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THE GUARDIAN-PRIESTHOOD, THE SPECIAL PRESENCE
OF GOD, AND CHURCH DISCIPLINE: A BIBLICAL-
THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING
OF THE PRIESTHOOD

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THE GUARDIAN-PRIESTHOOD, THE SPECIAL PRESENCE
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THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING
OF THE PRIESTHOOD

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To my sons, Anderson and Eli Smith,
who bring immeasurable joy to my life;
I cherish you both as God's gifts and pray for you continually.

And to my parents, Scotty and Cathy Smith,
who have been a constant source of wisdom and encouragement
in my life and throughout my educational and ministerial pursuits.

I love all of you so very much.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ABD</i>	<i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
ANTC	Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
BAGD	W. Bauer, F. W. Gingrich, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Danker. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature.</i>
BDB	Brown, F., S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs. <i>Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon</i>
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
<i>BibSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CC	Continental Commentary
<i>CTR</i>	<i>Criswell Theological Review</i>
<i>DBT</i>	<i>Dictionary of Biblical Theology</i>
<i>DBSJ</i>	<i>Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal</i>
<i>DOTP</i>	<i>Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch</i>
<i>DTT</i>	<i>Dictionary of Theological Terms</i>
<i>EBC</i>	<i>The Expositor's Bible Commentary</i>
<i>EBD</i>	<i>Easton's Bible Dictionary</i>
<i>EDB</i>	<i>Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible</i>
<i>EDT</i>	<i>Evangelical Dictionary of Theology</i>
<i>EDBT</i>	<i>Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology</i>
<i>EDWM</i>	<i>Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions</i>
ETS	Evangelical Theological Society

<i>GOTR</i>	<i>Greek Orthodox Theological Review</i>
<i>HBD</i>	<i>Harper's Bible Dictionary</i>
HNTC	Holman New Testament Commentary
<i>IDB</i>	<i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JPS	The Jewish Publication Society
<i>JSHJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>LBD</i>	<i>The Lexham Bible Dictionary</i>
LXX	Septuagint
NAC	The New American Commentary
<i>NBD</i>	<i>New Bible Dictionary</i>
NCBC	New Cambridge Bible Commentary
<i>NDBT</i>	<i>New Dictionary of Biblical Theology</i>
NIBC	New International Biblical Commentary
NICNT	The New International Commentary on the New Testament
NICOT	The New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIGTC	The New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIVAC	NIV Application Commentary
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NPNF</i>	<i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</i>
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
NTC	New Testament Commentary

OTSS	Old Testament Survey Series
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary
<i>SBJT</i>	<i>The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology</i>
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
<i>TBD</i>	<i>Tyndale Bible Dictionary</i>
<i>Them</i>	<i>Themelios</i>
<i>TJ</i>	<i>Trinity Journal</i>
<i>TJT</i>	<i>Toronto Journal of Theology</i>
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
UBS	United Bible Societies
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>

PREFACE

Several key people have contributed in important ways to my spiritual, ministerial, and educational formation. My parents, Scotty and Cathy Smith, have always pointed me to our Lord, encouraging me to love Jesus and to love others. They have been a constant source of love and support as I have pursued my theological education, as I have dedicated my life to the service of the church, as I have sought to live out my daily life in allegiance to Jesus, and as I have endured the trials of life. My brother, Justin Smith, has also been a large help to me, encouraging me in my walk with Christ through every life stage and being someone on whom I could always depend.

Numerous friends have impacted me profoundly along the way. Kevin Means was instrumental in the early stages of my discipleship, being used mightily of the Holy Spirit to prick my heart and awaken my sleeping eyes to see and recognize my need to pursue Christ with greater steadfastness and persistence. Tyler Gordon has been a friend like no other, a sincere brother who loves Jesus and people, a friend who has walked with me through thick and thin, pointing me to the gospel at every juncture. J. D. Harrison has taught me what it means to be a friend and a pastor, modeling sincere humility, love, and interest in my life and overall walk with God. Numerous other friends have been important to me throughout this journey. Such co-laborers have been Zach Hensley, Adam Clemmons, Nathalie Stephan, Caleb Ball, Toby Jennings, Danny Schuman, Scott Lamb, Nick Moore, James Santos, Don Price, Julie Price, Mike Hamby, J. C. Kimmer, Bob Canida, Rick Fory, and Rich Plass.

I am immensely grateful for my home church, Anderson First Baptist Church of Anderson, Alabama, and for many of its faithful members who taught me of Christ.

Other churches have made a significant impact on my life as well, either through ministering to me or by allowing me to serve them in ministry. Ryker's Ridge Baptist Church of Madison, Indiana, entrusted me with the great privilege of serving as one of her pastors and encouraged me in my education. Sojourn Community Church of Louisville, Kentucky, has also molded me in significant ways. Calvary Baptist Church of Madison, Indiana, has loved, shepherded, and encouraged me.

I am indebted to the entire faculty at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. My professors have been used of God to shape me considerably. Stephen Wellum has helped me grasp the big picture of Scripture, giving me a proper hermeneutical framework to interpret God's Word. Though I did not have many opportunities to learn from Jim Parker in the classroom, he taught me much outside the classroom. His genuine love for people, as evidenced by his spending copious amounts of time with his students during his free time, taught me important lessons that classroom lectures cannot. My doctoral supervisor, Gregg Allison, has profoundly influenced me in the ways of God, having taught me to love God's Word, to love Jesus, and to love people. More than any other person, he has made me a better writer, researcher, and student of God's Word. He is one of the most gifted men I know, and yet he is one of the most humble as well. He has modeled Christ-likeness to me, and I hope to emulate his example throughout my life as I grow in grace.

I am so thankful for my dear sons, Anderson and Eli Smith. They are truly two of God's greatest gifts to me in all the world. They bring me immeasurable joy. It is a wonderful blessing to be their father. They have been and continue to be key in motivating me to be the man of God that I need to be and want to be. Indeed, they have been at the forefront of my mind as I have worked to complete this dissertation. I long for my sons to love Jesus with all their hearts, to be warriors for the kingdom of Christ, and I pray that God will somehow use me to influence them toward that end.

Lastly, I am most thankful to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who has saved me from the pit and has given me new life in him. He has granted me an abiding joy that transcends the changing circumstances of life. My prayer is that he would be pleased with the work that has gone into producing this dissertation and that he would see fit to use it for his glory, for the building up of the church, ultimately spurring on his covenant people in their work as priests.

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Anderson, Alabama

December 2019

CHAPTER 1
PRIESTHOOD, CHURCH DISCIPLINE,
AND BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

The impetus for this work arises from the contention that much of what has been commonly propounded concerning the biblical office of priesthood—and directly concomitant to it, the new covenant practice of church discipline—has been mistakenly disconnected from a proper biblical-theological framework. It is standard practice for theologians to understand the priestly identity based primarily on their understanding of the Israelite priesthood and its sacrificial duties. That is, for these theologians, their framework for conceiving of the biblical office of priesthood derives its constitutional data from those priests who served the nation of Israel.¹ For them, sacrifice is often thought to be the essential and defining duty for priests.² As a result, they understand the beginnings of the biblical office to have originated with sacrifice; thus, the priesthood is considered to have surfaced in seed form when individuals like Noah (Gen 8:20), Job (Job 1:5), Abraham (Gen 12:7; 13:4), Isaac (Gen 26:25), and Jacob (Gen 31:54) made

¹ In the resources that follow, the biblical office of priesthood is assumed to have begun with the priesthood that served the nation of Israel. There is no mention of the priesthood's origins in prior biblical epochs. See Richard D. Nelson, *Raising Up a Faithful Priest: Community and Priesthood in Biblical Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 3; Walter A. Elwell and Philip Wesley Comfort, "Priesthood," in *TBD* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 2001), 1073; John T. Swann, "Priest," in *LBD*, ed. John D. Barry and Lazarus Wentz (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012); Lawrence H. Schiffman, "Priests," in *HBD*, ed. Paul J. Achtemeier (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 821; D. A. Hubbard, "Priests and Levites," in *NBD*, ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., 3rd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 956.

² Peter Leithart points to several works that uphold sacrifice as the foundational priestly duty. See, for example, J. Barton Payne, "כֹּהֵן," in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 1:431; W. W. Baudissin, *Die Geschichte des alttestamentlichen Priesterthums* (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1889), 269; J. Auneau and Pierre Marie Beaudé, "Sacerdoce," in *Supplement au Dictionnaire de la Bible*, ed. L. Pirot (Paris: Letouzey & Ané, 1985), 10:1198; *The Westminster Shorter Catechism: The Confession of Faith* (Glasgow: Free Presbyterian, 1976), 293. See also Peter J. Leithart, "Attendants of Yahweh's House: Priesthood in the Old Testament," *JSOT* 85 (1999): 8n14.

sacrifices,³ yet they do not think it found its full expression until the Levitical priesthood, with its sacrificial cultus, was established as a part of the old covenant stipulations between God and the people of Israel.

John Owen, in his *The Priesthood of Christ*, is emphatic in his assertion that the notion of sacrifice is *the* essential and integral component that defines the office of priesthood. He says that “a priest, properly so called, is a sacrificer.”⁴ He, furthermore, suggests that priesthood and sacrifice

mutually assert or deny each other; and where the one is proper, the other is so also; and where the one is metaphorical, so is the other. Thus, under the old testament, the priests who were properly so by office had proper carnal sacrifices to offer; and under the new testament, believers being made priests to God, that is, spiritually and metaphorically, such also are their sacrifices, spiritual and metaphorical. Wherefore arguments against either of these conclude equally against both. Where there are no priests, there are no sacrifices; and where there are no sacrifices, there are no priests.⁵

Owen’s emphasis on sacrifice as the defining function of the priesthood is quite representative of the common understanding of the priesthood. This work argues that such a view of priesthood is incorrect and that it wrongly divorces the priestly office from epochs that both precede and follow the Levitical priesthood and its sacrificial system. This error has led to a skewed perception of priestly identity. In fact, as it will be demonstrated, the priesthood is a multifaceted biblical office with many duties, some of which preceded the sacrificial cultus and some that continue to persist after the great high priest, Jesus Christ, laid himself down as the once for all blood sacrifice for the sins of the world.

³ M. G. Easton, “Priest,” in *EBD* (New York: Harper, 1893).

⁴ John Owen, *The Priesthood of Christ: Its Necessity and Nature* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Heritage, 2010), 40. This work originally appeared in John Owen’s exposition of Hebrews. John Owen, “Concerning the Sacerdotal Office of Christ, Part IV,” in *An Exposition of the Epistle of Hebrews: With Preliminary Exercitations*, vol. 2, ed. William H. Goold (New York: Robert Carter, 1854), 3-262.

⁵ Owen, *The Priesthood of Christ*, 40-41.

An accurate conception of the new covenant practice of church discipline flows from a complete understanding of the priesthood. Much ink has been spilled in recent years over the topic of church discipline, though the basis for the practice has not typically been rooted in biblical-theological categories. Usually it is assumed that church discipline is strictly a New Testament teaching, with little or no mention of its Old Testament background;⁶ at least this seems to be the case with the majority of recent ecclesiologies and New Testament theologies.⁷ This work, however, aims to situate the practice of church discipline in its proper biblical-theological context, paying attention to the changing epochs of redemptive history and seeking to understand how they inform one's conception of the new covenant priestly practice of church discipline. Church discipline, properly understood, is not some New Testament contrivance that stands detached from the rest of the preceding biblical narrative. Instead, the New Testament practice of church discipline is integrally linked to the entire narrative of Scripture, particularly with respect to the biblical office of priesthood.

This observation stands in contrast to the vast majority of the church's historical teaching regarding the relationship between the new covenant priesthood and church discipline. Indeed, while much has been written on the "priesthood of all believers," historically, the church has rarely made a connection between the doctrine and

⁶ An exception to this general rule is Jeremy M. Kimble, *That His Spirit May Be Saved: Church Discipline as a Means to Repentance and Perseverance* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013).

⁷ The following treatments of the practice of church discipline cite almost no Old Testament passages in their formulation of the doctrine: Thomas R. Schreiner, "The Biblical Basis for Church Discipline," in *Those Who Much Given an Account: A Study of Church Membership and Church Discipline*, ed. John S. Hammett and Benjamin L. Merkle (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2012), 105-30; Gregg R. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 179-201; R. Stanton Norman, "The Reestablishment of Church Discipline," in *Restoring Integrity in Baptist Churches*, ed. Thomas White, Jason G. Duesing, and Malcolm B. Yarnell III (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), 199-220; Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 738-39; John S. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), 34, 63, 84, 105-7, 110-16, 124-26, 147-48, 285, 331-32; Edmund P. Clowney, *The Church*, Contours of Christian Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995); Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 894-900.

church discipline.⁸ That is, while the church has, at times, had much to say about the “priesthood of all believers,” church discipline has seldom been rooted in the new covenant corporate priestly identity.

⁸ The church’s understanding of the office and the practices of the priesthood have a complex history. Though the early church maintained the need for leaders (i.e., elders and deacons) in their congregations, the laity enjoyed the same priestly status as the leaders. As a result, the whole congregation played an integral role in the church, with each member understood to possess his or her own spiritual gifts, offering their spiritual sacrifices to God, taking part in the sacramental life of the congregation, and collectively seeking to uphold the discipline of their congregations. No one person—not even the leaders of the congregation—was exempt from the accountability of church discipline.

As time carried on, a more nuanced leadership structure was established, with bishops presiding over congregations and carrying greater authority to rule their congregations. This greater authority also meant that these bishops played a more prominent and exclusive role in the discipline of the congregation as they sought to manage a developing penitential discipline in which straying sinners were required to dedicate a season of time to contrition and service to the church before they would be readmitted to the sacramental and communal life of the congregation. Toward the end of this era, the members of the laity had all but been displaced from their position as priests, with the ministerial office now making exclusive claims to that title.

With the rise of the medieval era, the understanding of the identity of the priesthood changed drastically. While the priestly status of the laity got pushed further into the background, the bishops of the churches argued amongst themselves about whose bishopric was supreme and most authoritative. Eventually, the bishop of Rome would gain recognition as the sovereign bishop throughout Christendom and would even, at times, be believed to possess greater authority than any emperor or secular ruler. Thus, the development of the papacy was crystalized during this period.

Meanwhile, the guardian-priest task of church discipline fell to the wayside, transitioning from what had previously been considered a congregational and communal necessity for church health to what would then be relegated to a privatized meeting with one’s priest to offer confession and be assigned penitential works of satisfaction. Thus, church discipline was essentially replaced with the penitential system and private confession to a priest. As the medieval era drew to a close, several voices began crying for the reformation of the church, of the papacy, and of the church’s penitential system.

One voice in particular carried the most weight as Martin Luther brought criticisms against the church, gaining the support of many and ultimately sparking the Protestant Reformation. Luther helped to restore to the church a more faithful understanding of the priesthood of all believers and laid the groundwork for the restoration of a more faithful doctrine of church discipline. Though he maintained the need for dedicated and gifted leaders to serve congregations in ministerial roles, he nevertheless elevated the place of the laity, reestablishing their status as priests.

Luther’s vision would not reach its full potential, however, with the presiding civil authorities maintaining governmental rights over the churches. Though John Calvin would experience some success in his attempts to convince the civil rulers to allow his Genevan congregation the right to practice its own discipline, an eventual break from the state-governed church would become necessary for the full expression of congregational church government, the observance of a true priesthood of all believers, and the exercise of an unimpeded church discipline among churches. Puritan Separatists paved the way for these things to take place, with congregations breaking away from the state-led Church of England, starting new churches in Holland, and eventually migrating to America. These independent congregationalists enjoyed the right to observe a true priesthood of all believers while also being allowed to exercise the guardian-priest task of church discipline.

Churches persevered in maintaining these doctrines and practices from the seventeenth to the end of the nineteenth century. However, with the rise of individualism, moral relativism, and the notion of “soul competency,” the congregationally-focused doctrine of the priesthood of all believers would devolve into a more privatized doctrine of the priesthood of the believer, resulting in modern-day churches who have developed a disregard for regenerate church membership and the practice of church discipline. Thus, while the church has for abbreviated stints in its history upheld the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and practiced church discipline, the practice of church discipline has largely been disconnected from a robust doctrine of the priesthood of all believers.

The preceding historical survey of the office of the priesthood and its relationship to the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and the practice of church discipline is drawn from numerous resources: Cyrus Eastwood, *The Royal Priesthood of the Faithful: An Investigation of the Doctrine from Biblical Times to the Reformation* (London: The Epworth Press, 1963); Eastwood, *The Priesthood of All*

Thesis

When viewed in light of a proper biblical-theological framework, a picture of the true identity of the priesthood becomes clearer. Starting with a study of the beginning of the biblical metanarrative, it becomes obvious that Adam should be regarded as the prototypical priest, the first priest who delivers a model for what priesthood essentially is. Furthermore, Scripture shows that the Garden of Eden should be viewed as the archetypal temple. God created Adam and placed him in the Garden of Eden. Here Adam was divinely granted the privilege of abiding in the very presence of God and was commissioned to serve him by guarding the holiness of his Garden-temple (Gen 2:15). Being without sin, Adam's access to God did not require a mediator. Initially, Adam was responsible for attending to his personal holiness through his obedience to the Word of God. After God gifted Adam with a wife, his guardian duties extended to guarding the holiness of the people of God. Prior to his fall into sin, Adam guarded the holiness⁹ of

Believers: An Examination of the Doctrine from the Reformation to the Present Day (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1960); Colin J. Bulley, *The Priesthood of Some Believers: Developments from the General to the Special Priesthood in the Christian Literature of the First Three Centuries* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2000); Gregory A. Wills, "A Historical Analysis of Church Discipline," in *Those Who Must Give an Account: A Study of Church Membership and Church Discipline*, ed. John S. Hammett and Benjamin L. Merkle (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2012), 131-56; Michael A. G. Haykin, "The Development and Consolidation of the Papacy," in *Shepherding God's Flock: Biblical Leadership in the New Testament and Beyond*, ed. Benjamin L. Merkle and Thomas R. Schreiner (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2014), 119-40; Gregg R. Allison, "The Papacy from Leo I to Vatican II," in *Shepherding God's Flock*, ed. Merkle and Schreiner, 141-96; Martin Luther, "The Keys," trans. by Earl Beyer and Conrad Bergendoff, in *Luther's Works*, vol. 40, *Church and Ministry II*, ed. Conrad Bergendoff (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1958), 372-73; R. Albert Mohler Jr., "Church Discipline: The Missing Mark," in *Polity: Biblical Arguments on How to Conduct Church Life*, ed. Mark E. Dever (Washington, DC: Center for Church Reform, 2005), 43-56; John S. Hammett, "From Church Competence to Soul Competence: The Devolution of Baptist Ecclesiology," *Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry* 3, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 145-63; E. Y. Mullins, *The Axioms of Religion: A New Interpretation of the Baptist Faith* (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1908), 53-56.

⁹ Peter Gentry argues that "holiness" "means essentially 'consecrated' or 'devoted.'" See Peter J. Gentry, "The Meaning of 'Holy' in the Old Testament," *BibSac* 170 (October-December 2013): 408. Furthermore, he contends, "Holiness should not be defined as moral purity, but rather purity is the result of being completely devoted to God as defined by the covenant" (413). "Purity is a result of being holy in the biblical sense, but is not the meaning of the word" (417). In general, this dissertation follows Gentry's line of thinking regarding holiness, and yet it suggests further that the notion of moral "purity" is inseparably linked with "consecration" and "devotion," such that any mention of one is incomplete without the other. People, places, and things are considered "holy" as they are consecrated or devoted to God and that holiness must be guarded by priests. Further, the holiness of people, places, and things is compromised and defiled by immorality, injustice, and unrighteousness and is cultivated and preserved by a priestly commitment to guard and promote morality, justice, and righteousness. Scripture indicates, too, that it is possible to grow in holiness/sanctification as one is committed to deeds of righteousness. For example, Paul speaks of those who were once slaves to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness/lawlessness and who are now slaves to righteousness, which leads to holiness and sanctification; once the person has been set free from slavery to sin and is made a slave to righteousness, it should lead that person to greater holiness

God's temple and his people as he labored to personally obey God, teach the people of God, and manage the borders of the temple of God. Adam's management of the temple borders included principles of protecting the Garden from evil while also seeking to cultivate, improve, and expand the Garden. Together, he and his wife, who were both set apart by God as priests, labored to carry out these priestly ministries. Following their failure in their priestly guardian duty, other priestly functions became necessary, which enabled priests to succeed in their office. While Adam and Eve's pre-fall priesthood required them to be responsible for the priestly duties of attending to the Word of God and border management, redemptive history progressed and sin would later require them and other priests to begin sacrificing and mediating, while continuing to attend to the Word of God and border management.

This dissertation argues that the priesthood consists of people who, divinely granted access to the presence of God, are entrusted with serving God by guarding the holiness of his temple and his people through attending to the Word of God, border management, sacrifice, and mediation. Moreover, one of the priesthood's essential expressions in the new covenant is church discipline in both its formative¹⁰ and corrective aspects.

and sanctification (Rom 6:15-23). Again, Paul contrasts holiness with impurity: "For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness" (1 Thess 4:7). Furthermore, the writer of Hebrews encourages Christians to pursue holiness (Heb 12:14); those who have already been initially set apart, consecrated, and devoted to God in Christ in their regeneration are being urged to continue in their pursuit of greater holiness. Thus, no matter how one defines "holiness," it must not be decided that holiness is static, but rather dynamic. That is, the people of God may either become more or less holy, a status that is directly related to one's commitment to moral purity, righteousness, and Christ-likeness. Further, consecrated and holy places, such as God's temples, may be defiled if they are not guarded, thus compromising their holiness. When this dissertation, thus, speaks of holiness, it concerns consecration and devotion along with the resulting and ongoing commitment to moral purity, sanctity, and righteous behavior.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations come from the English Standard Version (ESV).

¹⁰ Though the term "formative" is used here, and will be used throughout this dissertation, the term "preventative" could just as easily have been used. "Formative" communicates a positive and forward-moving growth of the individual. The idea stems from the New Testament concept of transformation as God's people are progressively being "formed" or "transformed" (μεταμορφώω) into the image and likeness of Christ (2 Cor 3:18; Rom 12:2). "Preventative" communicates a more negative idea. The notion considers the fact that children are born into the world with sin natures (Gen 8:21; Ps 51:5; Prov 22:15; Eph 2:2-3). Because of this innate sinful disposition, sinners must be actively disciplined (ῥομίω; Deut 11:2; Job 5:17; Ps 50:17; Prov 3:11; 4:1; 12:1; 13:1) so as to "prevent" the consequences and effects of sin. Both of

Overview

Adam originally served as the first priest by guarding the Garden of Eden (the first “temple” of God) and his wife Eve (the people of God) against the invasion and defilement of evil. Upon her creation, Eve joined Adam, and together they served God as priests. Their priestly responsibility to manage and protect the borders of the Garden also included the priest-king notions of expanding the borders of the Garden over the face of the earth by multiplying God-fearing image-bearers through reproduction and by working, cultivating, stewarding, and establishing dominion over the earth. Adam, furthermore, received the moral command from God to obey his word and the responsibility to teach Eve the will and ways of God.

Adam failed to faithfully guard the temple and people of God when he allowed the evil serpent to enter the Garden, deceive his wife, and defile the Garden-temple of God. This failure led to Eve’s sin and the fall of mankind. As a result of man’s fall, Adam and Eve’s priestly role was interrupted. They were no longer allowed access to the manifest presence of God and the inner sanctum of the temple, Eden; indeed, they were expelled into the “outer courts,” away from the holiness of the Garden-sanctuary. Adam and Eve no longer possessed the unique priestly privileges they once enjoyed. Nevertheless, God did not renounce his original plan but instead reinstated Adam and Eve’s priestly role by introducing the sacrificial system with them, which would stand as a way of mediation between God and man and, thus, the restoration of man’s once-enjoyed access to the special presence of God.

During the patriarchal period the sacrificial duty of the priesthood would be carried out primarily by the heads of families through the act of altar-building. This practice also functioned as a way of reclaiming land—a holy space—for God and his people, effectively expanding the borders of God’s holy space. Altar-building would

these concepts—formative and preventative discipline—are discussed throughout this dissertation, and both ideas must be taken together when speaking of this aspect of church discipline.

remain as the primary means for priests to meet with, worship, and sacrifice to God until the Levitical priesthood—the institutionalized priesthood that would be established in Israel following the patriarchal period—was instituted and began serving God at the tabernacle and later at the temple. This arrangement would remain in place throughout Israel’s history, through the monarchial stage, and through the intertestamental period. Throughout both the patriarchal and monarchial periods, priests enjoyed access to the presence of God and were responsible for guarding the temple of God and the people of God by attending to the Word of God, border management, sacrifice, and mediation.

With the advent of the new covenant, the great high priest Jesus Christ came once and for all to perform and complete the priestly duty of blood sacrifice, doing away with the need for the blood of bulls and goats to be spilt, thus establishing a means by which he served and continues to serve as the sole mediator between God and man. The priestly duty of blood sacrifice finds its consummation in Jesus Christ.¹¹ Jesus’ atoning work on the cross springs from his priestly endeavor to reclaim, guard, and preserve the holiness of the temple of God and the people of God. As priest, Jesus (the new temple) was perfectly obedient to the Word of God and taught others according to the Word of God. He also sought to purify and cleanse the uncleanness of his people, the end result being that the elect would be transformed into holy people, those who are well-suited to dwell in the eternal house of God. Jesus’ work as priest also brought about the possibility of expanding the borders of the Garden to the ends of the earth and to the nations as his salvific work included the Gentiles among the elect people of God, making possible God’s goal of spreading his glory throughout the earth. Furthermore, Jesus carried out his role as priest, protecting the people of God, when he crushed the head of the serpent at the cross, judging the world and binding the strong man and casting out the ruler of this

¹¹ Though blood sacrifice was consummated in Christ’s atoning work on the cross, new covenant priests continue in the work of offering spiritual sacrifices to God (Rom 12:1; Heb 13:5; 1 Pet 2:5).

world, thus providing a means for the Garden-temple to finally begin spreading over the face of the earth as the nations are brought into the fold.

Jesus inaugurated the spreading of the Garden-temple through the granting of his special presence, that is, the Holy Spirit, to the people of God, which serves to preserve and maintain the holiness and purity of the people of God (that is, the new temple of God). This new covenant priesthood is comprised of believers who are both individually and corporately indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, every member of the new covenant is a priest.

The new covenant priesthood is commissioned to carry out the discipline of the church. That is, the new covenant priesthood is appointed by God to guard the holiness of the temple of God and the people of God, and they do this largely through the practice of church discipline in both its formative and corrective aspects. The Old Testament priesthood and Jesus' priesthood together present the necessary groundwork for a proper view of the new covenant priesthood, setting the stage for the new covenant practice of church discipline. Church discipline is, therefore, rooted in an accurate and holistic understanding of the identity of priests. Church discipline is practiced as priests seek to guard the temple of God and the people of God by attending to the Word of God, border management, sacrifice, and mediation.

This new covenant priestly reality will continue until the second advent of the great high priest and the final ushering in of the consummate kingdom and the new heavens and the new earth. The new Adam, the great high priest, will then bring to completion what he inaugurated at the cross. The *telos* of the Garden-temple will finally be realized as the eschatological sanctuary encompasses the entire cosmos. Reigning together with the great high priest Jesus Christ, the eschatological priesthood will continue to serve God as priests throughout eternity as they fellowship together in the manifest presence of God and serve him as they guard the holiness of God's sanctuary

and his people by attending to the Word of God, border management, sacrifice, and mediation.

Methodology

This dissertation presents a biblical-theological examination of the themes. After dealing with introductory matters in chapter one, chapters two through seven present the biblical material. Each chapter covers differing eras in redemptive history and explains the development of the priesthood in relation to God's special presence across each era. Chapter 2 addresses these matters with regard to Adam and Eve, chapter 3 with the patriarchal priesthood, chapter 4 with Israel's priesthood, chapter 5 with Christ's priesthood, chapter 6 with the new covenant priesthood, and chapter 7 with the eschatological priesthood. Finally, the dissertation offers a concluding summation of the overall work in chapter eight. Important matters of historical, theological, and practical significance are addressed throughout the work wherever it is relevant and instructive.

Some limitations restrict the scope of this dissertation. Though it provides a thorough analysis of the biblical text where it is especially important, the overall work is not exhaustive in terms of examining every relevant Scripture passage with the exegetical depth that could be accomplished if space permitted. Instead, the approach is to survey the pertinent biblical-theological material as it spans the biblical narrative.

In summary the dissertation begins by establishing a biblical-theological basis for the entire discussion by addressing canonically the germane passages of Scripture. Each chapter addresses the development of the priesthood across the varying epochs of redemptive history in relation to God's special presence. As the thesis is fleshed out from one chapter to the next, it is shown that while some discontinuity exists across the priesthood's development, there is nevertheless much continuity that characterizes the overall office of the priesthood throughout history.

