORD called Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting**, saying, "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, 'When any one of you brings an offering to the LORD, you shall bring your offering of livestock from the herd or from the flock'. (Leviticus 1:1-2 ESV)

The Book of Leviticus³⁵ contains the instructions on performing the five main types of sacrifice. There are two parts to the instruction, Leviticus 1:3 through 6:7 provide instruction on giving the sacrifices; Leviticus 6:8 through 7:38 contain instructions for the priests in performing the sacrifices. It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the details of the sacrifices.³⁶ The instructions for performing sacrifices were necessary so that Aaron and his sons could perform the consecration ceremony and the first public worship.³⁷

³⁵ See Appendix 2 for an outline of Leviticus

³⁶ See Wenham pages 47-128, or KD1 pages 499-542, see also *Excursus 6 – Terminology of Sacrifices*, in the paper "**True Worship of the True God**" located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

³⁷ These instructions were probably given to Moses in the temporary Tent of Meeting during the construction of the Tabernacle. The instructions for the ordination ceremony in Exodus 29 assume knowledge of the five main sacrifices.

Leviticus chapter eight describes the consecration ceremony. The instructions for the ceremony were given to Moses in Exodus chapter twenty-nine. The term “consecrate” means to commission for holy service. It was a public ceremony:

The **LORD spoke to Moses**, saying, “Take Aaron and his sons with him, and the garments and the anointing oil and ... **assemble all the congregation** at the entrance of the tent of meeting.” And Moses did as the LORD commanded him, and the congregation was assembled at the entrance of the tent of meeting. And **Moses said to the congregation**, “This is the thing that the LORD has commanded to be done. ... (Leviticus 8:1-5 ESV)

The people would be outside the fence of the Tabernacle facing the entrance which would be open so they could see into the courtyard. Aaron and his sons were “washed with water” to render them “clean” (verse 6); then they were dressed in their official garments; then Moses used the official anointing oil to anoint them. The Tabernacle and all its furniture were similarly anointed to commission them for service (verses 10-13). The Tabernacle had already been rendered “holy” by the presence of YHWH. Moses as the mediator was also in a state of “holiness”. Moses then offered a sin offering and a burnt offering to bring Aaron and his sons to a state of “holiness” (verses 14-21). Aaron and his sons could then be “ordained” as priests – this was accomplished by the sacrifice of a ram (verses 22-30). After this Aaron and his sons were able to function as priests and Moses left them to continue the ceremony for seven days (verse 31-36).

This event is described in such great detail to demonstrate the nature of “holiness”. Aaron and his sons had to be “clean” before they could be sanctified. The process of sanctification was very specific and was given to Moses by God. Only when they were in a state of “holiness” could Aaron and his sons touch any part of the Tabernacle which had been made holy by the presence of God.

We have already discussed the first public worship service at the Tabernacle which is recounted in Leviticus chapter nine. Leviticus chapter ten then provides **an object lesson** of what happens when the “unclean” comes in contact with the “holy”. Two of Aaron’s sons, Nadab and Abihu, attempted to go into the Tent of Meeting without authorization and they were immediately struck dead:

Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, **each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the LORD**, which he had not commanded them. And **fire came out from before the LORD and consumed them**, and they died before the LORD. (Leviticus 10:1-2 ESV)

The lesson to be learned is clearly stated:

Then Moses said to Aaron, “This is what the LORD has said: ‘**Among those who are near me I will be sanctified**, and before all the people I will be glorified.’” (Leviticus 10:3 ESV)

God allowed no tolerance for error by Aaron and his sons. The only provision for the priests to take a censer of incense into the Tent of Meeting is for Day of Atonement, and then only for the High Priest. Clearly Nadab and Abihu were attempting an innovation. They clearly had not performed any prescribed sacrifice to sanctify themselves. It is possible they were drunk:

And the LORD spoke to Aaron, saying, “**Drink no wine or strong drink, you or your sons with you, when you go into the tent of meeting, lest you die**. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations. **You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean** ... (Leviticus 10:8-10 ESV)

The story flow of the events recounted in Leviticus picks up in chapter sixteen with the instruction for the Day of Atonement. This is clearly linked to the deaths of Nadab and Abihu:

The LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they drew near before the LORD and died, and the LORD said to Moses, “Tell Aaron your brother **not to come at any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the mercy seat that is on the ark, so that he may not die**. For I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat. But **in this way Aaron shall come into the Holy Place** ... (Leviticus 16:1-3 ESV)

The intervening chapters contain instruction on physical cleanliness. Physical cleanliness is a prerequisite to sanctification. **Chapter eleven** provides instruction on which animals are designed to be eaten and which are not. The purpose of avoiding unclean food is summarized:

You shall not make yourselves detestable with any swarming thing that swarms, and **you shall not defile yourselves with them, and become unclean** through them. For **I am the LORD your God**. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and **be holy, for I am holy**. **You shall not defile yourselves** with any swarming thing that crawls on the ground. For **I am the LORD** who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. You shall therefore **be holy, for I am holy**.” (Leviticus 11:43-45 ESV)

Chapter twelve discusses cleanliness after childbirth. **Chapter thirteen** discusses “leprosy” as an example of infectious diseases. **Chapter fourteen** discusses cleansing from infectious diseases again with the example of “leprosy”. **Chapter fifteen** deals with bodily discharges ending with the following injunction:

“Thus you shall **keep the people of Israel separate from their uncleanness, lest they die in their uncleanness by defiling my tabernacle** that is in their midst.” (Leviticus 15:31 ESV)

Under the Old Covenant, the Day of Atonement was the high point of the year from the perspective of the Aaronic Priesthood. **The ceremony of the Day of Atonement** was unique. The purpose of the ceremony was to demonstrate the inherent sinfulness of human nature and the need for God’s grace to provide sanctification, to bring the people to a state of holiness. This is demonstrated by the focus on cleansing the Tabernacle due to its association with the people:

Thus he shall **make atonement for the Holy Place**, because of **the uncleannesses of the people of Israel** and because of **their transgressions, all their sins**. And so **he shall do for the tent of meeting, which dwells with them in the midst of their uncleanness**. ... Then he shall go out to **the altar that is before the LORD** and **make atonement for it** ... and **cleanse it** and **consecrate it** from the **uncleannesses of the people of Israel**. (Leviticus 16:16, 18-19 ESV)

The Day of Atonement is the one day of the year upon which the High Priest was able to enter the Most Holy Place. Before entering specific sacrifices were required to bring the High Priest to a state of holiness. Upon entering a censer of incense was required to fill the Most Holy Place with fragrance:

But **in this way Aaron shall come into the Holy Place**: with a **bull** from the herd for a **sin offering** and a **ram** for a **burnt offering**. ... Aaron shall present the bull as a **sin offering for himself**, and shall **make atonement for himself and for his house**. He shall kill the bull as a sin offering for himself. And he shall take a **censer full of coals** of fire from the altar before the LORD, and **two handfuls of sweet incense**³⁸ beaten small, and he shall bring it inside the veil and **put the incense on the fire before the LORD**, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is over the testimony, **so that he does not die**. And he shall take some of the **blood of the bull** and sprinkle it with his finger **on the front of the mercy seat** ... (Leviticus 16:3, 11-14 ESV)

Previously **two goats had been selected as the sin offering for the people**. The first goat was to be slaughtered as a sin offering for the people to make atonement for their sins. This demonstrates that the individual offerings made by the people throughout the year for their sins, although necessary, were NOT sufficient. The yearly collective offering on the Day of Atonement was to remind the people of their inherent state of sinfulness:

And he shall take from the congregation of the people of Israel **two male goats for a sin offering** ... Then he shall **kill the goat of the sin offering that is for the people** and **bring its blood inside the veil** and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, sprinkling it over the mercy seat and in front of the mercy seat. ... Then he shall go out to the altar that is before the LORD and make atonement for it, and shall take some of the **blood of the bull and some of the blood of the goat**, and put it on the horns of the altar all around. (Leviticus 16:5, 15, 18 ESV)

Two goats are identified for the “sin offering”. Only one is killed – its blood is presented in the Most Holy Place, and some of its blood is used with the blood of the bull for Aaron to make atonement for the bronze altar. But, **what of the other goat**, which is also a “sin offering”? After the blood of the slaughtered goat is dispositioned, the “live goat” is burdened with the sins of the people and released:

