

Priests, Levites, and the High Priest

LEVITES	PRIESTS	HIGH PRIEST
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Levites were one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Levi, the third son of Jacob, was the ancestor of the clan. ➤ This was the tribe of Moses, Aaron and Miriam, which by the time of the Exodus, had grown to a large number. ➤ Because of their zeal to protect the purity and worship of God, the Levites obtained special status as the priestly tribe (Exodus 32:25–29). ➤ There were three families with different responsibilities for the sacred duties. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The family of Gershon was in charge of the Tabernacle, tent curtains and hangings of the court (Numbers 3:25–26). • The family of Kohath was responsible for the furniture of the Tabernacle, including the vessels and the curtains of the inner rooms (Numbers 3:31). • The family of Merari was to oversee the Tabernacle frames, bars, pillars, bases and accessories (verse 36). ➤ God directed the Levites' assistance to the priests at the Tabernacle (Numbers 3:5–10). ➤ In David's time, they helped in the baking of the sacred bread and with the music ministry (1 Chronicles 23:28–29; 15:16). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The descendants of Levi were the priestly tribe. However, Aaron and his sons were especially separated for the duties of the priesthood. ➤ God's intention was to make the entire nation of Israel a nation of priests to the world (Exodus 19:6). Within that nation, Aaron and his descendants would function as leaders (Exodus 19:22–24; 28:1–29:46). Later, the entire tribe of Levi was dedicated to priestly service (Exodus 32:25–29; Numbers 3:5–10). ➤ The distinction between a regular Levite and one who was of Aaron's line is made clear in Numbers 3:10. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aaron and his sons were to lead the priesthood and be the ones to approach God. Service in the Tabernacle was an exclusive ministry of Aaron's descendants. • The Levites were responsible to maintain the Tabernacle stocked with animals, grains, wine, wood, and everything necessary for the worship services. They also provided assistance to the priests in the Tabernacle (Numbers 8:18–22; 18:6). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Only the sons of Aaron could become high priests. ➤ There was to be one high priest at any given time, but exceptions did occur, such as during the early monarchy when Zadok and Abiathar shared the office (2 Samuel 20:25). ➤ The office was hereditary and generally fell to the oldest son unless some impediment disqualified him. ➤ Reasons for disqualification could include moral fault, ritual impurity, or physical deformity (Leviticus 21:10–24). ➤ Only the high priest could enter the inner sanctuary, the Most Holy Place, to minister before the Mercy Seat on the Day of Atonement once a year. ➤ The high priest, however, was also in charge of the entire priestly order and involved in superintending the other priests and Levites as well (Numbers 3 and 8:14–22).

PRIESTS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT (Listed alphabetically)

NAME	REFERENCE	IDENTIFICATION
Aaron	Exod 28–29	Older brother of Moses; first high priest of Israel
Abiathar	1 Sam 22:20-23; 2 Sam 20:25	Son of Ahimelech who escaped the slayings at Nob
Abihu	See Nadab and Abihu	
Ahimelech	1 Sam 21–22	Led a priestly community at Nob; killed by Saul for befriending David
Amariah	2 Chr 19:11	High priest during the reign of Jehoshaphat
Amaziah	Amos 7:10-17	Evil priest of Bethel; confronted Amos the prophet
Azariah	2 Chr 26:16-20	High priest who stood against Uzziah when the ruler began to act as a prophet
Eleazar and Ithamar	Lev 10:6; Num 20:26	Godly sons of Aaron; Eleazar—Israel's second high priest
Eli	1 Sam 1–4	Descendant of Ithamar; raised Samuel at Shiloh
Eliashib	Neh 3:1; 13:4-5	High priest during the time of Nehemiah
Elishama and Jehoram	2 Chr 17:7-9	Teaching priests during the reign of Jehoshaphat
Ezra	Ezra 7–10; Neh 8	Scribe, teacher, and priest during the rebuilding of Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity
Hilkiah	2 Kgs 22–23	High priest during the reign of Josiah
Hophni and Phinehas	1 Sam 2:12-36	Evil sons of Eli
Ithamar	See Eleazar and Ithamar	
Jahaziel	2 Chr 20:14-17	Levite who assured Jehoshaphat of deliverance from an enemy
Jehoiada	2 Kgs 11–12	High priest who saved Joash from Queen Athaliah's purge
Jehoram	See Eliashama and Jehoram	
Joshua	Hag 1:1,12; Zech 3	First high priest after the Babylonian captivity
Nadab and Abihu	Lev 10:1-2	Evil sons of Aaron
Pashhur	Jer 20:1-6	False priest who persecuted the prophet Jeremiah
Phinehas	(1) Num 25:7-13 (2) See Hophni and Phinehas	(1) Son of Eleazar; Israel's third high priest whose zeal for pure worship stopped a plague
Shelemiah	Neh 13:13	Priest during the time of Nehemiah; was in charge of administrating storehouses
Uriah	2 Kgs 16:10-16	Priest who built pagan altar for evil King Ahaz
Zadok	2 Sam 15; 1 Kgs 1	High priest during the reign of David and Solomon

Functions of the Priests

A priest is an intermediary—someone who works as a go-between or mediator between two parties. The English language has different words that express this concept: intercessor, arbiter, and advocate. As intercessor, the priest's role had two parts to it. First, priests represented the people to God. Second, they represented God to the people.

1. *The priests represented the people to God* by the many and varied sacrifices required in the covenant God made with Israel at Mt. Sinai.

- Five types of sacrifices are specified in the Bible:
 1. The burnt offering
 2. The sin offering
 3. The guilt offering
 4. The peace offering
 5. The gift/grain offering

- Priests were involved in all of these sacrifices to a greater or lesser degree depending on the regulations.
- Whereas before the covenant, kings and even family heads acted in the role of priests (see, Genesis 8:20; 14:18) the establishment of the Levitical priesthood centralized the role in this tribe and at the Tabernacle/Temple. This also applied to the festival sacrifices such as those at the Passover. Before the priesthood, the household heads sacrificed the lamb (Exodus 12:1-11). Afterward, priests were in charge of sacrifices in the Tabernacle and the Temple (Numbers 16:5-6).
- The clearest example of the priest functioning as representative for the people is that of the high priest on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16). On this special day the high priest represented himself, the priesthood of the Levites, and the entire nation.