CHAPTER 2

THE PRIESTHOOD OF ADAM AND EVE

The priestly office receives much attention in the Old Testament,¹ and so the scriptural source data for investigating it is plentiful. Specifically, this chapter identifies Adam as the first priest² and the Garden of Eden as the first temple, establishing the basis

¹ Priesthood is a common theme in the Old Testament. John Davies points out that the “word *kohen* occurs some 741 times in the Hebrew Bible, where it most commonly identifies a holder of the religious office.” John A. Davies, *A Royal Priesthood: Literary and Intertextual Perspectives on an Image of Israel in Exodus 19:6* (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 87. Richard Averbeck elaborates on the etymology of the term:

The primary word for “priest” in the Old Testament is the Hebrew masculine noun *kōhēn*, for which we have no certain etymology. It occurs approximately 750 times and can refer to priests of the one true God or of other supposed gods that other nations and sometimes also the ancient Israelites themselves worshiped (for the latter, see, e.g., Gen. 41:45, 50; 2 Kings 10:11, 19). Related terms are the verb *kāhan*, “to act as (or become) a priest” (23 occurrences), the feminine abstract noun *kēhunnā*, “priesthood” (14 occurrences; see Exod. 29:9; 40:15; Num. 3:10; 18:1, 7; 1 Sam. 2:36; Ezra 2:62; Neh. 7:64; 13:29, referring to the exclusivity, perpetuity, and responsibility of the Aaronic office of “priesthood”; cf. Num. 16:10 for Korah’s rebellion against the Aaronic exclusivity, and Josh. 18:7 for the “priesthood” of the tribe of Levi as a whole), and the Aramaic masculine noun *kāhēn* “priest” (8 occurrences, all in Ezra 6-7). Another Hebrew word, *kōmer*, “(idolatrous) priest,” occurs only three times in the Old Testament (2 Kings 23:5; Hos. 10:5; Zeph. 1:4) referring exclusively to priests of foreign gods. (Richard E. Averbeck, “Priest, Priesthood,” in *EDBT* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996], 633-37)

² This dissertation emphasizes Adam’s role as the prototypical priest and, indeed, the office of priesthood as it is developed across the narrative of Scripture. It is noted here that priesthood is only one facet that comprises what it means for Adam and humanity to be the image and likeness of God. It has been commonly observed that, as God’s image-bearer, Adam not only functioned as the prototypical priest, but also as the prototypical prophet and king. Adam was set in place to rule and serve as king, to exercise dominion over the created order. Moreover, Adam functioned in some ways a prophet as he was entrusted with handling and disseminating the divine Word of God. See L. Michael Morales, *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord?: A Biblical Theology of the Book of Leviticus*, NSBT 37 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 232-36; Richard P. Belcher Jr., *Prophet, Priest, and King: The Roles of Christ in the Bible and Our Roles Today* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2016), 5-11; Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 209-17.

Stephen Dempster further observes a “link between sonship and the image of God.” Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, NSBT 15 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 58-59. In similar fashion, Gentry and Wellum suggest that the expression “‘image of God’ in the culture and language of the ancient Near East in the fifteenth century B.C. would have communicated two main ideas: (1) rulership and (2) sonship.” Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 192. Schrock concludes that “Adam’s *imago Dei* conjoins sonship, priesthood, and kingship.” David Schrock, “Restoring the Image of God: A Corporate Filial Approach to the ‘Royal Priesthood’ in Exodus 19:6,” *SBJT* 22, no. 2 (2018): 31. Adam, who is regarded as “the son of God” (Luke 3:38) and image of God, carries out the offices of prophet, king, and priest. Looking forward into the biblical narrative, Morales brings each of these offices together in the person of Jesus Christ: “as the last Adam and

for both the divine sanctuary and the priestly office. Subsequent to Adam's creation, Eve is also entrusted with priestly responsibilities and exercises her priestly ministry as a complement to Adam's (Gen 2:18-20; cf. 1 Chr 23:28-32).³ Moreover, this chapter provides the foundation for a proper understanding of all of God's sanctuaries and all of the priesthoods that follow. Fundamentally, this chapter establishes the pattern for divine sanctuaries and shows that the priesthood, from the first to the last, consists of people who, granted access to the presence of God, are entrusted with serving God by guarding

true Israel, the Son of God dawned, as prophet, priest, and king, now conforming humanity to himself as the image and likeness of God." Morales, *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord?*, 236.

These offices can be very difficult to separate as their distinguishing elements are sometimes interwoven in their biblical presentation. Adam's priestly and kingly roles/offices are often portrayed together in Scripture, blurring the distinguishing lines between the offices. As a result, scholars often speak of biblical figures—be it Adam or other figures—functioning as a "priest-king." See Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 62; G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, NSBT 17 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2004), 70; Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 215.

As an example that illustrates this difficulty, this dissertation argues that procreation and work/cultivation are two elements of the priestly ministry, and yet they are also related to the kingly ministry. Whereas humanity's call to exercise dominion, to work, to cultivate the earth, and to engage in procreation all function in some way as kingly ministries to extend God's rule over the earth, they also exist as priestly ministries to guard and extend the presence of God and his temple throughout the world. Thus, this dissertation commonly uses the expression "priest-king" when both offices are in view.

³ God created Eve as a "helper" for Adam and as a complement to him (Gen 2:18-20). Both Adam and Eve are created equal in essence before God; indeed, they are both image bearers (Gen 1:27). Furthermore, as this chapter argues, it seems that Eve was co-responsible for the priesthood with Adam and shared in the overall priestly identity. Yet, differences also exist between Adam and Eve as they relate to one another as male and female, as husband and wife, and even as priests. While both enjoy unmediated priestly access to the divine presence, and while both are responsible for engaging in procreation, there is a sense in which Adam is responsible primarily as Eve's priestly leader, provider, and protector.

Ezekiel seems to describe Adam in high priestly terms (Ezek 28:13), depicting him as wearing the jewels that were found on the high priest's breastplate (Exod 28:17-20; 39:8-14). H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., *Ezekiel*, Pulpit Commentary, vol. 12 (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1909), 101-102; Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 75. If Ezekiel is speaking exclusively of Adam in high priestly terms (to the exclusion of Eve), it might indicate a distinction of sorts between Adam's and Eve's priesthood. It should be noted, however, that Ezekiel does not explicitly name Adam, so it is difficult to eliminate the possibility that both Adam and Eve are in view. Nevertheless, Eve's creation as Adam's "helper" establishes a distinction between Adam and Eve and the strong possibility that her priesthood was designed to function differently than Adam's and as a complement to Adam's.

Complementarity may be observed in other eras of priesthood as well. For example, while the whole Levitical tribe possessed the priestly identity in Israel, there is nevertheless distinction drawn between the sons of Aaron and the overall Levitical tribe; in what could be viewed as a parallel with Eve's priestly call to be Adam's "helper," the Levites are also called to "help" or "assist" the sons of Aaron in carrying out the priestly ministry, both having differing and complementary priestly roles and responsibilities (1 Chr 23:28-32). A similar kind of complementarity is also observed in the economy of the new covenant priesthood (Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 12:8-10, 28-30; Eph 4:11-16; 5:22-33; 1 Tim 2:12:11-15; 3:1-13; 1 Pet 4:10-11).

the holiness of his temple and his people by attending to the Word of God, border management, sacrifice, and mediation.⁴

The discussion commences with the first temple, the Garden of Eden, the residence of the first priests, then transitions to establish Adam as the first priest and his wife Eve as co-responsible for the priesthood, elaborating on what constitutes the priesthood and what responsibilities are incumbent on the priesthood.

The Garden: The Archetypal Cosmic Temple

To demonstrate Adam and Eve's status as mankind's first priests, it is noted that their initial residence—the Garden of Eden—was mankind's archetypal and first temple. Once the reality of the Garden of Eden is acknowledged as the archetypal temple, then Adam and Eve's status as the first priests becomes more obvious.

Patriarchal altars, Israel's tabernacle, and the Jerusalem temple all seem to point forward to the worldwide cosmic temple found in Revelation 21, but it also seems

⁴ Numerous writers have sought to assemble concise lists of the responsibilities of the priesthood. While this dissertation has offered its own definition of the priesthood, with its own list of priestly responsibilities, it is acknowledged that while there is more agreement than disagreement among scholars, diversity of opinion still exists in how the priestly responsibilities have been arranged and presented. T. J. Betts includes the following roles in his list: sanctuary overseers/servants, sacrificers, custodians of the silver trumpets, assistants to leaders, Yahweh's spokesmen—oracles through speech and urim and thummim, judges, and teachers. T. J. Betts, *Ezekiel the Priest: A Custodian of Tora* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 17-39. Albert Vanhoye believes that priests were responsible for oracles—urim and thummim, serving in the sanctuary, sacrifice, ritual purity, blessing, maintaining holiness, and mediation. Albert Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests and the New Priest: According to the New Testament* (Petersham, MA: St. Bede's, 1986), 20-36. Tremper Longman III emphasizes the priestly duties of teaching the Law, sacrificing, discerning the will of God, and guarding the sanctuary. Tremper Longman III, *Immanuel in Our Place: Seeing Christ in Israel's Worship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2001), 139-50. Cyril Eastwood points to teaching, guarding the temple, interpreting God and discerning his will, and sacrificing as the main priestly duties. Cyril Eastwood, *The Royal Priesthood of the Faithful: An Investigation of the Doctrine from Biblical Times to the Reformation* (London: Epworth Press, 1963), 19-23. Richard Nelson suggests that priests were responsible for maintaining boundaries of purity, delivering oracles, pronouncing God's will through the use of urim and thummim, teaching the Torah, blessing, administration, sacrificing, serving as intermediaries, and serving as a custodian of the temple. Richard D. Nelson, *Raising Up a Faithful Priest: Community and Priesthood in Biblical Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 36, 39-46, 55, 85-88. David Schrock observes unity of mind among scholars when it comes to detailing the different priestly duties. He writes, "While critical theories differ on the origin and nature of the priesthood, all are agreed that divining the will of God, guarding the holy place, teaching the law, and offering sacrifices and prayers were part and parcel of the priestly office." David Stephen Schrock, "A Biblical-Theological Investigation of Christ's Priesthood and Covenant Mediation with Respect to the Extent of the Atonement" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013), 54. Schrock arranges the priestly functions in the following categories: guarding, mediating, sacrificing, teaching, divination, and judging (94-98).

that they are, notably, recapitulations of the first temple in the Garden of Eden, the residence of the first priests.⁵ This claim can be substantiated from several points.⁶

First, as God walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:8), the Bible describes the Garden, along with later sanctuaries, as the place where priests enjoyed access to God's special presence.⁷ Second, Scripture indicates that the "tree of life" is found in many of these sanctuaries.⁸ Third, the Garden and the tabernacle/temple openings faced east (the same direction from which the eschatological temple would be

⁵ Beale explains the overarching biblical trajectory of God's tabernacling presence: The Old Testament tabernacle and temples were symbolically designed to point to the cosmic eschatological reality that God's tabernacling presence, formerly limited to the holy of holies, was to be extended throughout the whole earth. Against this background, the Revelation 21 vision is best understood as picturing the final end-time temple that will fill the entire cosmos. . . . The Garden of Eden was the first archetypal temple, and . . . it was the model for all subsequent temples. Such an understanding of Eden will enhance the notion that the Old Testament tabernacle and temples were symbolic microcosms of the whole creation. As microcosmic symbolic structures they were designed to point to a worldwide eschatological temple that perfectly reflects God's glory. It is this universally expanded eschatological temple that is pictured in Revelation's last vision. (Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 25-26)

T. Desmond Alexander substantiates this thesis:

If Genesis portrays the Garden of Eden as a sanctuary or temple-garden, a number of things follow: (1) Since the garden is a place where divinity and humanity enjoy each other's presence, it is appropriate that it should be a prototype for later Israelite sanctuaries . . . (2) Because they met God face to face in a holy place, we may assume that Adam and Eve had a holy or priestly status. Only priests were permitted to serve within a sanctuary or temple. (3) Although it is not stated, the opening chapters of Genesis imply that the boundaries of the garden will be extended to fill the whole earth as human beings are fruitful and increase in number. (T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* [Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008], 25)

⁶ Gentry and Wellum list ten "parallels between the garden of Eden and descriptions of sanctuaries elsewhere in the Old Testament and ancient Near East." Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 211-13. Gentry and Wellum acknowledge their reliance on William Dumbrell and Gordon Wenham for this data. See William J. Dumbrell, *The Search for Order: Biblical Eschatology in Focus* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1994), 23-26; Gordon J. Wenham, "Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story," in *I Studied Inscriptions from before the Flood: Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1-11*, ed. R. S. Hess and D. T. Tsumara, Sources for Biblical and Theological Study 4 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 399-404.

⁷ A parallel can be drawn between the special presence of God in Israel's temple and in Eden. Indeed, "Israel's temple was the place where the priest experienced God's unique presence, and Eden was the place where Adam walked and talked with God." Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 66. Just as Israel's priests enjoyed access to the divine presence in the temple (Lev 16:1-34), so did Adam in the Garden (Gen 3:8).

⁸ The "tree of life" was found at the center of the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:9). Similarly, the menorah (a branching lampstand meant to represent a "stylized tree of life") was found at the center of the tabernacle and temple (Exod 25:31-36). Gentry and Wellum (*Kingdom through Covenant*, 211) reference Carol Meyers' work: *The Tabernacle Menorah: A Synthetic Study of a Symbol from the Biblical Cult*, American Schools of Oriental Research Dissertation Series 2 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976). Moreover, the "tree of life" is also found in the new Jerusalem (Rev 22:2).

entered [Ezek 40:6]) and were guarded by cherubim.⁹ Fourth, just as a river is depicted as flowing out of the center of the eschatological temple (Ezek 47:1-12; Zech 14:8-9; Rev 7:15-17; 21:1-2) and from beneath the Jerusalem temple (1 Kgs 1:33, 38, 45), a river also flowed out of Eden into the Garden (Gen 2:10). Fifth, Scripture indicates that these sanctuaries were situated on elevated mountain settings.¹⁰ Sixth, just as the Garden was a place of precious stones and materials (Gen 2:12), the tabernacle (Exod 25:11-39), the temple (1 Kgs 6:20-22), and even the priestly garments (Exod 25:7; 28:9-12, 20; 1 Chr 29:2) were arrayed with fine materials; the same is expected of the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:18-21).¹¹ Finally, the tripartite sacred structure of the Garden of Eden (Eden, the Garden, and outside the Garden)¹² may be mirrored in the tripartite sacred structure (Holy of Holies, Holy Place, and outer courts) of the tabernacle and temple.¹³

⁹ Gen 3:24; Exod 25:18-22; 26:31; 1 Kgs 6:23-29, 32-35; Ezek 28:14-16; 41:18.

¹⁰ The river flowing from Eden divides into four streams, illustrating the reality that Eden was situated on an elevated mountain (Ezek 28:14-16); the same mountain setting is consistent with the mountain setting of many of the patriarchal altars (Gen 8:4-5, 20-22; 12:6-7, 8; 13:3-4, 18; 22:2, 9; 26:25; 33:20; 35:1-7), the sanctuary at mount Sinai (Exod 3:1; 18:5; 24:13), the Jerusalem temple (2 Chr 3:1), and the eschatological temple (Exod 15:17; Ps 78:54; Isa 2:2-4; 4:5; 11:9; 25:6-8; 56:7; 57:13; 65:11, 25; Ezek 40:2; 43:12; Rev 21:10).

¹¹ Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 66-80. See also Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 211-16. As Wenham notes, "Trees, water, gold and gems and cherubim also adorned the later tabernacle (Exod 25:27) and temple (1 Kgs 7; Ezek 41-47), and these symbols suggest what was most important about the garden: the presence of God." Gordon J. Wenham, "Genesis," in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 62.

¹² The Garden and Eden contained two distinct entities. Gen 2:10 explains that "a river flowed out of Eden to water the Garden." Thus, the water source, which provided life for the Garden, was not situated in the Garden but in Eden, which was adjoined to the Garden. Walton asserts that "Eden is the source of the waters and [is the palatial] residence of God, and the Garden adjoins God's residence." J. H. Walton, *Genesis*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 167. Much like the Edenic river, a river also flowed from beneath the Holy of Holies in the Jerusalem temple (Ezek 47:1). Similar imagery is mentioned of the eschatological temple (Rev 22:1-2).

This tripartite Edenic structure parallels the tabernacle and the Jerusalem temple. Eden is parallel to the Holy of Holies, both represented as the residence of God's special presence and as the source of water (Looking forward to Christ's priesthood, Jesus is regarded as the "temple" [John 2:19], and he and his Spirit-filled followers are/have the "living water" [John 4:10-14; 7:38-39]). The adjoining Garden, then, parallels the "Holy Place" in the Jerusalem temple. Walton, *Genesis*, 167-68, 182-83. Finally, the "land and seas to be subdued by Adam outside the Garden were roughly equivalent to the outer court of Israel's subsequent temple, which would lend further confirmation to the . . . identification of Israel's temple courtyard being symbolic of the land and seas throughout the earth." Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 75.

Moreover, the structure presents an increasing gradation in holiness from outside the Garden proceeding inward: the region outside the Garden is related to God and is "very good" (Gen 1:31) in that it is God's creation (= the outer

All of this evidence weighs heavily in favor of the notion that the Garden of Eden was the first or archetypal temple. This special segment of land stood as the locale for God's special presence on earth. It was in this Garden-temple that God placed mankind's first priests.

Adam and Eve's Priesthood: The Prototypical Priesthood

Not only does Scripture indicate that the Garden of Eden is the first temple, it also regards Adam and Eve as the first priests.¹⁴ As priests, they were granted access to the divine presence and were entrusted with guarding the holiness of God's temple and his people. The discussion of the priestly identity, therefore, begins by analyzing the priestly access to the presence of God and the priestly role of guardian.

Access to the Presence of God

The Garden of Eden was a place where Adam and Eve enjoyed access to the presence of God, access that did not require a mediator. God placed Adam in the Garden

court); the Garden itself is a sacred space separate from the outer world (= holy place), where God's priestly servant worships God by obeying him, by cultivating and guarding; Eden is where God dwells (= the holy of holies) as the source of both physical and spiritual life (symbolized by the waters). (75)

Significantly, the New Jerusalem is described as possessing cubical dimensions (Rev 21:15-17), the only other perfect cube in the Bible being the holy of holies (1 Kgs 6:20; Ezek 41:4). Thus, the eschatological new creation is depicted as being fully encompassed by the special presence of God, as the entire creation becomes enveloped by the "Holy of Holies," the unmediated manifest presence of God.

¹³ Margaret Barker favors a bipartite understanding of the Garden structure. Margaret Barker, *On Earth as It Is in Heaven: Temple Symbolism in the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 8. For a complete rejection of the idea that the temple structure is related to Eden and the cosmos, see Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*, trans. John McHugh (London: Darton, Longman, & Todd, 1961), 328-39; Daniel I. Block, "Eden: A Temple? A Reassessment of the Biblical Evidence," in *From Creation to New Creation: Essays on Biblical Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Daniel M. Gurtner and Benjamin L. Gadd (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2013), 3-30.

¹⁴ This assertion is not new. Numerous scholars agree with this notion; the following works represent a sampling of such scholars: Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 83-90; Kline, *Images of the Spirit* (1980; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1996), 35-56; J. V. Fesko, *Last Things First: Unlocking Genesis 1-3 with the Christ of Eschatology* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2007), 57-75; Peter J. Gentry, "Kingdom through Covenant: Humanity as the Divine Image," *SBJT* 12 (2008): 16-42; Schrock, "A Biblical-Theological Investigation," 56-65; Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 81-121; Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 24.

of Eden (Gen 2:8, 15),¹⁵ and Adam would later be joined there by his wife after her creation (Gen 2:18-25). Together they enjoyed the priestly privilege of communing with God in his presence in this Garden sanctuary. In Genesis 3:8, after their sin, Adam and Eve “heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.” The implication is that Adam and Eve were familiar with and recognized the sound of God walking in the Garden; that is, God’s decision to meet with Adam and Eve was apparently part of their normal experience living in the Garden prior to their sin. Indeed, “It would appear that [God] had been meeting them regularly.”¹⁶ Significant to understanding Adam and Eve’s identity as priests, it is observed that the same Hebrew expression used in Genesis 3:8 to speak of God’s “walking,” “coming,” or “going to and from” (הלך) in the Garden in the cool of the day is also used to speak of God’s special presence in later Israel sanctuaries (Lev 26:12; Deut 23:14; 2 Sam 7:6-7).¹⁷ Just as later priests were entrusted with access to God’s special presence, Adam and Eve were granted access to the divine presence in the Garden-sanctuary.

In his *A Royal Priesthood*, John Davies asserts that “the essence of the priestly prerogative consisted in access to the presence of God.”¹⁸ This privilege entailed “drawing near” or “being brought near to God.” Taking this idea further, Davies suggests that Scripture identifies priests as “הנגשים אל-יהוה” (‘the ones who draw near to Yhwh’, Exod 19:22), or קרובים ליהוה (‘those who approach Yhwh’, Ezek 42:13; cf. 43:19; Lev

¹⁵ Dumbrell writes,

It seems to be the intention of the writer in [Gen] 2:8 to indicate that man was created outside Eden and then placed within the garden. The garden is presented as a centre of world blessing. . . . The Garden also operates as a divine sanctuary, the point where the immediacy of the divine presence was encountered and enjoyed. In short, created in the world with dominion over it, man is immediately abstracted from the world and placed directly in the divine presence. (William J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: A Theology of Old Testament Covenants* [Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1984], 35)

¹⁶ Wilbur Glenn Williams, *Genesis: A Commentary for Bible Students* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan, 1999), 70.

¹⁷ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 211.

¹⁸ Davies, *A Royal Priesthood*, 162.

10:3).”¹⁹ In making this point, Davies brings attention to the ontological qualities of the priest rather than simply the functional; that is, he highlights who priests are rather than what they do. Part of the essence of what it means to be a priest is that they enjoy access to the presence of God. Thus, the biblical evidence would suggest that Adam and Eve were the first priests because they enjoyed unfettered access to the presence of God in the Garden.

Guardianship

There is more to what constitutes Adam as a priest in the Garden, as it was his duty to serve God by guarding the holiness of his temple and his people. God placed Adam in the Garden to **אָבַד** (*‘abad*) and **שָׁמַר** (*shamar*; Gen 2:15). The term **אָבַד** (*‘abad*) has a range of lexical meaning, including ideas of worship, service, obedience, cultivation, and work.²⁰ The term **שָׁמַר** (*shamar*) also has lexical diversity, translating to mean keep, watch, oversee, have charge of, preserve, ward, and guard.²¹ Of note, the only other instances where the Old Testament uses these two Hebrew verbs together are found in Numbers 3:7-8, 8:26, and 18:5-6, which all speak of the Levitical priests’ service and guardianship.²² Furthermore, these two Hebrew words are employed throughout the Old Testament of priests to speak of their charge to serve God and guard the sanctuary of God.²³ The close relationship between these two words and priesthood throughout the Old Testament functions to substantiate Adam’s priesthood.

¹⁹ Davies, *A Royal Priesthood*, 162.

²⁰ BDB (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 712-13.

²¹ BDB, 1036-37.

²² Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, WBC, vol. 1 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 67.

²³ Num 1:53; 3:7-8, 10, 32; 8:25-26; 18:5-6; 1 Sam 7:1; 2 Kgs 12:9; 1 Chr 23:32; 2 Chr 34:9 Ezek 44:14ff.; 48:11.

Some have argued that the two terms indicate two very distinct and separate functions or duties of the priesthood.²⁴ It seems best, however, to understand the two terms to be integrally linked and inter-connected;²⁵ Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden to serve God by taking care of it and by making it a suitable residence for God's special presence. Negatively speaking, Adam and Eve, as guardians, were to work to preserve the Garden's sanctity, protecting it from defilement; and yet, positively, they were to steward it, having dominion over it, cultivating it, promoting its growth and expansion, and making it better. As the guardians of the Garden-temple, Adam and Eve were placed there to work for its overall welfare.²⁶ Said another way, they were placed in the Garden to serve God by guarding the holiness of his temple and its inhabitants. The text indicates as well that Adam bore the primary priestly responsibility to guard Eve as he served her as leader, provider, and protector.²⁷

Davies, who insists that access to the divine presence is ontologically at the heart of what it means to be a priest, also contends that this ontological aspect of

²⁴ Peter Leithart, for example, recognizes a close relationship between service and guardianship, though he maintains a distinction between the terms and further argues that service or sanctuary attendance is the primary function of the priesthood. Peter J. Leithart, "Attendants of Yahweh's House: Priesthood in the Old Testament," *JSOT* 85 (1999): 10-12.

²⁵ Adam served in the Garden, at least in part, by guarding or keeping it. Mathews acknowledges this connection between אָבָד ('*abad*; "service/work") and שָׁמַר (*shamar*; "guard/take care"): "'Take care' (*šāmar*) probably specifies the nature of Adam's labor." Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, NAC, vol. 1A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 209-10. That is, Mathews thinks that Adam served God or worked for him *by* guarding or taking care of the Garden. John Peter Lange, too, recognizes this connection when he says, "The guarding of the Garden belonged to man's vocation." John Peter Lange, *Genesis-Ruth, Lange's Commentary on the Holy Scripture: An Exegetical and Doctrinal Commentary*, vol. 1, ed. Philip Schaff (Harrington, DE: Delmarva, 2014), 206. Guarding the Garden was part of Adam's work. Furthermore, Beale points out that when "these two words (verbal ['*abad* and *šāmar*] and nominal forms) occur together in the Old Testament (within approximately 15-word range), they refer . . . to priests who 'keep' the 'service' (or 'charge') of the tabernacle (see Num 3:7-8; 8:25-26; 18:5-6; 1 Chr 23:32; Ezek 44:14)" and can refer also generally to Israelites' activity of worship. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 67. Beale combines these two ideas of service and guardianship when he writes, "The priestly role in both the Garden and later temple was to 'manage' it by maintaining its order and keeping out uncleanness. The picture is that of a 'warden' who 'keeps charge of the temple' (cf. Ezek 40:45; 44:14) or manages a sacred ward" (69).

²⁶ Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1-17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1990), 171.

²⁷ While both Adam and Eve shared in the priestly identity, their priestly roles expressed themselves differently and with complementarity.

priesthood is integrally linked with the functional aspect of guardianship. Interestingly, he recognizes a correspondence between access to the divine presence and the priestly function of guardianship:

A corollary right of access is that the privilege had to be guarded, and no unauthorized approach permitted or other infringement of the sanctity provisions countenanced. Together with the Levites, the priests had the charge of all aspects of maintaining and guarding the holiness of the sanctuary (Num 1:53; 3:32; 18:5; 2 Kgs 12:11; Ezek 40:45; 44:15).²⁸

Unless the priest succeeds in his task of guarding, the priestly prerogative of access to the divine presence would be negated; priests have from the very beginning enjoyed the unadulterated presence of the divine, but this privilege has always been undergirded by the responsibility to guard and maintain that privilege. Without successful guardianship, priests cannot draw near to God.

Adam and Eve's Priestly Tasks

How did Adam and Eve go about guarding the holiness of the temple of God and the people of God? Initially, they attended to the Word of God and border management. The priestly tasks of sacrifice and mediation would become characteristic of priestly responsibilities later after mankind fell into sin.²⁹

God's Word. A priest must be devoted to maintaining personal holiness as he seeks to live a life in obedience to the Word of God. Additionally, a priest is responsible for guarding the holiness of the people of God as he teaches them the Word of God.

²⁸ Davies, *A Royal Priesthood*, 162.

²⁹ Though some of the duties that are commonly associated with the latter priesthood were not incumbent on Adam in the Garden (namely sacrifice and mediation), it is still apparent that Adam was placed in the Garden as the first priest. Though not entirely apparent in the text, it may be possible to argue that Adam served God through the kinds of sacrifices akin to those attributed to the later new covenant priests and that he mediated the covenant of creation to the world. Adam's priestly roles of sacrifice and mediation become obvious after his sin.

A priest's personal holiness is, throughout Scripture, regarded as crucial to his ongoing success as a priest, and this was certainly true of Adam and Eve's priesthood.³⁰ Immediately after Adam is placed in the Garden and is instructed to "serve" and "guard"³¹ the temple of God (Gen 2:15), God gives him a command: "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (vv. 16-17). As a newly minted priest, Adam is "commanded"³² to obey, to comply with the law of God. Persisting in obedience presented Adam with the privilege to continue enjoying the divine access to the presence of God that he had been granted. His was the opportunity to respond to God's blessing through adoration, worship, and continued obedience.³³ On the

³⁰ In the Levitical "holiness code" (Lev 17-26), God directs Moses to speak to Aaron, his sons, and the house of Israel and call them to live lives of holiness in obedience to the Word of God. The success of a priest of Israel was contingent on his commitment to holiness and personally obeying the law of God. The same was true of the first priest, Adam. See Mark F. Rooker, *Leviticus*, NAC, vol. 3A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 231; Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus: A Book of Ritual and Ethics*, CC (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 175.

³¹ The priestly terms "serve" and "guard" are contextually proximate to God's divine directive to obey his word, a pattern that is seen elsewhere in the Old Testament in relation to priests guarding the temple. Beale observes this connection:

After telling Adam to "cultivate" and "guard/keep" in Genesis 2:15, God gives him a specific "command" in v. 16. The notion of divine "commanding" (sāwâ) or giving of "commandments" (miswôt) not untypically follows the word "guard/keep" (šamar) elsewhere, and in 1 Kgs 9:6, when both "serving" and "keeping" occur together, the idea of "commandments to be kept" is in view. . . . Is this a mere coincidental connection with Genesis 2:15-16? Hence, it follows naturally that after God puts Adam into the Garden for "cultivating/serving and keeping/guarding" (v. 15) that in the very next verse God would command Adam to keep a commandment: "and the Lord God commanded the man . . ." The first "torah" was that "from any tree of the Garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die" (Gen 2:16-17). (Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 68-69)

³² This is the first occurrence of the verb "commanded" (רַצַּו) in Genesis, and it is "the only place in Genesis where the narrative introduces a divine command by this formula: 'And the LORD God commanded.'" Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 210. Mathews notes further, "Elsewhere in Genesis the formula, introducing direct discourse, always has a human subject (e.g., 12:20; 26:11; 28:1)." Here Adam learns that "unrestricted freedom does not exist. Man is called upon by God to exercise restraint and self-discipline in the gratification of his appetite. This prohibition is the paradigm for the future Torah legislation." Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis*, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: JPS, 1989), 21.

³³ Redford writes, "[Adam's] continued enjoyment of the blessings there was conditioned on his adherence to God's rules. His love for his Creator was to be demonstrated by obedience to his will." Douglas Redford, *The Pentateuch*, Standard Reference Library: Old Testament, vol. 1 (Cincinnati: Standard, 2008), 25. Adam is blessed with the opportunity to eat freely from every tree in the Garden with the exception of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God's abundant provision for Adam should have motivated Adam toward greater love, thankfulness, and obedience to his creator. Moreover, "The prohibition against eating the fruit of the 'tree of knowledge' gave Adam opportunity to worship God through loyal devotion." Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 210-11.

other hand, failure to obey God's law would compromise these blessings and his position as priest, such that he would be "cut off from the sacred land of the Garden"³⁴ with the associated blessing of access to the divine presence (Gen 3:23-24) and the privilege of serving as guardian (Gen 3:24).

