



Levitical Priesthood

The Levitical Priesthood was an Old Testament priesthood authorized under the Mosaic Law. This specialized priesthood was based on genealogy and physical qualifications. Three characteristics of the Levitical Priesthood are they were chosen of God, they were set apart or holy, and they were permitted to “draw near” which is a spiritual function. Num. 16:5.

“and he spoke to Korah and all his company, saying, “Tomorrow morning the LORD will show who is His, and who is holy, and will bring him near to Himself; even the one whom He will choose, He will bring near to Himself.” (Numbers 16:5, NASB)

Aaron was appointed the first high priest. Exod. 28:1; Num. 18:7-8.

““Then bring near to yourself Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the sons of Israel, to minister as priest to Me—Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron’s sons.” (Exodus 28:1, NASB)

““But you and your sons with you shall attend to your priesthood for everything concerning the altar and inside the veil, and you are to perform service. I am giving you the priesthood as a bestowed service, but the outsider who comes near shall be put to death.” Then the LORD spoke to Aaron, “Now behold, I Myself have given you charge of My offerings, even all the holy gifts of the sons of Israel I have given them to you as a portion and to your sons as a perpetual allotment.” (Numbers 18:7-8, NASB)

The priesthood was to descend through Aaron’s four sons, but only two survived. However, any sons of Aaron’s with any physical defects disqualified them. Num. 18:1; Lev. 21:17-23.

“So the LORD said to Aaron, “You and your sons and your father’s household with you shall bear the guilt in connection with the sanctuary, and you and your sons with you shall bear the guilt in connection with your priesthood.” (Numbers 18:1, NASB)

““Speak to Aaron, saying, ‘No man of your offspring throughout their generations who has a defect shall approach to offer the food of his God. ‘For no one who has a defect shall approach: a blind man, or a lame man, or he who has a disfigured face, or any deformed limb, or a man who has a broken foot or broken hand, or a hunchback or a dwarf, or one who has a defect in his eye or eczema or scabs or crushed testicles. ‘No man among the descendants of Aaron the priest who has a defect is to come near to offer the LORD’S offerings by fire; since he has a defect, he shall not come near to offer the food of his God. ‘He may eat the food of his God, both of the most holy and of the holy, only he shall not go in to the veil or come near the altar because he has a defect, so that he will not profane My sanctuaries. For I am the LORD who sanctifies them.’”” (Leviticus 21:17-23, NASB)

Function of the Levitical Priesthood

Teach the Law (Bible doctrine). They handled the written Word. The prophets handled the verbal Word, which became written. Lev. 10:11.

“and so as to teach the sons of Israel all the statutes which the LORD has spoken to them through Moses.”” (Leviticus 10:11, NASB)

Offer sacrifices. Lev. 9.



Maintain the Tabernacle or Temple. Num. 18:3.

“And they shall thus attend to your obligation and the obligation of all the tent, but they shall not come near to the furnishings of the sanctuary and the altar, or both they and you will die.” (Numbers 18:3, NASB)

Conduct all rituals. Lev. 24:5-8.

“Then you shall take fine flour and bake twelve cakes with it; two-tenths of an ephah shall be in each cake. “You shall set them in two rows, six to a row, on the pure gold table before the LORD. “You shall put pure frankincense on each row that it may be a memorial portion for the bread, even an offering by fire to the LORD. “Every sabbath day he shall set it in order before the LORD continually; it is an everlasting covenant for the sons of Israel.” (Leviticus 24:5-8, NASB)

Inspect unclean persons. Num. 6:9-10.

“But if a man dies very suddenly beside him and he defiles his dedicated head of hair, then he shall shave his head on the day when he becomes clean; he shall shave it on the seventh day. ‘Then on the eighth day he shall bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons to the priest, to the doorway of the tent of meeting.” (Numbers 6:9-10, NASB)

Judge controversies. Deut. 19:17.