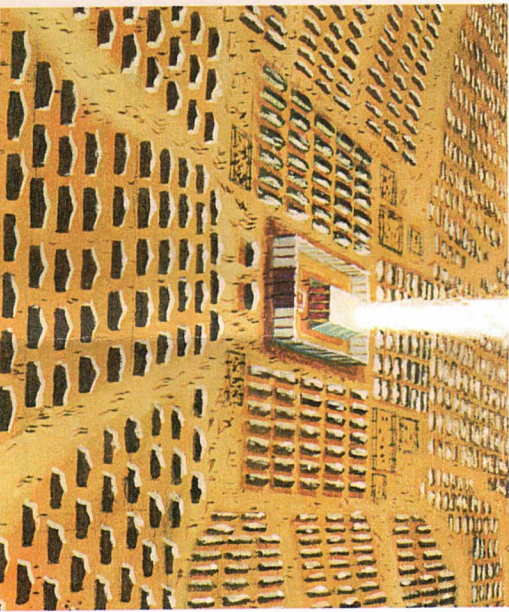
2. *The priest represented God to the people.* The priesthood functioned as the voice of God—in both teaching and prophetic roles.

- Deuteronomy 33:10 states that the tribe of Levi was to act in a teaching role to the rest of Israel. God placed the instructions,



commands, and wisdom of the law in the hands of the and the people about the covenant.

- The prophetic function centered on the use of the Urim and Thummim (Deuteronomy 33:8). What these prophetic devices were is not known, except that they were kept in the pocket of the high priest, who used them to determine God's will in specific cases (Exodus 28:30; Numbers 27:21-23; 1 Samuel 23:1-6). One of the reasons the Levites were scattered among the tribes and received no allotment in the Promised Land was so that they would interact more easily with all the people of Israel in their teaching capacity.
- Finally, the priests blessed the people on behalf of God (see Leviticus 9:22 and Numbers 6:22-27).



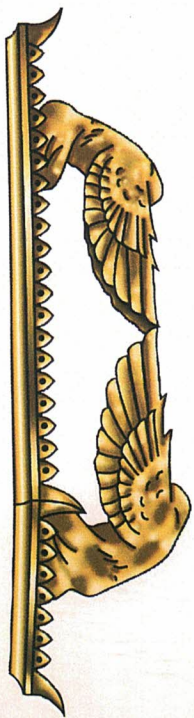
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Sacrifices in OT Worship

Character	Main Purpose	Obligatory	Blood	Flesh	Fat	Holiness
tion, l, or	Atonement, Thanksgiving, Fulfillment of Vow?	Yes or no? If yes, how often?	Is it poured out, sprinkled, smeared, etc.? And where?	Is it wholly or partially burned, eaten, etc.?	What was done with it?	Is it holy or most holy?
Individuals	Continual Atonement for Sinful Congregation	Yes - for the congregation; offered every morning and evening, plus major and minor festivals	Poured (קָרַח) on main altar or (in the case of birds) on the side of the altar	All was burned on the main altar except the hide, which was given to the priest	Burned with the flesh upon the main altar as a soothing aroma to YHWH	Most holy קָדָשׁ קֹדְשִׁים
Individuals	Atonement for Congregation or Individuals	Yes - for all who broke the commandments of YHWH	a) Priest & Cong: sprinkled on veil, smeared on horns of altar of incense, and poured out at base of main altar b) Individuals: smeared on horns of main altar and poured out at base	*If "a" (see left), body was burned outside camp. *If "b", the flesh was eaten, but only by the priests and only in holy court of the temple.	Removed from animal and burned on main altar as a soothing aroma to YHWH	Most holy קָדָשׁ קֹדְשִׁים
Individuals	Atonement for Individuals, especially in cases of sins against holy things or fraud against neighbor	Yes - for all who broke the commandments of YHWH, especially those indicated under "Main Purpose"	Poured on the main altar	It was eaten, but only by priests and only in the holy court of the temple	Removed from animal and burned on main altar as a soothing aroma to YHWH	Most holy קָדָשׁ קֹדְשִׁים
Individuals	Atonement and Communal Meal with YHWH and fellow Israelites; & Supplicatory, Thanksgiving, and Fulfillment of Vow	Yes - for congregation (at Pentecost; Lev 23:19) Yes - for those fulfilling a vow No - for other individuals	Poured on the main altar	a) Breast and right leg given to priests (and his family) b) Rest eaten by individual, his family, the poor, Levites, etc.	Removed from animal and burned on main altar as a soothing aroma to YHWH	Individual's are only holy (קָדָשׁ), but congregation's are most holy.
Individuals	Thanksgiving; Confession of YHWH as God of Creation	Yes - for congregation Yes - for individuals on some occasions No - for other individuals	N/A Note: The Meal Offerings was always accompanied by an offering with blood.	N/A	N/A	Individual's are only holy (קָדָשׁ), but portions for priests are most holy

The Mercy Seat

God promised to be present upon the mercy seat (Exodus 25:22; see also 30:6, 36). The mercy seat was a kind of portable throne, carried along the poles of the ark and complete with a canopy of angel wings. The cherubim faced the center of the seat while their wings overspread it. The picture of God as King of Israel enthroned on the mercy seat is clear no matter where the ark might be: in the wilderness, in battle, or in his tent (the Tabernacle).



The mercy seat was actually the top or lid of the ark of the covenant measuring 2.5 cubits by 1.5 cubits (3 feet 9 inches by 2 feet 3 inches). It was made of gold and had two golden cherubim at either end.

THE VISIBLE PRESENCE OF GOD

God's presence in the Old Testament was often seen as a fiery glow accompanied by smoke or a cloud.

Genesis 15:17	God is seen in a vision as a smoking fire pot and flaming torch
Exodus 14:24	The LORD is seen as a pillar of fire and cloud
Leviticus 16:2	The LORD appears as a cloud on the mercy seat
Numbers 7:89	The LORD is heard as a voice on the mercy seat
Numbers 9:15-22	The LORD appears over the Tabernacle as a cloud and fire
Deuteronomy 1:33	The LORD leads Israel as fire and cloud
1 Kings 8:10-11	The LORD fills Solomon's temple as a cloud
Isaiah 4:5	Prophecy of God as cloud, smoke and flaming fire
Isaiah 6:4	Isaiah sees God as smoke in the heavenly temple

Christ is God's presence among us. During his earthly ministry, Jesus was Emmanuel—God with us. Now that Jesus has returned to his Father, the Holy Spirit is his presence among us.

The mercy seat was also the ultimate place of appeal for God's grace. It was the place where, once a year, the high priest would sprinkle the blood of sacrifice from the bronze altar. Only on this day, in a precise manner was God to be approached in the Most Holy Place, and only by the chosen high priest. Today, because Jesus our Great High Priest has made once for all time his sacrifice, we are urged as believers to "boldly approach the throne of grace..." (Hebrews 4:16).

THE SHEKINAH

Many people think of the cloud in the Most Holy Place as God's *shekinah*. In a late Jewish tradition, the term *shekinah* became associated with God's presence. The word *shekinah* derives from a Hebrew word meaning "dwelling."

The word itself does not appear in the Old Testament. A similar word (*shakan*) occurs in, for example, Exodus 14:20, 40:34-38; Leviticus 9:23, 24; Numbers 14:10, 16:19, 42.