As a priest, Adam was unquestionably responsible for his personal holiness and for obeying the Word of God. A natural extension of this responsibility would be that of teaching the Word of God to the family of God. In the Garden, this would mean that, as a priest, Adam would become responsible for teaching his wife Eve after she was created.³⁵ A husband's duty of teaching God's Word to his wife is clearly an expectation in the new covenant (1 Cor 14:35; Eph 5:26); the same pattern applies to the first marriage as well.

While teaching is undeniably part of the priestly ministry of those who followed Adam's priesthood, the question of whether or not Adam actually engaged in this priestly ministry in the Garden is somewhat uncertain. While it is true that Adam received the moral command of God in Genesis 2:16-17 and was, thus, accountable to personally obey God's Word, it is impossible to conclude with absolute certainty that Adam communicated God's Word to Eve. Initially Adam alone received God's prohibition to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:17); Eve was not yet created. But somehow Eve was aware of God's prohibition when the serpent set out to deceive her. Eve's initial response to the serpent was, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die'" (Gen 3:2-3). How did

³⁴ Beale writes, "Adam's disobedience, as Israel's, results in his being cut off from the sacred land of the Garden." Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 69.

³⁵ Teaching was also, in one sense, the responsibility of prophets throughout the Old Testament. Prophets were responsible for representing God to his people, speaking the Word of God to the people of God (Deut 18:18; Jer 1:9; Ezek 2:7; Hos 1:2; Joel 1:1; Mic 1:1; Zeph 1:1; cf. Jonah 1:1; Amos 1:3).

Eve gain this knowledge? “Either God repeated it for her, or it was communicated to her by her husband.”³⁶

While the scriptural evidence in Genesis for determining whether or not Adam was Eve’s priestly teacher may be inconclusive, there is reason to believe that Adam was, at the very least, responsible for communicating God’s Word to her and that he was the one who did in fact communicate God’s prohibition to her. David Schrock suggests that, “As an archetypal Levite, it is fitting that Adam would not only guard God’s space, but he would guard his word through the ministry of teaching. In fact, the progression in Genesis 2:15-17, from priestly commission to covenantal stipulations, suggests that Adam had the responsibility of making known God’s law to all those in his family.”³⁷ Following this logic, then, it is reasonable to conclude that Adam may very well have taught Eve concerning the will of God and that he is likely the one who communicated God’s prohibitive statement about not eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil to his wife. At the very least, Adam was, as the first priest, responsible for teaching the Word of God to his family.

Concluding that Adam was appointed as Eve’s priestly teacher does nothing to detract from Eve’s own status as a priest or her own responsibility to attend to the Word of God. Such a conclusion aligns with the rest of Scriptural revelation concerning the differing and complementary roles of men and women. Though Adam and Eve’s priestly ministries may have manifested themselves differently, both were co-responsible for the priesthood as they carried out their priestly duties in complementary ways.³⁸

³⁶ Redford, *The Pentateuch*, 25.

³⁷ Schrock, “A Biblical-Theological Investigation,” 62.

³⁸ Though Adam and Eve’s priestly responsibilities may have been different, they were also complementary. They were, thus, co-responsible for the office. Throughout the narrative of Scripture, God’s people are regarded as priestly people. And yet, different roles and responsibilities are given to specific individuals throughout the unfolding narrative. While Eve helps Adam in the Garden, he is nonetheless the head of his family and is the one who is primarily held responsible for mankind’s fall. Men serving as the heads of their households during the patriarchal period carried out the primary priestly role in their families. Men are entrusted with the priestly office among the Levitical priesthood in Israel. Christ, a

Border management. As the guardian of both the temple of God and the people of God, Adam was responsible for attending to border management. Negatively speaking, this meant that, as a priest, he was tasked with protecting the Garden-sanctuary from defilement and from the intrusion of evil. The Garden was established by God as a separate and holy space, which was to be protected. The Hebrew term for Garden “*ḡn*” “comes from a root meaning to ‘enclose,’ ‘fence,’ or ‘protect.’ The garden envisioned in Genesis 2:8-17 is an enclosed or protected space.”³⁹ This holy Garden-temple was, thus, to be protected by Adam, its priest. Positively, Adam was charged with the role of expanding the borders of the Garden through reproduction, dominion, and cultivation. As the first priest, Adam was to manage the Garden, seeking to preserve its holiness along with its inhabitants while also working to cultivate the Garden, expanding its reach to the ends of the earth so that the glory of God would eventually cover the face of the earth as the waters cover the sea.

Prior to Eve’s creation, Adam alone received the priestly commission to cultivate and guard the Garden (Gen 2:15).⁴⁰ As a natural outflow of Adam’s original priestly directive, he and his wife receive the priest-kingly charge from God to exercise dominion over the entire created order as his co-regents, to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth with human image-bearers through sexual reproduction, and to cultivate and

male, is the great high priest. And men in the new covenant are charged with leading their homes and their churches. This divine design does not diminish the significance of the priestly identity of women. Instead, it places the onus on the shoulders of men to lead in carrying out the priestly office.

³⁹ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 209-10.

⁴⁰ Though the details of Gen 2 are recorded in the text after those in Gen 1, the reader is not to conclude that the details of chap 2 happen chronologically after those in chap 1. See Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 187-90. Whereas 1:1-2:4 details the “history/origin of the cosmos,” 2:4-24 provides the “history/origin of Adam/mankind” and concentrated detail about the creation and design for mankind. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 8.

The point here is to show that the presentation of the material in chap 2 indicates that Adam was chronologically created first (Gen 2:7), was set apart as a priest before his wife’s creation (Gen 2:15), and was given the law of God before Eve came to be (Gen 2:16-17). Only then was the woman Eve created (Gen 2:18-25). Gen 1:26-31 functions to provide the fundamental identity and purpose for all human beings; that is, both male and female, indeed all of humanity, possess the status of image bearers and are co-regents and stewards of the created order. Thus, both Adam and Eve are divine image bearers, co-rulers, and priest-kings.

steward the earth through work (Gen 1:26-31). In creating Adam and Eve, “God determined to give to the man about to be created in his likeness the supremacy . . . over the earth itself.”⁴¹ God’s instruction for all divine image bearers to “have dominion over . . . all the earth” (Gen 1:26) meant that humanity’s priestly duties were originally designed to extend outside the original boundaries of the Garden of Eden and ultimately to encompass the entire earth. Taking up these duties, Adam and Eve were to serve God as a royal priests or priest-kings,⁴² exercising dominion and spreading God’s glory over the earth, thus, extending the reach of God’s temple across the earth. Beale agrees with this idea when he writes, “As Adam and Eve were to begin to rule over and subdue the

⁴¹ Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 40.

⁴² Some writers tend toward making a strong distinction among the three offices of the *munus triplex*. Christ’s threefold office prophet, priest, and king (*munus triplex Christi*) has been regarded as important to understanding Christ’s overall work in redemption throughout church history. In the early church, Eusebius Pamphilius, for example, spoke of this threefold office when he wrote,

And we have been told also that certain of the prophets themselves became, by the act of anointing, Christs in type, so that all these have reference to the true Christ, the divinely inspired and heavenly Word, who is the only high priest of all, and the only King of every creature, and the Father’s only supreme prophet of prophets. And a proof of this is that no one of those who were of old symbolically anointed, whether priest, or kings, or prophets, possessed so great a power of inspired virtue as was exhibited by our Saviour and Lord Jesus, the true and only Christ. (Eusebius of Caesarea, “The Church History of Eusebius,” trans. Arthur Cushman McGiffert, in *A Select Library of the NPNF of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, 2nd Series, vol. 1, *Eusebius: Church History, Life of Constantine the Great, and Oration in Praise of Constantine*, [New York: Christian Literature, 1890], 3.8-9:86)

During the Reformation, John Calvin contended for the *munus triplex Christi* when he wrote, “That faith may find in Christ a solid ground of salvation, and so rest in him, we must set out with this principle, that the office which he received from the Father consists of three parts. For he was appointed both Prophet, King, and Priest.” John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 2.15.1 (1:482).

Others recognize the interconnectedness of some aspects of the office. Making a marked delineation between the offices, Richard Belcher contends that Adam’s failure to cast the serpent out of the Garden was a failure of his kingly office rather than his priestly office. Speaking specifically of Adam’s kingly office, Belcher writes that Adam “failed to exercise dominion over the serpent by not casting him out of the garden.” Belcher, *Prophet, Priest, and King*, 105. Taking a different approach, William Dumbrell observes a connection between the two offices and instead associates Adam’s call to dominion as the work of a “priest-king.” Expressing this sentiment, Dumbrell writes, “Before the fall, the man, the priest-king, exercised dominion over nature.” Dumbrell, *The Search for Order*, 25. Gentry, Wellum, and Schrock regard sonship as integral to what constitutes the image of God, an identity that is also associated with priesthood and kingship. Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 192; Schrock, “Restoring the Image of God,” 31. Taken together, it, therefore, seems best to regard Adam and Eve’s priest-kingly commission to exercise dominion over the creation, to engage in sexual reproduction, and to cultivate the earth as integral to their identity both as priests and kings.

earth, it is plausible to suggest that they were to extend the geographical boundaries of the Garden until Eden extended throughout and covered the whole earth.”⁴³

Adam and Eve’s priestly task of border management meant that they were to exercise dominion over God’s temple by extending the borders of the Garden throughout the world (Hab 2:14; cf. Num 14:21; Ps 72:19; Isa 11:9). Adam’s charge to protect the borders of the sanctuary meant that he was responsible for guarding against its defilement. Any failure to exercise dominion would result in a priestly failure to manage the borders of God’s temple. The unfortunate reality of Adam and Eve’s narrative is that they would, in fact, fail in this responsibility of exercising dominion.

Adam and Eve Fail as Priests

The narrative of Genesis 3 interjects a massive disruption in the history of humanity with Adam and Eve both falling into sin. A world that was originally created to be “very good”⁴⁴ (Gen 1:31) would experience the effects of evil because of Adam and

⁴³ G. K. Beale, “Final Vision of the Apocalypse and its Implications for a Biblical Theology of the Temple,” in *Heaven on Earth: The Temple in Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and S. Gathercole (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2004), 10-11.

⁴⁴ After God finished creating the world, he declared that “it was very good” (Gen 1:31). William Dumbrell explains that the traditional interpretation of this expression typically focuses on ideas of a perfected, whole, or morally harmonious creation. Dumbrell, *The Search for Order*, 20. While not entirely rejecting aspects of this interpretation, Dumbrell is more convinced that the most probable understanding of the expression has to do with regarding the world to be “good” for something; that is, it is good to accomplish the purposes for which God created the world (20). He suggests that the expression should be interpreted in a “functional sense” to mean “efficient.” The idea is that God created a world that was efficient and “suitable to fulfill the purpose for which it was brought into being” (21).

He continues to explain that such an understanding of the creation “need not mean that God created an absolutely perfect world” (21). By this, he does not mean that God created a morally imperfect world but rather that God created the world in a position of incompleteness, one that had not yet reached its full potential. Understood this way, “a less-than-perfect creation leaves room for the absolute perfection of the new creation and for the eschatological finality we find in Revelation 21-22” (21).

Furthermore, such an understanding of the created world explains why the world needed to be subdued, worked, and improved. It explains why Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden to cultivate it and to be fruitful and multiply and to fill the earth, exercising dominion over the entire earth. Dumbrell’s point is that the world was created with an incomplete status, one that was functional and capable of being moved along to accomplish God’s divine purposes for it (22).

God created Adam and Eve and placed them in a space to begin moving the world to a position of greater completeness and wholeness; and yet, they failed to carry this mission forward. They failed both functionally and morally. But, God sent the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ to pick up this priest-king ministry and to move it forward. Christ would succeed in this mission, functionally advancing the creation to completeness, wholeness, and perfection; and morally, redeeming an evil world through righteousness, holiness, and atonement.

Eve’s priestly failure, yielding severe consequences, including their expulsion from the presence of God and the Edenic temple and the suspension of their priestly status.

The text indicates that Adam and Eve’s individual sins—and the resulting curses—had to do with their rejection of God’s command to abstain from eating the forbidden fruit (Gen 3:11-13, 17). Eve first disobeys God’s command and eats, and then Adam does the same. While Scripture certainly holds Eve culpable for falling prey to the deceptions of Satan (2 Cor 11:3; 1 Tim 2:14),⁴⁵ there is another sense in which Adam—who had been entrusted with the duty of guarding the Garden and its contents/inhabitants, who had been personally issued the moral command from God himself (Gen 2:15-17), and who was assigned the leadership role as the head of his wife (Eph 5:22; Col 3:18; Titus 5:2; 1 Pet 3:1)—is held responsible for the actions of his wife. Indeed, even though Eve was deceived and partook of the fruit first, God seeks out and confronts Adam first rather than Eve, holding him responsible (Gen 3:9-11).⁴⁶ Thus, while the text addresses Eve’s and Adam’s individual rejection of God’s moral command as sin, it also indicates that Adam’s failure to attend to his priestly responsibilities was at issue as well.

Leading up to this sad event, Adam allowed a serpent to infiltrate the Garden and deceive his wife into believing and acting upon a satanic lie. There is reason to believe that Adam permitted the serpent to venture into a place where it was not intended to be. The text describes the serpent as being a “beast of the field” (Gen 3:1),

⁴⁵ Speaking of the original sin, Paul writes, “Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor” (1 Tim 2:14). “Paul saw Eve as the representative woman who broke God’s law due to Satan’s deception. In describing Adam, Paul denied that he was deceived.” Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, NAC, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 101. Paul “emphatically states that Adam was not deceived, which means that his accepting the fruit from Eve did not constitute submitting to deception.” Daniel C. Arichea and Howard Hatton, *A Handbook on Paul’s Letters to Timothy and to Titus*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: UBS, 1995), 60.

⁴⁶ The text employs the singular “you” in its address to Adam, “focusing on the individual liability of Adam” apparently because Adam “bears the greater responsibility.” Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 240. Lange agrees that Adam was responsible for Eve: “Adam, as the household lord of the wife, [was] answerable for her step.” Lange, *Genesis-Ruth*, 232. Furthermore, Scripture says that Adam broke the covenant (Hos 6:7; cf. Gen 2:1-17; 3:17) and presents Adam as the covenantal head of the human race (1 Cor 15:22); it follows that sin and its curses were passed down to the human race through Adam and not Eve (Rom 5:12-17).

not a common part of the Garden's pet population; its intended residence was, thus, outside the Garden in "the field" and not in the inner sanctum of God's temple.⁴⁷ The serpent's presence in the Garden would, therefore, indicate that Adam failed to exercise dominion over this particular beast of the field and that he neglected his duty to protect the Garden by keeping the beast in its designated space.

Furthermore, though the text of Genesis does not describe the serpent as being "unclean," the snake would later be regarded as an unclean animal (Lev 11:41-45) and would be associated with the judgment of God (Num 21:6). This serpent, being controlled by Satan, was set against the will of God and was, in this sense, most certainly "unclean."⁴⁸ Just as Israel's priests were to protect the temple from unclean things entering (Num 3:6-7, 32; 18:1-7), Adam too had the duty to protect the borders of the Garden against "unclean" creatures (i.e., the Satanically-possessed serpent) who might seek entry.⁴⁹ The serpent, therefore, should not have been allowed entry to God's holy sanctuary.

The unfortunate reality is that Adam failed as a priest, which led to the fall of mankind. Adam's failure to guard the Garden from the entrance of the serpent, connected with his failure to guard his wife from being deceived by the serpent, was a failure to

⁴⁷ The text says that the serpent is a beast of "the field" (הַשָּׂדֶה). The term may be understood to mean an open field, countryside, or pasture land (Gen 29:2; 30:16; Exod 9:3) that is unfrequented by man (Gen 24:63, 65) and is the home of wild animals (Exod 22:30). It is used to describe the open country outside of a walled city (Judg 9:32, 42-44) and the land outside a military camp (1 Sam 4:2; 14:15). See BDB, 961. In the immediate context of Gen 3:1, this same term is used in Gen 2:5 (i.e., bush of "the field" and plant of "the field") to speak of the barren land that awaited God's decision to bring about plant life. In the midst of this barren "field," the "Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east" (Gen 2:8). The idea is that God created the Garden as a unique oasis in the middle of an otherwise barren field. Thus, when Gen 3:1 speaks of the serpent being a "beast of the field," it is making a statement about the serpent's residence. The serpent resided outside the borders of the Garden of Eden in the field, and it had ventured into the Garden where it did not belong.

⁴⁸ While God had declared all creatures to be "good" in the first chap of Gen, it may be the case that Satan's possession of the serpent's body rendered the beast "unclean."

⁴⁹ Beale makes this point when he writes, "The task of Adam in Genesis 2:15 included more than mere spadework in the dirt of a garden. It is apparent that priestly obligations in Israel's later temple included the duty of 'guarding' unclean things from entering (cf. Num 3:6-7, 32, 38; 18:1-7), and this appears to be relevant for Adam, especially in view of the unclean creature lurking on the perimeter of the Garden and who then enters." Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 69.

uphold his priestly responsibility. As Schrock explains, Adam failed as a priest in his duty to guard both the Garden and the family of God:

Eve was well enough aware of God's instruction about the tree that she could at first resist the devil. However, she was quickly deceived, because her husband, her priestly teacher, failed to protect her. Thus, while Adam had an original calling to make known God's command to all those in his family, he failed. Worse, instead of leading his family to walk in wisdom, he effectively passed on to them the corrupted nature of sinful humanity (Rom 5:12, 18-19).⁵⁰

Adam's error allowed evil, chaos, and disorder to enter into the sanctuary of God and into his and his wife's lives.⁵¹ Adam's failure to fulfill his priestly role as guardian led to his wife's deception, their rejection of the Word of God, and the defilement of the sanctuary.

Adam and Eve's Expulsion from the Edenic Temple

Adam and Eve's priestly failure ultimately resulted in their expulsion from the special presence of God and from the Edenic temple. Scripture explains the driving out of Adam and Eve in detail: "The LORD God sent him [Adam] out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out (שָׁרַף) the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard (שָׁמַר) the way to the tree of life" (Gen 3:23-24). The imagery used here of Adam's removal from the Garden "effectively depicts the excommunication of the man and woman from the presence of God,"⁵² such that "Adam and Eve were expelled from the sacred space of the Garden and thus removed a distance from God's presence."⁵³ The language here that speaks of Adam and Eve being driven out (שָׁרַף)⁵⁴ from the Garden parallels later expulsions in redemptive history.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Schrock, "A Biblical-Theological Investigation," 62.

⁵¹ Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 54-55, 65-67.

⁵² Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 258.

⁵³ Walton, *Genesis*, 265.

⁵⁴ In understanding this text, Hamilton keys in on how the Hebrew text uses strong language to accentuate the way in which Adam and Eve were removed from the Garden. This is a forceful and non-

It is important to note also that רָמַשׁ , which is used in Genesis 2:15 to detail Adam's guardian identity, is used again in Genesis 3:23-24; the duty to guard Eden, the duty that was assigned to Adam just a few verses earlier, is now revoked from Adam and assigned to the cherubim.⁵⁶ With Adam and Eve exiled from the Garden sanctuary, Eden still needed to be guarded. God's solution was to place cherubim armed with a flaming sword that turned every way⁵⁷ east of the Garden to do what the first priest failed to do: guard the sanctuary of God. Adam, who was placed in the Garden to guard it, is now guarded from the Garden.

The result of Adam and Eve's expulsion was that their identity as priests was suspended. Previously, they enjoyed unmediated access to the divine presence; now, because of their "separation from the presence of God,"⁵⁸ they would no longer possess the priestly right to approach God's special presence. Neither was Adam, from that point on, entrusted with the privilege of guarding the Garden-sanctuary.

Adam and Eve's Priesthood Reinstated

Subsequent to their sin, and, thus, after their failure as priests, Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden, having their special privilege of access to the divine presence revoked and their original priestly status suspended. Nevertheless, God's plan

negotiable banishment and expulsion from the Garden. See Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 209. In explaining the differences in the Hebrew terms used in verses 23 and 24, Sarna writes that the "Hebrew *geresh* is harsher and more explicit than *shillah* in the previous verse. The same two verbs also appear in tandem in Exodus 6:1 in connection with the Exodus." Sarna, *Genesis*, 30.

⁵⁵ Examples include the cutting off of a spouse in divorce (Lev 21:7), the driving out of pagan nations from God's land (Exod 34:11), the removal of Jonah from God's presence (Jonah 2:5), the cutting off of the people of God from the land (1 Kgs 9:7), and perhaps even the excommunication of the unrepentant from the new covenant church fellowship (1 Cor 5:13). BDB, 176.

⁵⁶ Walton writes, "Ironically, whereas people were originally charged with 'keeping' the garden (Gen 2:15), now that same verb is used as the cherubim 'guard' the way to the tree of life, keeping people out. The warden is off to jail." Walton, *Genesis*, 230.

⁵⁷ The fire associated with the "flaming sword" is a "symbol of the presence of God, especially in judgment (e.g., Exod 19:18; Ps 104:4)." That it "turned every way" or was "revolving" is meant to communicate the image of "forked lightning, zigzagging to and fro." This "revolving or zigzagging sword . . . is one that is sure to hit and bring death" (cf. Num 22:234, 31, 33). Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 86.

⁵⁸ Wenham, "Genesis," 63.

was not abandoned, and he did not annihilate Adam and Eve. Instead, God was quick to be gracious to them and, as the text seems to indicate, apparently reinstated their priestly status. Nevertheless, the nature of their priestly role would now take on a new form.

Institution of the sacrificial cult and need for mediation. God's grace was demonstrated through his promise that the woman's seed would one day crush the head of the serpent (Gen 3:15) and through his provision of clothing made from animal skins for Adam and Eve (Gen 3:21). Adam and Eve had become aware of their nakedness, shame, and guilt before God (Gen 3:7-11) and attempted to hide from God and cover their shame and nakedness through their own means, indicating that their previously enjoyed unmediated access to the divine presence was now compromised. But God, seeking to cover their shame, provided a more suitable covering, one that was provided through the shedding of blood (Gen 3:21), one that—rooted in the hope of the atonement of the promised messiah (Gen 3:15)—possessed a derived power to cover not only their physical nakedness but also their spiritual nakedness.

Representing what appears to be the institution of the sacrificial system,⁵⁹ this animal shed its blood and gave up its life so that Adam and Eve might be clothed both

⁵⁹ In providing Adam and Eve with “garments of skins” (Gen 3:21) to cover their nakedness, the death of an animal was required. This episode represents a parallel both to the sacrificial system that would later be instituted with the people of Israel through Moses and later to sacrificial and atoning death of Jesus on the cross. Commenting on this text, Mathews writes,

The garments of Adam and Eve are made of “skin.” In the Mosaic law the skin of an animal offered for sin or guilt atonement was reserved for the officiating priest (Lev 7:8). Here God bestows “garments of skin” upon the guilty in the garden. Although the text does not specify that animals were slain to provide these coverings, it is a fair implication and one that likely would be made in the Mosaic community, where animal sacrifice was pervasive. Since the garden narrative shares in tabernacle imagery, it is not surprising that allusion to animal sacrifice is found in the garden too. Through an oblique reference to animal sacrifice, the garden narrative paints a theological portrait familiar to the recipients of the Sinai revelation who honored the tabernacle as the meeting place with God. Sacrifice renewed and guaranteed that special union of God with his people (e.g., Day of Atonement, Lev 16). This mode of provision then for Adam and Eve affirmed God's abiding goodwill. (Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 255)

Mathews, thus, observes in this text what he believes to be a reference to animal sacrifice and the sacrificial system that would be established as a means of atonement for the people of God. He further draws a connection between these “skins” that were provided for the priests Adam and Eve and the “skins” of the animals that would later be harvested from the slain animals offered as a sin or guilt atonement for officiating priests (255).

physically and spiritually.⁶⁰ Though Adam and Eve might not have understood in full the details of God’s prefiguring of Christ’s atoning sacrifice in this event, later Levitical priests would have recognized its connection to atonement and sacrificial animal skins given to priests to use (Lev 7:8). As Ross notes,

Israel would also learn that all the dealings of God with sinners can be traced back to the first disobedience. Their God was a saving God, however, to which the provision of clothes for Adam and Eve attested. In Israel sacrifices were made according to the prescribed manner of the law: the animals’ lives were taken in exchange for the human seeking atonement, and the skins were given to the priests for their use. (No priests could read this passage without thinking of the connection).⁶¹

Kenneth Mathews confirms this sentiment when he writes that the language of Genesis 3:21

alludes to tabernacle setting and worship. “Garments” (*kūttōnet*) and “clothed” (*lābaš*) are reminiscent of the Pentateuch’s description of priestly garments, particularly for Aaron as high priest [e.g., for “garments,” Exod 28:4, 39-40; 29:5, 8; 39:27; 40:14; Lev 8:7, 13; 10:5; 16:4; also Ezra 2:69; Neh 7:70 (69), 72 (71); for “clothed,” e.g., Exod 28:41; 29:8; 40:14; Lev 8:13]. This is another lexical link with the symbols of the tabernacle, where the priest must be properly clothed before God in the administration of his service (Exod 20:26; 28:42).⁶²

While the typical priestly garb was made of colorful woven yarn and fine linen (Exod 28:4-5; 28:39; 39:27; Lev 16:4), the Mosaic law required that the skin of an animal offered for a sin or guilt atonement was to be used as clothing for the officiating priest (Lev 7:8). In the same way, God bestowed “garments of skin” on Adam and Eve in the Garden, emblematic of what was his and her restored status as priests and the institution of the sacrificial system. In the end, God’s original plan was not diverted, though the

⁶⁰ This notion of God clothing sinners begins here but is found throughout the narrative of Scripture and surely serves to prefigure the atoning work of Christ on the cross. Charles Simeon traces this theme throughout the Bible, showing how God’s decision to clothe Adam and Eve with animal skins is connected to Christ’s sacrifice. See Charles Simeon, *Horae Homileticae: Genesis to Leviticus*, vol. 1 (London: Samuel Holdsworth, 1836), 42-43; reprint in digital format, *Horae Homileticae: Discourses Condensed into One Continuous Series, Forming a Commentary upon Every Book of the Old and New Testament, Genesis to Deuteronomy*, vol. 1 (Harrington, DE: Delmarva, 2014).

⁶¹ Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 150.

⁶² Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 254-55. See also, Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 84.

offering of atoning sacrifices became one of the necessary means to fulfill the priests' ministry and the basis whereby priests could serve as mediators between God and man.⁶³ Because of their sin, Adam and Eve lost their priestly privilege of enjoying unmediated access to God. Yet, through the introduction of a sacrificial system, they gained the priestly privilege of being able to approach God through the mediating institution of atoning sacrifices centered in the hope of Christ.⁶⁴

Border management. Adam and Eve would pick up their priestly task of border management following their reinstatement as priests. This trajectory was in some ways diverted because of their sin. Yet, there are hints in the text that suggest that Adam and Eve reconvened aspects of their priestly work in border management.

In God's cursing of Adam and Eve, he indicates that Eve would be punished through increased pain in childbearing (Gen 3:16) and that Adam's work would be more toilsome, painful, and difficult (Gen 3:17-19). Though these priestly tasks of procreation and cultivating/working the earth are made more difficult, they are nevertheless still incumbent on the original pair to continue to carry out. That is, it was once again their

⁶³ Mathews explains:

Although the text does not specify that animals were slain to provide these coverings, it is a fair implication and one that likely would be made in the Mosaic community, where animal sacrifice was pervasive. Since the Garden narrative shares in tabernacle imagery, it is not surprising that allusion to animal sacrifice is found in the Garden too. Through an oblique reference to animal sacrifice, the Garden narrative paints a theological portrait familiar to the recipients of the Sinai revelation who honored the tabernacle as the meeting place with God. Sacrifice renewed and guaranteed that special union of God with his people (e.g., Day of Atonement, Lev 16). This mode of provision then for Adam and Eve affirmed God's abiding goodwill. (Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 254-55)

Walton concludes that the text is not referring to sacrifice and believes that the "institution of sacrifice is far too significant an occurrence to leave it entirely to inference." Walton, *Genesis*, 229. He argues that the task of the interpreter ought to be "to understand what the author wished to communicate, not to piece together answers we would like to know from reading between the lines" (229). He deduces that the "author is clearly not communicating anything about sacrifice here, for he does not address that issue" (229). Walton's argument fails to take the genre of the text into account, demanding inordinate detail from the author. The narrative is not intended to dictate the legal regulations regarding sacrifice but is instead introducing the concept and practice of sacrifice in seed form.

⁶⁴ Restoring Adam to his priestly office and identity, God graciously provided a way for Adam and all of mankind to continue to commune with himself: "Sacrifice renewed and guaranteed that special union of God with his people. . . . This mode of provision then for Adam and Eve affirmed God's abiding goodwill." Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 255. Starting with Adam and culminating with Christ, blood sacrifice would become one of the key ways God's people would function as priests.

responsibility to work to manage and, in this case, expand the borders of God's dominion over the earth through procreation and through exercising dominion. Indeed, sometime after being expelled from the Garden, Eve conceived and gave birth to Cain (Gen 4:1), Abel (Gen 4:2), Seth (Gen 4:25), and other sons and daughters (Gen 5:4).

