

**The  
Eternal  
Priesthood  
Covenant  
Or**

**Why Sacrifices in the Millennial Kingdom?**

**By**

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# *Introduction*

There are two priesthoods in Scripture. the Levitical, Aaronic priesthood and the priesthood after the order of Melchisedec.

Christ is the fulfilment of both priesthoods. He is our great high priest and has made atonement for us as Aaron did for Israel, but He is also made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

Little is known about Melchisedec. We have no record of his ancestry. He appeared on the scene of history mysteriously and disappears without any indication of his whereabouts or of any descendants. In this regard he was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ who had no beginning and will have no ending.

The Aaronic priesthood is inseparably linked to the nation of Israel and can only function while the nation is established in the land with its own Temple. It would also be true to say that the nation cannot properly function without the Aaronic priesthood.

Since God has indicated that Israel will return to the land and the Lord in the last days, one must expect the Aaronic priesthood to be restored.

This article shows from Scripture that there is an eternal priesthood covenant made by God with the descendants of Aaron which guarantees the restoration of the Aaronic priesthood. However, not all of Aaron's descendants will be able to participate in the restored priesthood; only those who are descendants of Phinehas and Zadok qualify to participate in offering sacrifices in the future millennial Temple.

The existence of an active priesthood necessitates the offering of sacrifices and the covenant of the eternal priesthood places beyond doubt the question of whether there will be sacrifices in the millennial kingdom of Jesus Christ.

# THE ETERNAL PRIESTHOOD COVENANT

**T**he question has often been asked, If Christ is the fulfilment of the types in the Old Testament and the sacrifices are fulfilled in the perfect sacrifice of Christ on the cross, **why are there sacrifices in the Millennium?** Amillennialists even accuse us of denying the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice by insisting that there will be a future Temple at Jerusalem where Jews will offer animal sacrifices both in the Tribulation (Israel's 70th "week") and during the 1,000-year reign of Christ on earth. The answer lies in the eternal priesthood covenant made by God with the sons of Aaron and in particular, with Phinehas his grandson. It was continued through Zadok in the days of David.

In answer to the charge that a return to animal sacrifices would constitute a denial of the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice, we hasten to point out that the Old Testament sacrifices could *"never...make the comers thereunto perfect...for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins"* (Heb.10:1-4). but they vividly proclaimed the perfect sacrifice

of Christ. Those sacrifices were *"a shadow of good things to come"* (Heb.10:1). In the same way, sacrifices in a future day will be **memorials, shadows**, proclaiming the Lord's death in much the same way that the bread and wine do in this age of the Church. So let us look at the covenants of Scripture.

A covenant is a legal agreement between two persons. A "will and testament" means the same but in addition requires the death of the person. Of the seven covenants the Lord made with man, **the Aaronic priesthood covenant is the least known.** In fact, all the commentaries I have referred to say virtually nothing about it. It would be a fair statement to make that most Christians have never heard of this covenant. Before we have a look at this covenant, it would be helpful to remind ourselves of the others.



### **Noahic Covenant (Unconditional):**

*“I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood...I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth” (Gen. 9:11-14).*

### **Abrahamic Covenant (Unconditional):**

*“I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee” (Gen.17:7).*

### **Sinaitic Covenant (Conditional):**

*“And he (Moses) took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words” (Exod.24:7-8).*

### **Palestinian Covenant (Conditional):**

*“These are the words of the covenant, which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, beside the covenant which he made with them in Horeb” (Deut.29:1).*

### **Davidic Covenant (unconditional):**

*“I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah” (2Sam.7:12-15; Ps.89:3-4).*

### **Calvary or New Covenant ( Conditional on repentance):**

*“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of **the everlasting covenant**” (Heb.13:20; See also Heb.8:13).*

These covenants were given by God to Noah, Abraham, Moses, David and to the Church however, **Israel awaits the New Covenant in the last days (Jer.31:31-40)**. Because the Lord gave the covenants, they are sure, trustworthy, and will not fail.

