



Following the introduction<sup>1</sup>, this **second** part of this series of studies describes **how a disciple of Jesus Christ prepares** and is **ordained** a priest in the order of Melchizedek.

Only then is he/she ready to enter the court of the Tabernacle and take the first step along the new and living way, which is Jesus Christ.

### God seeks man.

Adam and Eve broke their relationship with God through their disobedience in paradise. Nevertheless, He did not abandon His creation and He still supports seeking human beings.<sup>2</sup> For, as the Holy Spirit hovered over the waters of the earth at creation, so does He, as the eyes of God, still ...

- ... *range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.*  
(2 Chronicles 16:9)

However, the restoration of the relationship with God only became possible with the coming of Jesus Christ into the world.

Forgiveness of sins through faith in Him, results in life to the full being received, as Jesus testifies of Himself:

- *I have come so that they (His sheep) might have **a life that surpasses everything.***  
(Johannes 10:10 – freely translated)

This superlative life is received in a life in relationship with Jesus Christ.

### The coming of Jesus Christ.

To make this superlative life possible, Jesus came to the world and established a new priesthood here, in the order of Melchizedek, of which He is the high priest.<sup>3</sup>

He desires that everyone who believes in Him should accede to this priesthood, in order to live the superlative life, with the commission, as stated by Peter:

- *But you are a chosen people, a **royal priesthood**, a holy nation, God's special possession, that **you may declare the praises of him** who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*  
(1 Peter 2:9)

As a foretaste of this priesthood, after the Exodus from Egypt, God had designated Aaron and his descendants as priests. They were to serve in the sanctuary, the tabernacle, which Moses was to set up in the wilderness, according to the pattern that God had shown him in heaven.

There is much to be learned from the legislation for this Levitical priesthood under the high priesthood of Jesus Christ, even though it is subject to change.

### The tabernacle and floor plan.

The tabernacle, also called the tent of meeting, consisted of a **sanctuary** divided into the **Holy Place** and the **Most Holy Place**, which were separated from each other by a veil.

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1 Study: The priest in the order of Melchizedek (1).

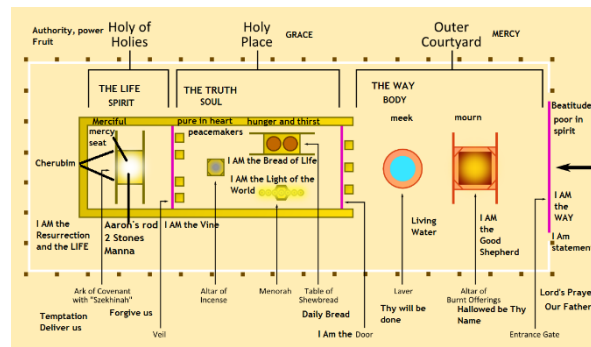
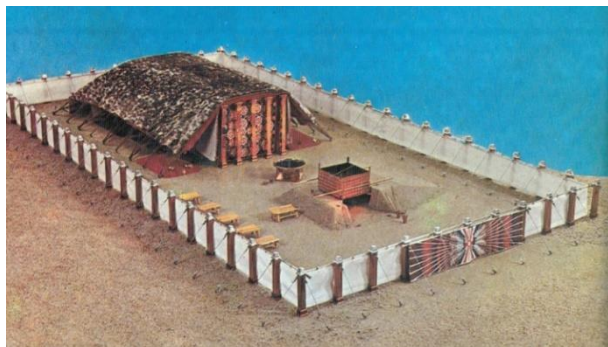
2 Study: God did not leave His creation in the lurch.

3 Study: Hebrews 7:12 - Change of priesthood.



In front of this sanctuary was a **courtyard**.

The whole structure was surrounded by a linen wall 5 cubits high (+/- 2m50).



## Difference in priesthood.

### The Old Testament:

After the Exodus from Egypt, God had designated the tribe of Levi to serve in the tabernacle. They are called the **Levites** in the Bible.

From the tribe of Levi, God had appointed the family of **Aaron** as **priests**.

The male descendants of Aaron were therefore **priests by natural birth**.

They had no choice and were **ordained** as priests to fulfil their duties in the Tabernacle as soon as they were 25 years old. (Numbers 8:24)

They vouched for the offerings on the altar of burnt offering in the **courtyard** of the tabernacle and took care of the items in the **sanctuary**.