God's Word. Adam and Eve's priestly obedience to God following their fall is evidenced in how they apparently passed along their priestly commission to their children. Though there is no record of Adam and Eve directly teaching God's Word to their children, there is yet evidence that they apparently must have done so. How did Cain, Abel, and Seth know that they ought to function as priest-kings working to procreate, cultivate/subdue the earth, and offer sacrifices to God (Gen 4:1-5:8)?⁶⁵ Perhaps their priestly parents taught them concerning the Word of God what it meant to be a priest, urging them to obey the Lord.⁶⁶

It would appear that Adam and Eve had been teaching their family to honor God and to obey his word. Though Abel was murdered (Gen 4:8) and Cain "went away from the presence of the Lord" (Gen 4:16), the text speaks more positively of Seth, noting that after the birth of Seth's son Enosh, "people began to call upon the name of the LORD" (Gen 4:26). The implication here is that the "worship of God . . . began in this era."⁶⁷ This instance in redemptive history marks an important point of connection between the earliest members of the family of God and the generations that follow (Gen

⁶⁵ While Abel apparently did not procreate, both Cain and Seth did (Gen 4:17, 26). Both Cain and Abel are credited with offering sacrifices to God (Gen 4:3-4). The text records that Cain was a worker of the ground while Abel was a keeper of sheep (Gen 4:2), demonstrating their priest-kingly commitment to cultivation and dominion. Seth and his family model worship and call on the name of the Lord (Gen 4:26). Adam and Eve's sons each manifested aspects of the priestly ministry, practices that they apparently learned from their parents.

⁶⁶ Daniel Strange discusses the common creation/fall/flood narrative/myth that courses through all ancient literature and posits that this oral tradition was handed down from generation to generation beginning with Adam and Eve. Daniel Strange, *Their Rock is Not Like Our Rock: A Theology of Religions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014).

⁶⁷ Wenham, "Genesis," 64.

4:26; 12:8).⁶⁸ Adam and Eve's role in obeying and teaching God's Word to their family should not be overlooked. Indeed, they should be credited for their role in both obeying the word of the Lord and for passing it along to the generations that would follow them.

Summary: The Priesthood of Adam and Eve

This chapter situates the origin and design of the priesthood within the purposeful mind of God, identifies Adam and Eve as the first priests and the Garden of Eden as the archetypal divine sanctuary, provides detail regarding the identity of the office of the priesthood, and employees Adam and Eve's overall narrative to explain how the priesthood originated with them. As the first priests, Adam and Eve served God in the archetypal sanctuary, the Garden of Eden, until they sinned against God and were expelled from the sanctuary. God's redemptive and cosmic plans to bring glory to himself throughout the world via the priesthood are observed as God demonstrates grace to the first pair after their sin, restoring to them the priesthood and reconvening his world-encompassing and cosmic initiative to bring glory to himself through the priesthood. Together Adam and Eve, as the first priests, and the Garden of Eden, as the first sanctuary, establish a model for subsequent priesthoods and sanctuaries that would come later in redemptive history.

⁶⁸ "Called on the name of the Lord" in Gen 4:26 "unites the Lord of the patriarchs and of Moses with the Lord of the antediluvian line of promise through Seth and shows thereby that the spiritual ancestors of Abraham's family were those descended through Noah." Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 292-93.

CHAPTER 3

THE PATRIARCHAL PRIESTHOOD

Though Adam failed as the first priest, God in his grace not only restored Adam's priestly identity but continued appointing priests among Adam's descendants. During this era the "priestly ministrations had become the responsibility of the patriarchal family head."¹ Specifically, this meant that "the oldest man built the altar, offered the sacrifices, and offered his prayers in the presence of God. We may assume that he did this not only for himself but also for his extended family, and in this way he acted like those later identified as priests."² For patriarchal family heads Adam, Cain, Abel, Seth, Noah, Job, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the observed biblical pattern is that they were to be dedicated to serving their families as priests, mediating priestly blessings to them through their ministry. Some scholars, relying primarily on extra-biblical and Jewish historical sources, have proposed that the patriarchal priesthood should be understood as a filial priesthood in light of the principle of primogeniture where the rights of priesthood are said to have been handed down from the family patriarch "to the firstborn son, as a part of his birthright."³ While there seems to be some merit to this theory,⁴ the biblical text

¹ J. Barton Payne, *The Theology of the Older Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), 373.

² Tremper Longman III, *Immanuel in Our Place: Seeing Christ in Israel's Worship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2001), 120. Roland de Vaux points to the account of Micah and the Levite boy in Judg 17:10 as a transitional point in history when he thinks the priestly duties were transferred from the patriarch of the family to a priestly office. He writes, "When Mi[c]jah engaged the Levite he said 'Be a father and a priest to me' (Judges 17:10), even though the Levite was only a young man (cf. vv. 7 and 10) the significance of this remark is that the priest had inherited those religious prerogatives which, in the patriarchal period, had belonged to the head of the family." Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*, trans. John McHugh (London: Darton, Longman, & Todd, 1961), 348.

³ Scott W. Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant: A Canonical Approach to the Fulfillment of God's Saving Promises* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 136. The principle of primogeniture itself is firmly established in Hebrew Scripture (Gen 25:29-28:5; Exod 13:2, 12-15; 22:29; 34:20; Num 3:11-13;

makes clear, at least, that the male patriarch served as his family's priest during this era. In keeping with Adam and Eve's priesthood, the patriarchal priesthood continued to consist of people who enjoyed access to the divine presence of God and continued to serve him as guardians. They worked to do this as they attended to God's Word, border management, sacrifice, and mediation.

Altar-Building and the Expanding Sanctuary of God

With no geographically-fixed divine sanctuary having been established for the new priests to meet with God, God instituted the practice of altar-building which enabled these priests to enjoy access to the divine presence of God as they approached him

8:16-18; 18:15). Certain privileges and prerogatives were accorded to the firstborn son of families in the patriarchal period. Whereas, predominately, the biblical pattern for the patriarchal priesthood shows that the male head or patriarch of the family served as the family's priest throughout this period, extra-biblical sources and Jewish tradition suggest that the principle of "primogeniture" extended to the conferral of priesthood from the patriarch to the firstborn son. As Sklba comments, "Sacrificial and cultic leadership was provided by the head of the family who represented his family in worship. . . . Besides this tradition of patriarchal predominance in the cultic life of the family, we find another later tradition which postulates the right of the priesthood in a special way for the firstborn son." Richard J. Sklba, *The Teaching Function of the Pre-Exilic Israelite Priesthood* (Rome: Pontifical University of St. Thomas of Urbe Press, 1965), 53-54.

This tradition may be observed in the Targums, for example, in the account of Jacob's blessing of Reuben (Gen 49:3). *The Targum Onqelos to Genesis* reads, "Reuben, you are my first-born, my might, and the beginning of my strength. For you it would have been fitting to take three parts—the birthright, the priesthood, and royalty." Bernard Grossfield, *The Targum Onqelos to Genesis*, the Aramaic Bible 6 (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1988), 158. Similarly, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis* reads, "Reuben, you are my first-born . . . you would have been worthy of the birthright, the dignity of the priesthood and the kingship. But because you sinned, my son, the birthright was given to Joseph, the kingship to Judah, and the priesthood to Levi." Michael Maher, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis*, the Aramaic Bible 1B (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 157.

⁴ The biblical evidence for this theory in the patriarchal period is mixed. Cain and Abel *both* functioned as priests while their father Adam was still alive (Gen 4:3-5). The text does not specify whether or not Adam had, at this point, passed along his blessing but does indicate that Adam's sons were performing sacrifices rather than him. However, instead of the firstborn alone performing sacrifices on behalf of the family, the text reports that both Adam's firstborn Cain and Adam's second-born Abel performed sacrifices. Interestingly, the sacrifice of the second-born son was preferred over that of the firstborn (Gen 4). In this case, the principle of primogeniture does not appear to apply. While both Noah (Gen 8:20) and Job (Job 1:5; 42:8-9) are recorded offering priestly sacrifices on behalf of their families, there is no mention of their offspring carrying on sacrificial duties prior to the death of their respective patriarch; it is, thus, unclear whether or not these patriarchs passed along the priestly responsibility to their sons. Abraham built altars and offered sacrifices on behalf of his household (Gen 12-22), but there is no mention of his offspring carrying on these priestly sacrifices until *after* his death (Gen 25:8) when Isaac built an altar to the Lord (Gen 26:25). Perhaps the strongest biblical example that could be offered in favor of this theory is the example of Isaac and his son Jacob. When Isaac was nearing his death in his old age, the narrative reports that he passed along his blessing to his second-born son Jacob rather than his firstborn son Esau (Gen 27:1-28:5); Esau had earlier sold his birthright to his younger brother (Gen 25:29-34). In this case, Jacob carried out the priestly task of altar-building (Gen 33:20; 35:7) *before* the death of his father (Gen 35:29).

through the appropriate priestly means.⁵ Priestly altar-building was God's plan for reclaiming a consecrated geographical location for himself and for his people. Numerous impermanent and non-architectural sanctuaries (their only architecture was an altar)⁶ were constructed without a fixed building. Much like the Garden of Eden, these non-architectural sanctuaries were holy geographical locations, true sanctuaries or temples where priests met with God and ministered on behalf of the people of God. It was through the avenue of altar-building that priests carried out several aspects of their priestly ministry. While priests continued to serve God by attending to God's Word and border management, they now attended to the priestly works of sacrifice and mediation as they erected altars to God.

Sacrifice, Mediation, and Border Management

The patriarchal priestly practice of altar-building was integrally linked with sacrifice, mediation, and border management.⁷ Altars were the consecrated locations (Exod 20:24-26)⁸ where priests mediated⁹ and offered sacrifices to God.¹⁰ Furthermore,

⁵ David Schrock comments on the nature of the ministry of these early patriarchal priests: From the very first generation, priestly actions (e.g., sacrifice, intercession, and covenant mediation) were something that accompanied true worship (Gen 4:1ff.). Even while no official place of divine residence had been established in Genesis, God revealed himself repeatedly to the seed of the woman, and in every generation the men who called upon the name of the Lord offered worship to the true God. (David Stephen Schrock, "A Biblical-Theological Investigation of Christ's Priesthood and Covenant Mediation with Respect to the Extent of the Atonement" [PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013], 66)

⁶ Tremper Longman III notes that "before Moses the altar was the only architectural feature marking a place as holy" and that later "altars were incorporated into the larger [structural] sanctuaries, the tabernacle and the temple." Longman, *Immanuel in Our Place*, 16.

⁷ The priestly duties of sacrifice, mediation, and border management are dealt with together in this section. This is so because of how closely related they are during this era. As the patriarchs built altars, they mediated and offered sacrifices to God on behalf of their households. When they offered sacrifices, they typically did so on altars. Furthermore, the overall practice of altar-building functioned to "expand the borders" of God's holy space as the erection of altars across the landscape served to progressively establish a sacred and consecrated land for God and his people.

⁸ Longman writes, the "altar was a holy place, a set-apart place, because that was where God chose to meet with his people and bring them his blessings." Longman, *Immanuel in Our Place*, 17.

⁹ "The priest functioned as an intermediary between God and people. This [duty] is most clearly seen in his role as one who declares or imparts divine blessing and as one who intercedes with God on behalf of the people." John A. Davies, *A Royal Priesthood: Literary and Intertextual Perspectives on an Image of Israel in Exodus 19:6* (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 163.

while Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden with the duty of managing the borders of God’s sanctuary—protecting and expanding its borders—patriarchal priests appear to have been responsible for reclaiming a sacred space—indeed a land with borders to populate, cultivate, and protect—for the people of God to manage once again. They accomplished this through constructing altars across the landscape in and around the land of Canaan, the land God promised to Abraham and his descendants (Gen 12:7). The net result of this priest-kingly endeavor of building multiple small altars across the land of Canaan was “that the terrain of Israel’s future land was dotted with shrines”¹¹ that functioned like “planting a flag and claiming the land”¹² for God and his people. Progressively, the priest-kingly patriarchs worked to establish a land—indeed, a kingdom—where God’s people could meet with and worship their God.

As a part of this process of reclaiming a sacred space, patriarchal priests erected altars and offered atoning sacrifices for themselves, for their households, indeed for all the people of God whom they served and guarded as priests: “Because of sin’s presence, the priestly duty of Adam shifted from maintaining and guarding God’s holy place to offering sacrifices to God in order to shield God’s people from his holiness.”¹³ The practice of patriarchal altar-building elevated the importance of respecting God’s holiness and accentuated the necessity of approaching God through the appropriate

¹⁰ Easton defines “altar” as “any structure of earth (Exod 20:24) or unwrought stone (20:25) on which sacrifices were offered.” M. G. Easton, “Altar,” in *EBD* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1893). At their root, altars were “places of slaughter.” *BDB* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 258. They were “use in connection with the ritual of sacrificing animals to God as a covering for sin.” Walter A. Elwell and Philip Wesley Comfort, *TBD*, Tyndale Reference Library (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 2001), 32. Altars were “open-air structures” that, during the patriarchal period and prior to the construction of the temple, could “exist and function independently of temple buildings. . . . However, the converse is apparently not true, and temple buildings were always accompanied by altars in their courtyards.” Carol L. Meyers, “Altar,” in *HBD*, ed. Paul J. Achtemeier (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 23.

¹¹ G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, NSBT 17 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2004), 99. Each of the instances in which the patriarchs built altars is dealt with in what follows.

¹² Longman, *Immanuel in Our Place*, 20.

¹³ Schrock, “A Biblical-Theological Investigation,” 66.

means of mediation and sacrifice. In offering suitable sacrifices at God's altars, the patriarchal priests served both to guard God's altars from defilement and to protect God's people against the consequences of their sins. Numerous examples of such altar-building can be found in the scriptural account of Cain and Abel (Gen 4:3-4), Noah (Gen 8:20), Job (Job 1:5; 42:8), Abraham (Gen 12:6-7, 8; 13:4, 18; 22:9), Isaac (Gen 26:25), and Jacob (Gen 33:20; 35:7).

Cain and Abel

Learning from the example of their priestly parents (Gen 3:21), Cain and Abel, as priestly sons, picked up the practice of offering sacrifices to God: "Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions" (Gen 4:3-4). Cain's offering of the fruit of the ground was part of the later Levitical sacrificial system (Deut 26:2); the same is true of Abel's offering of the firstborn of his flock (Deut 15:19-23).¹⁴

Though no explicit mention of altars is yet found in the narrative, "From the actions in Genesis 4:3-5, we may assume that Cain and Abel brought their sacrifices to an altar."¹⁵ In fact, the text presents several pointers that indicate that Cain and Abel presented their offerings at an altar. First, it should be observed that Cain and Abel relocated their offerings from one place to another in presenting them to God. Not just any location would suffice for the presentation of their offerings. Cain and Abel brought their sacrifices to the place designated and consecrated for offering their sacrifices. Second, the Hebrew terms for "altar" and "sacrifice/slaughter" are closely linked; because "altar" (אֹלָטָרָה) literally means "place of slaughter"¹⁶ and because Abel brought

¹⁴ Though Cain was married (Gen 4:17), there is no mention of Cain's wife presenting an offering. Instead, it seems that this priestly duty was reserved for the patriarch of the family.

¹⁵ Longman, *Immanuel in Our Place*, 15.

¹⁶ BDB, 258.

an animal to slaughter for his sacrifice (Gen 4:4), the place where Abel brought and slaughtered his sacrifice must have been an actual altar.¹⁷

Furthermore, God's reaction to Cain's offering and overall sinful disposition adds weight to the notion that Cain and Abel brought their offerings to an altar. While some commentators conclude that the Cain's problem lay solely in a defect in Cain's attitude,¹⁸ no textual evidence supports the notion that this alone was the issue. Instead, the text says that God did not have regard for "Cain and his offering" (Gen 4:5). Because there is nothing inherently wrong with presenting God an offering of grain at an altar (Deut 26:2), something else was at issue with God's rejection of Cain and his offering. Cain neglected to understand the seriousness of his own sin when meeting with God at his holy and consecrated altar. Altars were places "where the worshiper came into the presence of God"; and because God hates sin, "sin had to be accounted for before a person entered the holy place."¹⁹ Thus, when meeting with God at the consecrated place of sacrifice, Cain should have first made certain that atonement for his sin was accounted for.²⁰ Cain did not bring an atoning and propitiating sin offering to God's holy altar. The result is that he was sent away from the place of God's holy altar and special presence.²¹

¹⁷ Longman notes the close connection between the Hebrew words "altar" (*mizbeah*) and "sacrifice/slaughter" (*zabah*) and, while conceding that "though it is dangerous to rely exclusively on the etymology of a word for its meaning," the linkage between the two terms "is supported by the use of the word[s] in biblical contexts. It appears that the altar was a place where sacrifice could and did take place." Longman, *Immanuel in Our Place*, 16.

¹⁸ John E. Hartley, *Genesis*, NIBC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000), 81; Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis*, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: JPS, 1989), 32-33.

¹⁹ Longman writes, "The altar was where the worshiper came into the presence of God, and God . . . hates sin. Therefore, sin had to be accounted for before a person entered the holy place. . . . The most obvious function of sacrifice was to atone for sin. Thus, . . . at the heart of the altar was the idea of sacrifice." Longman, *Immanuel in Our Place*, 16.

²⁰ Morales concludes that "YHWH had revealed to Cain the means by which he might be restored to divine fellowship, precisely the same means he would later reveal to Israel through Moses in the book of Leviticus: a sin offering at the sanctuary doorway." L. Michael Morales, *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord?: A Biblical Theology of the Book of Leviticus*, NSBT 37 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 57.

²¹ The text records that Abel's animal sacrifice was accepted while Cain's grain offering was not. William Symington suggests the reason is because Abel's animal sacrifice was "vicarious in nature" and was rooted in "substitutionary suffering," which was appropriate for appeasing an "offended Deity,"

Indeed, after Cain's offering was rejected and he had murdered Abel, Cain (and potentially his family [Gen 4:17],²² for which he would have been responsible to serve and mediate for as priest) was driven from the presence of God to the land of Nod (Gen 4:16). Cain failed to account for his sin and regard the holiness of an altar that had been set apart to God; he should have offered a blood sacrifice for the atonement of his and his household's sin. However, Cain disregarded God's will regarding sacrifice, choosing to offer the kind of sacrifice he preferred without concern for the holy requirements of God.²³ Whereas "the blood sacrifice offered by Abel" was accepted by God, the "failure of Cain to bring a 'sin-offering' to the Lord" resulted in his judgment.²⁴

Cain was wrong; he failed to attend to his priestly duty of border management, neglecting to guard the holy sacrificial space/altar/sanctuary from his own unfitness to approach it and failing to properly mediate for his household in the face of a holy God. The consequence for Cain was like that of later priests who neglected to respect the holiness of God in their priestly duties around the altar. He was deposed from his office and duties, was removed from priestly service near the altar, and was sent away from the presence of God (2 Kgs 23:5).

Adam and Eve's children's priestly responsibility to attend to border management can also be observed in the pattern of procreation they received from their

and Cain's offering, on the other hand, was of vegetation, the kind of offering that did not consider the consequences of his sin. That is, Cain's offering was only "suitable as a gift or as an expression of gratitude" and did not atone for his sin. William Symington, *On the Atonement and Intercession of Jesus Christ*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: William Whyte, 1834), 92-93.

²² The text does not indicate whether Cain was married (and thus served his family as priest) before or after his removal from God's presence. What is clear is that Cain and his wife began procreating after Cain had been removed from God's presence to the land of Nod (Gen 4:16-17).

²³ The state of Abel's mind "directed him in the choice of the kind of offering that would be acceptable to God, and that had Cain also been in a right frame of soul he would never have thought an inanimate substance to be a suitable offering to an offended Deity." Symington, *On the Atonement and Intercession*, 92-93.

²⁴ David Schrock, "Restoring the Image of God: A Corporate Filial Approach to the 'Royal Priesthood' in Exodus 19:6," *SBJT* 22, no. 2 (2018): 35.

parents. Though Abel was murdered before procreating, both Cain and Seth had children (Gen 4:17-22; 4:26-5:32). Additionally, Adam apparently modeled to his children the need to expand the borders, to subdue the earth, to work the ground, and to have dominion over the creatures of the earth. The text indicates that both Cain and Abel were workers. Cain was dedicated to being a “worker of the ground,” and Abel was a “keeper of the sheep” (Gen 4:2).

Noah

The next patriarch to offer a sacrifice at an altar was Noah (Gen 8:20). In fact, this is the first time the word “altar” (אֹלָטָרָה) is actually used in the Bible. After the flood subsided, the ark rested in the mountains of Ararat (Gen 8:4). Upon leaving the ark, Noah immediately erected an altar to the Lord on this mountain sanctuary. Continuing the pattern set forth with the Garden of Eden being established on a mountain, Noah and the rest of the patriarchs continued to erect their altars at mountain settings.²⁵ Carrying out this practice, the “patriarchs were like people climbing a tall mountain for the first time and planting the national flag to indicate that the climber’s native land had first conquered the mountain”²⁶ so as to say, “This is God’s land.”

In building his altar to God, Noah validated his priestly status as he offered numerous animal sacrifices (Gen 8:20), which presented a pleasing aroma to God²⁷ and served to placate God’s wrath against creation (Gen 8:21). It is appropriate to understand

²⁵ Noah builds his altar to God here on Mount Ararat. Much like the Garden of Eden, which was situated on a mountain with a river flowing down from Eden (Gen 2:10; Ezek 28:14-16), Noah’s altar was also located on a mountain. This same pattern of God’s sanctuaries being situated on mountains would continue in the patriarchal altars (Gen 8:4-5, 20-22; 12:6-7, 8; 13:3-4, 18; 22:2, 9; 26:25; 33:20; 35:1-7), the sanctuary at mount Sinai (Exod 3:1; 18:5; 24:13), the Jerusalem temple (2 Chr 3:1), and the eschatological temple (Exod 15:17; Ps 78:54; Isa 2:2-4; 4:5; 11:9; 25:6-8; 56:7; 57:13; 65:11, 25; Ezek 40:2; 43:12; Rev 21:10).

²⁶ Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 99.

²⁷ Several passages of Scripture indicate a connection between priests offering sacrifices and the aroma of those sacrifices being pleasing to God (Exod 29:18, 25, 41; Lev 1:9, 13, 17; 2:2, 9, 12; 3:5, 16; 4:31; 6:15, 21; 8:21, 28; 17:6; 23:18). Thus, Noah’s sacrifices in Gen 8:21 appear to confirm his status as a priest.

these burnt offerings as atoning sacrifices that Noah offered as a mediator for his own sins and for the sins his family (Lev 1:4; 5:10; 9:7).²⁸ It would, however, be incorrect to conclude that they have salvific implications for the rest of the world.²⁹ As a priest, Noah mediates a covenant³⁰ with God that is primarily focused on protecting his family, those who are in the family of God. Yet, common grace is extended to the entire creation, with the underlying hope that the borders of God's sanctuary would eventually encompass all the nations.

Immediately following Noah's sacrifice, Noah receives covenantal stipulations from God (Gen 9:1-7) that were very similar to those that Adam received (Gen 1:28; 2:15-17). These same covenant stipulations were also passed along to Abram/Abraham (Gen 12:2-3; 17:2, 6, 8; 22:17-18), Isaac (Gen 26:3-4, 24), and Jacob (Gen 28:3-4, 14; 35:11-12; 48:3, 15-16). In the stipulations, these patriarchs receive a priest-kingly commission that includes elements of receiving God's blessing and being commanded to obey God and to attend to the discipline of border management, namely, to "be fruitful and multiply," to "fill the earth," to "subdue the earth," and to have "dominion over" the earth. Importantly, as the Adamic commission is repeated, it is typically delivered in

²⁸ Commenting on the atoning nature of the design of burn offerings in the Law, Mathews writes, "The 'burnt offering' was a blood offering given in the Mosaic community as a voluntary offering for sin." Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, NAC, vol. 1A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 392.

²⁹ God's promise to Noah is not that the curse of sin delivered in Gen 3:17 ("curse," אָרַר) would be lifted but rather that he would, in his common grace, never again "dishonor" or "bring contempt" ("curse," לָלַךְ; Gen 8:21) on the created order through bringing a flood (Gen 9:11). Noah stands as the mediator between God and man as this covenant is instituted. Gen 3:17 uses the word אָרַר to speak of God's curse against humanity following Adam and Eve's original sin. The result is the fall of mankind. The term is properly translated to mean "curse." Though לָלַךְ is sometimes translated as "curse" as it is here in Gen 8:21, its meaning carries the notion of bringing dishonor or contempt against something. See BDB, 76, 886.

³⁰ The covenantal language used to describe Noah's covenant indicates that God is not initiating a covenant with Noah but rather is upholding for Noah and his descendants a commitment initiated previously. . . . [God] is saying that his commitment to his creation, the care of the creator to preserve, provide for, and rule over all that he has made, including the blessings and ordinances that he initiated through and with Adam and Eve and their family, are now to be with Noah and his descendants. . . . The covenant with Noah was a kind of reinstatement and upholding of a covenant initiated at creation. (Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012], 156)

connection with what appears to be the construction of altars throughout the surrounding landscape.³¹

Job

Job stands as another example of a man who served as a priestly figure during this era³² and likely lived at some point between Noah and Abraham.³³ His priestly identity is evidenced in his service as the head of his family when he mediates and offers sacrifices on behalf of his children (Job 1:5). Though he is not certain whether or not his children are guilty of sin, he offers sacrifices³⁴ to atone for the sins that they may have committed so as to be sure that their sins are covered. Thus, as he mediates on behalf of his household, Job's priestly and "godly character is indicated in his concern for the

³¹ Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 93-96.

³² Robert Alden believes that Job lived and served as a priest during the patriarchal period. He substantiates this point when he writes, "One of the arguments for the antiquity of the man Job is that he was a priest to his own family. Like Abraham, he was not dependent on another to make sacrifices. Job was a patriarch in the sense that he was the head of his clan. He also was a patriarch in that he offered sacrifices for himself and for others. He knew nothing of the Levites or the laws of Moses. The story took place in very ancient times." Robert L. Alden, *Job*, NAC, vol. 11 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1993), 52. Numerous other scholars affirm the common notion of Job's patriarchal placement in history. See David J. A. Clines, *Job 1-20*, WBC, vol. 17 (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), lvii; Clines, "Job," in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 460; Elmer B. Smick, *Job*, in *EBC*, vol. 4, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 687; Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 654; John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, W. B. Eerdmans, 1988), 64-67.

While this determination is most reasonable, it must be conceded that dating difficulties exist, both for the timing of Job's life and for the dating of the book of Job. Determining a date for the writing of the book is fraught with difficulty, with scholars suggesting dates ranging from as early as the patriarchal period to as late as the post-exilic era: "Scholars have suggested dates as early as the eleventh or tenth centuries and as late as the fourth century." J. J. M. Roberts, "Job and the Israelite Religious Tradition," in *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 89 (1977): 109; Hartley, *The Book of Job*, 15-19. While the above evidence suggests strongly that Job lived during the patriarchal period, it is also plausible that Job lived at a later time period, perhaps in a place and among a people whose culture was still similar to that of the patriarchs.

³³ Spence-Jones argues that, based on his age, Job likely lived between the time of Noah and Abraham: "Job's term of life (two hundred to two hundred and fifty years) would seem to place him in the period between Eber and Abraham." H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., *Job*, Pulpit Commentary, vol. 7 (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1909), xv.

³⁴ The writer of Job uses the plural form of עֹלָה to indicate that multiple burnt offerings were presented to God, likely one animal for each child. See BDB, 750.

spiritual well-being of his grown children.”³⁵ Indeed, he is committed to guarding them against the consequences of their sin through his priestly ministry of sacrifice.

This same guardian-priest behavior is exhibited by Job when his friends Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar are told to go to Job so that he could mediate on their behalf by offering sacrifices and interceding for them before God so that the Lord would not deal with them “according to [their] folly” (Job 42:8-9). The result of their efforts was that “the Lord accepted Job’s prayer” (Job 42:9). It is important to note that Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar “offered their own sacrifices, but it was Job who interceded in their behalf.”³⁶ Job was regarded as a priest in a way that his friends were not. It was Job who, as the priest, had access to the divine presence and who had the right to present sacrifices and prayers to God, mediating on behalf of his friends.³⁷

Furthermore, Job clearly took seriously his priestly responsibility to engage in the cultural mandate to be fruitful and multiply. Prior to the calamities that came his way, Job and his wife had “seven sons and three daughters” (Job 1:2). Though each of these children tragically died (Job 1:18-19), Job continued to pursue this priestly task of procreation, and God blessed Job with more offspring, “seven sons and three daughters” (Job 42:13). Before dying, Job was able to enjoy the fruit of his priestly work, being able to enjoy life with “four generations” (Job 42:16) of his descendants.

Abraham

Abram encountered God while living in Haran (Gen 12:1), and God made a covenant with him, telling him to leave his country. So, Abram and his household set out

³⁵ James E. Smith, *The Wisdom Literature and Psalms*, OTSS (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1996), 52.

³⁶ Alden, *Job*, 412.

³⁷ Though the text does not speak of the presence of an altar, it is possible that God instructs Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar to take their offerings to Job so that he could present them on an actual altar in close proximity to Job’s location. Presenting such sacrifices to God on an altar would certainly fit the pattern of other patriarchal priests.

for the land of Canaan and “passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh” (Gen 12:6). God promises to bless him so that he would in turn be a blessing to all the families of the earth; God also promises to grant Abram offspring (furthering the cultural mandate Adam received to reproduce) and to give his descendants the land of Canaan (Gen 12:1-7). Abram’s response to God was to build an altar to God at that location (Gen 12:6-7). Interestingly, Abram makes a habit of building altars to God in close proximity to trees, a practice which may signify a connection to the Garden-sanctuary with its many trees, including the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:9, 16-17).³⁸ From Shechem Abram then moved and pitched his tent at the mountain just east of Bethel (“the house of God”) and just west of Ai; here Abram built another altar to the Lord and “called on the name of the Lord” (Gen 12:8).³⁹

Because of a famine in the land, Abram then travelled away from the promised land of Canaan, and away from the altars he had built, to Egypt where he committed some rather morally dubious actions concerning his wife in his encounter with Pharaoh (Gen 12:10-20; cf. 20:1-18).⁴⁰ Not surprisingly, Abram then returned to the land of Canaan, to the location between Bethel and Ai where he had previously built an altar, and there he once again “called on the name of the Lord” (Gen 13:1-4).⁴¹ It should be noted

³⁸ Longman draws this connection: “It is conceivable . . . that it was Abraham’s common practice to build the altar near a prominent tree or grove of trees. . . . What is the significance of the connection between places of worship and trees? . . . The tree next to the place where God meets his human servants reminds us of the garden of Eden. It is not the garden, but it evokes the garden. It is a little bit of Eden in a fallen world.” Longman, *Immanuel in Our Place*, 21.