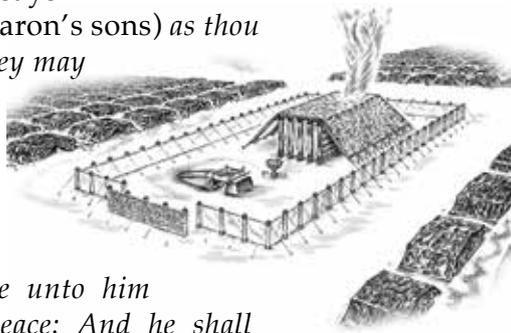
Some Covenants are unconditional and man has nothing to do with their fulfilment. This is in contrast to other covenants the Lord

made which require man to fulfil his part. The Sinai covenant was one such. It is referred to as the Old Testament or “old covenant” and is superseded by Calvary’s covenant or **new covenant** for the Church. The New Covenant is promised to Israel and includes material blessings for an earthly people. The Church is a heavenly people and partakes only of the spiritual elements of the covenant.

### **The Covenant with Phinehas**

The Calvary covenant with the Church contains the spiritual blessings of the new covenant which God will make with Israel in the last days. The Church now partakes of the “*root and fatness*” of the olive tree, Israel (Rom.11:17; Heb.8:10; 10:16). Much has been written about these covenants but **the covenant of the priesthood made with Phinehas is often overlooked**. Zadok, the priest in David’s day, entered into that covenant as we shall see. This is what the priesthood covenant says:

*“And thou shalt anoint them (Aaron’s sons) as thou didst anoint their father, that they may minister unto me in the priest’s office: for their anointing shall surely be **an everlasting priesthood** throughout their generations (Exod.40:15).*



*“Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him (Phinehas) my covenant of peace: And he shall have it, and his seed after him, **even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood**; because he was zealous for his God, and made atonement for the children of Israel” (Num.25:12-13). See Ps 106:30-31.*

Phinehas was the grandson of Aaron from the tribe of Levi which had been set aside to serve the Lord after Israel made the golden calf (Exod.32:26-29) and the background to the covenant with Phinehas is a sad story of events that happened toward the end of Israel’s forty-year wilderness journey.

Balak, the king of Moab, hired Balaam to put a curse on Israel but the Lord turned it into a blessing (Num.chs.22 to 24). Balaam then showed Balak how he could get Israel to sin against the Lord and thus bring His anger upon them. Instead of sending his army

against Israel the King of Moab sent an army of girls to meet them and it had devastating consequences. Israel played the harlot with the daughters of Moab and brought the anger of the Lord upon them: twenty four thousand Israelites died.

At the height of the plague, a prince of Israel took a princess of Moab into his tent for obvious reasons. We are given their names in Num.25:14-15. This was a brazen act done in the sight of Moses and the congregation gathered at the door of the Tabernacle and Phinehas, the son of Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, drove his javelin through both of them (Num.25:7-8). His actions stopped the plague and as a result, the Lord made this everlasting covenant with Phinehas.

The question is, What does this covenant mean? How has it been fulfilled in the past and how will it be fulfilled in the future?

Most, I would think, would say that the line of Phinehas is typical of the eternal priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ. This cannot be correct as our Lord came from the tribe of Judah and He is High Priest after the order of Melchisedec who was not a descendant of Israel.

The other covenants given to Noah, Abraham, Moses and David apply to literal people, so this covenant should be applied in the same way. Please note **what the covenant does not say**. It does not mention "high priest" but "priesthood." The high priestly position ceased when the Temple was destroyed in AD70 and the Aaronic priesthood will be restored when Christ returns but without a high priest.

The Bible gives the genealogy of Phinehas' descendants to the time of the captivity in 1 Chronicles chapter 6 and there is another brief genealogical record found in Ezra 7:1-5. Both genealogies show that the God-appointed line of priests was through Phinehas and later through one of his descendants, Zadok, who lived at the time of David. After the Babylonian captivity, Ezra was shown to be a priest in the covenant.

### **Zadok's Descendants to be Millennial Priests**

In the millennial Temple, only the priests who are descendants of Zadok will be qualified to serve (Ezek.44:15).

*"And the Levites that are gone away far from me, when Israel went*

# Aaron

Nadab

Abihu

Eleazar

Ithamar

*astray, which went astray away from me after their idols; they shall even bear their iniquity... But the priests the Levites, **the sons of Zadok**, that kept the charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from me, they shall come near to me to minister unto me, and they shall stand before me to offer unto me the fat and the blood, saith the Lord GOD: They shall enter into my sanctuary and they shall come near to my table, to minister unto me, and they shall keep my charge....”(Ezek.45:10-16).*

Zadok was a direct descendant of Phinehas and inherited the covenant of the priesthood but he was also rewarded for faithfulness to David.