However, in the Exodus and the wilderness experience, God's presence was represented with the cloud during the day and the column of fire during the night.

From the moment the Israelites left Egypt, danger followed them as an army pursuing them and the dangers in the wilderness, the Israelites. They had seen God's power in Egypt, but they were walking into the day and the column of fire during the night was probably a great fire functioned as a reminder of God's guiding and protective care, interposed between Israel and the pursuing Egyptian army, striking encouraging the Israelites.

When Jesus gathered his disciples for a last conversation, he told them Fear, anxiety, and uncertainty grew in their hearts. However, Jesus Comforter would come in his place. The Holy Spirit would come to comfort, to teach, and to guide. Acts 2:1-4 narrates the coming of the sidebar): the sound of a "violent wind" and "what seemed to be the sound of God's appearances in the Old Testament would recognize these descriptions: the pillar of fire, the Holy Spirit continues God's guiding

THEOPHANY

The word *theophany* derives from a Greek word meaning "appearance of God." A theophany is another instance of God's special presence.

In some theophanies, God appears in human form, as when he appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre (Genesis 18).

In other occasions, God appears with a great display of power. His appearance at Mount Sinai filled the Israelites with great fear (Exodus 19:16; see also Nahum 1:2-6).

However, God can also appear in a quiet, gentle way, as he did to Elijah at Horeb (1 Kings 19). Paul's vision of the resurrected Christ was a theophanic revelation (Acts 9:1-6).

MANIFESTATION

Text	Setting
Genesis 15:12-21	God met Abraham and made a covenant with him. This covenant God's promise to give Abraham a land.
Exodus 13:21-22	As the children of Israel were leaving, God guided them away from Egypt.
Exodus 19:16-20; 24:16-17	After three months of Egypt, the people of Israel arrived at the Mount Sinai.
Exodus 40:36-38; Numbers 9:15-23;	The Israelites camped around the Tabernacle. God would let them know when to move or remain in place.

Ark of the Covenant



The ark of the covenant was the place where God met and talked with Moses (Ex. 25:22). It was made of acacia wood and covered with gold.

The tabernacle (the "tent of meeting") was built to house the ark. The ark was the first item of furniture constructed after God told Moses to build the tabernacle (Ex. 25:10-22).

The ark was intended to be the central focus of the Most Holy Place in the tabernacle and later the temple (Ex. 40:1-21). The ark rested in the Most Holy Place which was separated from the Holy Place by a thick veil (Ex. 26:31-33). The heavy veil in the temple was torn from top to

bottom at the moment of Jesus' death (Matt. 27:50-51). The torn veil symbolizes the free access believers have through Christ to the presence of God (Heb. 6:19-20; 10:19-20).

God set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark and stand before him, to serve him, and to bless his name (Deut. 10:8). Only the high priest was allowed to enter the Most Holy Place once a year (Lev. 16) the Day of Atonement, to sacrifice and to sprinkle blood on the mercy seat (the top of the ark where the winged cherubim face each other) to atone for the sins of the people (Ex. 37:6-9; 2 Sam. 6:2; Ps. 99:1).

The Journey of the Ark of the C



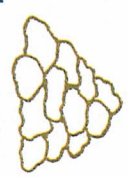
Manna laid before the testimony (Ex. 16:33-34).

Aaron's rod laid before the testimony (Num. 17:8-10).

1. God gives Moses directions to build the
2. The veil is woven (Ex. 26:31-33).
3. The ark in the tabernacle (Ex. 40:1-21)
4. The ark is carried for 40 years (Lev. 16; Num. 4, 10, 14)

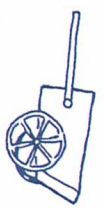


7. The ark is carried around Jericho (Josh 6).



6. People build a memorial after the Jordan parts (Josh. 4)

8. After taking Ai, the covenant was rem



14. Men struck dead by the Lord for looking into the ark (1 Sam. 6:19-21).

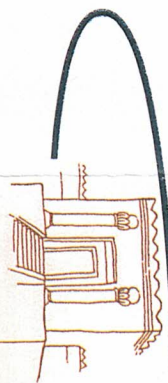
13. Philistines return the ark to Beth Shemesh (1 Sam. 6).

12. Phi take th (1 Sam

15. Ark brought to the house of Ahimadab in Kirjath Jearim and stays there 20 years (1 Sam. 7).

16. Saul brings the ark to camp temporarily (1 Sam

19. David flees Jerusalem but sends ark back to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 15).



20. Solomon has ark b into Most Holy Place in temple (1 Kings 8).

Scholars believe that when the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem (586 BC), and plundered the temple, the ark was either taken by Nebuchadnezzar and destroyed, or hidden by Levites. Its existence, or location, remain uncertain today.



"But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered [by sprinkling on the ark] for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. ... When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption."

— Hebrews 9:7, 11-12

The Manifestations of the Presence of the LORD— The *Shekinah* Glory Dwelling on Earth

SCRIPTURE	EVENTS	PLACE
Genesis 3:8–21	There was some manifestation of the Lord in the Garden of Eden. God came seeking Adam and Eve, and they knew He was there, and they talked with Him.	Garden of Eden
Genesis 3:24	The Cherubim and a flaming sword guarded the way to the Tree of Life.	Garden of Eden
Genesis 11:31; 12:1–4; Acts 7:2–4	The Lord of glory appeared to Abram in Mesopotamia (Ur).	Ur of the Chaldeans
Genesis 15:7–21 (verse 17)	The Lord entered into covenant with Abram and appeared in a cloud of smoke (like a smoking oven) and a flaming torch.	Hebron
Exodus 3:2–6	The Lord appeared to Moses in a burning bush that was not consumed by the supernatural fire.	Mount Horeb
Exodus 13:17–22	The Lord led the people of Israel out of Egypt with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.	Egypt and in the Wilderness
Exodus 14:19–20	The pillar of the presence of The Angel of the Lord shielded the Israelites from the Egyptian army	At the Red Sea
Exodus 14:21–31	The Lord confused the army of Egypt and brought the waters of the sea upon them.	Through the Red Sea
Exodus 16:4–12	The glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud, and the Lord gave them meat in the evening and manna in the morning.	Wilderness of Sin
Exodus 19:1–25	The Lord came down on Mount Sinai in smoke and fire.	Mount Sinai
Exodus 20:1–21	The Lord spoke to the people from the smoke-covered mount.	Mount Sinai
Exodus 20:21–26; 21–23	The Lord spoke to Moses and gave him the various laws for His people.	Mount Sinai
Exodus 24:1–11	Moses went up to meet the Lord with Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, along with seventy elders of Israel.	Mount Sinai
Exodus 24:12–18	Moses and Joshua went up to the mountain. After seven days, Moses entered the midst of the cloud on the mountain to receive the stone tablets of the law and the instructions for the Tabernacle (Exodus 25–31).	Mount Sinai
Exodus 33:7–11	Moses often met the Lord at the Tent of Meeting, and the “pillar of cloud” would descend and rest there. The Lord spoke with Moses face to face.	Outside the camp of the Israelites.
Exodus 33:12–16	Moses prayed for the presence of the Lord to go with them on the journey.	Mount Sinai
Exodus 33:17–23; 34:6–9	Moses prayed to see God’s glory, and the Lord revealed His glory, “ <i>passing by</i> ” Moses.	Mount Sinai
Exodus 34:29–35; (2 Cor. 3:7–18)	Moses’ face shone temporarily from being in the presence of the Lord.	Mount Sinai
Exodus 25:8, 22; 29:42–46; 40:34–35; Numbers 9:15	The Tabernacle fulfilled the purpose for which the Lord commanded it be constructed. It was the dwelling place of the Lord where He met with His people.	Mount Sinai
Exodus 40:36–38; Numbers 9:15–23	The cloud of glory rested on the Tabernacle by day and the pillar of fire by night. When the cloud was taken up, the people followed the Lord wherever He led them.	Wilderness journey
Leviticus 9:1–24	The cloud of glory appeared, and fire from the Lord consumed the sacrifices Aaron and his sons offered.	Mount Sinai
Numbers 12:1–15	The Lord came down in a pillar of cloud and dealt with the complaint of Miriam and Aaron against Moses.	Hazereth in the Wilderness
Numbers 13–14	The glory of the Lord appeared when the Israelites grumbled in unbelief over entering the land of Canaan. The Lord sentenced them to die in the wilderness	Wilderness of Paran at Kadesh