And **when he has made an end of atoning** for the Holy Place and the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall **present the live goat**. And **Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat**, and **confess over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins**. And he shall put them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who is in

³⁸ “incense” is a type of “prayer” Revelation 5:8

readiness. The **goat shall bear all their iniquities** on itself to a remote area, and he shall let the goat go free in the wilderness. (Leviticus 16:20-22 ESV)

The live goat carries away the responsibility for the sins of the people. Although human nature makes us susceptible to sin, it is actually Satan the Devil that is the author of sin.³⁹ The treatment of the “live goat” reflects the fact that Satan will ultimately be convicted of his role in human sin.⁴⁰ Under the New Covenant, the New Testament Passover has superseded the Day of Atonement as the most important memorial. The goat for the sin offering which is killed is clearly typical of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to pay for the sins of humanity.⁴¹

Chapters seventeen through twenty of Leviticus contain specific **instructions for the people on holiness**. **Chapter seventeen** contains instruction for dealing with animal blood. Verses 1 through 8 deal with the slaughter of domestic animals for food. During the wilderness sojourn, any such animal was to be offered as a “peace offering” at the Tabernacle. Once the Israelites passed into promised land, slaughter was allowed in any location.⁴² Verses 9 through 14 deal with relationship of life to blood:⁴³

... **I will set my face against that person who eats blood** and will cut him off from among his people. For **the life of the flesh is in the blood**, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your [lives], for **it is the blood that makes atonement by the life**. ... “Any one also of the people of Israel, or of the strangers who sojourn among them, who takes in hunting any beast or bird that may be eaten shall pour out its blood and cover it with earth. **For the life of every creature is its blood: its blood is its life**. Therefore I have said to the people of Israel, **You shall not eat the blood of any creature, for the life of every creature is its blood. Whoever eats it shall be cut off**. (Leviticus 17:10b-14 ESV)

Chapter eighteen begins with a motivational statement on holiness :

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, **I am the LORD your God**. You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you lived, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you. You shall not walk in their statutes. **You shall follow my just decrees and keep my statutes and walk in them**. **I am the LORD your God**. You shall therefore keep my statutes and my just decrees; **if a person does them, he shall live by them**: I am the LORD. (Leviticus 18:1-5 ESV)

Chapter eighteen then goes on to discuss proper sexual relationships emphasizing that the family is the basis of a stable society. **Chapter nineteen** contains an elaboration of the ten commandments. The first five commandments are linked to the proper use of the “peace offering”. They are explicitly co-joined with “you shall be holy, for I YHWH your God am holy” (verses 1 through 8). Verses 9 through 18 elaborate the last five commandments and end with “you shall love your neighbour as yourself; I am YHWH.” **Chapter twenty** deals with abhorrent pagan practices: child sacrifice (verses 5), the occult (verses 6-9, 27), deviant sexual relationships (verse 10-21), and ends with a general exhortation:

And **you shall not walk in the customs of the nation** that I am driving out before you, for they did all these things, and therefore I detested them. ... **You shall be holy to me, for I the LORD am holy** and have **separated you from the peoples**, that you should be mine. (Leviticus 20:23, 26 ESV)

Chapters twenty-one and twenty-two contains **instructions specific to the priests on holiness**. **Chapter twenty-one** verses 1 through 15 deal with family relationships and verses 16 through 23 deal with physical deformities that preclude priests from active service. All this is predicated on the following:

... **the priest is holy to his God**. You shall sanctify him, for he offers the bread of your God. **He shall be holy to you, for I, the LORD, who sanctify you, am holy**. (Leviticus 21:7b-8 ESV)

Chapter twenty-two deals with priestly aspects of offerings: verse 1-9, respect for the people’s offerings; verses 10-16, provision for priests’ families; verses 17-30, acceptable use of animals. The whole section is terminated by:

³⁹ See, for example, Revelation 12:9, 2 Thessalonians 2:9, 2 Corinthians 2:11, 11:14, Mark 1:13, Luke 22:31, Acts 5:3, 26:18

⁴⁰ See Revelation 20:1-3

⁴¹ Note that on the Day of Atonement Aaron did NOT wear his normal garment. He wore a pure white linen garment prefiguring the spiritual holiness of Jesus’ sacrifice. See Leviticus 16:4, Matthew 28:3, 22:11, Revelation 9:8, 14

⁴² See Deuteronomy 12:15

⁴³ This looks back to the “eternal covenant” in Genesis 8:20-9:17.

So **you shall keep my commandments and do them**: I am the LORD. And **you shall not profane my holy name**, that I may be sanctified among the people of Israel. **I am the LORD who sanctifies you**, who brought you out of the land of Egypt **to be your God: I am the LORD.**" (Leviticus 22:31-33 ESV)

The emphasis of the instruction so far has been "individual" holiness – what each person must do to be considered holy by God. The **emphasis now shifts to "communal" holiness** – what is required of believers as a group to be considered holy by God. **Chapter twenty-three** deals with "holy days" – periods of time which God has made holy. They are collectively called מועדי יהוה - mo'ade YHWH, "appointed times of YHWH". Each of them is designated מקרא קודש - miqra' qodesh, "assembly of holiness" – these are the acceptable times to worship God. There are three types of holy days:

1. The weekly Sabbath: שַׁבָּת - shabbath, the seventh day of the week:

Six days shall work be done, but **on the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation**. You shall do no work. **It is a Sabbath to the LORD** in all your dwelling places. (Leviticus 23:2 ESV)

The Sabbath was instituted at creation:

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And **on the seventh day God finished his work** that he had done, and **he rested on the seventh day** from all his work that he had done. So **God blessed the seventh day and made it holy**, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation. (Genesis 2:1-3 ESV)

The Sabbath was reiterated at Sinai:

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but **the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God**. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the **LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy**. (Exodus 20:8-11 ESV)

The references to the importance of the Sabbath throughout the Old Testament are too numerous to cite. Jesus kept the Sabbath.⁴⁴ The apostles kept the Sabbath.⁴⁵ The early Church kept the Sabbath.⁴⁶ The desecration of the Sabbath is one of the greatest lies of the false church. **Only God can make anything holy. God made the seventh day holy** – no other day can be made holy or observed as holy at man's discretion. Observance of the Sabbath is the foundation from which all understanding of the mind of God and the Plan of God is derived.⁴⁷

2. The Feasts: חג - hag, there are three feasts:

- Feast of Unleavened Bread, חַג הַמַּצּוֹת - hag hammatzot, "feast of the unleavened bread" (Leviticus 23:6-8)
- Feast of Harvest of First Fruits, חַג הַקִּצִּיר בְּכוֹרֵי מַעֲשֵׂיךָ - w'hag haqqatzir bikure ma'aseka, "the feast of harvest of the firstfruits of the labours of you" (Exodus 23:16, Leviticus 23:15-22)
- Feast of Tabernacles, חַג הַסֻּכּוֹת - hag hassukoth, "feast of the tabernacles", or "feast of booths" (Leviticus 23:33-36a, 39-43)

3. Appointed Times: מועדי - mo'ade, "appointed times", Passover (Leviticus 23:5), Day of Trumpets (Leviticus 23:24-25), Day of Atonement (Leviticus 23:27-32), The Eighth Day (Leviticus 23:36b)

These days are made holy by God. The observance of these days is required by God of anyone who is to be made holy by God. The observance of humanly designated days, in place of these days, is an abomination and an affront to God.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ See Mark 1:21, 2:28, 6:2, Matthew 12:8, Luke 4:16, 31, 6:5, 6, 13:10, 14:1

⁴⁵ See Mark 2:23-27, Matthew 12:1-8, Luke 6:1-2, Acts 13:14, 42, 44, 16:13, 17:2, 18:4

⁴⁶ See Mark 15:42, 16:1, Matthew 24:20, 28:1, Luke 23:54, 56, Colossians 2:16, Hebrews 4:9

⁴⁷ See Isaiah 58:1-2, 13-14, 56:1-2, 66:22-23

⁴⁸ See *Excursus 3 – The Holy Days of Leviticus Chapter Twenty-three* for analysis of description of the Holy Days.