Only the **High Priest**, once a year on the Day of Atonement, had access to the **Most Holy Place**, the place where God was present.

### The New Testament:

By his death and resurrection from the dead, Jesus established a new priesthood in this world, in the order of Melchizedek, of which He is the high priest. One is born into this new priesthood by **spiritual birth**, as a disciple of Jesus Christ, after which the disciple is also **ordained a priest** in the order of Melchizedek.

As Jesus explained to Nicodemus<sup>4</sup>, upon **conversion** a man or woman is **begotten** by God to new **spiritual life**.<sup>5</sup> This allows him/her to **see** the Kingdom of God.

Then, when he/she accepts the **authority** of Jesus over his/her life and this becomes visible in the life of the believer, he/she **enters** the Kingdom of God as a **disciple** of Jesus Christ.<sup>6</sup> This equates to a **spiritual birth**.

Peter exhorts therefore:

- *As you come to him, the living Stone - rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him - you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 2:4-5)*

4 Study: John 3:3-5 - Conversion and discipleship.

5 Study: Conversion.

6 Study: Discipleship (1).



## Access the priesthood in the order of Melchizedek.

God chose the **tribe of Levi** from the **nation of Israel** to minister in the tabernacle, and, from them, **Aaron** and his descendants as **priests**.

The rest of the tribe of Levi, the **Levites**, were to assist the priests in carrying out their duties **at (not in)** the tabernacle (i.e. in the **courtyard**) and they were also responsible for maintenance and transportation, according to their job description given to Aaron in Numbers:

- *Bring your fellow Levites from your ancestral tribe to join you and assist you ... They are to be responsible to you and are to perform all the duties of the tent, **but they must not go near the furnishings of the sanctuary or the altar**. Otherwise both they and you will die.*  
(Numbers 18:2-3)

Derived from the Hebrew '**lavah**' (which is translated as 'to join', 'to join up with'), the name **Levi** means:

- **connected** - in the sense of connecting, joining (OLB)
- **to join** (Hebrew dictionary)

From the tribe of **Levi**, God appointed **Aaron** as high priest and his sons as priests.

The name **Aaron** means: **bringer of light**.

According to the meaning of these names, **Aaron and his sons**, of the tribe of Levi, were **joined together** and as a priestly family, **bringers of light** for the people of Israel.

### Spiritual significance:

By their conversion, **Jesus** brings together people who **join** and **connect** with Him and with one another.

As priests in the order of Melchizedek, they are sent into the world as **bringers of light**.

Jesus said:

- ***I am the light** of the world. **Whoever follows me** will never walk in darkness, but **will have the light of life**.* (John 8:12)
- ***While I am in the world**, I am the light of the world.* (John 9:5)

Later He says to His disciples:

- ***You are the light** of the world. In the same way, **let your light shine** before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.* (Matthew 5:14 and 16)

Jesus, the new 'Aaron', as **The Light**, the high priest in the order of Melchizedek, calls people to connect with Him and, as priests/disciples, as '**bringers of light**', to shine His Light into the world. In other words: to reflect Jesus in the world.

## The ordination as a priest in the order of Melchizedek.

The sons of Aaron, priests by birth, had to be **ordained** to the **priestly ministry** before they were able to fulfil their commission in the tabernacle.

Likewise, the **believer** also prepares him/herself to become a bringer of light in the world, through his **ordination as a priest**.

At the ordination of the sons of Aaron as priests:

- a. their bodies were washed
- b. they were clothed with the priestly garments

### **a. The washing of the body:**

God commanded Moses:

- *Then bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance to the tent of meeting and **wash them with water**. (Exodus 29:4)*

To be ordained a **priest in the order of Melchizedek**, the disciple must also be cleansed by washing in water.

As Paul writes:

- *... just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, **cleansing her by the washing with water through the word**, ... (Ephesians 5:25-26)*

And Jesus said to His disciples:

- *You are already **clean because of the word** I have spoken to you. **Remain in me**, as I also remain in you. (John 15:3-4)*

It is not enough just to **hear** the **words** of Jesus and to know that one is **connected** to Him, as a new priest.

Jesus calls us to follow Him, with the command '**abide in Me**'.

It is important to take the words of Jesus to heart, in order to become spiritually clean and to maintain this purity.