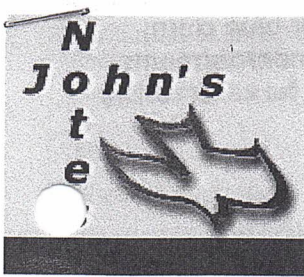
SCRIPTURE	EVENTS	PLACE
Numbers 16:1-40	Korah, Dathan, and Abiram rebelled against Moses and Aaron as God's chosen leaders and declared themselves as equal leaders. The glory of the Lord appeared, and the ground swallowed the men and their families. 250 others offering incense were slain by the fire of the Lord.	The wilderness
Numbers 16:41-50	The glory of the Lord appeared, and the Lord sent a plague to judge those who complained against Moses and Aaron	The wilderness
Numbers 20:2-13	The Lord appeared when the people complained about no water at Meribah. Moses struck the rock and forfeited going into the land of Canaan.	Wilderness of Sin at Kadesh (Meribah)
Deuteronomy 4:32-33; 5:4-5, 22-33	At Moab, before the people crossed over into the land of Canaan, Moses recounted the times the Lord appeared and spoke out of the fire on the mountain, giving them the Law.	At Moab, telling of Mount Sinai
Joshua 4:15-24; 5:1-15; 6:1-5	The priests carried the ark of the covenant into the Jordan River, and the river dried up. The people marched through and camped at Gilgal, where the Captain of the Host of the Lord appeared to Joshua, giving him the battle plan for Jericho.	Jordan River, Gilgal, Jericho
Judges 6:11-24	The Angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon and caused fire to consume the offering he made.	Ophrah
Judges 13:1-24	The Angel of the Lord appeared to Manoah and his wife, promising them a son and then ascended in the flame of the altar where they were offering a burnt offering.	Zorah
1 Samuel 3:21	The Lord appeared at the Tabernacle at Shiloh, where Samuel ministered as a prophet.	Shiloh
1 Samuel 4:11-22; 5-6	The Philistines captured the ark of the covenant from Israel, and God brought great turmoil and sickness to them. God cannot be captured.	Ebenezer, Ashdod, Ekron, Beth Shemesh
Psalms 26:8	David prayed, "O Lord, I love the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thy glory dwells" [literally, "the place of the tabernacle of Thy glory"].	Israel
Psalms 73:21-28	Asaph spoke of being in the presence of the Lord, of being received "to glory," and declared, "the nearness of God is my good."	Israel
1 Kings 8:1-11; 2 Chronicles 5:2-14; 6:1-2	In the reign of Solomon, the priests brought the ark of the covenant into the newly-built Temple, and the cloud and glory of the Lord filled the Temple.	Jerusalem
2 Chronicles 6:12-42; 7:1-3	When Solomon finished praying at the dedication of the Temple, the fire of God came down and consumed the burnt offering, and the glory of the Lord filled the Temple.	Jerusalem
Ezekiel 10:1-4, 18-19; 11:22-24	Ezekiel saw the glory of the Lord depart from the Temple to the East Gate to the Mount of Olives.	Jerusalem (Temple and Mount of Olives)
Ezekiel 43:1-12	Ezekiel saw a vision of the glory of the Lord returning to a reconstructed temple.	Jerusalem
Isaiah 6:1-13; John 12:41	In the year King Uzziah died, Isaiah saw a vision of the Lord in heaven.	Heaven
Isaiah 40:5; 60:1-2; 66; Habakkuk 2:14; Zechariah 2:5	Several prophets spoke of the coming kingdom in which the presence of the Lord would be manifested in His glory being seen.	Israel and the earth
Haggai 2:6-9	Haggai prophesied about the glory of the Lord appearing in a future Temple.	Jerusalem
Daniel 7:9-10	Daniel saw a vision of the Ancient of Days in His glory.	Heaven
Daniel 7:13-14	Daniel saw a vision of the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven.	Heaven and earth
Luke 2:8-20	The glory of the Lord appeared to the shepherds in the fields outside Bethlehem at the birth of the Messiah Jesus.	Shepherds' fields near Bethlehem
Matthew 2:1-12	The magi followed His star to find the Christ Child in Bethlehem. That star went before them and stood over the house where the Child was. Many believe that supernatural "star" which appeared and led these men was the <i>Shekinah</i> fire of God.	Bethlehem
Matthew 16:27	Jesus promised His disciples that one day He would come in the glory of His Father with His angels.	Earth