Chapter twenty-four deals with some housekeeping details for the Tabernacle and with justice. Verses 1-4 are instructions for the provision of oil for the lamp. Verses 5-9 are instructions for the provision and disposition of the show bread. Verses 10-16 describe an incident of blasphemy, and verses 17-23 describe *lex talionis*. The principle of *lex talionis* is that the punishment should fit the crime. Literal application is not required. The relationship of the blasphemy to *lex talionis* is that effrontery to God is the most significant crime possible within a holy community. At God's direction, the application of capital punishment was required.

Chapter twenty-five deals with measures that provide for ongoing societal stability. The land-sabbath is designed to ensure the ongoing productivity of the land. The jubilee year mitigates against generational poverty. The instructions for "slaves" are contingent on the jubilee year to prevent permanent lack of freedom. **Chapter twenty-six** is the final component of the provisions of the Sinai Covenant. Verse 3-13 contain a specification of the blessings to accrue from obedience to the covenant. Verses 14-45 describe the curses to result from disobedience. **Chapter twenty-seven** contains instruction on making vows and living up to them – the importance of keeping commitments.⁴⁹ This material is included last in the book to remind the people of Israel of their freely given commitment to live by the Sinai Covenant.

7. The New Testament Church

The prophet Isaiah characterized the relationship between YHWH and Israel as a community called the "Servant" where YHWH was the Head of the Servant and Israel the body.⁵⁰ The ancient nation of Israel was clearly recognized as YHWH's servant:

But you, **Israel, my servant, Jacob**, whom I have chosen,
the **offspring of Abraham**, my friend;
you whom I took from the ends of the earth,
and called from its farthest corners,
saying to you, "**You are my servant**, I have chosen you and not cast you off" (Isaiah 41:8-9 ESV)

YHWH clearly gave the ancient nation of Israel the opportunity to fulfill the relationship. Ancient Israel failed to live up to its role as the servant:

Hear, you deaf, and look, you blind, that you may see!
Who is blind but my servant, or deaf as my messenger whom I send?
Who is blind as my dedicated one, or **blind as the servant of the LORD**?
He sees many things, but **does not observe them**; his ears are open, but **he does not hear**.
Who gave up Jacob to the looter, and Israel to the plunderers?
Was it not the **LORD, against whom we have sinned**,
in whose ways they would not walk, and whose [instruction] they would not obey?
(Isaiah 42:18-20, 24 ESV)

However, there was always a faithful remnant in Israel with whom YHWH continued to work:

Listen to me, **you who pursue righteousness, you who seek the LORD**:
Give attention to me, **my people**, and give ear to me, **my nation**;
My righteousness draws near, **my salvation has gone out**,
and my arms will judge the peoples;
the coastlands hope for me, and for my arm they wait. (Isaiah 51:1a, 4a, 5 ESV)

Because of Israel's failure, the Servant Songs go on to prophesize the transition of the Servant from Israel to the New Testament Church. YHWH remains head of the new servant in his role as Messiah, Jesus Christ. The body of the servant, the New Testament Church, now comprises converted individuals, a spiritual Israel:

Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my [mind] delights;⁵¹
I have put my Spirit upon him; **he will bring forth justice to the nations**.
He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street;
a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench;

⁴⁹ See Matthew 5:33-37, James 5:12

⁵⁰ See the five Servant Songs: Isaiah 42:1-9, 49:1-7, 50:4-9, 52:13-53:12, 61:1-4

⁵¹ This passage is quoted in Matthew 12:17-21 specifically designating it as a prophecy fulfilled by Jesus.

he will faithfully bring forth justice.

He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth;
and **the coastlands wait for his [teaching].** (Isaiah 42:1-4 ESV)

... he [Father] put all things under his [Christ] feet and gave him as **head over all things to the church, which is his body** ... So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and **members of the household of God** ... Rather, speaking the truth in love, **we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,** from whom **the whole body,** joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. ... **Christ is the head of the church, his body** ... (Ephesians 1:22-23, 2:19, 4:15-16, 5:23b ESV)⁵²

For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly ... and physical. But **a Jew is one inwardly ... by the Spirit** ... (Romans 2:28-29 ESV)

But the **Jerusalem above** is free, and she **is our mother.** (Galatians 4:26 ESV)

But you have come to Mount Zion and to **the city of the living God,** the **heavenly Jerusalem,** and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to **the assembly of the firstborn** who are enrolled in heaven, and to God ... (Hebrews 12:22-23 ESV)

Jesus inaugurated the New Covenant with the first New Testament Passover.⁵³ The Old Covenant terminated at Jesus' death.⁵⁴ The New Testament Church was inaugurated at the first Christian Pentecost.⁵⁵ Jesus had given the apostles the commission to preach the gospel in all the world.⁵⁶ He had previously made the prophecy that preaching of the gospel in all the world as a testimony would precede the Second Advent.⁵⁷ The apostles were commissioned to teach Christians God's way, to prepare them to be members of the Kingdom of God.⁵⁸ This the purpose of the New Testament Church.

The history of the True Church is well documented. The New Testament documents clearly record the beginnings of the corruption which Satan was sowing into the Church.⁵⁹ During the second century, the false church, Satan's church, attained full control over the "visible church", at least in the Western Roman Empire. Vestiges of the True Church remained visible in the Eastern Empire at least until the Council of Nicaea in the fourth century. The True Church has continued to proclaim the true gospel throughout the centuries, though persecuted by the false church and usually remaining incognito. Today, the Gospel of the Kingdom is freely available from many sources. This will end when the Beast Power gains hegemony over Western Civilisation.⁶⁰ This will lead quickly to the Second Advent, the first resurrection, and the inauguration of the Kingdom of God. At that time, all the saints from Abel down to "we who are left alive, who are left",⁶¹ who have been granted the gift of eternal life, will assume their roles as **"priests of God and of Christ"**.

8. The Role of a Priest

In the section **3. The Intercessory Role of the Aaronic Priesthood** we saw that the role of a priest is to be an **intercessor.** Because human beings are inherently prone to sin, we are inherently "unclean". Nothing that is "unclean" can come into contact with anything that is "holy". **God is inherently Holy.** In ancient Israel, animal sacrifices were offered by the priesthood to expiate the sins of the people and sanctify them so they could approach the Holy God as his people. The priesthood had also to present sacrifices on their own behalf so that God would account them holy as they served in the Tabernacle.

⁵² See also 1 Corinthians 12:12-31, Colossians 1:18, 24, 2:19. James and Peter both use "Israel" as a metaphor for the Church: James 1:1, 1 Peter 1:1

⁵³ See Mark 14:22-25, Matthew 26:26-29, Luke 22:14-20, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

⁵⁴ See Hebrews 9:15-17

⁵⁵ See Acts 2:1-40

⁵⁶ See Mark 16:15-18, Matthew 28:16-20, Luke 24:45-48

⁵⁷ See Mark 13:10, Matthew 14:24

⁵⁸ See John 21:15-17

⁵⁹ See 'The Mystery of Iniquity' on www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

⁶⁰ See Daniel 7:21, 25, 8:24-25, 9:26-27, 12:7, Mark 13:9-13, Matthew 24:9-14, Luke 21:12-19, Revelation 6:11, 13:5, 7, 15, 16:6, 17:6, 18:24.

⁶¹ See 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Jesus Christ offered himself once for all as a sacrifice which can truly bring forgiveness of sin.⁶² This sacrifice obviated the need for all animal sacrifices. A person called by God must repent of being a sinful human being and accept Jesus' sacrifice to cover all sins. This allows God in his grace to account a Christian as holy. Living in holiness requires avoidance of sin because sin defiles and renders the sinner unclean. To return to a state of holiness, a Christian must daily repent of all sin and come to God's presence through the blood of Jesus Christ.⁶³

Since the Ascension, Jesus Christ has returned to inhabit eternity with God the Father. His official position is at the right hand of God the Father serving as intercessor for Christians. He is our High Priest without whom no Christian could attain to the gift of God to be granted eternal life at the first resurrection. The Book of Hebrews explains this in detail, providing much insight into Jesus' role as intercessor and High Priest.

