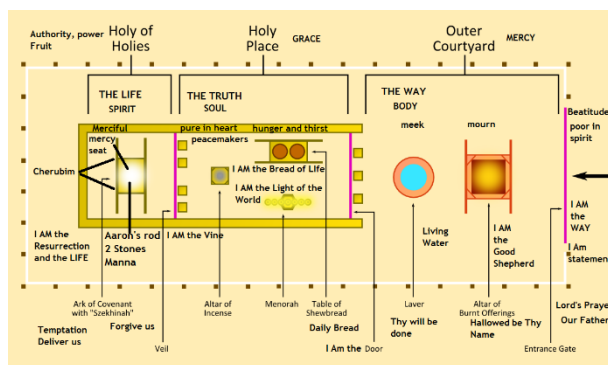
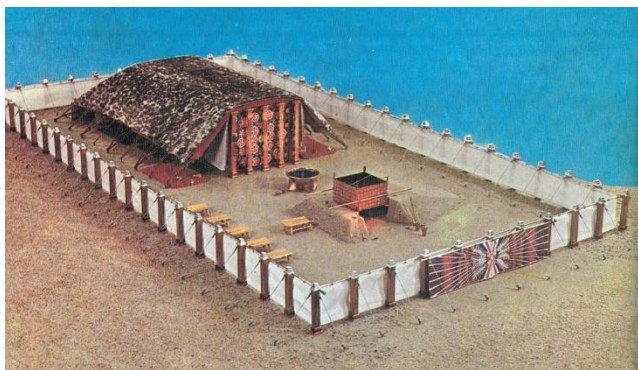




Following an introduction¹ and the ordination as a priest², this **third** part of the series of studies about the priest in the order of Melchizedek, looks first at the significance of the tabernacle in the life of the priest/disciple today.

Then the **first curtain** is discussed and, thereafter, the **altar of burnt offering**, the first object that the priest/disciple encounters in the courtyard of the new and living way through the tabernacle.

Review of the floor-plan of the tabernacle:



The significance of the tabernacle today.

After the exodus from Egypt, according to God’s commandment, Moses was instructed to set up the tabernacle, in which the priests performed their ministry for the glory of God and in the service of the people.

The **tabernacle** consisted of a **courtyard** and a **tent, the sanctuary** with the **Holy Place** and the **Most Holy Place**. All this was surrounded by a linen wall 5 cubits high (2m25).

Later, in the land of Canaan, King Solomon built a temple. This temple was destroyed by the Babylonians, later rebuilt and finally destroyed by the Romans in the year 70 AD.

The people of Israel were then driven out and the priestly service terminated.

The priesthood in the order of Melchizedek, instituted by God with Jesus Christ as high priest, is a **spiritual priesthood** and therefore has no tent as a tabernacle or a stone building as a temple.

The priest/disciple therefore performs his/her activities in a **spiritual temple**, as Peter writes:

- ... 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 2:5)

Jesus said to the Pharisees:

- Destroy **this temple**, and I will raise it again in three days. ... But the **temple** he had spoken of **was his body**. (John 2:19 and 21)

Paul writes to the believers at Corinth:

- **Now you are the body of Christ**, and **each one of you is a part of it**. (1 Corinthians 12:27)

Thus, as **part of the body of Jesus Christ**, the priest in the order of Melchizedek is himself a temple, but also **part of the temple of God today**, as Paul writes:

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

2 Study: The priest in the order of Melchizedek (2).



- For **we** are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people. (2 Corinthians 6:16)

The priest in the order of Melchizedek, as a member of the body of Jesus Christ and part of the temple of the living God, performs his ministry:

- **in his body** (**you** are the body of Christ)
- as part of the **church**, locally and worldwide (**we** are the temple of the living God).

This is why Paul also writes:

- Do you not know that **your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit**, who is in you, whom you have received from God? **You are not your own**; you were bought at a price. **Therefore honour God with (literally: in³) your bodies.** (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

Aaron's descendants had no choice and were predestined by their lineage to serve as priests in the tabernacle.

A priest in to the order of Melchizedek must also realise that his/her life does not belong to himself/ herself. He/she is expected to volunteer as a priest **to glorify God with his/her body** throughout the whole of his/her life.

Remarks:

General:

Honour God **with** your body, would be better translated as ‘honour God **in** your body’, according to the use of the little Greek word ‘**en**’, which indicates the place where the action takes place. The body, as a spiritual temple, is the place **where** God is glorified through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

The disciple/priest glorifies God through who he **is**, and this becomes visible in his/her actions. Through the renewal of the mind, his/her **character** and **personality** is formed under the authority of Jesus Christ. That will become **visible** in the world, **by** the way he/she manages the body in life.

The courtyard:

In the courtyard the priest in the order of Melchizedek pauses at the **altar of burnt offering** and the **laver**. He/she makes **choices** that determine the direction of his/her life.

Those choices are very **personal**, whereby the priest/disciple should not allow himself/herself to be distracted by what the world has to offer. This is why the courtyard was fenced off with a linen wall 5 cubits (2m25) high.

The Holy Place:

The Holy Place, together with the Most Holy Place, the actual tabernacle, was a completely enclosed space.