SCRIPTURE	EVENTS	PLACE
Luke 9:28-36; Matthew 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-8; 2 Peter 1:16-18; James 2:1; John 1:14	On the mount of Transfiguration, Jesus' face and clothing changed, Moses and Elijah appeared in glory, and the Father overshadowed them in a cloud. Peter, James, and John saw this.	The Mount of Transfiguration (possibly Mount Hermon)
Daniel 7:13-14 Matthew 24:30, 26:64; Mark 13:26; 14:62; Luke 21:27	First to His disciples and then later to the Jewish leaders at His trial before His crucifixion, Jesus promised that He would come as the reigning Son of Man in the clouds of heaven (a manifestation of His glory).	Heaven and Earth
Acts 1:9-11	Jesus ascended in a cloud of glory forty days after His resurrection. The angel promised that Jesus would one day return in the same way.	Mount of Olives in Jerusalem
Acts 2:1-4 1 Corinthians 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16	Tongues of fire rested on each of the believers gathered on the morning of Pentecost. These appear to be individualized pillars of fire resting on the new temples of the Holy Spirit. Paul speaks of believers being the temple (Greek, <i>naos</i> , "inner sanctuary") of the Holy Spirit.	Jerusalem
Acts 6:15; 7:54-60	Stephen's face appeared as the face of an angel. When the authorities were seeking to execute him, he saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.	Jerusalem and Heaven
Acts 9:1-9; 22:3-16; 26:9-18	A very bright light from heaven, brighter than the sun, flashed all around Saul as he was on the road to Damascus, and then the Lord Jesus spoke to him.	Damascus Road
2 Corinthians 3:8-9	The ministry of the Spirit is marked by the glory of God	Wherever
2 Corinthians 3:18	Believers in Christ are being transformed into the image of Christ "from glory to glory."	Wherever
2 Corinthians 4:3-6	God " <i>has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.</i> "	Wherever
2 Corinthians 4:16-18	An eternal weight of glory is being worked in us as God renews the inward man day by day in the midst of the light affliction we face.	Wherever
Romans 8:18-21	We and the creation await the glory of the revealing of the sons of God	The creation
1 Thessalonians 4:17	Believers in Jesus will be caught up in clouds [of glory] to meet the Lord in the air.	Earth and Earth's Atmosphere
Hebrews 1:3	Jesus is the radiance, or the outshining, of the glory of God	Throughout heaven and earth
Hebrews 2:10	Jesus is bringing many sons to glory, to a life full of the Shekinah glory.	Heaven
Revelation 1:9-20	The apostle John saw the Lord Jesus in His resurrected glory and received the Revelation of things to come.	Island of Patmos
Revelation 15:5-8	John saw the Temple in Heaven filled with smoke from the glory of God. This was in addition to the many manifestations of the Lord throughout the Revelation.	Temple in Heaven
Revelation 21:1-27; 22:1-5	The Tabernacle of God (the New Jerusalem) appears, and the Lord and His people live eternally in the glorious presence of the Lord.	New Heaven and New Earth

WHERE IS THE ARK TODAY?

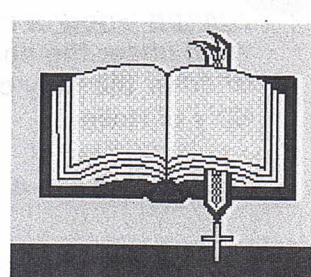
The Old Testament mentions the ark for the last time in 2 Chronicles 35:3. There, after finding the book of the law, King Josiah celebrated the Passover. He then instructed the Levites to return the ark to the Temple. The New Testament only mentions the ark in two places: John 1:14 (an allusion) and Hebrews 8:2, 5; 9:1-24. Yet, these are references to the Old Testament sacred object.

- The probability is that the ark was destroyed in 586 BC when Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem. There is no mention of it in the list of temple treasures that the Babylonian King took (2 Kings 25:13-17). When the exiles later returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple, they were allowed to bring several thousand articles from the temple with them. However, there is no mention of the ark (Ezra 1:7-11).
- When the Roman general Pompey conquered Jerusalem and entered the Most Holy Place in the Temple, he famously affirmed that he had seen nothing but “an empty and mysterious space.” Although for Pompey the expression was in reference to images of God, it implies that the ark was absent as well.
- Over the centuries there have been claims that the ark survived the Babylonian invasion. In 2 Maccabees 2:4-8 the prophet Jeremiah is said to have hidden the ark in a cave on Mt. Nebo, which is east of the Dead Sea in today’s Jordan.
- An Ethiopian legend has Menelik, King Solomon’s son by the Queen of Sheba, carrying the ark to Ethiopia (a copy of the ark was left behind in Jerusalem). The ark is alleged to be hidden in a church in the city of Axum, where it has been protected by generations of guardian monks.
- Fueled by the popularity of the movie *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, recent years have seen numerous searches and appeals for money to fund the recovery of the ark. A cave near the Dead Sea, or in one of the tunnels under Jerusalem’s Temple Mount, are only two of the suggested locations. Claims of having found the ark have never been accompanied by any pictures or other evidence.



*Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved,
a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who
correctly handles the word of truth.*

2 Tim 2:15 NIV



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Did the High Priest enter the Holy of Holies with a rope around his ankle?

John Hoole

January 23, 2005

It has been said that because the High Priest could be killed by God in the Holy of Holies if not properly prepared according to the precise instruction of God, a rope was routinely tied around his ankle. Then, if he dropped dead, his body could be dragged out, since no other person could enter the Holy of Holies.

There have been several versions of this story, such as having the rope tied around the waist. However, nowhere in Scripture is this described. Those who have researched this, from both Jews and Christians, are calling this an old legend.

They have tried to locate the original source, but what they have come up with is that this it didn't start until 600 to 700 years after Christ. This would be long after the last temple was standing.

HOW WOULD PEOPLE KNOW THE HIGH PRIEST HAD DIED?

Exodus 28:31-35 NIV

*31 "Make the robe of the ephod entirely of blue cloth,
32 with an opening for the head in its center. There shall be a woven edge like a collar
around this opening, so that it will not tear.
33 Make pomegranates of blue, purple and scarlet yarn around the hem of the robe, with
gold bells between them.
34 The gold bells and the pomegranates are to alternate around the hem of the robe.
35 Aaron must wear it when he ministers. The sound of the bells will be heard when he
enters the Holy Place before the LORD and when he comes out, so that he will not die.*

This has been interpreted as meaning that someone must listen outside the Holy of Holies for the bells. And as long as the priests outside could hear the bells tinkling, they would know the High Priest was still alive. Then if the sound would cease, those outside could tug on the rope to verify that he was still conscious or not.

This tradition is noted in Zondervan's NIV Study Bible, 1985 in their margin notes.

Dr. W.E. Nunnally, a professor of Hebrew and early Judaism, has reported:

"The rope on the high priest legend is just that - a legend. It has obscure beginnings in the Middle Ages and keeps getting repeated. It cannot be found anywhere in the Bible..."

The Biblical Studies Foundation - loosely associated with Dallas Theological Seminary has similarly studied this legend - with similar results.

Joseph Good of Hatikvah Ministries points out that the bells were attached to a robe of blue cloth, worn under the ephod whereas the priest wore only the linen tunic, sash, turban and undergarments to enter the Holy of Holies. In other words, the High Priest did not wear the bells when he entered the Holy of Holies.

Leviticus 16:2-4 NIV

2 The LORD said to Moses: "Tell your brother Aaron not to come whenever he chooses into the Most Holy Place behind the curtain in front of the atonement cover on the ark, or else he will die, because I appear in the cloud over the atonement cover.