The Being who interacted with ancient Israel as YHWH is the same Being who gave up his status in eternity and became a human being as Jesus of Nazareth:

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days **he has spoken to us by his Son**, whom he appointed the heir of all things, **through whom also he created the world**. He is the radiance of the glory of God and **the exact imprint of his nature**, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. **After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high** ... (Hebrews 1:1-3 ESV)

In order for Jesus to be a perfect sacrifice, he had to experience life as a human being. Jesus was fully divine and fully human. He lived a sinless life, a life of holiness. As the Divine Creator, his life is worth more than all human lives combined. His death is a sufficient propitiation for all sin. Through his life as High Priest he is able to sanctify Christians as they repent:

... we see him ... namely **Jesus, crowned with glory and honor** because of the **suffering of death**, so that by the grace of God **he might taste death for everyone**. For it was fitting that he [the Father], for whom and by whom all things exist, in **bringing many sons to glory**, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. For **he [Christ] who sanctifies** and **those who are sanctified** all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers ... Therefore **he had to be made like his brothers in every respect**, so that he might become a **merciful and faithful high priest** in the service of God, to make **propitiation for the sins of the people**. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. (Hebrews 2:9-11, 17-18 ESV)

Jesus as mediator of the New Covenant is compared to Moses as the mediator of the Old Covenant. Christians under the blood of Christ remain holy through Jesus' role as High Priest. Moses was a faithful mediator, but Jesus' mediatorial role is of greater value. Moses was a servant, a slave; Jesus is a son. Christians, the New Testament Church, are God's house:

Therefore, **holy brothers**, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider **Jesus, the apostle and high priest** of our confession, who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as **Moses also was faithful** in all God's house. For **Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses**—as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. ... Now **Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant**,⁶⁴ to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, but **Christ is faithful over God's house as a son**. And **we are his house**, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope. (Hebrews 3:1-6 ESV)

Because Jesus is our Great High Priest, who lived a sinless life in perfect holiness, Christians are accounted holy by God so that we can approach the Holy God:

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 is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one **who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin**. Let us then **with confidence draw near to the throne of grace**, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:14-16 ESV)

⁶² See Hebrews 9:12, 24-26, 10:11-12

⁶³ See Hebrews 4:14-16, 10:19-22

⁶⁴ See Numbers 12:7

Jesus is compared to a human priest on two accounts: the human high priest must offer sacrifices for his own sins – Jesus being sinless, offered “prayers and supplications”; as the office of a human high priest was appointed by God’s authority – Jesus was also appointed High Priest by God the Father. Jesus’ humanity allowed him to suffer, through which he learned, and can, therefore, fulfill the High Priestly role as intercessor to bring eternal salvation to Christians:

For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since **he himself is beset with weakness**. Because of this **he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins** just as he does for those of the people. And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was. **So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest**, but was appointed by him who said to him,

“You are my Son, today I have begotten you”;⁶⁵

as he says also in another place,

“You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.”⁶⁶

In the days of his flesh, **Jesus offered up prayers and supplications**, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Although he was a son, **he learned obedience through what he suffered**. And being made perfect, **he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him**, being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.⁶⁷ (Hebrews 5:1-10 ESV)

The New Covenant priesthood of Jesus Christ is compared to the Old Covenant priesthood of men. Being subject to death, many human priests were required. Jesus holds his priesthood permanently. For Christians to “draw near to God”, we must be accounted “holy” by God – this can only happen through Jesus’ intercession as High Priest on our behalf. Human priests must repeatedly offer sacrifices for their own unholiness. Jesus offered his perfectly holy life once for all sins of all human beings. Yet his becoming a human being was necessary to make him a perfect High Priest for ever:

This makes **Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant**. The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, but **he holds his priesthood permanently**, because he continues forever. Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost **those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them**. For it was indeed fitting that we should have **such a high priest, holy**, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since **he did this once for all when he offered up himself**. For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints **a Son who has been made perfect forever**. (Hebrews 7:22-28 ESV)

The author of Hebrews continues the comparison of the Old Covenant with the New Covenant. Jesus as High Priest is in the truly Holy Place – the throne of God in eternity. Moses built a physical representation of God’s throne in the Tabernacle which was made Holy by God’s presence. The service at the Tabernacle could not truly result in forgiveness of sin – only through the blood of Jesus Christ can sin be forgiven. This is the better promise of the New Covenant which makes the physical sacrifices of the Old Covenant obsolete:

Now the point in what we are saying is this: **we have such a high priest**, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister **in the holy places, in the true tabernacle** that the Lord set up, not man. For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; thus it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. ... They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tabernacle, he was instructed by God, saying, “See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain.” But as it is, **Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises**. For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second. ... In speaking of **a new covenant**, he **makes the first one obsolete**. (Hebrews 8:1-7, 13 ESV)

⁶⁵ See Psalm 2:7

⁶⁶ See Psalm 110:4

⁶⁷ See “Excursus 2 – Melchizedek” for a discussion of the comparison of Jesus to Melchizedek.

Jesus has entered once for all into the throne of God by his own blood. This allows him to intercede for Christians that we may be saved “from dead works to serve the living God”:

But when **Christ appeared as a high priest** of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tabernacle (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) **he entered once for all into the holy places**, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but **by means of his own blood**, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, **how much more will the blood of Christ**, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, **purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God**. Therefore **he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance**, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant. ... For **Christ has entered**, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but **into heaven itself**, now **to appear in the presence of God on our behalf**. Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, **he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself**. (Hebrews 9:11-15, 24-26 ESV)

The author of Hebrews then goes on to compare the efficacy of the sacrifices prescribed in the Pentateuch with the efficacy of Jesus’ sacrifice. Animal sacrifice cannot expiate sin. Animal sacrifices fore-shadowed Jesus’ sacrifice. Only Christ’s sacrifice can remove the penalty for sin. Christ’s having been sacrificed, renders animal sacrifice obsolete. This was a very difficult concept for people for whom animal sacrifice was integral to their existence:

For since **the law has but a shadow of the good things to come** instead of the true form of these realities, **it can never**, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, **make perfect those who draw near**. ... But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year.⁶⁸ For **it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins**. Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said,

“Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure.

Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.’”⁶⁹

When he said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law), then he added, “Behold, I have come to do your will.” **He does away with the first in order to establish the second**. And by that will **we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all**. (Hebrews 10:1-10 ESV)

The Aaronic Priesthood repeatedly offered the same sacrifices, but Jesus offered himself once. Since then, he is waiting until the time is right to assume his position as King of kings. Because of this “those who are being sanctified”, Christians, are accounted holy by God; and, thus, can come in contact with God in full assurance of faith:

And **every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices**, which can never take away sins. But when **Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins**, he sat down at the right hand of God, **waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet**. For by a single offering **he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified**. ... Therefore, brothers, since **we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus**, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since **we have a great priest** over the house of God, **let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith**, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. (Hebrews 10:11-14, 19-22 ESV)

Christian faith is a gift from God – founded and perfected by Jesus through God’s calling. Jesus knew the joy to result from the start of the New Testament Church – this is why he was willing to endure his sacrifice. The inauguration of the New Covenant realized in the New Testament Church is the most critical step in fulfilling the Plan of God to offer salvation to each and every human being who has ever lived. Christ’s sacrifice makes this salvation possible:

... **Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross**, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. ... But you have come to

⁶⁸ This is an allusion to the Day of Atonement.

⁶⁹ This is based on the Septuagint translation of Psalm 40:6-8.

Mount Zion and to **the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem**, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to **the assembly of the firstborn** who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to **Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant** ... (Hebrews 12:2, 22-24 ESV)

9. The Priesthood of Christians

In the first resurrection, those human beings to whom God sees fit to grant the gift of eternal life will form a kingdom – the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God will finally bring peace, prosperity, freedom, and good government to the entire earth. Those individuals who are members of the Kingdom of God will go into all the world and bring the truth of God to all people. In doing this, they will function as “intercessors” between the people of the earth and God the Father and Jesus Christ the King of kings. **This is the role of a “priest”.**

God the Father will open the way to salvation for all people. Each and every person on the planet will be called to the Church. But “calling” requires a response. To respond to God’s calling requires understanding it. To understand God’s calling, people must be taught. God has been preparing individuals since Abel to do this teaching. Only God knows who will be in the first resurrection, but there will be a sufficient group of individuals to accomplish God’s purpose.

The importance of “teaching” cannot be overemphasized. The world today is characterized by lies. Many great lies in religion, in science, in history, in social relationships – in fact every aspect of modern living, are accepted the majority of people as truths. The survivors of the holocaust will have seen their entire world washed away – they will be receptive to true knowledge. The word of God is the foundation of all knowledge. This must be taught first of all. The religious confusion of people in the world today is enormous – it must be removed before people come to proper understanding of the way of God. Other lies can be, and must be, eradicated after that.