In the privacy of the **Holy Place, the symbol of the soul**, the priest/disciple meets Jesus as the **Light**, carried by the **lampstand** and as the **bread** on the **table of the bread of the Presence**.

By accepting in the Holy Place, Jesus as the Bread, the Word in his/her soul, the priest/disciple will understand what the words of Jesus mean when He said:

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



- *On that day you will realize that **I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.***
(John 14:20)

As the third object in the Holy Place, the priest/disciple comes to stand before the **altar of incense**. The Levite priest stood before the curtain. The priest in the order of Melchizedek is here in full view of the ark however, as the curtain was torn at the moment when Jesus died on the cross.

The Most Holy Place:

The Most Holy Place was where God was enthroned between the cherubim above the atonement cover of the **ark**.

Because the priest in the order of Melchizedek stands at the altar of incense with his/her face directed towards the ark, this is where he/she becomes acquainted with the full character of God.

Entering the courtyard through the first curtain.

When someone becomes aware that his/her soul remains unsatisfied and calls on Jesus to change that, and:

- is prepared to **listen** to what Jesus teaches in His Word
- accepts the responsibility of **wishing to live differently** and thus being clothed with the 'linen priestly garments',

he/she is ready to be ordained as a priest in the order of Melchizedek, which is described in the second part of this series of studies.⁴

As a priest, he/she hereafter takes the first step along the 'new and living way' by entering the court through the first curtain, the only entrance to the tabernacle.

For strength, this curtain was made of fine twined linen, like a multi-coloured weave, according to God's commandment to Moses:

- *For the **entrance to the courtyard**, provide a **curtain** twenty cubits long, of **blue, purple and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen** - the work of an embroiderer ... (Exodus 27:16)*

Twisted: Flax thread consisting of 6 twisted yarns of flax.

Significance of the colours:

- **Blue(-purple)** speaks of **heaven**
- **(red-)purple** points to Jesus' **authority as king**
- **scarlet** points to Jesus' **work of redemption as priest**⁵

The curtain symbolizes Jesus as king-priest, with the emphasis here on Jesus as **priest**.

To enter the court **through the first curtain** means to enter the way to the sanctuary, **through** Jesus Christ, as He said:

⁴ Study: The priest in the order of Melchizedek (2).

⁵ Study: Psalm 22:6 - I am a worm.



- ***I am the gate***; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. (John 10:9)

The significance of the curtain:

To enter through the first curtain into the court is **to be clothed with the blood of Jesus**.

Isaiah prophesied:

- *“Come now, let us settle the matter,” says the Lord. “Though your **sins are like scarlet**, they shall be as white as snow; though they are **red as crimson (Hebrew: red as the worm)**, they shall be like wool.* (Isaiah 1:18)

Whoever comes to believe has lived without God’s law and is **coloured scarlet because of sin**. Scarlet red, also called crimson, is the colour of **blood**, the colour that **the worm** *Coccus Illicis* takes on when it dies and colours the larvae.

The death of the worm symbolizes the death of Jesus, making forgiveness of sins possible through faith in Him.

The priest in the order of Melchizedek, who, following ordination as a priest, enters the court through the first curtain, **through Jesus**, is **covered** at that moment with the **scarlet blood of Jesus**. The scarlet sins of the priest/disciple’s past are thus washed away, by covering them with the scarlet blood of Jesus.

This is symbolised by the **first sacrifice** that the **high priest** made on the Day of Atonement, the **sin offering**, which God says is made:

- *... for **anyone who sins unintentionally or through ignorance**; ...* (Ezekiel 45:20)

Or, as Paul wrote, on the Day of Atonement the high priest was allowed to come to the throne of God before the ark:⁶

- *... only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had **committed in ignorance**.* (Hebrews 9:7)

The priest/disciple may thus enter the courtyard and begin the journey along the new and living way through the tabernacle, free from the sins of the past, as Paul writes:

- *Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behaviour. But now he (Jesus) has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present **you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation** ...* (Colossians 1:21-22)

By taking the **first step** along the new and living way, the priest in the order of Melchizedek is **cleansed from the sins of the past by the blood of Jesus Christ**.

The duties of the priest in the courtyard:

The duties of the Levitical priests in the courtyard of the tabernacle consisted of:

- offering the sacrifices on the **altar of burnt offering**, the fire of which was not allowed to go out

⁶ Study: The Great Day of Atonement.

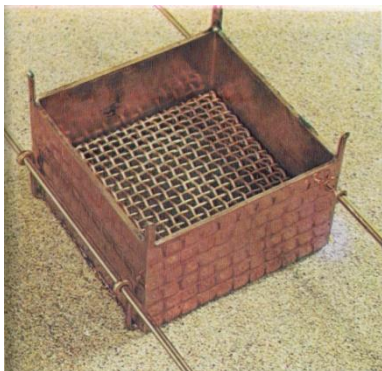


- washing hands and feet at the **laver**⁷, before he
- was allowed to enter the sanctuary through the **second curtain**

These were **mandatory assignments** for the **descendants of Aaron**, associated with their duties as priests.