3 "This is how Aaron is to enter the sanctuary area: with a young bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering.

4 He is to put on the sacred linen tunic, with linen undergarments next to his body; he is to tie the linen sash around him and put on the linen turban. These are sacred garments; so he must bathe himself with water before he puts them on.

When the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies, he was to wear a set of special linen garments. Did you notice earlier when we read from **Exodus 28:31-35** that, in **verse 35**, it said he wears the blue robe with bell when entering the Holy Place Look at it again.

Exodus 28:35 NIV

35 Aaron must wear it [the blue ephod with the bells] when he ministers. The sound of the bells will be heard when he enters the Holy Place before the LORD and when he comes out, so that he will not die.

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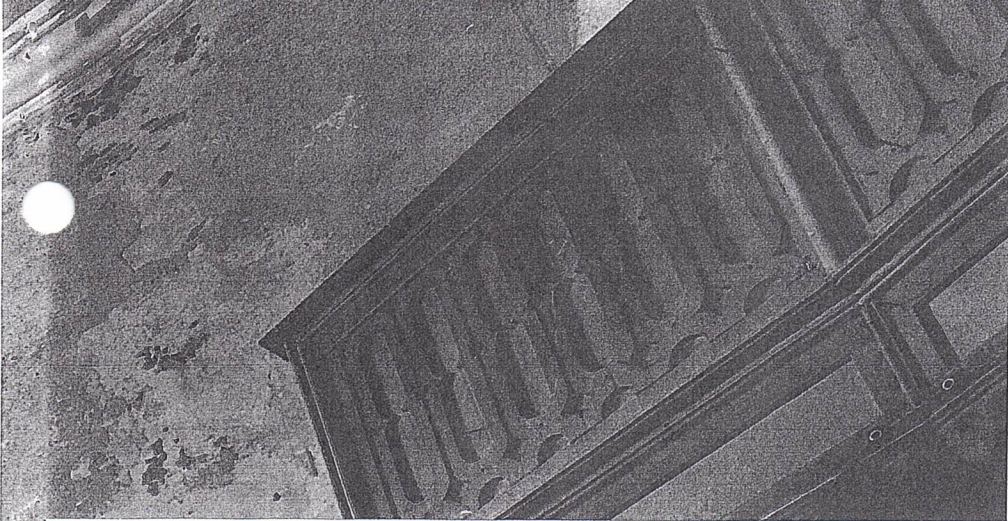
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Question: "Did the high priest have a rope tied to him when he entered the Holy of Holies?"

Answer: There is a tradition that the high priest of Israel would enter the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle / Temple with a rope tied to his foot and/or with bells around his waist. Tradition says that when the High Priest went into the Holy of Holies at Yom Kippur during the last couple of centuries of the Temple, a scarlet rope was tied to his foot. A priest in the Holy Place tended the other end of this rope, which had a purpose. If the High Priest's sins were not atoned for properly, he would die in the presence of the shekinah—the glory of God—that filled the Holy of Holies. Since nobody else could enter that part of the Temple without also dying, the priests felt they needed a way to retrieve the body of the High Priest, if necessary. That was the purpose of the rope—to pull the body out. The bells jingling would be the sign that the priest had fallen to the ground dead.

If true, this would be a powerful reminder of God's holiness and how we should praise Jesus for the direct access to God's throne He provides! However, the Bible does not record such a practice. In fact, the Bible has specific instructions regarding what the high priest can and cannot wear (Exodus chapters 28-35). It seems highly unlikely that God would allow this practice.

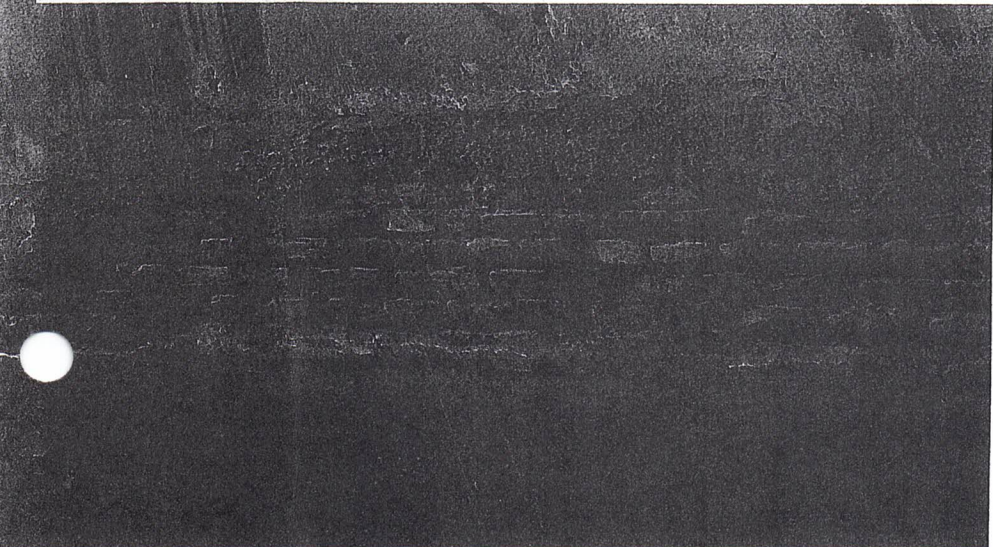
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WHAT WENT WRONG

**A look at the downward spiral
of the Aaronic priesthood.**

by David M. Levy



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Contrary to what some people think, the concept of priesthood did not originate with Israel. In the patriarchal period, the male head of each household functioned as a mediating priest on behalf of his family. Job (Job 1:5), Noah (Gen. 8:20), Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all erected altars and sacrificed animals to God.

After God delivered Israel from Egypt, He wanted to make the nation a kingdom of priests with direct access to Him (Ex. 19:4-6). But Israel sinned, breaking the covenant it had made with God at Mount Sinai (v. 5), and forfeiting the privilege of becoming a kingdom of priests.

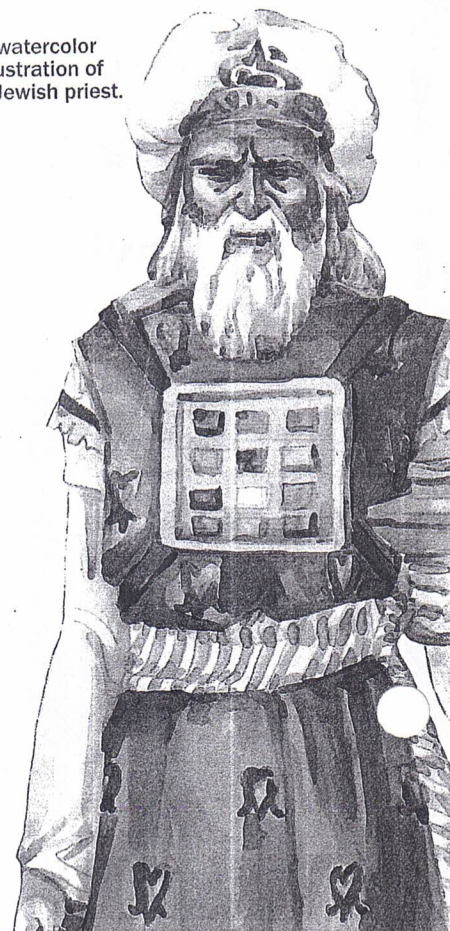
That forfeiture birthed the Aaronic priesthood, a system that grew more corrupt with age until it even demanded the crucifixion of its own Messiah.