From Jesus’ example as our High Priest, we can deduce some of the qualities required of Christians to fulfil the role of a priest:

- Hebrews 1:3 says of Jesus that, “He is the radiance of the glory of God and the **exact imprint of his nature**”. This is required of Christians. Our life now is preparatory – we must come to understand God’s nature and strive to replace our sinful human nature with God’s divine nature. If God sees a reflection of his nature in us, it is possible he will transform us in the first resurrection.
- Participation in the first resurrection will render a Christian **truly Holy**. To be part of the God Family, **a Christian must be holy**. This is the ultimate promise upon which faith is based – it is the ultimate gift of God.
- Humility: Hebrews 5:5 says, “**Christ did not exalt himself** to be made a high priest”; Hebrews 5:8 says, “**he learned obedience** through what he suffered”. In preparation, we must truly learn humility as Jesus exemplified. We must be willing to always learn.
- Hebrews 10:1-10 is an example of the **difficulty in introducing people to new concepts**. As Christians we must become fully familiar with all aspects of the Plan of God as revealed in the Bible. This is the basis of the instruction people will require in the World Tomorrow. **To teach it, we must know it.**
- Confidence: Hebrews 10:19 says, “**we have confidence** to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus”. This can only come as a gift from God through the strength of the Holy Spirit. Knowing the Plan of God, a Christian requires this confidence to go forward and carry out God’s Plan.
- The people of the world who survive the holocaust will be shattered. Everything they know will have been destroyed. Most will have lost loved ones. Our first response to these people must be **mercy and compassion**. Hebrews 2:17 says of Jesus, “he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, **so that he might become a merciful ... high priest**”. Hebrews 4:15 again says of Jesus, “**we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses**, but

one who in every respect has been tempted as we are". These attributes of Jesus will be critical to help the people who survive.

- As a Christian, faith is one of the most important gifts from God – **"Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith"** (Hebrews 12:2). As members of the God Family, that faith will have become integral to our nature. As a human being Jesus had to grow in faith: Hebrews 2:17 says of Jesus, "he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, **so that he might become a ... faithful high priest**". Hebrews 3:6 says, **"Christ is faithful over God's house"** as a son. And we are his house" – in the World Tomorrow God's house will extend to the whole world. We will have to be faithful over that house.

Excursus 1 – Hebrew and Greek Words

The primary Hebrew word for "priest" is כֹּהֵן - kohen, a masculine noun. The underlying root of kohen is unknown; there is however a denominative verb כָּהַן - kahan, which means to "minister in a priests' office", "to act as a priest".⁷⁰ kohen can be used for a secular official position, but it is most often used for "... a minister of sacred things, especially sacrifice ...".⁷¹ Aaronic Priests' primary functions were to "... officiate at the new sanctuary ... pray on behalf of the people ... and teach"⁷² the *torah*. Another derived word, כַּהֲנָה - k^ehunnah, a feminine noun, is used for "priesthood".

Greek is more complicated – there are a number of words which pertain to the role of a priest. The most common word for "priest", ἱερεύς – hierēus, a masculine noun, occurs 31 times⁷³. It is derived from ἱερός – hieros, an adjective which means "holy", "sacred".⁷⁴ ἱερός occurs only in 1 Corinthians 9:13 and 2 Timothy 3:15. There are also several other words related to "priest" derived from ἱερός:

- ἱερατεία – hierateia, a feminine noun, is used for "priestly office" in Luke 1:9 and Hebrews 7:5
- ἱεράτευμα – hierateuma, a neuter noun, is used for "priesthood" in 1 Peter 2:5 and 2:9
- ἱερατεύω – hierateuō, a verb, means "serve as priest" in Luke 1:8
- ἱερούργεω – hierourgeō, a verb, means "serve as priest" in Romans 15:16
- ἱερωσύνη – hierōsynē, a feminine noun, means "priesthood" in Hebrews 7:11, 12, and 24

In addition to the above words, the word ἀρχιερεύς – archiereus, a masculine noun, is used for "chief priest", "high priest" on 119 occasions.

Excursus 2 – Melchizedek

The Book of Hebrews makes several tantalizing references to the shadowy figure, "Melchizedek". Melchizedek appears out of nowhere in Genesis chapter fourteen, which in itself is one of the most enigmatic chapters of the Bible. Genesis chapter fourteen recounts a raid by four kings⁷⁵ from Mesopotamia against a coalition of rebellious cities around the south end of the Dead Sea. Abram's nephew, Lot, was dwelling in Sodom at the time. He was taken captive, so Abram and some allies go after the raiding party. Lot is rescued, and on the way back Abram encounters Melchizedek:

After his return from the defeat of ... kings ... the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the **Valley of Shaveh** (that is, the King's Valley). And **Melchizedek king of Salem** brought out bread and wine. (He was **priest of God Most High.**) And he blessed him and said,

"Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth;
and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!"

And **Abram gave him a tenth of everything.** ... Abram said to the king of Sodom, "**I have lifted my hand to the LORD, God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth, that I would not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours** ..." (Genesis 14:17-23 ESV)

⁷⁰ See TWOT article 959 page 431

⁷¹ op. cit.

⁷² op. cit.

⁷³ See GEL page 372

⁷⁴ See TDNT III pages 221-265 for a thorough discussion of this group of words.

⁷⁵ Various attempts have been made to identify these kings; see, Hamilton pages 399-400, Rohl (EE) pages 118-120.

“Salem” is most likely used as an abbreviated form of Jerusalem. In Psalm 76:2⁷⁶ it is used in parallel with “Zion”. It may be an older name of the city. The full name, “Jerusalem”, is attested in several ancient texts.⁷⁷ “Salem” is from the root שָׁלֵם - shalem, meaning “to be complete”, “to be sound”.⁷⁸ שְׁלֹום - shalom, “peace” is derived from the same root. The root is also part of יְרוּשָׁלַיִם - yirushalaim, “Jerusalem”. The first component of “Jerusalem” is derived from the root יָרָה - yarah, meaning “to throw” or “to cast”. תּוֹרָה - torah, meaning “teaching”, “instruction”, “direction” is derived from the same root. This would give “Jerusalem” a meaning like “sound instruction” or “teaching of peace”. The name “Jebus” is used for Jerusalem in Judges 19:10 and 11, and 1 Chronicles 11: 4 and 5. “Jebus” seems to be a temporary name used by a certain group of inhabitants.⁷⁹ Once David took the city, the name reverted to Jerusalem.

The name of God used is אֱלֹהֵי יֶזְרָאֵל - 'el 'el'yon, God Most High. This designation is used only in the passage in Genesis under consideration and in Psalm 78:35. In Genesis 14:22, “Most High God” is placed in apposition to YHWH in the Masoretic Text. YHWH is omitted in the Septuagint, the Peshitta, and the Samaritan Pentateuch; so clearly it is a later interpolation, but it represents the understanding of a copyist. In Psalm 78:35, the context is the wilderness, and “God” is stated to be “the Rock” and “God Most High” is “their redeemer” – clear allusions to YHWH. In Psalm 97:9, the appellative YHWH 'el'yon is used. So clearly “God Most High” can be an appellative of YHWH.⁸⁰

There is considerable evidence in the Bible of vestigial knowledge of the True God, of YHWH, scattered among the nations.⁸¹ All of the persons who came through the flood had knowledge of YHWH. Noah lived 350 years after the flood⁸²; his sons lived longer. YHWH interacted with the people at Babel.⁸³ Abram was familiar with YHWH without any introduction.⁸⁴ Bil'e'am had knowledge of YHWH.⁸⁵ The inhabitants of Jericho knew of YHWH.⁸⁶ The Gibeonites were familiar with YHWH.⁸⁷ Reuel/Jethro knew of YHWH.⁸⁸

The facts of the encounter of Abram with Melchizedek:

- The encounter takes place in the **Valley of Shavah**; near, but outside of, Salem (Jerusalem)
- Melchizedek is “**king**” of Salem
- Melchizedek is a “**priest**” of El Elyon (most likely referring to YHWH)
- Melchizedek brings “**bread and wine**”, suggesting a meal, perhaps a covenant meal
- Melchizedek **blesses Abram** in the name of El Elyon
- Melchizedek **blesses El Elyon** for delivering Abram from his enemies
- Abram gives Melchizedek a “**tenth of everything**”
- Abram **swore to El Elyon** that he would take nothing belonging to the King of Sodom

⁷⁶ In Genesis 33:18 “shalem” also occurs – KJV makes it proper noun; ESV translates it as an adverb, “safely”; BDB page 1024 identifies it as an adjective.