³⁹ Interestingly the expression “called on the name of the Lord” is the same expression used to describe the behavior of Seth’s son Enosh and his generation (Gen 4:26). Not coincidentally, Noah’s family line came through Seth (Gen 5:1-32).

⁴⁰ Abram’s “fear of man replaced trust in God as his guiding principle,” resulting in him using a “misleading half-truth” to deceive Pharaoh into believing that Sarai was his sister. This episode “shows God fulfilling his promise to protect Abram (12:3) despite his unbelief,” effectively overruling “the mistakes of those he has called, to their long-term benefit.” Gordon J. Wenham, “Genesis,” in *New Bible Commentary*, ed. Carson et al., 70.

⁴¹ Abram returned to the altar apparently desiring to “recover his experience with God” after his questionable actions in Egypt and perhaps seeking atonement for his sins and reconciliation to God at the altar. Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, NAC, vol. 1B (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2005), 133.

that Abram did not build altars while he was in Egypt, but he did so regularly while in the land of Canaan (Gen 12:7, 8; 13:4, 18; 22:9).⁴²

After some time of working and living alongside one another, Abram and Lot decide to part ways (Gen 13:5-13). Abram then relocates near “the oaks of Mamre, which are at Hebron, and there he built an altar to the Lord” (Gen 13:18). Again, Abram chooses to build this altar near trees. Moreover, these passages reveal the centrality of altars in Abram’s life; wherever Abram lived and wherever he moved in the area near the land of Canaan, his life revolved around meeting with God at the altar.

Shortly after this altar-building event, Abram demonstrates his status as a guardian-priest when he defends and rescues Lot after Lot was abducted by a group of pillaging kings (Gen 14:11-12). Being committed, as a priest, to protecting those under his care from harm (i.e., his family), he deployed a small army of 318 trained men to overtake the kings to rescue Lot and return the possessions which they had stolen (Gen 14:14-16).⁴³ In this episode, Abram labors as a priest when he mediates blessings to his kinsman Lot by blessing him with land (Gen 13:1-12), physical protection (Gen 14:1-24), and, later on, spiritual liberation (Gen 18:1-19:29).

In Genesis 15, God reminds Abram of the promises he has made with him, promises to give him an heir and descendants as numerous as the stars; Abram believes God, and his belief was counted to him as righteousness (Gen 15:6).⁴⁴ Then God instructs

⁴² Gentry and Wellum note that “Canaan is depicted in Edenic language as a mountain sanctuary.” Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 235. Accordingly, Canaan is in some ways viewed as a sanctuary space for God, a place that is appropriate for the building of altars. In erecting these altars in the sanctuary land of Canaan, Gentry and Wellum believe that Abram is “fulfilling an Adamic role: he offers sacrifice as a priest and worships God in this mountain sanctuary” (235).

⁴³ This incident is just another occasion in which priestly and kingly behavior are intermingled. Gentry and Wellum observe that the “events of Genesis 14 are important to the depiction of Abram and his role as ‘priest-king.’” Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 236.

⁴⁴ Writing of the Abrahamic covenant, Dempster writes, Genesis 15 concludes the first section of the Abram narrative, by repeating once more the dual themes of genealogy and geography. Abram is reminded that he will have a child, yet he asks the Lord to substitute his servant Eleazar for the promised heir (Gen 15:2-3). This domesticates the wild promise of God by viewing it from a strictly earthly horizon. God rejects his request and directs Abram’s gaze beyond the earth to the heavens to find the horizon of his expectations. The

Abram to prepare several sacrifices and cut them in half (Gen 15:9-10), the place where God's special presence would pass (Gen 15:17; cf. Exod 13:21-22). In his preparations, certain scavenging birds of prey swooped down seeking to eat the sacrifices Abram had prepared. Abram, realizing the holiness of the sacrificial location, responded as a faithful guardian-priest, and "drove them away" (Gen 15:11).⁴⁵

Again, in Genesis 17, God speaks with Abram and reminds him of his covenant promises. In this instance, God renames Abram to Abraham (Gen 17:5) and establishes the covenant sign of circumcision with him and his household (Gen 17:9-14). The sign of circumcision "symbolised complete devotion to the service of God as a priesthood"⁴⁶ and served to establish a physical marker distinguishing between the covenant people of God and those outside the covenant.⁴⁷ Those who submitted to God and accepted the sign of the covenant received the blessing of the covenant; those who

innumerable stars represent his countless children (Gen 15:4-6). He finally believes this wild promise, and this act is counted as a righteous deed. The promised seed will come.

The theme of land naturally follows, since a great number of children require a living space. This theme is evoked by a question from Abram. He has been dwelling in the land for a number of years and wonders how and when he will possess it. God makes a covenant with the patriarch by means of a sacrificial ritual. He states that the promise of land possession will be delayed some 400 years because Canaanite sin is not yet ready to be judged. This promise of blessing to Abram and curse for the Canaanites loudly echoes Noah's blessing of Shem and curse of Canaan after the flood. In Abram the divine goal of history is being worked out.

Abram's action is part of a covenant ceremony that guarantees the promise made by means of an oath. In such a ritual animals are slaughtered, their carcasses are divided and the parties of the covenant swear to a pledge (in this case the granting of land) between the dismembered animals, which graphically illustrate the consequence of covenant violation. After Abram performs the ritual, he falls asleep and has a vision of God passing through the animal segments as a blazing fire. God explains that the possession of the land will be delayed. Abram's descendants will become slaves in Egypt, will be delivered and will later possess Canaan (Gen 15:12-17). It is then stated that God cut a covenant with Abram ensuring that the land would be given to his descendants (Gen 15:18). Consequently, God curses himself if the descendants do not possess the land.

Abram has thus begun the journey of faith in response to the call of God; his faith has faltered by going down to Egypt and lying about his wife. He tries to domesticate the promise. Nevertheless, he has triumphed in his faith. God has made a covenant with him and sworn an oath that the patriarch's descendants would receive the land. (Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, NSBT 15 [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003], 79-80).

⁴⁵ Mathews regards Abram's protection of the sacrifices as the work of a prophet; however, defending the sanctity of the sacrificial location is more consistent with the work of a priest. See Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 172.

⁴⁶ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 275.

⁴⁷ Bill T. Arnold, *Genesis*, NCBC (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 169-70.

did not were cursed (Gen 17:14) and were “cut off from the covenant community.”⁴⁸ In seeking to protect his household and mediate the covenant blessings to them, Abraham saw to it that all those in his household took the covenant sign (Gen 17:22-27). This covenant sign functioned as a priestly means to “manage the border” of the people of God. Only those who had received circumcision benefited from the covenant blessings; outsiders could not partake of the covenant blessings unless they submitted to the Lord and received the covenant sign of circumcision (Gen 17:12-13; Exod 12:38, 48-49; Ezra 6:2). Circumcision, then, served as a priestly means to both protect and extend the borders, guarding against the “unclean” uncircumcised (Isa 52:1) while welcoming any outsider who would worship the Lord and be circumcised. Indeed, “The covenant sign underlines Abraham’s Adamic role as a priest in his calling to bring blessing to the nations.”⁴⁹ Circumcision alone did not signify one’s status before God; indeed, other pagan religions observed the practice.⁵⁰ In the end, though circumcision stood as the covenant marker for the people of God, God was fundamentally concerned with the state of one’s heart (Lev 26:41; Jer 9:25-26).

Abraham again served his household as mediator and guardian when he heard of God’s intentions to destroy the wicked people of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 18:20-19:29) and responded by interceding for the life of his nephew Lot who was currently residing there. Abraham pled with God to spare the righteous among the wicked (Gen 18:23),⁵¹ and God responded in mercy to Abraham’s prayer (Gen 19:29), sparing Lot and

⁴⁸ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 274.

⁴⁹ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 275.

⁵⁰ Hall notes that circumcision, for pagan nations, was considered a magical rite to avoid evil forces. R. Hall, “Circumcision,” in *ABD*, ed. D. N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1.1026. Mathews adds, “Circumcision was not unique to the Hebrews; the Egyptians and some west Semitic groups employed circumcision (Jer 9:25-26), predominantly as a puberty rite or marriage rite.” Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, 198. See also J. Sasson, “Circumcision in the Ancient Near East,” *JBL* 85 (1966): 473-76.

⁵¹ Some have questioned the legitimacy of Lot’s actually being righteous, especially in light of the sins he committed in Gen 19:8. Gordon J. Wenham, for example, writes, “Lot was not saved on his own merits but through Abraham’s intercession.” Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, WBC, vol. 2 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1994), 59. Certainly, Gen 19:29 states that God responded in mercy to Abraham’s prayer.

his family while destroying Sodom and Gomorrah. Thus, because of the mediating priestly prayers of Abraham, his household was spared from the wrath of God.

The last example of Abraham building an altar occurs when God instructs Abraham to build an altar for the purpose of offering his own son Isaac as a sacrifice. Not long after God had fulfilled his covenant promise in granting Abraham offspring (Gen 21:1-3), he was instructed to go to the land of Moriah and offer his son Isaac as a burnt offering on the mountain of God's choosing (Gen 22:2, 9). As the narrative goes, after Abraham built the altar and was about to sacrifice Isaac, God provided a ram to be sacrificed instead of Isaac (Gen 22:13). This mountain would later become the site for Solomon's temple (2 Chr 3:1).⁵²

Isaac and Jacob

Following the death of Abraham (Gen 25:8), Isaac would carry his father's priestly altar-building practices further. After working to rebuild wells in the Valley of Gerar, wells that his father had once built and were later filled in by the Philistines (Gen 26:18), Isaac "went up to Beersheba" (Gen 26:23)—apparently to an elevated area⁵³—

However, 2 Pet 2:7-8 clearly affirms the righteousness of Lot as being, at least in part, one aspect of why God chose to save Lot. Lot's cowardly sins apparently did not disqualify him from being the recipient of God's merciful rescue. Certainly, there is no example, excepting Christ, in Scripture of someone who is perfectly righteous, and Lot was no exception. It seems that Scripture affirms both Abraham's prayer and the righteousness of Lot as reasons God chose to demonstrate mercy to Lot and his family.

⁵² Abram's near sacrifice of his son Isaac is strong evidence for his priestly status and represent a clear prefiguring of God's sacrifice of his own Son:

The location of the sacrifice is clearly associated with priestly sacrifices (vv. 2, 14). The Chronicler indicates that Solomon's temple was built on Mount Moriah (2 Chr 3:1), the same place where David purchased the threshing floor from Araunah (2 Sam 24:18-25). The sacral location of Abraham's/David's/Solomon's altar not only prefigures the location of Christ's own sacrifice, but if "Salem" in Gen 14:18 is really Jerusalem, as Psalm 76:2 suggests, then Abraham would be returning to the dwelling place of Melchizedek in order to carry out a priestly duty of the greatest magnitude. (Schrock, "Restoring the Image of God," 38)

⁵³ Writing of the topography of Beersheba, R. L. Drouhard notes that Beersheba was positioned in an elevated area relative to the surrounding land:

The original settlement was built on a small hill at the confluence of the Wadi (river) Khalil and Wadi Shallaleh (biblical Besor River)—two seasonal streams . . . Beer-Sheba lies at the southern end of the hilly area known as the Shephelah, which divides the coastal lowlands and the Judaeen hill country. The land around Beer-Sheba is low and level, averaging 800-900 feet, so the relatively modest elevation of the tel (just over 1,000 feet) nonetheless gives it a fairly commanding view of the surrounding area. (R. L. Drouhard, "Beer-Sheba," in *LBD*, ed. John D. Barry et al. [Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016])

and, after he had received the Adamic commission “I am with you and will bless you and multiply your offspring for my servant Abraham’s sake” (Gen 26:24), he “built an altar there and called upon the name of the LORD and pitched his tent there” (Gen 26:25). God indeed blessed Isaac with offspring: twin sons, Esau and Jacob (Gen 25:24-26).

When Isaac grew old and was nearing his death, he passed his blessing along to Jacob (Gen 27) because Esau, Isaac’s firstborn, had sold Jacob his birthright (Gen 25:29-34). Following the priestly example of his forefathers, Jacob, thus, continued the practice of altar-building. In Genesis 33:20, Jacob came to Shechem, the location where Abraham built his first altar (Gen 12:6-7), and “erected an altar and called it El-Elohe-Israel,” meaning “God the God of Israel.” Shortly after Jacob builds this altar, his daughter Dinah is sexually defiled (Gen 34:2). Jacob’s sons avenge this wrong-doing and kill the perpetrator (Gen 34:25-26); Jacob responds in anger, fearing retaliation from the Canaanites and the Perizzites (Gen 34:30-31).

In response to Jacob’s predicament, God instructs Jacob to return—or to “go up”—to Bethel (Gen 35:1), the house of God—where he had previously encountered the Lord in a dream (Gen 28:12-15)⁵⁴—to build an altar to him there (Gen 35:1, 3). Serving as a priest to his household and to God, Jacob sought to protect the people of his household from the holiness of God while also preserving the sanctity of the altar he would build. He did this by instructing his household to put away their foreign gods and to purify themselves as they were about to approach Bethel, the house of God and the

⁵⁴ That dream had served to reaffirm the Adamic commission and promises made with Jacob’s forefathers (Gen 28:12-15; cf. 12:1-3; 22:16-18). After waking from the dream, Jacob was made aware of the presence and power of God; the text reads, “Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, ‘Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it.’ And he was afraid and said, ‘How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven’” (Gen 28:16-17). Still, Jacob is not yet fully committed to the Lord. He sets up a pillar there at Bethel, a practice that is later forbidden as a syncretistic practice associated with Canaanite worship (Deut 16:22), and then he makes a vow with God saying, “If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, so that I come again to my father’s house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God, and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God’s house. And of all that you give me I will give a full tenth to you” (Gen 28:20-22).

abode of his special presence, to set up an altar for him (Gen 35:2). In turn, God protected Jacob and his household during their journey, restraining his assailants from pursuing them (Gen 35:5). Upon reaching Bethel, Jacob obeyed God and built an altar to him (Gen 35:7). God responded to Jacob's obedience by blessing him, renaming him "Israel," and reaffirming aspects of the Adamic commission and the promises made to his forefathers (Gen 35:9-12). It is important to note that it was Jacob, and not those in his household, who as a priest had access to the divine presence, who had the right to build an altar to God, and who had the responsibility of guarding those in his household.

Seeking to "expand the borders" through procreation, Jacob carried the cultural mandate further, having twelve sons: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, Benjamin, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher (Gen 35:22-26). In the process of time, Joseph's brothers turned on him and sold him into slavery, eventually resulting in Joseph living in and rising to power in Egypt and the family of Jacob/Israel leaving the land of Canaan to settle in Egypt. After Jacob died and his sons had buried him back in the land of Canaan (Gen 50:13), they returned to Egypt where "the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them" (Exod 1:7). It is significant to observe that no further mention of altar-building is made in the narrative after Jacob builds an altar at Bethel in Canaan in Genesis 35:1-7; that is, the children of Jacob/Israel apparently ceased the practice of altar-building while they were away from the promised land of Canaan and while they lived in the pagan land of Egypt.

The next mention of an altar in the narrative comes many years later after the Lord had delivered Moses and the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt; after the Israelites had crossed the Red Sea and had escaped the wrath of the Egyptian Pharaoh, they faced off with the Amalekites at Rephidim and were, by the power of God, victorious. To commemorate God's mercy, Moses erected an altar on the hill/mountain of Rephidim (Exod 17:15). This "practice of building an altar to commemorate a significant

blessing from God.” began with the patriarchs, and now “Moses was carrying on this tradition in building the altar at Rephidim to express thanksgiving to God for delivering the Israelites.”⁵⁵ Moreover, this “altar at Rephidim is the first altar Moses builds, and as such it serves as a hint of the importance altars will take on throughout the remainder of the book [of Exodus] and the Pentateuch.”⁵⁶ This altar at Rephidim would be the last altar built by the Israelites until Moses received the law of God at Sinai (Exod 24:4-8).⁵⁷

God’s Word

Priests of the patriarchal period were also responsible for attending to the Word of God, by personally obeying God’s Word and by passing it along to God’s people, especially those in their households.

Cain, Abel, and Seth

Abel is credited with obeying the Lord, offering a suitable sacrifice to him (Gen 4:4). Yet, his life is cut short by his own brother Cain, a man who neglected to obey God’s Word. Cain’s failure to uphold the will of God resulted in his expulsion from the presence of God. Seth is presented as one whose family “called upon the name of the Yahweh” (Gen 4:26);⁵⁸ contrasting the genealogy of Cain’s descendants with that of

⁵⁵ Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, NAC, vol. 2 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 400.

⁵⁶ Peter E. Enns, *Exodus*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 351.

⁵⁷ However, it should be observed that Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law and the priest of Midian, comes to Moses where he was encamped in the wilderness at the “mountain of God” (Exod 18:5) and brings burnt offerings and sacrifices to the Lord after hearing of Moses’ and Israel’s deliverance from the hand of Pharaoh and the Egyptians (Exod 18:12). Jethro (or Reuel), the priest of Midian (Exod 2:16; 3:1; 18:1) and Melchizedek, king of Salem (likely Jerusalem) and priest of the God Most High (*’El ’Elyon*; Gen 14:18-20; cf. Ps 110:4; Heb 7:1-10), each stand as examples of non-Israelite priests that appear to have served Yahweh. Tremper Longman writes, “While no Israelite was called a priest of God before Moses, two non-Israelites were not only called priests, but recognized and affirmed as priests of the true God: Melchizedek, the Canaanite priest-king of Salem . . . , and Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law.” Longman, *Immanuel in Our Place*, 121. While Jethro is referred to as a “priest of Midian” and Melchizedek is regarded as the “priest of Salem,” it must not be assumed that they served foreign gods. What is certain is that Jethro did offer sacrifices to Yahweh (Exod 18:7-12). It is possible that Jethro could have been a polytheist prior to this episode. Furthermore, there is no indication that Melchizedek ever served any other deity but Yahweh.

⁵⁸ The people of Seth’s and his son Enosh’s time called upon the name of Yahweh, which is long before Moses instructed the people of Israel to call on the name of Yahweh (Exod 3:13-15; 6:2-3).

Seth's, the text indicates that Cain's family line is noted for being killers (Gen 4:17-24) whereas Seth's line leads to one who "walked with God" (Gen 5:24).

Though Cain rejected God, failing to lead his family in the ways of God, Seth apparently served his family well as a priest, resulting in a progeny of those who feared God. Notably, among those in Seth's lineage is none other than Noah (Gen 5:28-29).

Noah

In a time when "the wickedness of man was great in the earth" and "every intention of the thoughts of [man's] heart was only evil continually" (Gen 6:5), and in a time when God considered blotting out man from the face of the land (Gen 6:6), Scripture says that "Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord" (Gen 6:8). While this statement might logically lead the reader to be convinced that God chose to "favor" Noah because of divine grace, the following verse, which identifies Noah as "a righteous man, blameless in his generation" and asserts that Noah "walked with God" (Gen 6:9; cf. 7:1), has led some to conclude that Noah somehow merited God's favor and was, thus, saved from the flood on the basis of his personal righteousness. Others suggest instead that when Noah is said to have found favor with God (Gen 6:8), the reader is to understand that this is because he already enjoyed a covenant relationship with God and that Scripture's mention of Noah's "righteousness" is in reference to Noah's faithfulness to a divine covenant of grace that had already been initiated with Noah.⁵⁹

Taking issue with both explanations, Carol Kaminski offers an alternate interpretation, suggesting that: (1) At the time of God's bestowal of divine favor, and

Reyburn and Fry note that some who are more sympathetic to higher textual criticism explain the apparent conflict by "attributing Gen 4:25-27 to one writer and Exod 3:13-15 to another." They favor another solution, which suggests that "the Genesis statement refers to an earlier stage of religion that originated the worship of God by the name *Yahweh*, which later in Exodus was adopted by all Israel." William David Reyburn and Euan McG. Fry, *A Handbook on Genesis*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: UBS, 1998), 129.

⁵⁹ William J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: A Theology of Old Testament Covenants* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1984), 13-15.

afterward, Noah shared in the wicked condition of the human heart as depicted in Genesis 6:5;⁶⁰ (2) God's bestowal of favor was not a deed done out of obligation in response to a righteous life, but rather because of divine kindness;⁶¹ (3) the context of Noah's interaction with God at this juncture is creational and not covenantal, and so Noah did not, prior to this point, enjoy a gracious covenant relationship with God;⁶² (4) God's decision to show favor on Noah was a divine act of unmerited grace, not contingent on the status of Noah's present righteous or unrighteous character; and (5) Genesis 6:9's declaration that Noah is a "righteous man" should be understood as a "proleptic" statement that anticipates the divine verdict in Genesis 7:1, where God grants Noah and his household entry into the ark and offers, as his reason, this declaration: "For I have seen that you are righteous before me in this generation."⁶³ Depending on Sternberg's work⁶⁴ on "proleptic portraits in Hebrew narrative," Kaminski states that "biblical epithets are *preliminary*, that is, they *precede* rather than follow the actions they govern. Their function is to shape expectations of key characters, whose actions are subsequently described in the narrative."⁶⁵ Thus, Genesis 6:9 functions "to shape expectations for the ensuing story about Noah, and as such, it does not provide the rationale for divine favour, but gives advanced notice of the divine verdict."⁶⁶ According to Kaminski, therefore, God graciously chose to show favor to Noah, not on the basis of merit and not on the basis of an already-initiated covenant of grace, but because he sovereignly chose to

⁶⁰ Carol Kaminski, *Was Noah Good?: Finding Favor in the Flood Narrative* (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014), 64-104.

⁶¹ Kaminski, *Was Noah Good?*, 105-38.

⁶² Kaminski, *Was Noah Good?*, 139-68.

⁶³ Kaminski, *Was Noah Good?*, 198.

⁶⁴ Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 321-41.

⁶⁵ Kaminski, *Was Noah Good?*, 187.

⁶⁶ Kaminski, *Was Noah Good?*, 198.

extend grace to Noah, an undeserving and unrighteous man whose heart was, by nature, wicked.

Nevertheless, as the narrative progresses following God's consecration and bestowal of grace on Noah, Noah's righteous deeds and overall priestly obedience to God (Gen 6:9-22) serve as evidence of God's grace in his life. Noah is, thus, credited with having obeyed God "by faith" (Heb 11:7). Additionally, he is regarded as a priestly herald⁶⁷ and teacher of God's will, "a herald of righteousness" (2 Pet 2:5).⁶⁸ This was a man who was devoted both to obeying the will of God and to proclaiming the Word of God to others. His commitment to obeying to the will of God served to guard those in his household from the wrath of God, preserving them from the flood (Gen 7:1, 7; 8:15-18). Having been charged with obeying the covenant stipulations and Adamic commission he received (Gen 8:20-9:7), "as a covenant teacher, [Noah] would have to teach his children and their offspring the rules of the covenant."⁶⁹ It would appear that Noah succeeded in this role for some time prior to the flood.

⁶⁷ Marvin Vincent draws a connection between the terminology used to describe Noah as a herald (κήρυκα) and the language used to describe the herald-gods of Greece in the Homeric age, particularly Mercury who was the messenger-god and an ambassador who communicated messages on behalf of gods between enemies. Furthermore, Vincent indicates that "a priestly house at Athens bore the name of κήρυκες, heralds." Marvin Richardson Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1887), 1:693. Peter, thus, could be drawing parallels between the priestly class of Athens and Noah's priestly status as a herald of righteousness, an ambassador of God in his wicked age.

⁶⁸ Noah is nowhere in the Old Testament mentioned as being a "preacher of righteousness," and yet this idea appears to be the consensus among writers in Jewish history. As Spence-Jones notes, "The Old Testament narrative does not directly assert this; but 'a just man and perfect,' who 'walked with God' (Gen 6:9), must have been a preacher (literally, 'herald') of righteousness to the ungodly among whom he lived. Josephus, in a well-known passage ('Ant.,' i. 3. 1), says that Noah tried to persuade his neighbours to change their mind and their actions for the better." H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., *2 Peter*, Pulpit Commentary, vol. 22 (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1909), 44. See also, Josephus, *Ant.* 1.74; *Jub.* 7:20-29; *Sib. Or.* 1:128-29, 150-98; cf. *1 Clem* 7:6; 9:4. Peter is drawing a parallel between the unrighteous of Noah's day and the false teachers of his own day; in so doing, his mention of Noah as a herald of righteousness is "adduced by Peter against the licentiousness of the false teachers (2 Pe 2:2) who have no prospect before them but destruction, even as it overtook the ungodly world in Noah's days." Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1961), 2:520.

⁶⁹ Schrock, "A Biblical-Theological Investigation," 69.

However, Noah followed the sad pattern of Adam—falling into disobedience and evidencing the “continuation and universality of sin after the flood”⁷⁰—as he became drunk with wine and lying naked, which led to his son Ham dishonoring him when Ham observed him in his nakedness (Gen 9:21-22). Both Noah and Ham were at fault, and yet Ham’s imprudent decision would not have occurred without Noah’s initial drunkenness. Noah failed as a priest, which led to the defilement and cursing of part of those he was set in place to protect (Gen 9:25-27).

Job

Job stands as another example of a priest in the patriarchal period who sought to honor God as he attended to the Word of God. Early in his narrative, Job is identified as a man who “was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil” (Job 1:1). He faithfully served his household as priest, mediating and performing the duty of sacrifice on their behalf (Job 1:5). When Satan brought several hardships against Job (Job 1:13-19), rather than reacting to such great suffering in rebellion against God, Job responds by grieving his losses and then by praising the Lord (Job 1:20-21). Importantly, “In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong” (Job 1:22).

When Job’s wife adds to the turmoil by turning against him and by encouraging him to renounce his commitment to obeying God (Job 2:9), Job is not swayed by her lack of integrity and ungodly counsel; he responds in faith, saying, “You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil” (Job 2:10)? Once again, Job’s priestly obedience is commended: “In all this Job did not sin with his lips” (Job 2:10).

⁷⁰ Kaminski, *Was Noah Good?*, 196.

Abraham

Abraham was a man of faith, obeying and upholding the Word of God among those in his household. God promised Abraham certain blessings that would have seemed impossible to natural man. Yet, Abraham was a man who exercised supernatural faith, believing that God would be true to his promises. In turn, Abraham's faith was counted to him as righteousness (Gen 15:6; cf. Rom 4:3, 22; Gal 3:6; Jas 2:23).

Abraham's role as a covenant teacher is clearly spelled out in Genesis 18:19 when the Lord says of Abraham, "For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him." Thus, as priest, Abraham was responsible to teach to those in his household, the people of God during this time, to "guard/keep" (רָמַץ) the "way of the LORD." The "way of the Lord" is a commonly used phrase in Scripture that denotes the expression of Yahweh's character (Exod 33-34; cf. Ps 86).⁷¹ In order to keep the "way of the Lord" Abraham's descendants must be committed to "doing righteousness and justice."

⁷¹ In Exod 33-34, Moses converses with Yahweh and asks, on the basis of having found favor with him, "Show me your way" (Exod 33:13) and "Show me your glory" (Exod 33:18). Gentry makes the case that the "way of Yahweh" in verse 13 is synonymous with the "goodness of Yahweh." Peter J. Gentry, "'The Glory of God'—The Character of God's Being and Way in the World: Some Reflections on a Key Biblical Theology Theme," *SBJT* 20, no. 1 (2016): 153. Moreover, he concludes that "the glory of Yahweh can be described under two categories: the *name* of Yahweh and the *way* of Yahweh" (153). Carrying his analysis of Exod 33 forward into his understanding of Exod 34, Gentry concludes the *name* of Yahweh—that is, his being and ontology—is unveiled in Exod 34:6: "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness." This is the name of Yahweh; it is "God as he is in himself, in character and nature" (155). Out of his being flows his action; that is, from his *name* flows his *way*. The *way* of Yahweh is described in Exod 34:7: "keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation." The *way* of Yahweh describes "God in his relation to the creation" (155). From an ontological character of mercy, love, forbearance, and faithfulness flows God's positive and negative functions as he exercises the positive functions of "guarding/keeping" love and forgiveness while also exercising the negative function of meting out judgment on the guilty (155). Ultimately, Gentry concludes that "the glory of God consists in his *name* and his *way*. The former describes the character and nature of his being and the latter describes his relations with us—indeed with all creation" (158). God's *way* flows from his *being*. Thus, when God's people are harkened to keep "the way of the Lord," they are being called to live in accordance with the very nature of God's character as it is expressed in his relationship with creation.

Gentry and Wellum show that when “righteousness” and “justice” are used together in Hebrew literature, “they form a single concept or idea: social justice.”⁷² The author is using “a figure of speech known as a hendiadys, one concept expressed through two words. The word pair becomes an idiom expressing a single thought that is both different from and greater than just putting the two words together. . . . One cannot determine the meaning of this expression by analyzing ‘justice’ and ‘righteousness’ individually.”⁷³ Taken together, the word pair “righteousness-justice” is an expression for social justice and constitutes a proleptic “summary of the covenant/Torah”⁷⁴ that would later be established through Moses on Sinai (Exod 33-34). Elsewhere, the word pair lovingkindness-truth is used in a similar way as a summary of the covenant/Torah (Isa 16:3-5; John 1:14, 17-18; Eph 4:15).⁷⁵ Collectively these concepts of righteousness-justice and lovingkindness-truth would come to express the true nature of the covenant/Torah, which is itself “an expression of [Yahweh’s] own character.”⁷⁶ Thus, in guarding/keeping the “way of the Lord,” Abraham’s descendants are committing to live in accordance with God’s character.