The Aaronic priesthood was established when God commanded Moses to take his brother, Aaron, and Aaron's sons from the tribe of Levi and designate them as priests (28:1). Aaron, the high priest, was consecrated in an elaborate ceremony. His body was washed with water; blood atonement was offered on the altar for his sins; holy anointing oil was poured over him; and beautiful, official garments were draped on his body for service. In the decades to follow, the priesthood was passed down through Aaron's family.

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The priests' sacred responsibility was to represent the Israelites before God, and God before the Israelites by declaring God's will to the people, teaching the Mosaic Law, caring for the Tabernacle and Temple, and offering sacrifices in worship to God.

*
A watercolor illustration of a Jewish priest.



“ **Priests could have no physical defects and were rejected for service if they failed to meet the qualifications recorded in Leviticus.**



The word *priest* (Hebrew, *kohayn*) means “one who officiates.” Priests were not self-appointed but divinely called by God, deriving their authority directly from Him. They interceded for the Israelites by offering gifts and sacrifices for their own sins and those of Israel (Heb. 5:1–4). Priests could have no physical defects and were rejected for service if they failed to meet the qualifications recorded in Leviticus 21:17–21.

Priests also labored under certain restrictions. They were not permitted to defile themselves by participating in funerals, except those of family (Lev. 21:1–4). They could not shave their heads, beards, eyebrows, or make any cuts in their flesh (19:27–28). Nor were they to marry a profane (secular or unspiritual) woman, divorcée, prostitute, or widow. A priest had to marry a virgin (21:7, 14). Years later, Nehemiah condemned the priests for taking heathen wives (Neh. 13:25, 28). Other restrictions are listed in Leviticus 22.

The priests’ sacred responsibility was to represent the Israelites before God, and God before the Israelites by declaring God’s will to the people, teaching the Mosaic Law, caring for the Tabernacle and Temple, and offering sacrifices in worship to God (Dt. 33:8–10).

Over time, however, the priesthood grew corrupt, and priests often abused their calling and position. For example, Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of the high priest Eli during the days of Samuel, forcibly took the peoples’ offerings and slept with women at the door of the Tabernacle. As punishment, God severed Eli’s house from the priesthood of Israel (1 Sam. 2:17, 22, 31–36).

The prophet Malachi detailed the priesthood’s corruption (Mal. 1:6–2:9).

The priests defamed God’s sacred name by showing contempt for it and not giving Him honor or glory. Furthermore, they seemed unaware of their corruption and calumny, having the audacity to ask, “In what way have we despised Your name?” (1:6).

The priests offered defective sacrifices in the Temple (vv. 7–8). Malachi sarcastically urged them to take the blind, crippled, and diseased animals to the governor and see if he would accept them. No credible priest would dare offer such worthless things to the governor. How much more insulting to offer them to the God of the universe.

The priests had demeaned the Temple by their despicable



“

Aaron, the high priest, was consecrated in an elaborate ceremony. His body was washed with water; blood atonement was offered on the altar for his sins; holy anointing oil was poured over him; and beautiful, official garments were draped on his body for service.

actions and attitudes. God was angry that there was no conscientious, devout priest to step forward and close the Temple until the sinful practices were terminated (v. 10). The priests showed no respect for either the Lord’s table (altar) or its fruit (meat offering) (v. 12).

So God cursed the priests and the way they performed their duties before Him (2:1–9). He warned them to turn from their wicked ways because if they continued down the path of disobedience, He would send the same curses prophesied against Israel as it entered Canaan (Dt. 27:9–26; 28:15–68).

Other prophets also relayed God’s condemnation of the corrupt priests (cf. Jer. 5:31; Lam. 4:13–20; Ezek. 22:26; Hos. 5:1; 6:9; Mic. 3:11; Zeph. 3:4).

By the time Jesus began ministering on Earth, the priesthood was beyond redemption. Priests were full of pride, projected a pseudo piety, and misused their power. They sought to murder anyone who threatened their position or authority or their nefarious means of acquiring massive wealth by manipulation.

Jesus predicted the high priest would reject, arrest, and convict Him and call for His crucifixion—a prophecy that came true (cf. Mt. 16:21; 20:18; Lk. 24:20). The chief priests continually tried to obtain false testimony against Jesus so they might have Him put to death (Mt. 26:59).

Both the Jewish religious authorities and Roman political

authorities put Jesus on trial. Each held three hearings, totaling six trials. The Jewish religious leaders brought Jesus before Annas then Caiaphas, both high priests, though Annas was no longer in office. Then Jesus went to trial before the Sanhedrin.