⁷⁷ See ANET page 329, TWOT article 912 page 406, IDB2 page 847

⁷⁸ TWOT article 2401 page 930

⁷⁹ Rohl (LA) pages 106-107 and 235, suggests these inhabitants were a group of Hyksos fleeing from Egypt; see also Josephus Contra Apion, book 1, section 14.

⁸⁰ אֱלֹהֵי יֶזְרָאֵל - 'el'yon is used alone on many occasions with a similar distribution: in Deuteronomy 32:18, Psalm 78:17, 56, 107:11, and Lamentations 3:35, 38 it is used in allusion to YHWH; in 2 Samuel 22:14, Psalm 7:17, 9:2, 18:13, 21:7, 47:2, 77:10, 83:18, 87:5, 91:1, 9, and 92:1 it is used in parallel with YHWH. In Numbers 24:16, Psalm 46:4, 50:14 and 73:11 it is in parallel with 'el or 'elohim. In Psalm 97:2, the appellative 'elohim 'el'yon is used. In Daniel 7:18, 22, 25, and 28 'el'yon is used in allusion to the “Ancient of Days”. So clearly, 'el'yon can also be an appellative of God the Father.

⁸¹ See the discussion in TWOT article 1199i page 510.

⁸² See Genesis 9:28

⁸³ See Genesis 11:5-8

⁸⁴ See Genesis 12:1

⁸⁵ See Numbers 22:9-13, 18, 22-35, 38, 23:4-5, 8, 15-16, 21, 24:1-4, 13, 16

⁸⁶ See Joshua 2:10-13

⁸⁷ See Joshua 9:9-10

⁸⁸ See Exodus 2:16-22, 4:18, 18:1-12, Numbers 10:29; Rohl (EE), pages 188-189, suggests that Reuel/Jethro may have been Moses' source for some of the information on the Patriarchs which we have in the Book of Genesis.

Some commentators assert that this is a theophany, that Melchizedek is in fact a manifestation of YHWH. There is clearly nothing in the text of Genesis to support this. In fact, the likely identification of El Elyon with YHWH indicates that this is NOT a theophany. **The most important aspect of Melchizedek is that he is both “king” and “priest”.** His actions in bringing food to Abram, blessing Abram, and blessing El Elyon are consistent with such a dual role. Similarly, Abram’s action in providing a “tenth of everything” to Melchizedek is consistent with such a dual role.

The next reference to Melchizedek is in Psalm 110:

- (1) The LORD says to **my Lord**:
“Sit at my right hand, until I **make your enemies your footstool.**”
- (2) The LORD sends forth from Zion **your** mighty scepter.
Rule in the midst of **your** enemies!
- (3) Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power, **in holy garments**:
from the womb of the morning, the dew of your youth will be yours.
- (4) The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind,
“**You** are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”
- (5) **The Lord** is at **your** right hand;
he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath.
- (6) **He will execute judgment among the nations**, filling them with corpses;
he will shatter chiefs over the wide earth.
- (7) He will drink from the brook by the way; therefore he will lift up his head. (ESV)

This Psalm seems to be inherently Messianic. It is a לְדָוִד - l’dauid, “to David” Psalm, suggesting Davidic authorship. In which case, it could be possible to attempt to analyze the Psalm with respect to David. This approach, however, does not work with verses 5 through 7, which clearly look to the Day of YHWH. The author of Hebrews also clearly assumes that Jesus is the focus:

- ... in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son ...
- ... having become as much more superior to angels ...
- And to which of the angels has he ever said,
“Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet?”
(Hebrews 1:2, 4, 13 ESV)

Clearly, then, it is necessary to take “my Lord” in verse 1 as the Messiah, Jesus Christ, to return as King of kings after the Day of YHWH. Then YHWH in verse 1 has to be taken in the sense of “YHWH” speaking as the representative of the God Family (Elohim), looking to his own future role as Messiah. The injunction to “sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool” is clearly Messianic.⁸⁹

Verse 2 then is YHWH speaking in the same sense as the representative of the God Family looking to his future role as King of kings. Verse 3 is talking about the resurrected Saints, in “holy garments”,⁹⁰ carrying the Gospel to all the world in the World Tomorrow. Verse 4 is also in this context. The author of Hebrews clearly interprets “you” in this verse to be the Messiah:

- So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him,
“You are my Son, today I have begotten you”;
- as he says also in another place,
“You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.” (Hebrews 5:5-6 ESV)

However, in the context of Psalm 110, the “you” could equally refer to the resurrected Saints. Jesus has assumed his eternal role as High Priest. Resurrected Saints will be assigned roles as Priests.

The question is, what does “after the order of Melchizedek” mean? The Hebrew is עַל־דְּבָרָתִי - ‘al div^erathi, literally, “on manner of”. So, a better translation would be “on the manner of Melchizedek”, or “like Melchizedek”. In Genesis chapter fourteen, it was clear that the most important characteristic of Melchizedek is that he was both “king” and “priest”. This is in fact what Jesus’ role is: today he is our High Priest, our intercessor at the throne of God the Father. At the Second Advent, he will assume the

⁸⁹ See Hebrews 10:13; 1 Corinthians 15:25; Ephesians 1:22; Hebrews 2:8; 1 Peter 3:22

⁹⁰ See Revelation 19:8, 14

role of King of kings⁹¹. Also, this is the role held as a promise to Christians – to be “priests” and “reign” in Kingdom of God⁹². The antecedents of the pronouns in verse 5 remains somewhat ambiguous. If “the Lord” is taken to be the same as “my Lord” in verse 1, that is, the Messiah, Jesus, King of Kings, then “your” would be the same as “you” in verse 4 – the resurrected Saints. This is consistent with the rest of verse 5 and verse 6 and 7.

The author of Hebrews makes many allusions to Melchizedek. First, he compares Jesus to Melchizedek. Then, he compares Melchizedek to the Aaronic Priesthood – this comparison is then used as the basis to demonstrate the superiority of Jesus’ Priesthood over the Aaronic Priesthood. The objective of the author of Hebrews is to demonstrate the superiority of the Priesthood of Jesus Christ over the Aaronic Priesthood.

As stated above, the author of Hebrews clearly applies Psalm 110:4 to Jesus Christ:

So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him,
“You are my Son, today I have begotten you”;⁹³

as he says also in another place,

“You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.”⁹⁴

... And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek. (Hebrews 5:5-6, 9-10 ESV)

We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the [mind], a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. (Hebrews 6:19-20 ESV)

Again, what does “after the order of Melchizedek” mean? The Greek is κατὰ τὴν τάξιν, literally “after the nature of”. τάξιν means “nature”, “quality”, “manner”. A suggested translation of the phrase is “according to the nature of” or “just like”.⁹⁵ The meaning of the Greek is exactly the same as the Hebrew. The Priesthood of Christ is like Melchizedek’s in that Jesus is both “king” and “priest”.

The author of Hebrews then summarizes Genesis fourteen in order to begin the comparison between Melchizedek and the Aaronic Priesthood:

For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, and to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything. He is first, by translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace. He is without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever. (Hebrews 7:1-3 ESV)

The author makes a play on words based on the components of the name “Melchizedek”. The first part of the name “melchi” most likely means “my king”⁹⁶. The second part means “righteous”. The name literally means “my king is righteous” and would be an allusion to the Kingship of “El Elyon” i.e. “YHWH”. Because nothing is provided about Melchizedek’s provenance, no genealogy, or his disposition, no information on the rest of his life, the author compares him to Jesus who has eternal life.