As the covenant teacher, and as “God’s chosen vessel, Abraham was to be a spiritual teacher inculcating in his children”⁷⁷ the way of the Lord. Adhering to this stipulation to keep the way of the Lord “among Abraham’s descendants was to be a condition for the fulfillment of the covenant promises which God had made to the patriarch (18:17-19).”⁷⁸ In this covenantal context, God rooted the covenant in his

⁷² Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 577.

⁷³ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 577.

⁷⁴ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 578.

⁷⁵ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 581-82.

⁷⁶ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 579.

⁷⁷ James E. Smith, *The Pentateuch*, 2nd ed., OTSS (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1993), 146.

⁷⁸ Smith, *The Pentateuch*, 146.

promises to Abraham while also stipulating the necessity that Abraham persevere in obedience.⁷⁹ Abraham's commitment both to obeying the will of God and to declaring the will of God to his household may be observed when he prepared to offer his son Isaac up to God as a sacrifice (Gen 22:1-10); in "Genesis 18-19 Abraham tried to get God to reconsider. He asked questions and demanded answers. Here in Genesis 22 the patriarch quietly followed divine directions. . . . Abraham responded without hesitation to the unexplained and unexpected command of his God."⁸⁰ Yet, while Abraham proved to be obedient in many respects, "In sum, Abraham was not a perfect covenant partner and badly represented Yahweh to the world of that time in a number of ways."⁸¹ Abraham's disobedience indicates that another must come who will be perfectly faithful to the covenant.⁸² God himself would supply what he requires in his perfect son, the perfect priest, the Lord Jesus.

⁷⁹ Gentry and Wellum observe that "theologians have attempted to classify and describe covenants as either conditional or unconditional . . . bilateral or unilateral." Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 174. Paul R. Williamson, for example, sees two covenants with Abraham. Paul R. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God's Unfolding Purpose*, NSBT 23 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 84-91; Williamson, *Abraham, Israel, and the Nations: The Patriarchal Promise and Its Covenantal Development in Genesis* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000). Michael Horton, taking another path, suggests that the covenants are "unilateral and utterly promissory." Michael S. Horton, *God of Promise: Introducing Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 50.

Gentry and Wellum discard each of these proposals and assert that these "categories are not helpful or fruitful if one desires to accurately represent the biblical text." Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 174. Instead, he argues that, while there "is only one covenant with Abraham, confirmed to Isaac and Jacob" (280), this one covenant includes both elements of divine promise and human obedience, such that "God guarantees the faithfulness of the partners in the Abrahamic covenant, but still requires faithful obedience on the part of Abraham to bring the blessing to the nations promised in the covenant" (279). Both divine promise and human obedience are affirmed in one covenant.

⁸⁰ Smith, *The Pentateuch*, 160.

⁸¹ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 294. Certainly, Abraham's dubious dealings and deceptive behavior regarding his wife while in Egypt (Gen 12:10-20; 20:1-18) did not represent perfect obedience to the covenant.

⁸² Abraham's "lack of complete devotion and obedience points to the fact that another is coming who will be obedient in every respect. . . . God requires the covenant promises and yet he also requires an obedient son in the covenant relationship." Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 294.

Isaac and Jacob

Abraham's priestly and covenantal responsibility to attend to the Word of God was passed along to Isaac (Gen 26:2-5). Isaac's behavior is questionable at times. Prior to the birth of Isaac's sons Esau and Jacob, the Lord declared his purposes for them; though Esau was the eldest, it was God's plan that Esau would serve Jacob (Gen 25:23). Nevertheless, Isaac was determined to bless Esau rather than Jacob, apparently because Esau was a hunter (Gen 25:27), made "delicious food" (Gen 27:4), and "because he ate of his game" (Gen 25:28). On another occasion, apparently not having learned from his father Abraham's dubious behavior when he deceptively presented his wife as his sister (Gen 12:10-20; 20:1-18), Isaac does the same thing with his wife Rebekah in his interaction with Abimelech, the king of the Philistines (Gen 26:6-11). Nevertheless, God's gracious purposes remained with Isaac. Reminding Isaac of the oath he made with his father Abraham (Gen 22:16-18), God entreated Isaac to follow the example of Abraham when he says, "Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws" (Gen 26:5).⁸³ God called upon Isaac to remain in the land of Canaan rather than going to Egypt (Gen 26:2-3), and Isaac was obedient to the Lord.

Jacob also was responsible for attending to God's Word. Like Isaac, Jacob's behavior is quite questionable at times (Gen 27); he admits his shortcomings in relation to his forefathers when he says to Pharaoh, "Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their sojourning" (Gen 47:9). Yet, Jacob's life is not devoid of obedience, as he does have some redeeming moments when he responds to God's promises in obedience (Gen 35:1-15; 46:1-7). In fact, even as Jacob admits his own evil in conversation with the

⁸³ This text employs Mosaic legal language (i.e., obey/keep commandments, statutes, and laws) to emphasize Abraham's righteous character. It reinforces the thoroughness of Abraham's obedience. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 190.

Egyptian Pharaoh, he nevertheless demonstrates priestly obedience to God and models obedience to his entire household as he extends a double blessing to Pharaoh (Gen 47:7, 10), honoring God's promise to Abraham, "I will bless those who bless you" (Gen 12:3).⁸⁴

Before his death, Jacob/Israel extends a priestly blessing to each of his sons (Gen 49:1-27). These sons of Jacob would remain in Egypt, and the people of Israel grew great in number. In time, the Egyptian rule began harshly oppressing the Israelites, and God raised up another priest Moses to lead them in an exodus from Egypt and eventually back to their promised land, Canaan.

Summary: The Patriarchal Priesthood

Transitioning from Adam and Eve's priesthood to that of the patriarchs, God sets out to reclaim a land for himself and for his people. He does this through the priestly act of altar-building as the priests consecrated holy spaces throughout the landscape, progressively claiming a sacred space for himself. He further establishes his covenant with his faithful priests and promises to bless them with a land and with a great progeny.

The priesthood of the patriarchal period was in some ways very faithful to the Lord, and yet it was also quite flawed. God's covenantal promises graciously remained with his people in spite of their sin, and God continued to call them to obey his will. Though they carried out their duties with modulating consistency, these patriarchal priests continued to enjoy privileged access to the divine presence of God as they worked to guard the holiness of God's sanctuaries and his people by attending to the Word of God, border management, sacrifice, and mediation. As the era of the patriarchal

⁸⁴ Jacob's obedience to God in response to Pharaoh's kindness to him and his household was divinely sanctioned, since God had told Abraham, "I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen 12:3).

priesthood drew near to its conclusion, another development in the priesthood was on the horizon.

CHAPTER 4

ISRAEL'S PRIESTHOOD

Subsequent to the patriarchal period, another development in the priesthood was at hand. During this era, the patriarch served as the family's priest, a role and responsibility that was intended to be passed down to the patriarch's male progeny, quite probably to the patriarch's firstborn son. This design for the priesthood would eventually give way to a more formalized priesthood, one governed by an elaborate set of regulations and one that would be limited to a select group of men. The rationale behind how and why this transition took place has been the subject of debate among scholars. Some have proposed that Israel's immense population growth while in Egyptian captivity (Exod 1:7) necessitated a more structured priesthood.¹ Others have proposed a more nuanced explanation.

Scott Hahn has put forward a hypothesis, which is rooted in the notion of sonship and its relation to priesthood.² That is, Hahn emphasizes the importance of the

¹ The idea is that as the people of Israel grew numerically (Exod 1:7), so did the need to pay greater attention to Israel's organizational structures (Exod 18:13-27), and the priesthood was no exception as it became a formalized office (Exod 19:22-24). Longman describes the situation: "No longer a large family, Israel was now a nation, and so a priesthood needed to be institutionalized." Tremper Longman III, *Immanuel in Our Place: Seeing Christ in Israel's Worship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2001), 120.

Longman believes that the priesthood existed prior to the one that was institutionalized with the nation of Israel. Roland de Vaux offers a dissenting view. He suggests that "the priesthood did not appear until the social organization of the community had developed considerably." Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*, trans. John McHugh (London: Darton, Longman, & Todd, 1961), 345. That is, De Vaux believes that the priesthood did not come to be among the people of God until Israel was established as a large nation. At that point, De Vaux says that "certain members of the community were entrusted with the special tasks of looking after the sanctuaries and of performing rites which were becoming ever more and more complicated" (345). Clearly, this dissertation disagrees with De Vaux and instead observes the development of the priesthood across redemptive history starting with the first priest, Adam.

² Hahn traces this theme back to the first royal priest and "son of God," Adam (Luke 3:38), and observes its development throughout the patriarchal period, the monarchical period, the age of Christ, and the age of the church. Scott W. Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant: A Canonical Approach to the Fulfillment of God's Saving Promises* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 136-75. Beginning with Adam,

firstborn son in the patriarchal period as the recipient of the patriarch's blessings, including priestly privileges. Hahn draws a connection between the motif of primogeniture in the patriarchal era and the narrative of Israel's deliverance from Egypt where Moses is commanded to say to Pharaoh: "Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son, and I say to you, 'Let my son go that he may serve me.' If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son" (Exod 4:22-23). It is at this point that the whole nation of Israel is first identified as God's "firstborn son." After God had delivered Israel from Egypt, he makes a conditional offer to Israel, his firstborn son: "Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exod 19:5-6).³ Moses⁴ is then commanded to consecrate the people of Israel as priests and to instruct them to wash their garments in preparation for meeting with God in his presence (Exod 19:10). Harrelson explains the linkage between Israel's status as a "kingdom of priests," as a "treasured possession" (*segullah*), and as God's "firstborn son":

Israel is singled out as God's people from among *all* the peoples. . . . Israel is God's *segullah*. . . . This word apparently means that Yahweh has set aside for Israel the

Hahn writes, "A natural royal priesthood of the firstborn son seems implicit in the biblical narrative from Adam through the end of the patriarchal period, that is, throughout the Genesis narrative" (167).

³ Circumcision stood as the appropriate sign for the people of Israel to remind them that they as a priestly and holy nation were specially consecrated for the service of God. John D. Meade, "The Meaning of Circumcision in Israel: A Proposal for a Transfer of Rite from Egypt to Israel," *SBJT* 20, no. 1 (2016): 35-54. Their circumcision, thus, functioned as a sign, which helped them to remember who they were as God's covenant people—a special treasured possession of God and a holy and priestly community who were meant to mediate the blessings of God to the world. Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 318-27. See also, Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 255-56.

⁴ While some suggest that Moses was not a priest, Jo Bailey Wells thinks otherwise: The narratives of the institution of the priesthood in Exodus 28-29 and Leviticus 8-9 present Moses as the "priest-maker." According to these priestly accounts, Moses ordains the first priests, instructs them in their duties and later, when Aaron dies, transfers the chief office from Aaron to his son Eleazar (Num 20:22-29). Although the Pentateuch never describes Moses as a priest, he is clearly presented fulfilling many of the functions of a priest; indeed he "fills in" when Aaron fails (Exod 32-34). He is the ultimate mediator between Yhwh and Israel, sealing God's covenant relationship, receiving the covenant laws and restoring it when it is endangered. (Jo Bailey Wells, *God's Holy People: A Theme in Biblical Theology* [Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000], 127)

portion belonging to the first-born son, and thus that Israel is to exercise the privileges and the responsibilities of the first-born of all God's sons—the other nations and peoples of the world. . . . Israel is to be a kingdom of priests. . . . The most probable interpretation is this: Israel is to be the priest-nation for the nations of the world, exercising the responsibility of priestly instruction and intercession in behalf of all peoples before Yahweh. . . . The passage thus carries out the thought of the Yahwistic summons to Abraham in Genesis 12:3.⁵

Israel is, thus, consecrated as a kingdom of priests and “stands as the firstborn son within the family of nations, for the purpose of mediating the divine blessing of Abraham to all the nations.”⁶ As the firstborn son, the people of Israel are collectively viewed as God's priestly people among the nations; furthermore, each individual was called to share in the responsibility of the overall royal priestly ministry.⁷

Hahn underscores the conditional nature of this divine offer; God formally offered the covenant to the people before the covenant was fully established: “Israel is . . . called to live out the faithfulness which is proper to its filial and royal priestly vocation, in order to be established within the covenant as ‘a holy nation.’”⁸ Sadly, the people of Israel breach the terms of the covenant when they apostatize in their idolatrous worship of the Golden Calf in Exodus 32. The consequences of Israel's failure were severe; because they failed to keep the covenant, they would lose the right to serve God as a kingdom of priests. If not for Moses' priestly intercession before God on behalf of Israel and his reminding God of his covenant with Abraham (Exod 32:9-14), Israel would have otherwise perished under God's wrath.⁹ Nevertheless, it was at this point in history when the firstborn sons of Israel lost their special status and the nation as a whole

⁵ Walter Harrelson, *Interpreting the Old Testament* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1964), 92.

⁶ Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 141.

⁷ Davies argues against the notion that Israel was initially simply a nation led by priests, and he has asserted instead that Israel as a nation had access to the divine presence and was, therefore, a priestly people. See John A. Davies, *A Royal Priesthood: Literary and Intertextual Perspectives on an Image of Israel in Exodus 19:6* (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 61-102.

⁸ Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 141.

⁹ John Ha, *Genesis 15: A Theological Compendium of Pentateuchal History* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1989), 162.

forfeited its priestly privileges. The title “kingdom of priests” is never again applied to the Old Testament nation of Israel.

Following Moses’ rebuke of Israel for their grievous sin, he asks the gathered assembly if there exists anyone among them who will stand with the Lord:

Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said, “Who is on the LORD’s side? Come to me.” And all the sons of Levi gathered around him. And he said to them, “Thus says the LORD God of Israel, ‘Put your sword on your side each of you, and go to and fro from gate to gate throughout the camp, and each of you kill his brother and his companion and his neighbor.’” And the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And that day about three thousand men of the people fell. And Moses said, “Today you have been ordained for the service of the LORD, each one at the cost of his son and of his brother, so that he might bestow a blessing upon you this day” (Exod 32:26-29).

It is here that the Levitical tribe proves to be faithful sons. While removing the priestly status of the whole nation of Israel, God honors the Levites’ obedience to the covenant by consecrating them unto priestly service: “the first-born, who had previously been entrusted with sacerdotal duties, were deprived of their privileged position and replaced by the Levites who had refused to participate in the calf cult.”¹⁰ Whereas the entire nation of Israel once enjoyed the status as God’s firstborn son (Exod 4:22-23; 11:4-13:15; 19:5-6; 32:26-29), Israel’s apostasy and the faithfulness of the sons of Levi led God to take “the Levites from among the people of Israel instead of every firstborn who opens the womb among the people of Israel” (Num 3:12-13) to serve him as priests.

Rather than destroying the people of Israel altogether, God institutes a program of covenant renewal (Exod 34), a renewal of the Sinai covenant previously ratified (Exod 24). The terms of this covenant are spelled out in Exodus 35-40 and Leviticus 1-26. “Israel’s initial relationship with God at Sinai, characterized by the patriarchal simplicity of the Covenant Code [Exod 21-23], is now represented by the complex and restrictive laws of the Code of the Priests [Exod 35 - Lev 26].”¹¹ Altogether, this altered reality for

¹⁰ Leivy Smolar and Moses Aberbach, “The Golden Calf Episode in Postbiblical Literature,” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 39 (1968): 105.

¹¹ John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary*

God's people would be made up of a newly "structured nation consisting of clergy (the Levites) and laity (the twelve tribes)." ¹² Together, "Aaron, his sons, and the Levites" were appointed to "assume priestly authority over the twelve tribes." ¹³

The newly instituted system of mediation began with "the elevation of Moses (Exod 34), followed by the erection of the tabernacle (Exod 35-40), the instruction and installation of the Aaronic priests and Levites (Lev 1-16), and culminating with the moral reeducation of the twelve tribes of Israel (Lev 17-26)." ¹⁴ That is, God renews his covenant specifically with Moses, the faithful covenant partner (Exod 34), and then shows how Israel's relationship with God can be restored and maintained—i.e., through the priestly anointing and mediatorial work of Aaron and his sons (Exod 40:12-15; Lev 8:1-35) and the Levites (Exod 32:26-29; Lev 1-16), adherence to the Holiness Code (Lev 17-26), ¹⁵ and the construction of the tabernacle (Exod 35-40).

It is in the Pentateuch where God's model for Israel's formalized priesthood is set forth. As Schrock contends, "In the Latter Prophets, Israel's priests are excoriated for failing to keep the law, but in the beginning, in the Pentateuch, there is an 'idealized'

(Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 48.

¹² Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 152.

¹³ Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 149.

¹⁴ Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 152.

¹⁵ While not affirming the official priestly status of the non-Levitical Israelites, Jo Bailey Wells nevertheless writes of the expectation of "priestliness" of the entire nation of Israel. While maintaining the uniqueness and consecration of the priestly office that was reserved for the Levites, Wells affirms God's call on all Israel to live with a kind of "priestliness" that would accord with the Levitical Holiness Code:

Yhwh's appointment of the priesthood is set within the context of the call of "priestliness" to the whole people of God. Both of these bear directly on the notion of holiness. The directions for the institution of (individual) priests continually refer to the consecration (. . . Exod 28:3, 41; 29:1, 21, 33, 44) and focus on those aspects by which they will be marked out and designated for this role: by their descent from a particular family, by the clothes they will wear, by the actions of sacrifice they will perform, by the special laws they will keep and by the place they will serve. The implication is clear: the priesthood is not for "anybody," it is not to be regarded casually. It is for those who are chosen. Every detail of who, how, what and where is carefully specified by Yhwh. The role is important, the task exacting and the person exact. (Wells, *God's Holy People*, 128)

vision of what the priests should be.”¹⁶ While different categories or sects of priests arose later in Israel’s history, it was God’s original design presented in the Pentateuch that he intended for Israel to observe.¹⁷ Wells further elaborates on this point: “In terms of both canon and content, . . . what the Pentateuch says about priesthood is paradigmatic for understanding its meaning in theological terms. Other texts may provide older or later views concerning priests in Israel’s history, but they do not necessarily contribute much to the theological picture.”¹⁸ With regard to biblical theology, then, it is the model of the priesthood given in the Pentateuch that should primarily inform one’s idea of the priesthood during this era.

Nevertheless, it is important to understand how the Levitical priesthood developed throughout Israel’s history and how the Levitical covenant should be understood in light of its associated promises (Exod 32:26-29; cf. 40:15; Num 3:5-51; 18:15-19; 25:11-13; Mal 2:4-8; Jer 33:17-26). The historical development of the Levitical priesthood may be summarized in three phases: “first, the Phinehas episode; second, the emergence of Zadok; and third, Ezekiel’s oracular establishment of the Zadokites as the sole priestly line to officiate at the altar in the restored temple of Jerusalem.”¹⁹

¹⁶ David Stephen Schrock, “A Biblical-Theological Investigation of Christ’s Priesthood and Covenant Mediation with Respect to the Extent of the Atonement” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013), 98.

¹⁷ Richard E. Averbeck notes that the priesthood devolved into a position in which there existed a rather diverse set of kinds of priests. Averbeck also observes that Josiah reformed the priesthood into one that was more representative of that which was originally handed down to Israel in the Pentateuch. He writes,

Second Kings 23:4-20 lists five categories of priests that existed in ancient Israel before Josiah’s reformation, and arranges them according to their proximity to the Jerusalem temple: (1) the high priest (v. 4), (2) the second-order priests (v. 4), (3) the idolatrous priests in the cities of Judah and in the area surrounding Jerusalem (v. 5); (4) the priests of the high places in the cities of Judah from Geba to Beersheba (vv. 8-9); and (5) the priests of the high places in Samaria (i.e., the remnants of the priests of the former northern kingdom, v. 20). According to this passage, a significant feature of Josiah’s religious reformation was his eradication of all priests (and their cultic accouterments) except those who functioned legitimately within Jerusalem temple. Therefore, only the first two categories of priests in 2 Kings 23 retained their office: the “high priest” (v. 4, here Hilkiah) and “the priests of the second order” (v. 4; i.e., other descendants of Aaron). (Richard E. Averbeck, “Priest, Priesthood. Old Testament Priesthood,” in *EDBT*, [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996], 633)

¹⁸ Wells, *God’s Holy People*, 127.

¹⁹ Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 158.

First, through repeated acts of valor, courage, and righteous jealousy for the name of God (Num 25:6-13; Josh 22:10-24), acts quite similar to the Levites' brave act in response to the Golden Calf incident (Exod 32:26-29), Phinehas is awarded "covenant of peace" and a "covenant of perpetual priesthood" (Num 25:12-13), a covenant much like the original Levitical covenant (Exod 32:26-29; Mal 2:4-8) though perhaps narrower in scope. Phinehas' priestly work "serves to purify, preserve, and strengthen the *Levitical* covenant of priesthood," while it also seems to have functioned to "narrow the line of priestly succession from Aaron exclusively through Phinehas and his descendants."²⁰

Second, Zadok, a descendant of Phinehas is installed as priest under King Solomon, an installation that would coincide with the banishment of Abiathar, Zadok's priestly rival (1 Kgs 2:26-27, 35). The covenant previously made with Phinehas, thus, serves to legitimize Zadok's priesthood and undermine Abiathar's priesthood since Zadok was a direct descendent of Phinehas (1 Chr 6:4-8) and Abiathar was not (1 Chr 24:6).²¹

Third, as a part of his restoration program following the rebuilt Jerusalem temple, Ezekiel makes a strong distinction between the Zadokite priests and all other Levitical priests: "And he said to me, 'This chamber that faces south is for the priests who have charge of the temple, and the chamber that faces north is for the priests who have charge of the altar. These are the sons of Zadok, who alone among the sons of Levi may come near to the LORD to minister to him'" (Ezek 40:45-46). Thus, Ezekiel appoints the Zadokite priesthood as the only priests among the Levitical priesthood who were allowed to minister at the altar in the rebuilt temple.

What began with the entire nation of Israel being God's firstborn son, which

²⁰ Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 159.

²¹ Whereas Zadok descended from Phinehas and Eleazar, Abiathar was a descendent of Eli and Ithamar.

was to serve him as a “kingdom of priests,” eventually transitioned to become a nation led by the Levitical priesthood. The “Levites were appointed to assume the covenant of priestly primogeniture in Israel, but they in turn forfeited the fullness of their covenant, first to Phinehas and his descendants (Num 25:12-13), and then further to the Zadokites (Ezek 44:9-15).”²² The Old Testament closes with the people of Israel and the overall priesthood in a state of decline while nevertheless remaining hopeful that a better priesthood would eventually come and bring full restoration. While it might seem that the Levitical covenant had failed and had, at last, been unfulfilled, the New Testament sheds new light on how these covenant promises find their fulfillment in the restoration of Israel’s royal priestly primogeniture as it is accomplished in the priesthood of Jesus Christ.²³

In what follows, the related themes of the priesthood and God’s special presence on earth are examined from the time of the establishment of the nation of Israel to the close of the Old Testament. Several permutations of God’s sanctuary are observed as Israel’s history unfolds. Building on the existing priesthood of the patriarchal period, Israel’s priesthood experiences significant developments, on the one hand, while continuing, on the other hand, to consist of people who, divinely granted access to the presence of God, are entrusted with serving God by guarding the holiness of his temple and his people by attending to the Word of God, border management, sacrifice, and mediation. While Israel’s priesthood remained faithful to God early in its history, it morally devolved later in its history from which it would not recover.

Permutations of the Garden-Sanctuary

In addition to the development observed within the priesthood, a change also

²² Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 167.

²³ Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 170.

took place concerning the sanctuaries where priests met with God. Three meeting places in particular bear mentioning during this era: Mount Sinai, the tabernacle, and the temple. Each of these holy places stands as a permutation of the archetypal Garden-sanctuary.

Israel at the Mountain Sanctuary of Sinai

Moses and the people of Israel encountered God in a unique way at Mount Sinai. Being a permutation of the Garden-sanctuary and an approximate temple site, Mount Sinai is called the “mountain of God” (Exod 3:1; 18:5; 24:13), a title that is also associated with the temple on Mount Zion and is synonymous for the “house of God” (Isa 2:2; Mic 4:2). This sanctuary language lends support to the notion that Mount Sinai functioned as a permutation of the Garden-sanctuary.

Along with the Garden, the tabernacle, and the temple, Mount Sinai constitutes another priestly sanctuary experience based on its tripartite arrangement in which it is split up into three sections of graded holiness.

Both Sinai and the Tabernacle evidence a tripartite division. The summit corresponds to the inner sanctum, or Holy of Holies. The second zone, partway up the mountain, is the equivalent of the Tabernacle’s outer sanctum, or Holy Place. The third zone, at the foot of the mountain, is analogous to the outer court. As with the Tabernacle, the three distinct zones of Sinai feature three gradations of holiness in descending order. Just as Moses alone may ascend to the peak of the mountain, so all but one are barred from the Holies of Holies in the Tabernacle. Just as the Holy Place is the exclusive reserve of the priesthood, so only priests and elders are allowed to ascend to a specific point on the mountain. The confinement of the laity to the outer court of the Tabernacle, where the altar of the burnt offering was located, evokes the parallel with Sinai in the restriction of the laity to the foot of the mountain where the altar was built.²⁴

Only Moses could ascend to the top of the mountain to directly experience the presence of God as something of a “high priest” (Exod 24:2, 12-13). Moses entered an approximate “Holy of Holies,” represented by a theophanic cloud (Exod 24:15-17). Moreover, the burning bush, or the “cassia tree,” was located atop the mountain in this “Holy of Holies.” The burning bush/tree, which is surrounded by “holy ground” (Exod

²⁴ Mary Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 59-61.

3:5), is representative of the Edenic tree of life and the menorah in the temple's Holy of Holies (Exod 3:2).

Aaron, his sons, and seventy elders were allowed to come up the mountain part of the way, though not all the way (Exod 19:22; 24:1);²⁵ the rest of Israel was required to stay at the base of Sinai (Exod 19:12, 23).²⁶ Just as an altar was built on the outermost portions of the Israelite temple, an altar was likewise built at the base of Sinai for the people (Exod 24:5-6). It comes as no surprise, therefore, that Sinai is the location in which Moses was shown the pattern of the tabernacle so that he might construct it according to God's instructions (Exod 25:8-9, 40).²⁷

Israel and the Tabernacle

The tabernacle is yet another impermanent sanctuary that advances the story of redemption, moving history closer to the day when God's presence will fill the whole earth.²⁸ Marking a notable transition from the previous era, "The tabernacle replaced the

²⁵ There is some uncertainty about the timing of Aaron's and his sons' ordination as priests. While Moses receives instruction from God regarding what should take place in their ordination service in Exod 29, the actual service is not recorded until Lev 8-9. Nevertheless, the biblical narrative includes mention of priests in Israel before Moses ever consecrated Aaron and his brothers. Longman believes that it is possible

that the narrative is not given in chronological order. That is, the ordination of Aaron and his sons, but not the whole tribe of Levites..., could have taken place before the ascent onto Mount Sinai. Perhaps this would explain why Aaron was allowed to penetrate so far into the realm of the sacred on Mount Sinai. Furthermore, it may help us to understand better the events of Exodus 32, with the golden calf. If Aaron was already ordained, we recognize why he could easily have led the people in a religious, albeit false, ritual. On the other hand, it is more awkward to think of Aaron being set apart for the priesthood after engaging in such a dubious act. (Longman, *Immanuel in Our Place*, 123)

Schrock believes their ordination to be tied directly with the institution of the tabernacle. Schrock, "A Biblical-Theological Investigation," 95. R. K. Duke thinks it took place earlier when Aaron was appointed as Moses' spokesperson. R. K. Duke, "Priests, Priesthood," *DOTP*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 647.

²⁶ Though God had already articulated the priestly status of the people of Israel in the form of a conditional covenant (Exod 19:5-6), it seems that the confirmation of their priesthood awaited the conclusion and ratification of the covenant (Exod 24). This may explain why the overall congregation of Israel was not yet allowed the same priestly privileges as the others who had already been fully confirmed as priests.

²⁷ Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature*, 59-65. See also G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, NSBT 17 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2004), 105-107.

²⁸ While neither the patriarchs' altars nor the mountain sanctuary on Sinai were intended to be permanent sanctuaries for God, they all served to point forward to a new and changing reality. Alexander

altar as the primary location where God revealed his intimate presence to his people. More correctly, the tabernacle incorporated the altar since . . . the sacrificial altar was an important component of the tabernacle complex.”²⁹ Alexander indicates several features of the tabernacle that associate it with, and thus make it another permutation of, the Garden of Eden. As a sanctuary, he notes that both are entered from the east, with cherubim guarding their entrances. The golden menorah of the tabernacle is said to parallel the tree of life in the Garden. Just as Adam was placed in the Garden to serve and guard it, priests are set in place to do the same with the tabernacle (Num 3:7-8; 8:26; 18:5-6). Both the Garden and the tabernacle are unique dwellings for God’s manifest presence. Alexander adds that both the Garden and the tabernacle should likely be viewed as models of the cosmos, conveyed by its colorful fabrics that may have represented the “variegated colors of the sky.” Understood this way, the tabernacle may be linked both to the Garden and the cosmos, communicating the notion that the whole earth will one day become God’s sanctuary.³⁰

After the Sinai experience and all of the tabernacle-building and priest-consecrating instructions are given (Exod 25:8-31:18), Moses returns to the base of Sinai to find that Aaron and the Israelites have built a Golden Calf to worship (Exod 32:1-8); God’s anger burns hot against the people (Exod 32:9-11), and Moses performs the priestly duty of interceding on their behalf before God (Exod 32:11-13; cf. 32:30-32; 33:12-22), pleading with him to remain faithful to the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac, and Israel (Exod 32:13). God responds positively to Moses’ plea and relents (Exod 32:14). Finally, Moses builds the tabernacle for God and his people (Exod 40:1-33) with

notes that “the promises given to the patriarchs build on God’s creation blueprint that the whole earth shall become his dwelling place as holy people populate it. While Genesis anticipates this development, the book of Exodus advances this meta-story by introducing the tabernacle.” T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), 32.

²⁹ Longman, *Immanuel in Our Place*, 125.