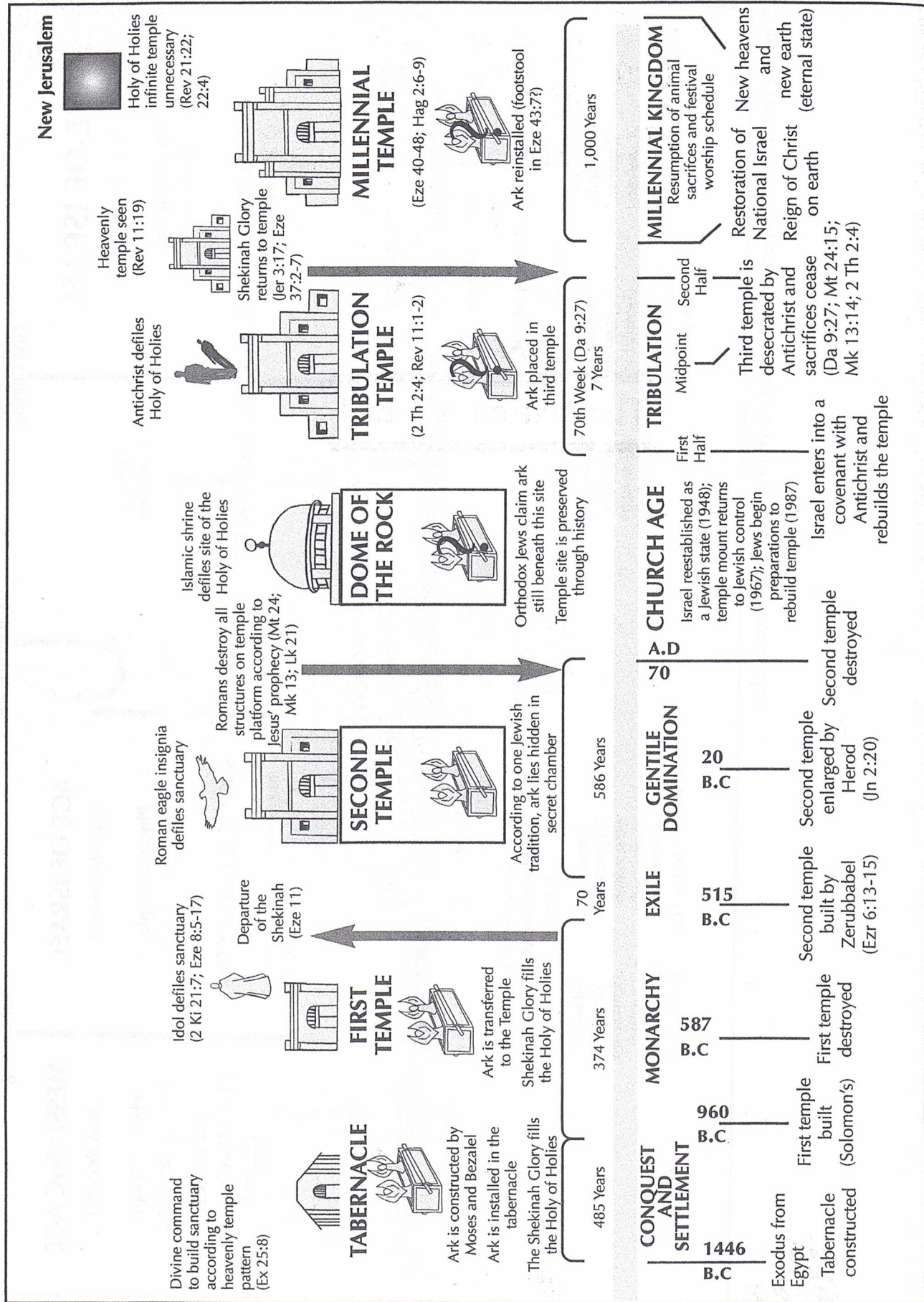
Jesus was also arraigned before the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, who sent Him to Herod for questioning, after which Herod sent Him back to Pilate. Pilate heeded the desire of a mob that called for Jesus’ crucifixion. After Jesus was brutally scourged, He was led away and crucified (Mt. 27:11–50).

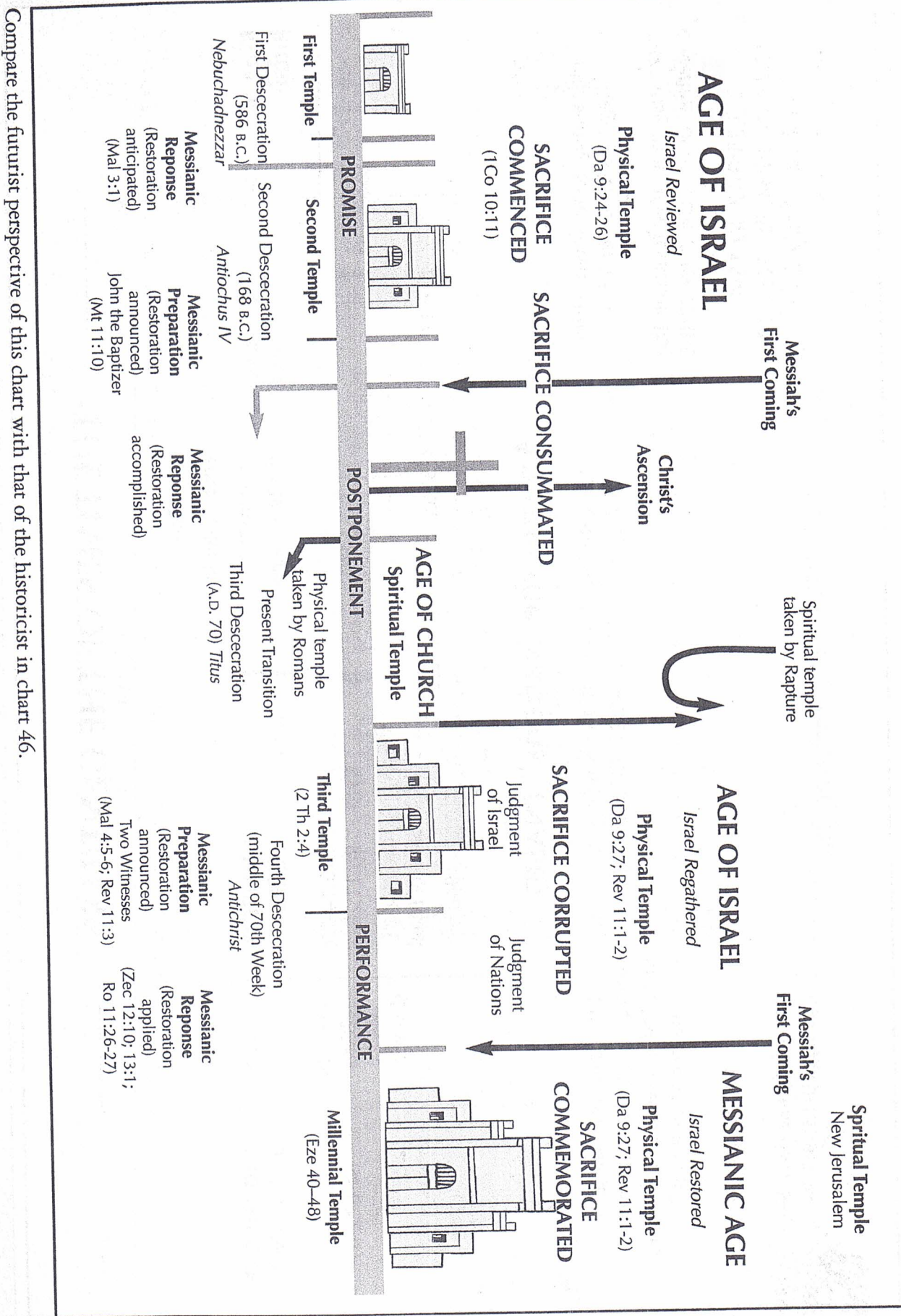
All these trials were illegal, according to Jewish and Roman law. But by then, the Jewish priesthood had sunk so low it bore little resemblance to the office God instituted in the wilderness of Sinai when He commanded Moses to take Aaron, his brother, and Aaron’s sons and consecrate them to serve Him.



David M. Levy is the director of Worldwide Ministry Development and a Bible teacher for The Friends of Israel.

61. The Sacred Sanctuary in History and Prophecy





Compare the futurist perspective of this chart with that of the historicist in chart 46.