Next, Melchizedek is compared to Levi demonstrating the superiority of Melchizedek because he preceded Levi and collected “tithes” through Abraham:

See how great this man was to whom Abraham the patriarch gave a tenth of the spoils! And those descendants of Levi who receive the priestly office have a commandment in the law to take tithes from the people, that is, from their brothers, though these also are descended from Abraham. But this man who does not have his descent from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior. In the one case tithes are

⁹¹ See 1 Timothy 6:15, Revelation 17:14, 19:16

⁹² See 1 Peter 2:9, Revelation 1:6, 5:10, 20:6

⁹³ See Psalm 2:7

⁹⁴ See Psalm 110:4

⁹⁵ GEL page 811

⁹⁶ TWOT article 1199i page 510

received by mortal men, but in the other case, by one of whom it is testified that he lives.⁹⁷ One might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him. (Hebrews 7:4-10 ESV)

The Aaronic Priesthood is then compared to the Priesthood of Jesus Christ. Jesus is compared to Melchizedek, being both King and Priest. The Aaronic Priesthood was of limited scope, being efficacious only for the Old Covenant. The New Covenant requires a change in the law – the replacement of the Aaronic Priesthood by the Priesthood of Jesus Christ:

Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron? For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well. For the one of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests. (Hebrews 7:11-14 ESV)

The comparison is continued on the basis of Jesus' eternal existence. Melchizedek is like Jesus in that there is no information concerning his provenance or disposition. The Aaronic Priesthood was required to perform the sacrifices stipulated in the law. The sacrifices of the law were temporary, looking to Jesus' sacrifice, unable to actually expiate sin. The Priesthood of Jesus Christ is eternal; therefore, it supersedes the Aaronic Priesthood:

This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life. For it is witnessed of him,

"You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek."

For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness (the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God. And it was not without an oath. For those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath, but this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him:

"The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, 'You are a priest forever.'"

This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant. (Hebrews 7:15-22 ESV)

The comparison made by the author of Hebrews can be summarized as follows:

- Jesus is greater than Melchizedek, because he is eternal,
- Melchizedek is greater than Abraham, because he blessed him and received tithes from him,
- Abraham is greater than Levi, because he is his predecessor,
- Levi is greater than Aaron, because he is his predecessor,
- Therefore, the Priesthood of Jesus Christ is inherently better than the Aaronic Priesthood.

Excursus 3 – The Holy Days of Leviticus Chapter Twenty-three

Leviticus chapter twenty-three contains three types in information about each Holy Day:

1. When it is to be kept
2. What is to be done to keep it
3. Why it is to be kept

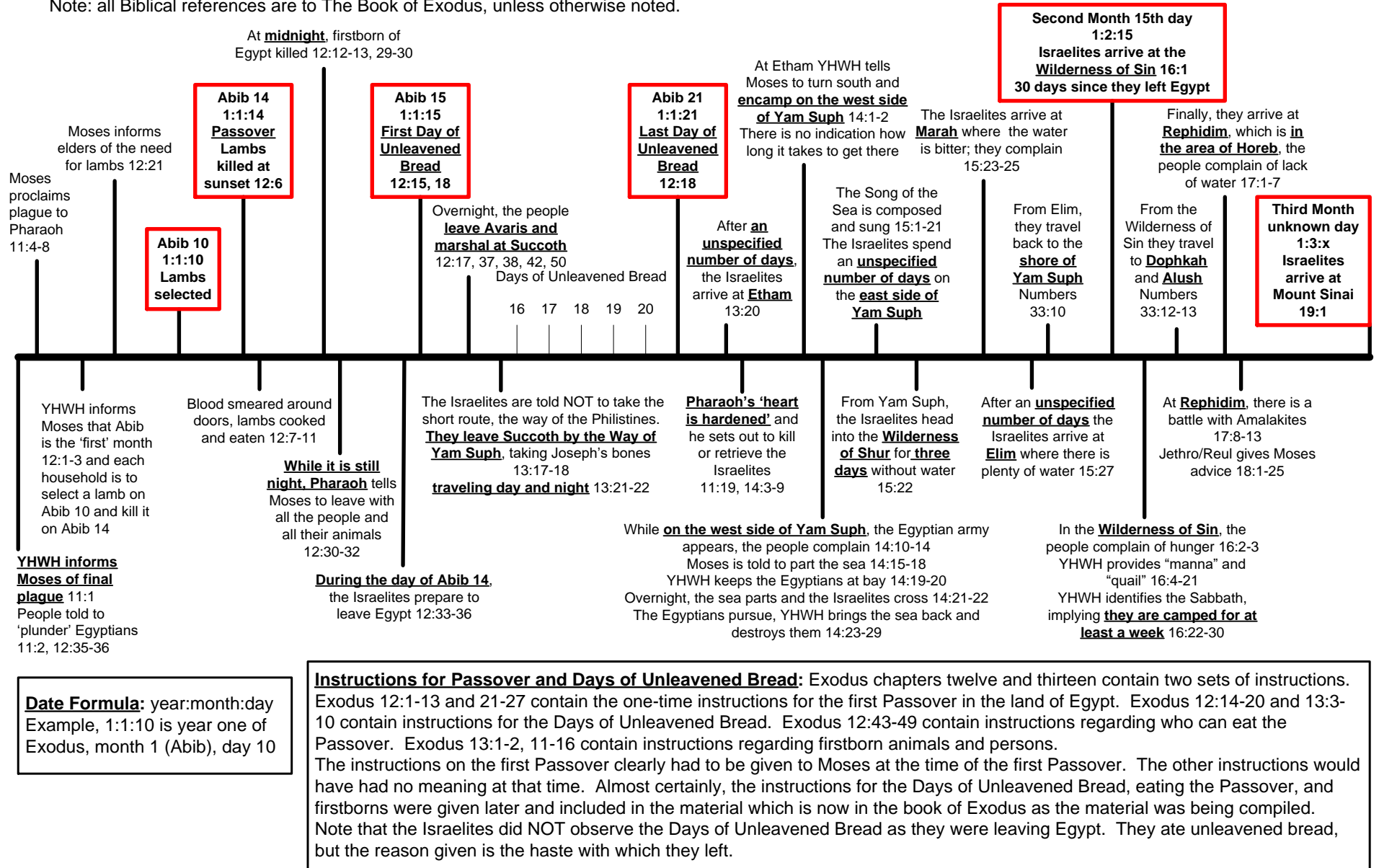
The chart on the next page contains an analysis of these factors.

⁹⁷ This statement may be the basis of the theophany theories. It is obscure. It most likely looks to Hebrews 7:24 applying to Jesus, not Melchizedek. Clearly, the exegetical principle of the "single obscure scripture" applies: an obscure scripture cannot be used in preference to one or more clear scriptures.

	General Invocation	Sabbath	Passover	Unleavened Bread	First Fruits	Trumpets	Atonement	Tabernacles	Eighth Day
<u>When</u>									
Date			14th day of 1st month v5	15th day of 1st month v6		1st day of 7th month v24	10th day of 7th month v27	15th day of 7th month v34	
Calculation		7th day v3	between the two evenings v4	7th day v8, day after Sabbath v11	7 weeks v15, 50 days v16		evening to evening v32	7 days v34	8th day v36
<u>What</u>									
<u>Nature of Holy Day</u>									
Sabbath (shabbath)	v38	v3, v15					v32		
Assembly (mo'ed)	v2, v4, v37, v44								
Feast (hag)				v6	Exodus 23:16			v34, v39, v41	
<u>Prescriptions</u>									
Holy Convocation	v2, v4, v37	v3		v7, v8	v21	v24	v27	v35	v36
Proclaim	v2, v4, v37				v21	v24			
Present Offering	v37, v38			v8, v12, v13, v14	v16, v18, v19	v25	v27	v36	v36
<u>Proscriptions</u>									
Do No Work		v3		v7, v8	v21	v25	v28, v30, v31	v35	v36
<u>Why</u>									
<u>State Mind</u>									
Solemn Rest		v3				v24	v32	v39	v39
Solemn Assembly									v36
<u>Objective Benefit</u>									
To Be Accepted				v11					
Afflict Oneself							v27, v29, v32		
Make Atonement							v28		
Celebrate / Rejoice								v39, v40, v41	
Reap Harvest				v10	v22			v39	
<u>Provision to YHWH</u>									
Pleasing Aroma (Fire)	v37			v8, v13	v18	v25	v27	v36	v36
Wave Offering				v10, v11, v12	v20				
Give to YHWH	v38								
Leave Gleanings					v22				
<u>Didactic Benefit</u>									
Memorial						v24			
Generations May Know				v14	v21		v31	v43	
Cut Off / Destroy							v29, v30		
Statute Forever				v14	v21		v31	v41	
<u>Symbolic</u>									
Two Loaves					v17, v20				
Dwell in Booths								v40, v42, v43	
Eat Unleavened Bread				v6					

Exodus Timeline

Note: all Biblical references are to The Book of Exodus, unless otherwise noted.