We need to find out if this Zadok is of the line of Phinehas and therefore included in the **eternal priesthood covenant made with Phinehas**. We find his genealogical record of 1 Chron.6:4-8. Behind this is an interesting story.

At the end of the time of the Judges, the priesthood had shifted from the line of Eleazar

**Phinehas**

Abishua

Bukki

Uzzi

Zerahiah

Meraioth

(Azariah Ezra7)

Amariah

Ahitub

**Zadok** (Replaced Abiathar as high priest-1Kgs2:35)

Shallum

Hilkiah

Azariah

Seraiah

Jehozadak (went into Babylonian captivity

Ezra

(Ezra 7:1-5)

Line of Zadok to be priests in millennial temple Ezek.44:15

Eli

Hophni & Phinehas (killed by Philistines)

Ahitub son of Phinehas (1Sam.14:3)

Ahimelech, son of Ahitub (killed with 85 priests at Nob by Doeg on Saul's orders)

Abiathar son of Ahitub (escaped to tell David but later joined Adonijah in rebellion and was put out by Solomon).

Ahimelech, son of Abiathar

Shaded area represents the period when Ithamar's line were High priest

to the descendants of the fourth son of Aaron, Ithamar. Phinehas was from the third son, Eleazar. Remember, the first two sons Nadab and Abihu were killed in the tabernacle by the Lord when they offered strange fire before the Lord. After that, all priests were descendants of Eleazar and Ithamar but the high priest was normally from Eleazar's line.

At the time of Samuel's birth Eli was priest and he was from the fourth line; the line of Ithamar. Josephus, the Jewish historian, states that Eli was the first high priest from the line of Ithamar:

"5. (361) Now **Eli was the first of the family of Ithamar, the other son of Aaron**, that had the government; for the family of Eleazar officiated as high priest at first, the son still receiving that honor from the father which Eleazar bequeathed to his son Phineas; (362) after whom Abiezer his son took the honor, and delivered it to his son, whose name was Bukki, from whom his son Ozi received it; after whom Eli, of whom we have been speaking, had the priesthood, and so he and his posterity until the time of Solomon's reign; but **then the posterity of Eleazar resumed it.**"  
(*Antiquities*, Book 5, ch.11)

King Saul murdered Ahimelech the High Priest, a grandson of Eli, and 85 other priests in the city of Nob. Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech, escaped and fled to David for protection. Unfortunately, toward the end of David's life, Abiathar joined Adonijah when he tried to seize the throne.

When Solomon came to power, he removed Abiathar from the priesthood and replaced him with Zadok so the high priesthood **reverted to the line of Eleazar and Phinehas** to whom this everlasting covenant was given. Solomon's action fulfilled a prophetic curse against the descendants of Eli in 1 Samuel 2:31-36.

*"So Solomon thrust out Abiathar from being priest unto the LORD; that he might fulfil the word of the LORD, which he spake concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh"* (1 Kings 2:27).

When David appointed the 24 courses of priests to serve in the Temple he chose 16 courses from the line of Abiathar and 8 courses from the line of Ithamar (1Chron.24:3). The number of Ithamar's descendants was depleted by Saul when he slew 85 priests at Nob.

However, in the Millennial kingdom, only the descendants of Abiathar and Phinehas through Zadok will be permitted to serve in the offerings at the millennial Temple (Ezek.40:46; 43:19; 44:15). A special portion of the land will be allocated to the sons of Zadok adjacent to the millennial Temple:

*"It shall be for the priests that are sanctified of the sons of Zadok; which have kept my charge, which went not astray when the children of Israel went astray, as the Levites went astray" (Ezek.48:11).*

### **The Post-Exilic Period**

When the Jews returned from exile in Babylon under Zerubbabel the governor, he insisted that priests prove their genealogical connection to Aaron. The legitimate line to Phinehas was given in Ezra 7:1-5 and shows that Ezra was in the priestly line.