Listening to Jesus and embracing His words means, letting go of ideas and habits from the old life. This is **conversion**<sup>7</sup>, to which the warning is attached:

- *No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain **in me**. (John 15:4)*

This points to the second part of priestly ordination.

### **b. Being clothed in the priestly garments:**

At their ordination as priests, Moses was to clothe Aaron and his sons with the holy garments in which they would serve in the tabernacle and be identifiable to the people.

God had set special regulations for these clothes:

- *For Aaron and his sons, they made **tinics of fine linen** - the work of a weaver - and the **turban of fine linen**, the **linen caps** and the **undergarments of finely twisted linen**. The **sash** was made*

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<sup>7</sup> Study: Conversion.



of **finely twisted linen** and **blue, purple and scarlet** yarn - the work of an embroiderer - as the Lord commanded Moses. (Exodus 39:27-29)

**Note on undergarments:** The Hebrew word here does not only mean undergarments, but is also used for outerwear. Think of Joseph's ornate robe.

### Linen:



Linen is a fabric that is woven from flax thread.

Flax thread is a fine yarn that is spun from the fibres of flax. In order to extract these fibres, the flax has to undergo a whole series of processes.

Clothes woven with flax thread are **pleasant to wear**.

It is **soft**, but also **strong and durable** and with **use** it becomes **softer and stronger**.

Linen clothing can absorb up to 20% of its own weight in moisture before it feels damp itself.

Because this moisture is also easily released into the air, it remains **fresh and dry** to the touch.

Where fine linen is mentioned in the Bible without mentioning the colour, it can be assumed that the clothing was **white**.

### Linen clothing:

The priestly garments of fine linen also symbolise a commission:

- *Fine linen stands for the **righteous acts** of God's holy people. (Revelation 19:8)*

Jesus gives the commission:

- *In the same way, let **your light shine** before others, that they may **see your good deeds** and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)*

No one is going to do 'righteous deeds' by putting on the linen priestly garment.

The priest/disciple is **clothed** with fine linen, by his/her righteous deeds i.e. his/her **walk in the new state of life**. These are proof of royal priesthood and show Jesus, as the Light, to the world. This requires a **choice** and a **course of life** resulting from love for God and one's neighbour.

According to God's command, the priests were to wear linen garments, because:

- *... they must **not wear any woollen** garment while ministering at the gates of the inner court or inside the temple (tabernacle). (Ezekiel 44:17)*
- *They must not wear anything that makes them perspire. (Ezekiel 44:18)*

This points to the promise of Jesus, which calls:

- *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and **I will give you rest**. Take my yoke upon you and **learn from me**, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For **my yoke is easy and my burden is light**. (Matthew 11:28-30)*



This is what John writes in his first letter:

- *In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And **his commands are not burdensome**, for **everyone born of God** overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. (1 John 5:3-4)*

Living under the yoke that Jesus offers and being clothed in fine linen clothing means:

- accepting the authority of Jesus and taking His teaching to heart
- living life together with Jesus
- being aware of the commission in this world
- in which doing righteous deeds under His authority is a pleasant commission
- that is gradually experienced as soft, from a character that grows stronger
- in order to find the perfect inner peace for the soul.

Bearing the burden of life with Jesus means that the burden becomes light and does not cause sweat.

This does **not** mean that a priest in the order of Melchizedek will never encounter difficulties in his life, or that he will not have to make difficult decisions.

It **does** mean that one is not overwhelmed by them, because the priest/disciple **learns to handle them** in a life together with Jesus.

### What are the righteous deeds?

A few Bible texts by way of explanation:

- **Love the Lord your God** with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. (Deuteronomy 6:5) (see also: Matthew 22:37 - Marc 12:30 - Luke 10:27)
- *Love the Lord your God and **keep** his requirements, his decrees, **his laws and his commands always**. (Deuteronomy 11:1)*
- *Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but **love your neighbour as yourself**. I am the Lord. (Leviticus 19:18)*
- *But the **fruit of the Spirit** is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. (Galatians 5:22)*
- *Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, **clothe yourselves** (literally: fasten, sink into) with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. (Colossians 3:12)*

### The undergarments and the sash:

The undergarments and the sash of the priests' linen were made of **finely twisted linen**.