Horeb Timeline

Events in the Book of Exodus

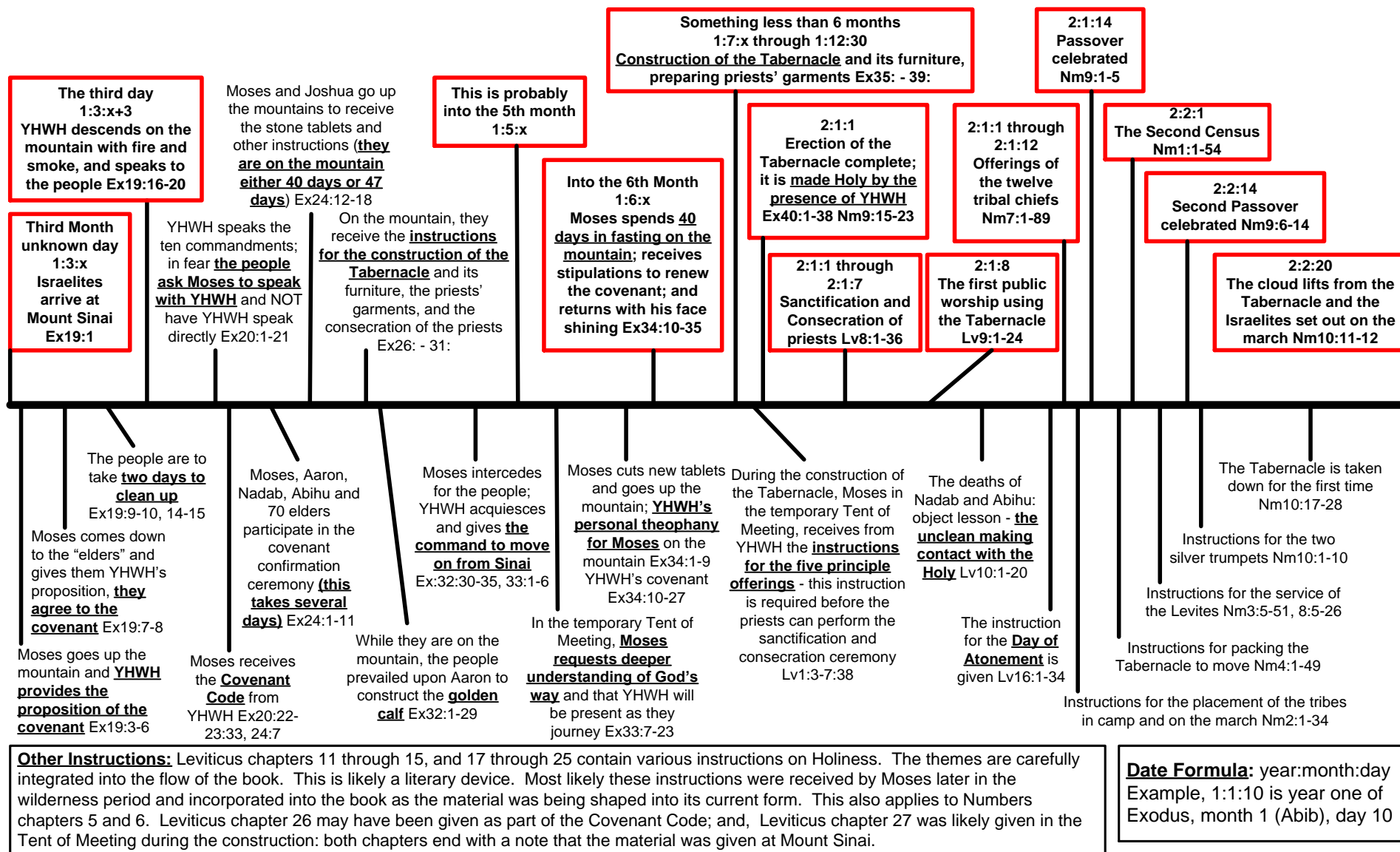
Events in the Book of Leviticus

Events in the Book of Numbers

The Covenant and the Tabernacle

Definition and Demonstration of Holiness

Preparation for the March



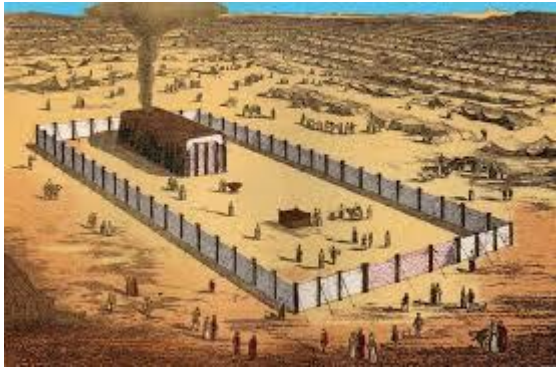


Figure 1: The Tabernacle



Figure 2: The Bronze Alter

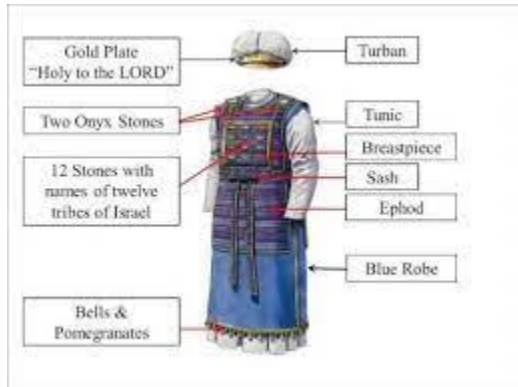


Figure 3: The Garment of the High Priest

Appendix 2 – Outline of Leviticus

1:1-2 Setting: YHWH speaks to Moses in the Tent of Meeting

1:3-7:35 Prerequisite: The five major sacrifices

1:3-6:7 Instructions for the people

1:3-17 The Burnt Offering

2:1-16 The Meal/Grain/Cereal Offering

3:1-17 The Peace Offering

4:1-5:13 The Sin Offering

5:14-6:7 The Trespass/Guilt/Reparation Offering

6:8-7:38 Instructions for the priests

6:8-13 The Burnt Offering

6:14-23 The Meal/Grain/Cereal Offering

6:24-29 The Sin Offering

7:1-10 The Trespass/Guilt/Reparation Offering

7:11-18 The Peace Offering

7:19-7:38 General Instructions

8:1-10:20 Holiness Events

8:1-36 The ordination ceremony of Aaron and his sons

9:1-24 The first public worship service in the Tabernacle

10:1-20 An object lesson: the unclean comes in contact with the Holy

11:1-15:32 Physical cleanliness: a prerequisite for Holiness

11:1-47 Bodily cleanliness in food consumption

12:1-8 Cleanliness after childbirth

13:1-59 Cleanliness with respect to infectious disease (leprosy)

14:1-57 Cleansing from infectious disease (leprosy)

15:1-32 Cleansing from bodily discharges

16:1-34 Yearly Holiness renewal: The Day of Atonement

- 17:1-20:27 Holiness instruction for the people
 - 17:1-8 Holiness related to animal slaughter
 - 17:10-16 Holiness related to animal blood
 - 18:1-30 Holiness related to sexual relationships
 - 19:1-36 Holiness related to the ten commandments
 - 20:1-27 Holiness contrasted with abhorrent pagan practices
- 21:1-22:31 Holiness instruction for the priests
 - 21:1-15 Holiness related to family relationships
 - 21:16-22 Holiness related to physical service
 - 22:1-31 Holiness related to the people's offerings
- 23:1-25:55 Holiness instruction for the community
 - 23:1-46 Holiness in worship: acceptable time and manner
 - 24:1-9 Holiness required to maintain the Tabernacle
 - 24:10-23 Holiness in the administration of justice
 - 25:1-55 Holiness in societal relationships
- 26:1- 27:34 Holiness and the Sinai Covenant
 - 26:1-13 Blessings to accrue from living by the terms of the Covenant
 - 26:14-45 Curses to accrue from failure to live by the terms of the Covenant
 - 27:1-34 Holiness in making commitments

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The location of "To Be a Priest"