For the **disciple**, who lives in a relationship with Jesus Christ, as a **priest in the order of Melchizedek**, these are **spiritual symbols** that give direction to his/her life.

The significance of the altar of burnt offering.



In the courtyard, the attention of the priest in the order of Melchizedek is first drawn to the **altar of burnt offering**.

According to Leviticus 16:24, the **high priest** offered a **burnt offering** on it **once a year**, on the Great Day of Atonement:

- a. for himself (and the priestly family)
- b. for the people

Jesus did not have to offer this burnt offering for Himself. In the letter to the Hebrews, in the chapters about **Jesus as the high priest** in the order of Melchizedek, a description is given about how, on the cross of Golgotha, He offered this burnt offering (for the priestly family and) for the people:

- ... **once for all** when he offered **himself**. (Hebrews 7:27)
- ... thus obtaining **eternal redemption**. (Hebrews 9:12)

a. The significance of the burnt offering for the priestly family:

The **sin offering** is mentioned as being brought by the high priest for **himself and his house**.

This is not said of the **burnt offering** on the Great Day of Atonement. Then, Aaron sacrificed his **burnt offering for himself** and **one for the people**. (Leviticus 16:24)

Jesus did not offer a burnt offering for Himself on the cross of Golgotha. He was without sin. He then only offered the burnt offering for the people and more specifically for the priest/disciple standing in the courtyard.

In that **one sacrifice** on the Great Day of Atonement Jesus wrought **eternal redemption**, by which He took away the curse upon sin for the **priest/disciple**, by becoming the curse Himself.⁸

For:

- Christ **redeemed** us from the curse of the law by **becoming a curse** for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole. (Galatians 3:13)

The disciple of Jesus Christ, ordained as a priest in the order of Melchizedek, received remission of past sins when he/she entered the courtyard through the first curtain, i.e. through Jesus Christ.

⁷ Study: The priest in the order of Melchizedek (4).

⁸ Study: The law and the curse.

Remission of the penalty for sins is not automatic, however:

- *If we **confess** our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)*

Clothed with Jesus:

The law concerning burnt offerings states that:

- *The priest who offers a burnt offering for anyone may keep its **hide** for himself. (Leviticus 7:8)*

Before the sacrificial animal went up in smoke on the altar of burnt offering, it was skinned. The only thing that remained after the animal's sacrifice was the skin, its **outward appearance** so to speak.

This may sound strange, but when Jesus, after his death and resurrection, returned to the Father, only his 'outward appearance' remained, as it were, in this world.

This outward appearance is the image of the church, the assembly of the priests/disciples worldwide, as Paul writes:

- *... **for all of you** who were baptized into Christ have **clothed yourselves with Christ**. (Galatians 3:27)*
- *Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, **clothe yourselves** with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. (Colossians 3:12)*

Clothe is the translation of 'enduo', which means 'to go within', 'to sink into'.

Putting on Christ, or **putting on the skin** of Jesus Christ, means receiving the mind of Jesus Christ in the heart. In this way the priest/disciple's actions and conduct make Jesus visible in the world.

b. The significance of the burnt offering for the people:

By offering Himself as a sacrifice on the cross of Golgotha, Jesus brought about complete reconciliation **not only** for the priests/disciples, **but also** for the people.

- *All this is from God, who reconciled **us to himself** through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling **the world** to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he **has committed to us the message of reconciliation**. (2 Corinthians 5:18-19)*

By accepting the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the priest in the order of Melchizedek is reconciled to God.⁹

In addition, he has also been instructed to take a stand for reconciliation **in the world**.

Jesus lived in complete obedience to the Father. Despite His personal wishes and desires, He effaced Himself in order to be able to walk the most difficult way of the cross.

He laid his life on the altar of burnt offering so that people might be reconciled to God.

Likewise, Paul calls upon the priests in the order of Melchizedek:

- *Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer **your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God** - this is your true and proper worship. (Romans 12:1)*

⁹ Study: Forgiveness - basic principles 1.



- *For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone. If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, **we belong to the Lord.** (Romans 14:7-8)*
- *We are therefore **Christ's ambassadors**, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: **Be reconciled to God.** (2 Corinthians 5:20)*

The priest in the order of Melchizedek is commissioned to go forth as the messenger of Jesus Christ and to call the world to be reconciled to God.¹⁰

That is why Jesus also gave the commission:

- *Therefore go and make **disciples** of all nations, ... **and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.** (Matthew 28:19-20)*

Remark:

The fire on the altar of burnt offering was first kindled by God Himself at the dedication of the tabernacle (Leviticus 9:24). It always had to stay alight.

This means that **Jesus** is **always** ready to **forgive sins** and that the way is always open for the priest/disciple to be **reconciled** to God.

Likewise, in the order of Melchizedek, the priest must **always** be ready to forgive and bring about reconciliation, regardless of personal wishes and desires.

In the courtyard the priest/disciple also stands before the laver on his/her way through the tabernacle.

This is discussed in the next study in this series.¹¹

¹⁰ Study: Forgiveness - basic principles 2.

¹¹ Study: The priest in the order of Melchizedek (4).