³⁰ Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 31-41.

its tripartite divisions of graded holiness—the court of the tabernacle (Exod 27:9), the Holy Place, and the Most Holy Place (Exod 26:33-34)—and its priestly regulations.

After Moses had completed erecting the tabernacle, a “cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle” (Exod 40:34). The presence of the Lord would thenceforth go with the wilderness-wandering Israelites, such that, “throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out. But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys” (Exod 40:36-38). God’s special presence was with and in the tabernacle.

Much like the Garden, the tabernacle served as God’s “dwelling place on earth. Here his presence was experienced in a unique way.”³¹ While the building of the tabernacle was certainly a step toward redeeming Eden and ultimately arriving at the new Jerusalem, it still left much to be desired since God’s abode with his people was rather small and the glory of God had not yet covered the face of the earth (Is 51:3; Ezek 36:35; Joel 2:3). Once again, the tabernacle represents another permutation of the Garden with its tripartite divisions and gradation of holiness.

Israel and the Temple

The temple stands as the last permutation of the Garden during this era. With the tabernacle still in Gibeon (1 Chr 21:29), David performs priestly duties at Mount Moriah,³² indicating that this would soon be the site for the new temple (2 Chr 3:1; cf. Gen 22:2). Subsequent to the death of Saul (1 Sam 31), David is anointed as king of

³¹ Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 37.

³² Unlike King Saul, who was judged for performing priestly duties (1 Sam 13:8-14), King David performed priestly duties without judgment. This is because David was not only a king, but he was also divinely appointed as a priest: “The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.’” (Ps 110:4). The son of David, that is, the Lord Jesus Christ, would eventually come as the priest-king in the order of Melchizedek (Heb 5:6).

Judah (2 Sam 2). After routing the Philistines in a divinely-aided battle and exercising his kingly office in the conflict (2 Sam 5:17-25), David assembles his army to transfer the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem (2 Sam 6), perhaps presaging his priestly role (Ps 110:4). After successfully relocating the ark to Jerusalem, David then acts as a priest, as “he sacrificed an ox and a fattened animal” (2 Sam 6:13) and danced in the presence of the Lord wearing a linen “ephod,” a “bold affirmation that David is wearing priestly attire for the celebration” (2 Sam 6:14; cf. 1 Sam 2:18; 14:3; 22:18; Judg 8:27).³³ Further performing duties typically reserved for priests, David places the ark of the Lord “inside the tent” (2 Sam 6:17a; cf. Num 1:51; 4:1-53), offers “burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord” (2 Sam 6:17b), and then “blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts” (2 Sam 6:18; cf. Num 6:22-27; Deut 18:8; 21:5). Believing that his own house should not be more elaborate than God’s (2 Sam 7), David then determines to build a new “house” for God. God ensures David that his “son” would build the house; indeed, Solomon eventually does build the temple, and the glory of the Lord fills the sanctuary (1 Kgs 8:10-11; 2 Chr 7:1-2). Altogether, these events portray David as an Adamic figure who, like Adam, functioned both as a king and a priest.³⁴

While the tabernacle is replaced by the temple, the tripartite Edenic and cosmic features associated with the tabernacle transfer to the temple.³⁵ The Jerusalem temple is in miniature what God intends to do with the entire world (Pss 48; 132:13-18; 133:1-3; 147:12-14), and God’s covenant with David concerns much more than the Solomonic

³³ Terence Kleven, “Hebrew Style in 2 Samuel 6,” *JETS* 35, no. 3 (1992): 307. Kleven relies on Anthony Phillips in his understanding of the priestly ephod. See Anthony Phillips, “David’s Linen Ephod,” *Vetus Testamentum* 19, no. 4 (1969): 458-87.

³⁴ The “narrative portrays David as acting like a priest-king when he brought the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem.” David’s request to build a temple (2 Sam 7:1-2) may “be interpreted as the climactic expression of his royal priestly activities.” Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 181.

³⁵ The temple maintained the Holy of Holies, the Holy Place, and the outer court as part of its structure.

temple. Indeed, God says that he will build his kingdom through the Davidic Son—that is, Jesus—and that kingdom will be eternal (2 Sam 7).

The theological significance of the establishment of the temple may represent a step forward in redemptive history, as God’s tabernacling presence is no longer sojourning from place to place in the tabernacle and fighting wars along the way. Instead, the more permanent dwelling represents God’s and his people’s ability to rest (2 Sam 7:11), since their enemies are being held at bay, thus, restoring to some degree the hope of the priest-king.³⁶ Moreover, the establishment of the temple has to do with the expectation that God will eventually establish a “temple-city,” one in which all of the inhabitants would functionally live as a “kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” Indeed, much like Adam, David comes not only as a king (2 Sam 5) but also as a priest (2 Sam 6) and as a son (2 Sam 7:14): “the king would be a devoted servant and son of God and would also function as a priest, instructing the nations in the righteousness of God and inviting them to come under the rule of Yahweh,” which “indicates that the king will accomplish in his person the purpose that God had for the nation of Israel as a whole, to be a kingdom of priests. The king will embody the nation in himself.”³⁷ While the epoch of the Davidic covenant and the monarchy may properly be recognized as the highpoint in Israel’s history, Israel still failed as a nation to live up to its intended identity as a “kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” Something was lacking, or better yet, Someone was needed—the true priest, Jesus Christ.

Israel’s Priesthood

Changing epochs brought about many developments to the new priesthood of Israel, with the institution of the Levitical priesthood as the priests who would serve the

³⁶ Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 64.

³⁷ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 422.

people of God in Israel. Yet, the identity of the priesthood remained the same. Though a new sanctuary was in place, and though specific laws were established regarding the priesthood, Israel's priesthood continued to consist of people who, divinely granted access to the presence of God, were entrusted with serving God by guarding the holiness of his temple and his people through attending to the Word of God, border management, sacrifice, and mediation.

God's Word

Like the priests who had preceded them, Israel's priests were entrusted with the high duty of attending to the Word of God. In attending to God's Word, they were responsible both for maintaining their personal holiness and for communicating the Word of God to the people of Israel. God instituted the "Holiness Code,"³⁸ which consisted of numerous moral laws, for both priests and Israelites alike to uphold, thus painting a picture for the high moral and ethical standards God had for his people, and especially his priests. It was priests who "conserved and guarded Israel's traditions, transmitting laws, songs, and rituals from one generation to another," who "guarded Israel's faith about Yahweh and transmitted it to future generations."³⁹

In seeking to attend to God's Word, Israel's priests worked to secure and maintain their own personal holiness.⁴⁰ Aaron and his sons, for example, were

³⁸ Lev 17-26 has commonly been referred to as the "Holiness Code" due to its demand for holiness on the part of the Israelites (19:2; 20:7, 8, 26; 21:6, 8, 15, 23; 22:9, 16, 32). August Klostermann is credited with naming Lev 17-26 *Das Heilig-Keitsgesetz* ("The Law of Holiness") in 1877. Regarding these "holiness chapters," Milgrom observes that "two critical changes" occur in the book of Leviticus: "ritual impurity becomes moral impurity; and the domain of the sacred expands, embracing the entire land, not just the sanctuary, and all of Israel, not just the priesthood." Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus: A Book of Ritual and Ethics*, CC (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 175. Yet, though this section of Leviticus is directed at the entire Israelite community, portions of it are written specifically for the priests. While "the theme of holiness for the nation" is important in Leviticus, "the holiness of the priesthood was vital in maintaining the holiness of the nation at large." Mark F. Rooker, *Leviticus*, NAC, vol. 3A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 231.

³⁹ Richard D. Nelson, *Raising Up a Faithful Priest: Community and Priesthood in Biblical Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 88-89.

⁴⁰ Sadly, the history of Israel shows that many priests failed to attend to the Word of God as they should. Nelson writes of their poor record:

consecrated, ordained, and set apart for the work of priesthood (Exod 28-29). Their coronation with priestly clothing, their ceremonial anointing with oil, and the sacrifices offered on their behalf all served to dedicate and set them—and the entire priestly office—apart as holy vessels to be used by God (Exod 28-30; Lev 8).

After being consecrated as priests, their personal holiness had to be maintained. Many of the Levitical laws were, thus, written to help priests maintain their personal holiness (Lev 21-22). Because a large portion of their service consisted in working near the altar of God, and thus in the presence of the holy God, the priests' personal holiness was of utmost importance. The narrative of Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, accentuates this point. These men, who enjoyed a special place among the people of God as the first and second born in Aaron's house (Num 3:2), are said to have offered "strange" or "unauthorized fire" to the Lord, a kind of offering that had not been commanded by the Lord (Lev 10:1).⁴¹ It was essential that priests "be very strict in their

Precisely because priests were seen as custodians of the faith, the issue of unfaithful and disobedient priests became a recurring literary theme: Aaron (Deut 9:20), Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Eli, Amaziah of Bethel (Amos 7:10-15), Jehoiada son of Eliashib (Neh 13:28-29), and Jason and his progressive colleagues (2 Macc 4:10-15). Because faithfulness was the norm expected of priests, reformers never dared overlook priestly malfeasance or infidelity (2 Kgs 12:7-8; 23:9, 20; Neh 13:4-9). In the restoration period this was especially the case in matters involving marriage and descent (Ezra 10:18-22; Neh 13:28-30). Nehemiah's indignation over priests with foreign wives expresses how meticulously the purity of the priestly line was to be protected: 'Remember them, O my God, as defilers of the priesthood and of the covenant of the priests and Levites' (Neh 13:29).

The prophets often attacked the priests as failed guardians of orthodoxy and morality, sometimes charging them with perfidy in regard to the torah (Jer 2:8; Ezek 22:6; Hos 4:4-10; Zeph 3:4), mercenary motives (Jer 6:13; Micah 3:11), drunken confusion (Isa 28:7-8), and stifling the prophetic word (Jer 26:11; Amos 7:16). A previous generation of scholars interpreted these diatribes as the inevitable consequence of a conflict between mutually hostile and incompatible prophetic and priestly approaches to religion. This was a misleading oversimplification. In many prophetic invectives, priest and prophet are actually castigated together in the same breath. In reality, the priests became targets for prophetic invective precisely *because* the prophets generally shared with them the transitional ideal of priestly fidelity and saw priestly integrity as critical to national survival. (Nelson, *Raising Up a Faithful Priest*, 90-91)

⁴¹ Numerous interpretations concerning the nature of this "strange fire" have been suggested. Some conclude that Nadab and Abihu penetrated too deeply into the sanctuary, that perhaps they had entered the Holy of Holies, a location that was only to be entered on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:1-2). This is the position of Levine. Baruch A. Levine, *Leviticus*, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: JPS, 1989), 59. The text indicates, however, that the problem is associated not with where the offering is presented but instead on the nature of the fire. In reference to Exod 30:9, Keil and Delitzsch propose that the problem is associated with Nadab and Abihu purportedly offering incense, a forbidden practice according to the law. See Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 554. Opposing this view and focusing on the text's mention of fire rather than incense, Rooker, Haran, and Laughlin think the issue lies in the possibility that Nadab and Abihu offered coals from outside the temple area, coals that were of an unauthorized source. Rooker,

behavior while in the presence of a holy God.”⁴² However, the priests Nadab and Abihu disobeyed God, which resulted in severe punishment: their death (Lev 10:1-2).

Responding to the event, the Lord said, “Among those who are near me [those who approach me] I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified” (Lev 10:3). Thus, “the severity of the penalty showed the seriousness that sin has for the person who approaches God. [That person] must be in obedience to the directives of the Lord.”⁴³ In taking on the office of priesthood, a man accepted and embraced a life of high moral accountability, a calling to obey the will of God and maintain personal holiness.

Preserving their personal holiness and remaining committed to upholding the Word of God enabled them then to be in a position to work to achieve and maintain the holiness of the people of Israel. In fact, their “priestly integrity” and holiness was recognized as “critical to national survival.”⁴⁴ God’s consecration of the priests and the sanctuary served the larger purpose of making it so “that God may be present throughout all Israel, and make them holy also.”⁴⁵ As Wells explains,

Priests are those who, by virtue of their identity as belonging to God, enable Yhwh to be fully present to his people, so enabling the people to recognize him fully as Yhwh their God, and thus themselves as his people, with the same understanding of

Leviticus, 157; Menahem Haran, “The Uses of Incense in the Ancient Israelite Ritual,” *Vetus Testamentum* 10 (1960): 115; J. C. H. Laughlin, “The Strange Fire of Nadab and Abihu,” *JBL* 95, no. 4 (1976): 561-62. Another view suggests that the problem is rooted in the possibility that Nadab and Abihu’s offering was ignited for the purpose of worshiping other gods. This seems likely because of the text’s use of the expression “contrary to his command” (Lev 10:1), which is also used in Lev 7:31-38 and 19:4-5 with regard to worshiping other gods. Budd takes this position. Phillip J. Budd, *Leviticus*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1996), 150-51. Mathews focuses on the meaning of the term זָר, which is used elsewhere to describe a person who is a “stranger” to the family or “outside the family” (Deut 25:5) and to a “forbidden woman” who is outside a person’s marriage (Prov 2:16). The idea is that the offering Nadab and Abihu brought to God was foreign to what was acceptable to God. Whatever the source, “it did not come from the source sanctioned by God.” Kenneth A. Mathews, *Leviticus: Holy God, Holy People*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2009), 94. See also BDB, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 266.

⁴² Raymond B. Dillard and Tremper Longman III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 80.

⁴³ Mathews, *Leviticus*, 95.

⁴⁴ Nelson, *Raising Up a Faithful Priest*, 90-91.

⁴⁵ Wells, *God’s Holy People*, 108.

belonging. The holiness of the priesthood is connected to the special status of the entire nation.⁴⁶

From this position of personal holiness, the Israelite priests carried out their entire ministry. Any failure to attend to their personal holiness would compromise their ability to effectively serve God as priests.

As they attended personally to the Word of God, they also taught God's people the law of Moses (Exod 24:12; Lev 1: 2; 10:11; Deut 33:10). Priests were responsible for teaching "all Israel" (Deut 27:9-10; 31:9-13; Lev 10:10-11; cf. 2 Chr 19:9-10), helping them to understand it, whether they were a male, a female, a child, or even a foreigner (Neh 8:1-8). As a result, there were numerous Levitical cities that were dispersed throughout Israel's landscape; this was intended so that the priests could reach and teach all of the people of Israel about God.⁴⁷

Priests taught God's "statutes and laws" to the people of Israel so as to "make them know the way in which they must walk and what they must do" (Exod 18:20). They further spoke to the people of Israel on behalf of God, administering divine blessings (Num 6:22-26) to God's people, delivering divine oracles through the use of Urim and Thummim⁴⁸ as a means of divine disclosure⁴⁹ and as a "means of revelation,"⁵⁰ diagnosing things that are clean or unclean (Lev 11-15), and distinguishing between the holy and profane (Lev 10:10).⁵¹ The content of their teaching was to include "instruction

⁴⁶ Wells, *God's Holy People*, 108.

⁴⁷ T. J. Betts, *Ezekiel the Priest: A Custodian of Tora* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 23-24.

⁴⁸ The urim and thummim were "a two-part device whereby the people of Israel could solicit guidance from God." Longman, *Immanuel in Our Place*, 144. They served as an extension to the priests' teaching of the law. When a question arose that was not specifically addressed in the law of God, the urim and thummim were employed as tools priests used to hear from God (143-46). See also Albert Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests and the New Priest: According to the New Testament* (Petersham, MA: St. Bede's, 1986), 20-24.

⁴⁹ Exod 28:30; Lev 8:8; Num 27:18-21; Deut 33:8; 1 Sam 2:28, 35; 23:9-12; 30:7-8; Ezra 2:63; Neh 7:65.

⁵⁰ Cornelius van Dam, *The Urim and Thummim: A Means of Revelation in Ancient Israel* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997), xi.

⁵¹ Betts, *Ezekiel the Priest*, 20.

that directed the Israelites to separate themselves from the common and impure unto the sacred and pure.”⁵²

David Schrock notes the connection between the priests’ teaching ministry and their underlying duty to serve as guardians: “As part of their duty to protect the holy place of God, the priests were called to be teachers of the covenant (Lev 10:10-11; Deut 33:10; cf. 2 Chr 35:3; Ezek 22:26; Hag 2:11-13; Mal 2:6-9). While this didactic ministry was independent of the priests’ guarding duty, the two were not unrelated.”⁵³ Peter Leithart picks up on this connection as well: “Priests guarded boundaries of holiness as much by teaching Torah as by serving as custodians of the literal gates of the sanctuary.”⁵⁴ Their teaching role was, thus, integral to maintaining the sanctity of the people of God as they instructed God’s people according to appropriate moral and physical boundaries, according to what was clean or unclean (Lev 11-15).

Border Management

Israel’s priests also served God by managing the borders of his sanctuary, which entailed both expanding and protecting its borders. As for expansion, in keeping with the covenant stipulations laid down with their forefathers, Israel’s priests were to promote multiplication among the people of the nation, through both sexual reproduction⁵⁵ and introducing foreigners into the covenant people (Gen 17:12-13; Exod 12:38, 48-49; Ezra 6:21).

⁵² Betts, *Ezekiel the Priest*, 26-27.

⁵³ Schrock, “A Biblical-Theological Investigation,” 108.

⁵⁴ Peter J. Leithart, “Attendants of Yahweh’s House: Priesthood in the Old Testament,” *JSOT* 85 (1999): 22.

⁵⁵ Commenting on Exod 1:7, which speaks of Israel’s population increasing in great number while in Egypt, Stuart observes that “most of the vocabulary of this verse hearkens to the Genesis creation story, showing that Israel was in itself a fulfillment of the creation commands (‘Be fruitful . . . increase [multiply] . . . fill,’ Gen 1:22, 28).” Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, NAC, vol. 2 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 61.

Furthermore, it meant seeking to reach, conquer, and possess the promised land of Canaan for God and his people. After Moses died, Joshua and the people of God finally entered (Josh 1:1-5:15), took over (Josh 6:1-12:24), apportioned the land to the various tribes of Israel (Josh 13:1-21:45), and began serving God in the land (Josh 22:1-24:33). While Israel's conquest of Canaan was only partial (Judg 1:1-2:5),⁵⁶ there was a sense in which what the patriarchs had begun—by staking claim to the promised land as they built altars—was now coming closer to being realized through Israel's conquest of Canaan.⁵⁷ They now possessed, in large part, the land that God promised them, and it was the responsibility of the priests to manage its borders. That is, these priests were intended to maintain and protect the overall holiness and welfare of both the sanctuary of God and

⁵⁶ Noting Israel's failure to completely possess the promised land, Charles Simeon writes, If they had followed up their successes with becoming zeal, their difficulties would have been comparatively light: but at no time did they advance with that ardour which they should have manifested in such a cause. Joshua had reproved them for their indolence (Josh 18:3), and quickened them in some degree; but still, after his death, and fifteen years after their first invasion of Canaan, no one of the tribes had complete possession of the lot assigned them. The Israelites had increased, and now wanted the whole of their inheritance: but the Canaanites had increased also, and, possessing still their strong-holds, were able to cope with Israel in battle. Now therefore the different tribes found the bitter consequences of their past indifference; and, as it should seem, were afraid to resume a warfare with such potent enemies. (Charles Simeon, *Horae Homileticae: Judges to 2 Kings*, vol. 3 (London: Samuel Holdsworth, 1836), 1; reprint in digital format, *Horae Homileticae: Discourses Condensed into One Continuous Series, Forming a Commentary upon Every Book of the Old and New Testament, Joshua to Esther*, vol. 2. [Harrington, DE: Delmarva, 2014])

⁵⁷ Gentry and Wellum note that many dispensationalists believe that "Israel, as a national people, still awaits the 'literal' fulfillment of the land promise in the future millennial age." Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 704. Discarding this position, they argue instead that land must "be viewed as a type or pattern of something greater" (704) that reaches its fulfillment in Christ. Because the covenants require "an obedient, devoted covenant partner . . . , it is only in the provision of our Lord Jesus Christ, God's own obedient, devoted Son who does not fail, that the new covenant is established on better grounds; indeed, unbreakable grounds" (705). Because of their disobedience, Israel forfeited the benefits of the promises, requiring a faithful covenant member to bring the promises to pass, including the land promise (706). Furthermore, they suggest that the land promises of the Abrahamic covenant were never meant to be "understood *merely* within the limited confines of specific geographical boundaries" (707) but should rather be understood to have international implications, such that "Abraham did *not* understand the land promise as referring only to a specific geographical location; rather he viewed the promise as that which ultimately would encompass the entire created order" (708). Furthermore, as this dissertation has argued, land did not originally become significant with Abraham and Israel's "promised land." Instead, the promises made to Abraham sprung from the creation design and God's purposes with the Garden of Eden, indeed "with the mandate for God's priest-kings and image-bearers to expand the borders of Eden to the uttermost parts of the world" (710). Thus, Israel's partial conquest of Canaan, combined with Israel's historical failure to maintain the land, leaves the Abrahamic land promises yet unfilled in full. According to Gentry and Wellum, the land promises reach their terminus in the new creation; that is, they will not be fulfilled in this age or even in some future millennial age, but rather in the new creation when all the nations have been brought in and the presence of God is made manifest throughout the entire created order (716).

the people of God in this land. Furthermore, they were set in place to continue to promote positive growth within the borders, exercising dominion, encouraging the numerical growth of God's covenant people, progressively bringing about the realization of the covenant made with their forefathers.

Additionally, managing the borders meant that Israel's priests were set in place to protect the sanctuary of God and the people of God from harm and defilement; indeed, "guarding is the essence of [the] priestly task."⁵⁸ One way that Israel's priests worked to protect the borders was by carrying out legal judgments among the people of Israel. They served as judges in lawsuits (Deut 17:8-13), were consulted to settle disputes among the people (Deut 21:5), and were judges over the affairs of Israel (2 Chr 19:5-11; Ezra 10). This judicial role served to advance the priests' duty to serve as guardians as they sought to maintain a holy and righteous people. Refusing the judgment of the priest incurred serious consequences: the death of the rebellious individual (Deut 17:12; cf. 1 Cor 5:13).

The priests of this era were also expected to be warriors, indeed soldiers for the sake of maintaining the sanctity of God's people and sanctuary. This reality may be observed in Moses' priestly blessing prior to his death.⁵⁹ In his blessing, he commends the tribe of Levi for disowning their brothers and ignoring their children (Deut 33:9). That is, he is referring back to the Golden Calf episode of Exodus 32 in which the tribe of Levi demonstrated its allegiance to the one true God. After the people of Israel had sinned by asking Aaron to create gods for them to worship, Moses asked for those among the assembly who were on the Lord's side to come forward; when the sons of Levi came

⁵⁸ James B. Jordan, *Through New Eyes: Developing a Biblical View of the World* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1999), 134, 136-38. Raymond Abba adds that "the essential function of the Levitical priesthood is . . . to assure, maintain, and constantly re-establish the holiness of the elect people of God." Raymond Abba, "Priests and Levites," in *IDB* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1981), 4:877. Further, Raymond Dillard and Tremper Longman III argue that the "main function of the priesthood" was "to protect the holiness of God in the camp." Dillard and Longman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 80.

⁵⁹ Just as Jacob extended his priestly blessing to his sons before his death (Gen 49:3-27), Moses does the same with Israel before he dies (Deut 33:8-11).

forward, God instructed them, “Go to and fro from gate to gate throughout the camp, and each of you kill his brother and his companion and his neighbor,” and the Levites obeyed, resulting in their ordination for service to God (Exod 32:26-29). Remembering this event, Moses spoke blessing over the people of Levi, and Moses commended them for serving God rather than their father, mother, brothers, and children (Deut 33:9) and for observing God’s Word and keeping his covenant (Deut 33:9). Thus, the Levites’ willingness to fight as warriors in defense of God’s holiness qualified them as priests: “Their willingness to shed blood for the sake of his holiness qualified them as priests and adumbrated a significant feature of their holy service—temple defense and spiritual warfare.”⁶⁰

This overall defensive and guardian posture exemplified by the Levites was characteristic of the entire priesthood in Israel. While there was some level of distinction between the Levites and the Aaronic priests,⁶¹ they both worked together as guardians of God’s holy place and the people of God; for the priests and the Levites, “if any outsider comes near [the tabernacle], he shall be put to death” (Num 1:51).⁶² This guardian duty

⁶⁰ Schrock, “A Biblical-Theological Investigation,” 97.

⁶¹ As Philip Peter Jenson points out, “The Levites’ subordination to the priests is clearly expressed in the Priestly presentation of their role.” Philip Peter Jenson, *Graded Holiness: A Key to the Priestly Conception of the World* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 132. Offering proof of this, he writes, “In texts which mention both Levites and priests, the Levites are mentioned second, as in the records of their genealogies (Num 3:1-4 before 3:5-13), tasks (18:1, 6 bracketing 18:2-5), and maintenance (18:8-20 before 18:21-24). The appointment of the Levites (Num 8) also comes after that of the priests (Lev 8), whom they are commanded to serve” (132). The distinction is also made evident in their division of labor:

The Levites were to guard the sanctuary, while the priests protected the holy items inside. The Levites were not allowed access to the holy things on pain of death (Num 4:15). They were directed to serve Aaron, and were under the authority of him and his sons. They did not serve Yahweh directly in the sanctuary, as did the priests; rather they guarded the sanctuary from defilement on the outside and performed the hard labour of its dismantling and erection. Only the priests could safely pack and cover the holy items (Num 4:5-20), and subsequently the coverings provided the necessary barrier between the holiness of the Tabernacle and the Levites. (132)

John A. Davies recognizes this distinction as well; yet, he also upholds their similarities. Speaking of one’s ability and privilege to “draw near” or “be brought near” to God, he writes, At one level, as we have seen, it is true of all Israel (Exod 19:4). At another level, it is true of the Levites generally (Num 16:9-10), and at yet another level in the graded system of holiness, it is the exclusive prerogative of the priests (Numb 16:5; Ezek 40:46; 42:13; 43:19; 44:15) . . . Together with the Levites, the priests had charge of all aspects of maintaining and guarding the holiness of the sanctuary (Num 1:53; 3:32; 18:5; 2 Kgs 12:11; Ezek 40:45; 44:15). (Davies, *A Royal Priesthood*, 162)

⁶² Again, Moses, Aaron, and Aaron’s sons were instructed to camp “before the tabernacle on the east,” and their duty was “guarding the sanctuary itself” for the purpose of “protect[ing] the people of

was carried out “so that there may be no wrath on the congregation of the people of Israel” (Num 1:53).

One notable example of the priests’ work in protecting the holiness of God’s sanctuary is when King Uzziah unlawfully and arrogantly entered the temple of God to offer incense on the altar (2 Chr 26:16-23). When King Uzziah’s actions were discovered, Azariah and eighty additional priests rushed in to confront him: “They withstood King Uzziah and said to him, “It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense. Go out of the sanctuary, for you have done wrong, and it will bring you no honor from the LORD God” (2 Chr 26:18). After rebuking him with the law of God, he was stricken with leprosy. Quickly and forcefully, the priests removed King Uzziah from the holy sanctuary of God, seeking to preserve the sanctity of God’s temple. While King Uzziah had to live with leprosy for the rest of his days, Azariah and the priests were commended for their priestly work of guarding God’s holy place.

Related to the priestly task of defending the holy place against intruders, it was also their duty to “distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean” (Lev 10:10). Chapters 11-15 of Leviticus stand as a manual for the people of Israel, but more specifically for the priests, to discern the clean from the unclean. “To make a mistake in these matters,” says Wells, “provokes God’s judgement and could lead to death.”⁶³

Priestly guardianship further concerned the active defeat of evil lurking outside the camp. In the time of Israel, this manifested itself in warfare against enemy nations (Josh 6:1-12:24). In so doing, Israel’s priests carried out their guardian duty in a way that is reminiscent of Adam’s responsibility to guard the Garden against the evil that lurked Israel.” Specifically, this meant that “any outsider who came near was to be put to death” (Num 3:38).

⁶³ Wells, *God’s Holy People*, 114.

outside.⁶⁴ Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron and son of Eleazar, played a key role in serving the armies of Israel as priest.⁶⁵ Phinehas fought to protect the people of God from outside contamination when Zimri the Israelite brought Cozbi the Moabite into the congregation of Israel and Phinehas killed them both (Num 25:7-8), propitiating God's wrath against Israel (Num 25:11), bringing a deadly plague to an end (Num 25:8-9).⁶⁶

⁶⁴ While the priests did not always take up arms in the fight, their role was crucial in "rallying the troops" before battle, reminding the soldiers of "God's presence on the battlefield," and emboldening them "to have courage and fight for the Lord" (Deut 20:2-4). Schrock, "A Biblical-Theological Investigation," 100-101.

⁶⁵ In addition to the account described here in Numbers, another account of Phinehas' priestly involvement in warfare is found in the book of Joshua when the people of Israel heard that some of their kinsmen had built an altar "of imposing size" (Josh 22:10) that was believed to stand "in rebellion against the Lord" (Josh 22:7), ultimately replacing the "altar of the Lord" that was found "where the Lord's tabernacle stands" (Josh 22:19). The whole assembly of the people of Israel gathered at Shiloh to make war against them (Josh 22:12), and Phinehas was sent to confront them (Josh 22:13). The eastern tribes respond to the accusations, claiming that the altar that they built was a "copy" of the real altar in Shiloh (Josh 18:1; 22:19) and that it stood as "as witness" between them "that the Lord is God" (Josh 22:27, 34). Phinehas' wrath was averted (Josh 22:30-31), along with the rest of Israel (Josh 22:32-33). Nevertheless, the point here is to demonstrate Phinehas' priestly jealousy for the glory and holiness of God. Moreover, he knew that their sins would have ominous consequences for the "whole congregation of Israel" (Josh 22:18), and so he seeks to defend Israel from the consequences of God's righteous anger. Like the Levites had done under Moses (Exod 32:26-29), Phinehas was ready to declare war against his kinsman for what he believed may have been a "breach of faith against the Lord" (Josh 22:31) and an affront to the holiness of God's sanctuary.