*"Now after these things, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra the son of Seraiah, the son of Azariah, the son of Hilkiah, The son of Shallum, the son of Zadok, the son of Ahitub, The son of Amariah, the son of Azariah, the son of Meraioth, The son of Zerahiah, the son of Uzzi, the son of Bukki, The son of Abishua, **the son of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the chief priest.**"*

To be priests and serve in the Second Temple Jews had to produce records tracing their ancestry back to **Phinehas**. If they could not they would have to wait for God to reveal it, if and when there was a high priest with Urim and Thummim. We read of certain Jews:

*"These sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but they were not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood. And the Tirshatha (Zerubbabel the Governor) said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things, **till there stood up a priest with Urim and with Thummim**" (Ezra 2:62-63).*

### **The Inter-Testamental Period**

At the end of the Old Testament period, we have a reference to the evil priests of the post-exilic time. They are reminded of their forefather, Phinehas. I believe God refers to the covenant of Exodus 40:15 which was confirmed to Phinehas in Num.25:12-13:

*"My covenant was with **him** (Phinehas) of life and peace; and **I gave them to him** for the fear wherewith **he feared me**, and was afraid before my name" (Malachi 2:5).*

The following verse is a reminder of this promise and the one given to Jeremiah at the time that Israel was taken into captivity.

*“For thus saith the LORD; David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel; Neither shall **THE PRIESTS THE LEVITES WANT A MAN** before me to offer burnt offerings, and to kindle meat (meal) offerings, and to do sacrifice continually” (Jer.33:17-18).*

We all know that Jesus Christ will be the next king of Israel, but what about these Levitical priests? The Lord had entrusted the priesthood to the descendants of Aaron in the tribe of Levi and it was a very important position of leadership. The people followed what the priest taught. You could say, “like priests like people.”

During the inter-testamental period, the office of the high priest became a political appointment resulting in a corrupt priesthood in Christ’s time. We know the nation of Israel at the present time has no high priest or priesthood and has been set aside by the Lord, however, the Lord will again deal with them as a nation in the Great Tribulation and beyond into the millennial kingdom of Christ on earth.

### **The Millennial Kingdom**

It would seem that there is no further evidence of this priesthood line until we reach a prophecy dealing with the future millennial Temple.

*“And thou shalt give to the priests the Levites **that be of the seed of Zadok**, which approach unto me, to minister unto me, saith the Lord GOD, a young bullock for a sin offering” (Ezek.43:19).*

Many Christians have difficulty understanding that there will be a millennial reign of Christ let alone a future Temple in Jerusalem with animal sacrifices. This priesthood covenant proves beyond doubt that this will in fact happen. No wonder those who oppose it turn a blind eye to this teaching.

Only a few Jews in our day know what tribe they belong to let alone if they are descendants of Phinehas and Zadok. What will happen is that the two witnesses of Revelation will appear and “restore all things” (Matt.17:11). This will include the identification of their tribal ancestry. At least 12,000 will be acknowledged from

the tribe of Levi (Rev.7:7). As well as this, they will be taught how to implement the animal sacrifices.

Many oppose this teaching because the Old Testament sacrifices were “*shadows*” of what Christ accomplished when he died for the sins of the world. What needs to be taken into consideration is that many millions of people will be born during these future ages that will need to be reminded of what our Saviour did for them. They will need to be saved like all the saints of every age through repentance and faith in Christ. Sacrifices will be **a memorial much like the Lord’s Supper is to us**. It will have a distinctive Jewish characteristic, as Israel will be the leading nation during this time.

The description of the Temple and its service given by Ezekiel covers many chapters and has never been built. The setting for this is when the nation of Israel is restored to the Lord and the everlasting Priesthood Covenant, as prophesied, will be fulfilled at that time. Ezekiel made it clear that, under the New Covenant which God will make with Israel, the Temple will be built.

*“My servant David shall be their prince for ever. Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will **set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore**”* (Ezek.37:25-28).

What happens after the millennium reign, as far as this covenant is concerned, has not been revealed but the twelve tribes of Israel will be identified on the twelve gates of the New Jerusalem (Rev.21:12). We can rely upon the Lord to keep His promises.

When John foresaw his Rapture into heaven (Rev.4:1-2), he saw the 24 elders appointed by David leading worship before the throne in heaven. Their priestly duties continue into eternity.

There can be no doubt that Israel, the Temple, the priesthood and sacrifices will all be a part of God-ordained worship in the millennial Kingdom of Christ on earth.