**Fine twisting** is tightly twisting several threads into one thread.

Finely twisted linen in Moses' time is believed to have consisted of 6 flax yarns twisted together into a thicker, stronger thread.

The **undergarments and the sash** were therefore made of a linen fabric that was less fine but stronger.

### Significance of the sash:

The sash was made of a **multi-coloured** linen weave. The colours thereof identify the priest in the order of Melchizedek in his/her calling and from whom he/her derives his authority:

- bleu speaks of **heaven**
- purple refers to the **authority** of Jesus as **king**



→ scarlet refers to the **redemptive work** of Jesus as **priest**<sup>8</sup>

These colours **confirm** the priesthood of the disciple of Jesus Christ, as Peter says:

- *But you are a chosen people, a **royal priesthood**, a holy nation, God's special possession, **that you may declare the praises** of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. (1 Peter 2:9)*

Like the first part of the spiritual armour from the Epistle to the Ephesians, the identity of the priest in the order of Melchizedek is confirmed by the sash, as Paul writes:

- *Stand firm then, with the **belt** of (inner) truth buckled **around your waist**, ... (Ephesians 6:14)<sup>9</sup>*

### **Ready to enter the courtyard:**

Whoever comes to faith in Jesus Christ, repents and is ordained a priest, is at the beginning of a totally new life.

The Bible provides a great perspective, because the priest/disciple is allowed:

- ***Let us then approach God's throne of grace (kindness) with confidence**, ... (Hebrews 4:16)<sup>10</sup>*

Unlike the service in the Tabernacle, where only Aaron as high priest had access to the Most Holy Place only once a year, the priest in the order of Melchizedek has free access **at any time of the day** to the place where God sits enthroned between the cherubim.

There are a number of conditions attached to this, however, because there is only **one door** that gives access to the tabernacle. Jesus said of Himself:

- ***I am the gate**; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. (John 10:9)*
- ***I am the way** and the truth and the life. **No one comes to the Father** except through me. (John 14:6)*

There is also only **one way** that leads to the throne of God:

- *Therefore, ... since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place **by (literally: in)**<sup>11</sup> **the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way** opened for us **through the curtain, that is, his body**, ... (Hebrews 10:19-20)*

### **Remark:**

In this text **by** has been added to the translation.

Literally, in Greek, it says: *Therefore, ... since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place, **in the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way** opened for us ...*

In a manner of speaking the blood of Jesus is the red carpet, rolled out from the entrance of the courtyard of the tabernacle, to before the ark in the Most Holy Place.

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8 Study: Psalm 22:6 - I am a worm.

9 Study: Spiritual armour.

10 Study: Grace - definition.

11 Study: Word study of the little Greek words epi, en, eis.



Jesus **does not point** the way, the **blood of Jesus IS** the **new** and **living way** to the Most Holy Place, **where one meets God**.

That means that the priest/disciple does not only live by the forgiveness of sins that Jesus wrought 2,000 years ago, by dying vicariously on the cross at Golgotha.

**Nor** does he/she also only live exclusively through forgiveness, received in the **past**, at conversion.

The priest/disciple **lives** in the remission of sins, every moment of the day, at every step in life.

This is an **attitude to life** of:

- receiving forgiveness (by acknowledging and confessing mistakes)
- forgiving others (70 times 7 times - Matthew 18:22)<sup>12</sup>

This is fundamental to receive the superlative life, through the new and living way, according to the promise of Jesus in John 10:10.

In this series of studies several points of interest are presented for this life in the presence of God. Here, the symbolism contained in the various objects in the Old Testament tabernacle is an example.

This symbolism can become reality at the moment of conversion, but can also be experienced step-by-step during life as a priest in the order of Melchizedek, under the high priesthood of Jesus Christ.

### **Summarised:**

The priest in the order of Melchizedek, who will enter the courtyard of the tabernacle **through the first curtain**:

- has been **cleansed** in his soul by the Word and knows how to distinguish between what is good and what is not good
- **listens** to the Word of God and **cleanses** herself from worldly ideas
- **agrees** to live according to what is expected of him/her, as a priest/disciple.

To be continued in section 3, on the meaning of the tabernacle and the altar of burnt offering in the courtyard.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Study: To forgive – word study.

<sup>13</sup> Study: The priest in the order of Melchizedek (3).