“then both the men who have the dispute shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who will be in office in those days.” (Deuteronomy 19:17, NASB)

Priests assisted by Levites on occasions when it is humanly impossible to perform the tasks, i.e. Passover and when offering thousands of sacrifices. 2 Chron. 35:14; 2 Chron. 29:34.

“Afterwards they prepared for themselves and for the priests, because the priests, the sons of Aaron, were offering the burnt offerings and the fat until night; therefore the Levites prepared for themselves and for the priests, the sons of Aaron.” (2 Chronicles 35:14, NASB)

“But the priests were too few, so that they were unable to skin all the burnt offerings; therefore their brothers the Levites helped them until the work was completed and until the other priests had consecrated themselves. For the Levites were more conscientious to consecrate themselves than the priests.” (2 Chronicles 29:34, NASB)

The priesthood was reorganized in David’s day into 24 orders. Some priests such as Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Zechariah also had the office of a prophet. The entire nation of Israel was originally intended to be priests, but the Golden Calf incident cut it off to just Aaron’s family. In the Church Age, every believer is a believer-priest. 1 Chron. 24:1-18.

“Since more chief men were found from the descendants of Eleazar than the descendants of Ithamar, they divided them thus: there were sixteen heads of fathers' households of the descendants of Eleazar and eight of the descendants of Ithamar, according to their fathers' households.” (1 Chronicles 24:4, NASB)

The Levitical Contract

The Levitical Contract was made with the Aaronic Priesthood. Reuben, as first-born was in line for this but he lost his ruler ship to Judah, his double portion to Joseph, and his priesthood to Levi, family of Aaron. Malachi 2:4.



““Then you will know that I have sent this commandment to you, that My covenant may continue with Levi,” says the LORD of hosts.” (Malachi 2:4, NASB)

Levi was faithful during the Golden Calf incident. Aaron failed, but the tribe of Levi did not fail. The Golden Calf incident was the first religious thing to hit Israel after the Exodus. Religion would have destroyed Israel. Levites at that time went with Bible doctrine all the way. They would not own land, but be communicators of Bible doctrine. Exodus 32:25-29.

“Now when Moses saw that the people were out of control—for Aaron had let them get out of control to be a derision among their enemies— then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, “Whoever is for the LORD, come to me!” And all the sons of Levi gathered together to him. He said to them, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘Every man of you put his sword upon his thigh, and go back and forth from gate to gate in the camp, and kill every man his brother, and every man his friend, and every man his neighbor.’” So the sons of Levi did as Moses instructed, and about three thousand men of the people fell that day. Then Moses said, “Dedicate yourselves today to the LORD—for every man has been against his son and against his brother—in order that He may bestow a blessing upon you today.”” (Exodus 32:25-29, NASB)

Phineas was especially faithful during the wilderness journeys. He was the grandson of Aaron and became the high priest eventually. When the contract was first given, they were born-again, they studied doctrine, and they communicated doctrine. Num. 25:10-13.

“Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned away My wrath from the sons of Israel in that he was jealous with My jealousy among them, so that I did not destroy the sons of Israel in My jealousy. “Therefore say, ‘Behold, I give him My covenant of peace; and it shall be for him and his descendants after him, a covenant of a perpetual priesthood, because he was jealous for his God and made atonement for the sons of Israel.’”” (Numbers 25:10-13, NASB)

The actual contract had repercussions on the Land and as such was related to the Palestinian Covenant. If the contract was fulfilled by obedience to Bible doctrine, the Land would have prosperity. If not, the Land would have cursing. Deut. 33:8-11.

“Of Levi he said, “Let Your Thummim and Your Urim belong to Your godly man, Whom You proved at Massah, With whom You contended at the waters of Meribah; Who said of his father and his mother, ‘I did not consider them’; And he did not acknowledge his brothers, Nor did he regard his own sons, For they observed Your word, And kept Your covenant. “They shall teach Your ordinances to Jacob, And Your law to Israel. They shall put incense before You, And whole burnt offerings on Your altar. “O LORD, bless his substance, And accept the work of his hands; Shatter the loins of those who rise up against him, And those who hate him, so that they will not rise again.”” (Deuteronomy 33:8-11, NASB)

The content of the Levitical Contract is given in Numbers 3:5-13 and Numbers 8:14-19.

“Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Bring the tribe of Levi near and set them before Aaron the priest, that they may serve him. “They shall perform the duties for him and for the whole congregation before the tent of meeting, to do the service of the tabernacle. “They shall also keep all the furnishings of the tent of meeting, along with the duties of the sons of Israel, to do the service of the tabernacle. “You shall thus give the Levites to Aaron and to his sons; they are wholly given to him from among the sons of Israel. “So you shall appoint Aaron and his sons that they may keep their priesthood, but the layman who comes near shall be put to death.” Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Now, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the sons of Israel instead of every firstborn, the first issue of the



womb among the sons of Israel. So the Levites shall be Mine. “For all the firstborn are Mine; on the day that I struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I sanctified to Myself all the firstborn in Israel, from man to beast. They shall be Mine; I am the LORD.”” (Numbers 3:5-13, NASB)

““Thus you shall separate the Levites from among the sons of Israel, and the Levites shall be Mine. “Then after that the Levites may go in to serve the tent of meeting. But you shall cleanse them and present them as a wave offering; for they are wholly given to Me from among the sons of Israel. I have taken them for Myself instead of every first issue of the womb, the firstborn of all the sons of Israel. “For every firstborn among the sons of Israel is Mine, among the men and among the animals; on the day that I struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified them for Myself. “But I have taken the Levites instead of every firstborn among the sons of Israel. “I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and to his sons from among the sons of Israel, to perform the service of the sons of Israel at the tent of meeting and to make atonement on behalf of the sons of Israel, so that there will be no plague among the sons of Israel by their coming near to the sanctuary.”” (Numbers 8:14-19, NASB)

Malachi 2:5-6 gives the function of the Levitical Contract. It functioned beautifully when fed Bible doctrine.

““My covenant with him was one of life and peace, and I gave them to him as an object of reverence; so he revered Me and stood in awe of My name. “True instruction was in his mouth and unrighteousness was not found on his lips; he walked with Me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many back from iniquity.” (Malachi 2:5-6, NASB)

However, Malachi 2:7-9 records the horrible failure of the people to keep this contract.

““For the lips of a priest should preserve knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. “But as for you, you have turned aside from the way; you have caused many to stumble by the instruction; you have corrupted the covenant of Levi,” says the LORD of hosts. “So I also have made you despised and abased before all the people, just as you are not keeping My ways but are showing partiality in the instruction.” (Malachi 2:7-9, NASB)

The priests in Malachi’s day were unbelievers. As such, they polluted the person of Christ and corrupted the work of Christ. Through the preaching of Malachi (420-400 BC) they got with it and had another golden era through Bible doctrine down to 323 BC.

Change in the Levitical Priesthood

Perfection (eternal fellowship with God) can’t be produced by the Levitical Priesthood. Since perfection can’t be produced by the Levitical Priesthood, it can’t be produced by the Mosaic Law which authorizes the Levitical Priesthood. Since the Levitical Priesthood and the Mosaic Law can’t produce perfection, there must be some change which can produce perfection. Heb. 7:12.

“For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also.” (Hebrews 7:12, NASB)

Therefore, in the Church Age, the priesthood of Aaron was replaced by the priesthood of Jesus Christ and the Mosaic Law was replaced by the spiritual life. Heb. 7:18-19.

“For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness (for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.” (Hebrews 7:18-19, NASB)

The Levitical priesthood is earthly and limited by death. The new priesthood is heavenly, eternal, and



universal to believers in the Church Age. These two priesthoods can't co-exist or mix. Therefore, the incompatibility of the Law and grace. Since the purpose of God is the production of perfection through the priesthood, the old Levitical priesthood must be set aside.