⁶⁶ Phinehas' work of defending the holiness of God among the people of God led God to initiate a "covenant of peace" with him (Num 25:12). God also awarded Phinehas and his descendants with a "covenant of perpetual priesthood" because he was righteously "jealous for his God and made atonement for the people of Israel" (Num 25:13). This priestly or Levitical covenant, here given (יְהוָה) to Phinehas and his priestly descendants, demonstrates the permanence of God's intent to carry out his priestly purposes (cf. Num 18:19; Jer 33:18-22). This covenant with Phinehas harkens back to the establishment of the Levitical covenant made at the Golden Calf incident (Exod 32), and it ultimately serves to solidify the Levitical covenant going forward. See discussion above for a more detailed explanation of the significance of Phinehas' priesthood, the covenant made with him, and how his priesthood would ultimately shape the future of priesthood in Israel as a whole.

Commenting on the significance of this priestly covenant and how it functioned within the life of Israel, Williamson writes,

These priestly covenants seem to have served the same general purpose as the Mosaic covenant with which they are so closely related; namely the priests facilitated the maintenance of the divine-human relationship between Yahweh and Abraham's descendants. . . . Thus the Priestly and Mosaic covenants, while remaining distinct, run in parallel with one another, and are closely related in purpose; namely, maintaining the relationship between God and Israel. (Paul R. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God's Unfolding Purpose*, NSBT [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007], 105-106)

It functions, further, as "a mechanism to administer the Israelite covenant especially before the inauguration of kingship in Israel." Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 528. But, Israel's priests would eventually fall into a moral decline, as it explained below. These later priests are excoriated for their disobedience and failure to live in light of this priestly covenant (Neh 13:29; Mal 2:1-9), thus anticipating a new covenant and a better priest to perfectly carry out the priesthood.

Sacrifice

As noted earlier, it is not uncommon for scholars to emphasize the priority of sacrifice among priestly duties, almost to the neglect of the other duties.⁶⁷ While certainly not downplaying the importance of sacrifice, this dissertation has highlighted other aspects of the priesthood, seeking to provide a more balanced and complete view of the priesthood. Oppositely, other authors demote sacrifice in the order of priority; Paul Ellingworth, for example, notes that the actual killing or slaughtering of the sacrificial animal was not always the exclusive duty of the priest.⁶⁸ The law actually demanded that the animal should be killed by the one offering it instead of the priest.⁶⁹ Though it was not the priest's job to slaughter the animal,⁷⁰ the priest was responsible for presenting the animal's blood to God on the altar (Lev 17:11, 14). The primary task for the priest in his sacrificial work was, thus, not primarily the slaughtering of the animal but his ministry at the altar, guarding the sanctity and the holiness of the presentation of the host to God.⁷¹ The guardian-priest was responsible for protecting the people of God as he labored to maintain his own personal purity along with the purity of the sacrificial host. In the end, it

⁶⁷ In the introduction of chap 1, it has already been noted that John Owen views sacrifice as definitive of the priestly office; again, he says that "a priest, properly so called, is a sacrificer. . . . Where there are no priests, there are no sacrifices; and where there are no sacrifices, there are no priests." John Owen, *The Priesthood of Christ: Its Necessity and Nature* (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Heritage, 2010), 40-41. W. R. Smith and A. Bertholet reduce the priesthood down to sacrifice in their definition of the office: "A minister whose stated business was to perform, on behalf of the community, certain public ritual acts, particularly sacrifices, directed godwards." W. R. Smith and A. Bertholet, "Priest," in *Encyclopedia Biblica*, vol. 3 (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1902), col. 3838. J. Barton Payne also places priority on the sacrificial duties of the priest, defining a priest as "a minister for sacred things, especially sacrifice." J. Barton Payne, "כהן," in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 1:431.

⁶⁸ Roland de Vaux thinks it significant that the biblical author himself mentions sacrifice last of all among the priestly functions in the "Blessing of Levi" (Deut 33:10). De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 355. He further suggests that this text assigns a "low position" (355) in "this hierarchy of functions" (355). Moreover, he notes that "the priest in the Old Testament is not strictly a 'sacrificer' in the sense of an 'immolator.' He may at times have taken care of the slaughtering of a victim, but this was always an accessory function and was never his exclusive privilege" (356).

⁶⁹ Lev 1:2, 5; 3:2, 8, 13; 4:22, 24, 29, 33.

⁷⁰ This was true except in the case of a bird, which had to be killed on the altar and, thus, by a priest (Lev 1:14-15; 5:8-10).

⁷¹ See Paul Ellingworth, "Priest" in *NDBT*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 697-98.

can be observed that the priest's role in sacrificing was instrumental in his endeavor to succeed as guardian.

And yet, there is no denying the importance of sacrifice among the priestly responsibilities. The offering of sacrifices "remained central to the ritual systems of the tabernacle and the first and second temples and, therefore, to the Old Testament theology of God's 'presence' and his relationship to ancient Israel as his 'kingdom of priests.'"⁷² Sacrifice was God's way of dealing with his people's defiled holiness and overall uncleanness, so that communion with him could be restored. It was a vehicle God entrusted to priests that effectively brought *shalom* to the relationship that was broken.

While Israel began offering their sacrifices primarily at the tabernacle and later at the temple, Israel continued to construct altars throughout the landscape of Canaan and offer sacrifices on them during this period.⁷³ It seems that at least part of the reason Israelites continued to build altars during this time has to do with their continued effort to "lay claim to the land that the Lord had promised Abram."⁷⁴ While these altars continued to play a role in Israel's relationship with God, the tabernacle became the central location where Israel met with, worshiped, and made sacrifices to God.⁷⁵

⁷² Richard E. Averbeck, "Offerings and Sacrifices," in *EDBT*, Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), 574.

⁷³ Joshua's altar on Ebal (Deut 27:4-7; Josh 8:30-31), the eastern tribes' altar of witness (Josh 22:10-34), Gideon's altar (Judg 6:17-24), Manoah's altar (Judg 13:19-20), the people of Israel's altar during a controversy with the tribe of Benjamin (Judg 21:1-7), Samuel's altar at Ramah (1 Sam 7:17), Saul's altar (1 Sam 14:31-35), David's altar in Jerusalem (2 Sam 24:18-25; 1 Chr 21:18-27), and Elijah's altar (1 Kgs 18:23-39) are examples.

⁷⁴ Averbeck, "Offerings and Sacrifices," 575.

⁷⁵ In addition to the introduction of the tabernacle with Israel, a complex list of required offerings and sacrifices is also delivered to Israel in the book of Leviticus. These included burnt offerings (Lev 1:1-17), grain offerings (Lev 2:16), peace offerings (Lev 3:1-17), sin offerings (Lev 4:1-5:13), and guilt offerings (Lev 5:14-6:7). Each type of offering had its own characteristics and functions. Burnt offerings functioned as a means to call out to God to respond to the needs of the offeror, to express worship to God (Lev 22:18-20), and to make atonement for the offeror (Lev 1:4). Peace offerings signified that all was well between God and his people and always came last when offered with other kinds of offerings. The peace offering was subdivided into thank, votive, free will, and ordination offerings. Thank offerings were presented as an expression of gratefulness for blessings received (Pss 50:23; 107:22). Votive offerings were offered to repay a vow (2 Sam 15:7-8). Free-will offerings needed no specific reason to be offered. The ordination offering was presented at the ritual ordaining of the high priest (Exod 28:19-28, 31-34; Lev 8:22-29, 31-32). Grain offerings and drink offerings (wine libations) accompanied burnt and peace

Highlighting further the role of the priesthood to guard the holiness of the people of God, it is important to observe that this sacrificial system was designed to provide atonement for a specific people, the covenant community of God, and not to all people without exception. Numerous examples throughout the Old Testament demonstrate the definite nature of priestly sacrifices. The sacrifices of the patriarchs atoned for the sins of those in their households and not for the world at large. In the same way, Israel's sacrificial system clearly dealt with the sins of the household of Israel, and not for the sins of the nations.⁷⁶ Thus, in all of the regulations and practices concerning Israel's sacrificial system, its extent and overall benefits are limited to specific groups of people or individuals. Therefore, as Israel's priests carried out the work of sacrifice, their services were only extended to guarding the holiness of the covenant people of God.

Additionally, in offering sacrifices to God, as guardian-priests, it was essential that the priests carried out their ministry near God's altar with accuracy and with a commitment to meticulously following God's instruction. Commenting on the priests'

offerings (Num 15:1-5). Sin offerings served as the main blood atonement offering in the sacrificial system, bringing forgiveness of sins to those offering the sacrifice when any of the Lord's commandments were transgressed (Lev 4:2). Guilt offerings, which had to be accompanied with the offeror's acknowledgment of guilt and the repayment of damages, made atonement for sins committed when sacred or holy items had been desecrated because they had been treated as common instead of holy (Lev 5:14).

Space does not allow for a more thorough evaluation of each of these sacrifice types. For a discussion of the variances between the different sacrifices, see Susan Rattray, "Worship," in *HBD*, ed. Paul J. Achtemeier (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 1143-44; Averbeck, "Offerings and Sacrifices," 574-81; Jenson, *Graded Holiness*, 155-65.

⁷⁶ The Passover ritual of Exod 12-13 appears to have had a definite application; certainly, the atoning nature of the sacrifices were not intended to have efficacy for the whole world, but only for God's elect and circumcised covenant people who participated in the Passover ritual (Exod 2:24; 3:10; 6:1-8; 12:43-35, 48-49). This point is substantiated by the fact that the number of sacrificial animals was directly proportionate to and efficacious for the number of those in the participating households (Exod 12:4, 7-13, 21-23). Moreover, it should be noted further that on the Day of Atonement, the high priest "made atonement for himself and for his house and for all the assembly of Israel" (Lev 16:17). No forgiveness of sins or purification was extended to the non-Israelite world. Only those in covenant with God, which including not-native Israelites or "strangers" who joined the covenant community (Num 15:25-26, 30-31), were the beneficiaries. The definite nature of Old Testament sacrifices may be observed further in that the sacrificial system was designed to offer atonement not only for the collective covenant community of Israel as a whole unit but also for the individuals who comprised the covenant community as they sought atonement for themselves (Num 5:7-8). See Paul R. Williamson, "Because He Loved Your Forefathers: Election, Atonement, and Intercession in the Pentateuch," in *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her: Definite Atonement in Historical, Biblical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspective*, ed. David Gibson and Jonathan Gibson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 227-46.

failure to offer a pure sacrifice in Malachi 1:7-9, Richard Taylor links the priest's task of guardianship with the responsibility of maintaining the holiness of the sanctuary: "The priests showed their contempt for the Lord's name by offering him food that desecrated the very sanctuary whose holiness they were responsible to maintain."⁷⁷ Clearly, it was the responsibility of the priests to guard the sanctuary from defilement and to examine all of the sacrifices prior to offering them to God. Such polluting sacrifices included, for instance, blind, disabled, lame, mutilated, or sick animals (Lev 11-15; 22:17-25; Deut 15:21; 17:1; Mal 1:8).⁷⁸ The priests' pollution of these sacrifices had grave implications, for in polluting them, the text indicates that the infraction was actually directed against God himself. The priests fleetingly seek to defend themselves against their guilt, asking, "How have we despised your name?" and "How have we polluted you" (Mal 1:7)? By neglecting to maintain the purity of the sacrifices, the priests demonstrate their disregard for God, for "despising the sacrificial system is a direct way of despising God."⁷⁹ Thus, in offering sacrifices to God, priests had to remain steadfast in guarding the sanctity of the sanctuary of God. In so doing, priests not only maintained the holiness of the temple of God, but they also guarded the holiness of the people of God and upheld the honor of the name of God.

Mediation

Israel's priests also served God and the covenant people of Israel as mediators. Being granted special access to the divine presence of God, and acting as guardians, priests as mediators performed this role as they "acted as both insulators and connectors

⁷⁷ Richard A. Taylor, *Haggai and Malachi*, in *NAC*, vol. 21A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2004), 268.

⁷⁸ Dillard and Longman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 80. See also Longman, *Immanuel in Our Place*, 140.

⁷⁹ Douglas Stuart, "Malachi," in *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary*, ed. Thomas E. McComiskey (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 1300.

for the rest of the community. Priests insulated worshippers from direct contact with the hazards of sacred space and holy things, yet priests also provided the connections that brought divinity near and made life with Yahweh possible.”⁸⁰

Priests worked as intermediaries and mediators, standing between Yahweh and the people to guard them from danger. The Levites served in this insulating role, for example, when they encamped around the tabernacle so as to protect the rest of Israel from God’s wrath (Num 1:53). They were often concerned about preventing the people of Israel from coming too near the special presence of God (Num 8:19; 18:22-23). Furthermore, priests consistently offered intercessory prayer on behalf of the people of God, seeking to preserve an environment in which God and his people could live at peace (Ezra 6:10; 9:6-16; Joel 1:13; 2:17). Thus, in these cases, the priests both protected the people of God while also guarding the sacred space in the presence of God.

Furthermore, the twelve jewels on Aaron’s priestly garments were representative of the twelve tribes of Israel; thus, when Aaron wore his priestly garments as the high priest ministering in the tabernacle, he functioned as their representative before Yahweh (Exod 28:12, 15-29). The high priest, furthermore, confessed the people’s sins on their behalf over the scapegoat (Lev 16:21). Priests also interceded on behalf of the people before Yahweh (Ezra 6:10; 9:6-15; Joel 1:13; 2:17). Representation of the people, confession of their sins, and intercession on their behalf were all aspects of Israel’s priestly ministry of mediation.

Israel’s priests’ ministry of mediation impacted many other spheres of their ministry, as Roland de Vaux comments,

When the priest delivered an oracle, he was passing on an answer from God; when he gave an instruction, a *torah*, and later when he explained the Law, the Torah, he was passing on and interpreting teaching that came from God; when he took the blood and flesh of victims to the altar, or burned incense upon the altar, he was presenting to God the prayers and petitions of the faithful. In the first two roles he

⁸⁰ Nelson, *Raising Up a Faithful Priest*, 85.

represented God before men, and in the third he represented men before God; but he is always an intermediary . . . the priest was *ipso facto* a mediator, for the priesthood is an institution for mediation.⁸¹

Mediation is, thus, crucial to the priestly ministry of Israel.⁸²

The Decline of Israel's Priesthood

While Exodus-Deuteronomy presents a rather positive picture of Israel's priesthood, the writings that follow offer a more negative one. Transitioning from the Law to the Prophets, the priesthood enters into a time of decline and aberration from the idealized model of the priesthood found in the Law. Schrock argues that "what is observed of the priests between Joshua and Malachi is a progressive, undulating 'fall' of the office."⁸³ While this progressive decline of the priestly office continues until the close of the Old Testament, there is nevertheless an underlying prophetic expectation that a greater and better priest would eventually come (1 Sam 2:35).

All that is written of priests in the book of Judges indicates the wickedness of priests during that era. As an example, a thieving and idolatrous man named Micah ordains his own son as a priest (Judg 17:5). As if to provide a rebuke, the text immediately states, "In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judg 17:6). Clearly, this was not in accord with the law of God, for "priesthood is not an office and an honor earned but rather granted by God who 'calls' priests."⁸⁴ Following this event, Micah hires a Levite and a grandson of Moses named

⁸¹ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 357.

⁸² Much like sacrifice, however, mediation was not required of Adam and Eve when they served God as priests before sin. Adam and Eve enjoyed a unique and unmediated relationship with God prior to the fall as they served God by guarding the holiness of his temple and the people of God. The need for mediation and sacrifice, thus, did not arise until after sin. After sin, mediation and sacrifice became necessary ministries for priests that served to guard the holiness of the temple and the people of God.

⁸³ Schrock, "A Biblical-Theological Investigation," 143.

⁸⁴ Ben Witherington III, *Letters and Homilies for Jewish Christians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Hebrews, James and Jude* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2007), 199. Micah disobeyed God's clear instruction regarding the appointment of priests. No person had the right to take on the office for themselves nor to bestow the office on another; as the author of Hebrews notes regarding priesthood, "No one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron

Jonathan (Judg 18:30) to serve as his personal priest, apparently hoping it would bring him good fortune and prosperity (Judg 17:13). Jonathan failed his master Micah as his priest by not opposing his idolatry (Judg 17:5) and later by standing by idly and not guarding his belongings when 600 armed Danites come and plunder Micah's collection of cultic objects. To make matters worse for Micah, the Danites reward Jonathan by enticing him to serve as the priest of their entire tribe rather than serving as the priest of one man; Jonathan gladly accepts their offer, abandons Micah, and goes along with the Danites (Judg 18:19-20) where his lineage would serve the tribe of Dan until the captivity (Judg 18:30). While Judges does not overtly castigate priests for their behavior, it is clearly an indictment on the priesthood of the time to allow the people of Israel to be ignorant of the ways of God (Judg 2:10). Thus, the priests in Judges failed to guard the law of God and teach the ways of God.

Following the time of Judges, numerous other examples of priestly failure are found in the writings of pre-exilic Prophets. Samuel reproves Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli the priest, for numerous sins, including having a disregard for God's Word, committing sexual sin near the altar of God, mishandling sacrifices, and not listening to the counsel of their father. Samuel further rebukes Eli for both failing to communicate God's Word faithfully in his own household and for neglecting to discipline the disobedience of his sons, all resulting in the downfall of his family.⁸⁵ Hosea, another pre-

was" (Heb 5:4). The priests of Israel were supposed to take on their position through divine appointment (Exod 28:1-3; Lev 8:1ff.; Num 16:5; 20:23ff.; 25:10ff.).

⁸⁵ In 1 Samuel, the story of Eli the priest and his sons provides further evidence of the decline of the priesthood during this era. Eli's error was rooted in his failure to punish his sons Hophni and Phinehas for their profuse sins. They were guilty of not knowing God (1 Sam 2:12), handling the offerings of God with contempt (1 Sam 2:17), having sexual relations with the women serving at the entrance of the tent of meeting (1 Sam 2:22), and refusing the discipline of their father (1 Sam 2:22-25). Such wickedness from Hophni and Phinehas may have arisen due to the fact that "the word of the Lord was rare in those days" (1 Sam 3:1). The priesthood as a whole had failed to guard, proclaim, and place priority on God's Word. This is evidenced in the fact that Samuel, who lived in the house of Eli the priest as a young boy, is said to "not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him" (1 Sam 3:7). Surely, if Eli placed a priority on God's Word, he would have communicated to Samuel and all those in his household. Ultimately, Eli's failure as a priest incurred the curse of God on his house: "On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. And I declare to him that I am about to punish his house forever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were

exilic prophet, rebukes the priests of his time for neglecting God's Word, for leading God's people into idolatry, for committing murder, and for failing to guard the people of God.⁸⁶ Zephaniah, too, censures the priests for idolatry, for neglecting to distinguish between what is common and what is holy, and for transgressing the law.⁸⁷ Amos also castigates the priests for their ungodly practices concerning sacrifice, for carrying out their priestly obligations with the wrong motivation, and for using their priestly office for political gain.⁸⁸

blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them. Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever" (1 Sam 3:12-14).

⁸⁶ The deterioration of the priestly office is evident in the priests' failure to remain faithful to their main priestly responsibilities. The pre-exilic prophet Hosea declared that God's people are destroyed because of the priests' "lack of knowledge," because they have "neglected knowledge" and have "forgotten the law" of their God (Hos 4:6). He further taught in Hos 5 that the priests and the king of Israel are indicted for having "been a snare" and for having spread a net for God's people (Hos 5:1). The idea is that, rather than protecting the people of God, the priests and the house of the king have made the Israelites their prey. The remainder of the chapter shows how the priests failed to guard God's people because they were led into idolatry. Hosea recognizes that the priests are failing to guard the people of God through their improper use of the sacrificial system. They were "greedy for the iniquity" of the people (Hos 4:8) because more sacrifices meant more food for them. In so doing, they increased the number of altars throughout the land. Because they "multiplied altars for sinning, they have become to him altars for sinning" (Hos 8:11). The priestly misuse of the sacrificial system rendered it ineffective for the people, thus failing to serve them properly as their guardians. Hosea, furthermore, rebukes the priests and Levites for murdering defenseless people (Hos 6:9). Priests were allowed to use physical force to protect the sanctuary of God, but these men used physical violence for their own gain. Hosea refers to them as villains. Read in context with Hos 6:7, it seems likely that the priests' failure to rightly carry out their guardian duty was considered grounds for transgressing the covenant. Hosea parallels this priestly breaking of the covenant with Adam's failure to uphold the covenant God made with him: "Just as Adam failed to keep God's priestly command and guard the garden from the defilement of the unclean serpent, so too, Israel failed to keep the covenant because its priests failed to fulfill their duties." Schrock, "A Biblical-Theological Investigation," 147.

⁸⁷ Zephaniah, a pre-exilic prophet, also castigates the priests for being idolatrous and, thus, failing to maintain true worship (Zeph 1:4). He, furthermore, remarks that the priests "profane[ed] what is holy" and were guilty of doing "violence to the law" (Zeph 3:4). Ezekiel castigates the priests of his time for the same things, saying "[Israel's] priests have done violence to my law and have profaned my holy things. They have made no distinction between the holy and the common, neither have they taught the difference between the unclean and the clean, and they have disregarded my Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them" (Ezek 22:26). In both situations, Zephaniah and Ezekiel rebuke the priests for failing in their guardian task. The priests did not fear God enough to uphold the teachings of his word; nor did they respect God's holiness in their profaning of holy things and their negligence to distinguish between the clean and unclean.

⁸⁸ Amos, a pre-exilic prophet, makes several criticisms of the sacrificial practices and attitudes of the time (Amos 3:14; 4:4-5; 5:21-24; 8:3, 14). His ire for the errant sacrificial practices is made clear in his declaration in Amos 5:21-24: "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the peace offerings of your fattened animals, I will not look upon them." Amos' anger was not against the sacrificial system itself, but it was rather against the motivation behind those offering the sacrifices. He, furthermore, is quite opposed to Amaziah (Amos 7:10), a priest who was illegitimately appointed to the office by Jeroboam, a king who had selected priests who were not of Aaronic or Levitical lineage (1 Kgs 12:31-32; cf. 1 Kgs 13:33; 2 Kgs 17:32; 2 Chr 11:14-15; 13:9). Amaziah wants Amos to leave the Northern Kingdom and flee to Judea because Amos had prophesied that Jeroboam would die by the sword and that

Ministering as a prophet both before and after the fall of Jerusalem, Jeremiah laments that the priests were guilty for failing to guard the people of God against false teachers and for disseminating false teaching themselves.⁸⁹ Such disregard for God's Word was a common problem among the people of Israel. Isaiah⁹⁰ and Micah⁹¹ both experienced the same issue.

Ezekiel served as a post-exilic prophet and priest in Babylon. Prophesying from the perspective of a priest (Ezek 1:3), his prophecies often focused on the priests. In the first of his two temple visions, Ezekiel castigates the priests for failing to guard the temple of God from unclean intruders (Ezek 8-11; cf. 44:6-8). The end result of the guardian-priests' failure is that God abandons his temple (Ezek 8:6; 10:18-19; 11:22-23). God's choice to leave his temple is directly related to the failure of the priests. Ezekiel explains four reasons or "abominations" which led to God's decision, each having to do with the priests' failure to guard the temple of God from idolatry.⁹²

Israel would go into exile (Amos 7:11). Amaziah did not approve of Amos' negative prophecies, and so he wanted Amos to be gone. His concern was for the "king's sanctuary" and for the "temple of the kingdom" rather than "God's sanctuary" or the "temple of God." Clearly, Amaziah's priorities were out of line and were more in line with that of pursuing political prestige. Amos recognized this and opposed Amaziah for it. Amos' response was that of prophesying a curse over Amaziah, declaring that Amaziah's wife would become a prostitute (Amos 7:17). Ironically, such a curse would render Amaziah even more unfit to serve as a priest (Lev 21:7). Amaziah's example is representative of many of the priests of this time who failed to guard God's law and thus preserve the holiness of God's people.

⁸⁹ It was the priests' lawful duty to execute false teachers (Deut 17:1-7). However, Jeremiah indicates that both the prophets and the priests dealt falsely with God's Word; not only did the priests refuse to discipline the prophets for their false teaching, they propagated it as well (Jer 6:13-15; 8:10; 14:14, 18; 23:9ff.). This failure of the priests to guard against false teaching led to the corruption of God's people (Jer 5:30-31).

⁹⁰ Priests of Isaiah's time scoffed at his message as something that was beneath them (Isa 28:9-10). Isaiah reprimands both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms, along with their priests, for not caring about God's Word (Isa 28:7-10).

⁹¹ Micah, a pre-exilic prophet, prophesied against Judah, saying, "Priests teach for a price" (Mic 3:11). Their teaching was corrupt, since they—like the prophets and heads of government—told the people what they wanted to hear in exchange for compensation. The priestly office had lost their fear of God and used their office for personal gain.

⁹² In all of these "abominations" (Ezek 8), the priests should have been stirred to righteous anger and should have acted in defense of God's holy temple. Instead, they failed to guard God's sanctuary. The consequence of this sinful priestly negligence is great: the glory of the Lord departs from Jerusalem and the temple (Ezek 10-11). Betts, *Ezekiel the Priest*, 111.

With Jerusalem's first temple in ruins and the presence of God having departed from the Jerusalem temple, the concluding chapters of Ezekiel present his vision of a future temple, one that would eventually replace the previous corrupt and abandoned temple (Ezek 40-48; cf. Isa 66:1-2). The coming eschatological temple would enjoy the returned presence and glory of God (Ezek 43) and a restored priesthood (Ezek 44). God promises the permanency of his indwelling presence in this coming eschatological temple when he says that this temple will be the place where he "will dwell in the midst of the people of Israel forever" (Ezek 43:7) and that he will make his temple his resting place as he reclines on his throne and puts his feet up (Ezek 43:7). In that day, Israel will never again desecrate God's name in this temple (Ezek 43:7-9), and Jerusalem will be called "Yahweh is there" (Ezek 48:35). This eschatological sanctuary will be an everlasting one in which God resides with his people permanently (Ezek 37:26-28).

While the temple was certainly rebuilt when the Jews returned from exile (Ezra 1:11 - 2:70; Neh 7:6-73) during the time of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Zerubbabel (Ezra 6:13-18; Neh 12:33, 38), it seems that the complete fulfillment of Ezekiel's visions of a restored temple and restored priesthood would not be fully realized until a time in the future.⁹³ Ezekiel's visions seem to anticipate a non-structural eschatological temple that will eventually descend and be established throughout the earth in the last day, when

⁹³ Beale elaborates on how this reality of a restored temple would eventually come to pass, particularly with regard to the question of whether or not God chose to indwell the rebuilt Jerusalem temple and how his presence would later be manifested when Christ came and tabernacled on the earth:

God moved out of the holies of holies at the inception of the Babylonian exile (Ezek 10:18; 11:22-23), and probably did not return to dwell in the second temple that was rebuilt after the return from Babylon. That unique presence returned to the heavenly sanctuary until the coming of Christ, when it returned to earth again, not to dwell in another handmade temple but in one made without hands: 'the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us, and we beheld his glory' (John 1:14). God's presence in the heavenly temple extended to earth, no longer into the old holy of holies but in Christ. (Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 388)

The fullness of Ezekiel's temple vision will not come to realization until Christ returns and ushers in the New Jerusalem and God's presence encapsulates the creation.

God's presence will be made manifest throughout the creation and to all his priestly people (Hag 2:6-9; Zech 2:10-13; Rev 21-22).⁹⁴

In light of the sad state of the Levitical priesthood at this point in Israel's history, one is left wondering if and how the covenant promises of a "perpetual" Levitical priesthood would stand (Exod 32:26-29; 40:15; Num 18:15-19; 25:11-13).⁹⁵ Several texts shed light on the future of the Levitical priesthood. Isaiah speaks of a time in the future when God will bring as "an offering to the Lord" foreigners to himself from among the "nations," and he will "take" them "for priests and for Levites" (Isa 66:20:21; cf.; Isa 56:6-7; 61:5-6; Rom 15:15-16). While these passages suggest the possibility of a measure of modification to the Levitical priesthood, other texts continue to affirm unbreakable perpetuity of the Levitical priestly covenant.

Jeremiah makes clear that he anticipates the Levitical covenant to remain unbroken into the future age:

Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.' "For thus says the LORD: David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel, and the Levitical priests shall never lack a man in my presence to offer burnt offerings, to burn grain offerings, and to make sacrifices forever. . . . Thus says the LORD: If you can break my covenant with the day and

⁹⁴ Most interpreters believe that this second temple vision of Ezekiel is referring to an eschatological temple, a future reality that has not yet been realized. While some uphold the idea that a literal physical temple will be rebuilt, others believe that Ezekiel's prophecy depicts a time when God's presence is no longer confined to a physical building but is rather made manifest among the people. Beale lays out the four main lines of interpretation regarding Ezekiel's future temple:

First, the vision is prophetic of a literal physical temple to be built in Israel. Second, the vision is figurative of an ideal heavenly temple that was never intended to be built or established on earth. Third, the portrayal is a figurative vision of an ideal temple. Fourth, the depiction is of a real heavenly temple that would descend and be established on earth in non-structural form in the latter days. (Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 335)

The fourth interpretation appears to be consistent with John's visions in Revelation 21-22.

⁹⁵ Douglas Stuart affirms what he believes to be the temporal nature of the Levitical covenant: "The human priesthood could never accomplish what the great divine plan of redemption called for (Heb 8-10). The priests would indeed lose their lineage in terms of its validity as an office when Christ's sacrifice, the only eternally acceptable one, was accomplished. In the overall plan of God there was not to be an eternal human priesthood. The Aaronic office was by design temporary." Stuart, "Malachi," 1313.

my covenant with the night, so that day and night will not come at their appointed time, then also my covenant with David my servant may be broken, so that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne, and my covenant with the Levitical priests my ministers. As the host of heaven cannot be numbered and the sands of the sea cannot be measured, so I will multiply the offspring of David my servant, and the Levitical priests who minister to me. (Jer 33:14-18, 20-22; cf. 23:1-8)

Jeremiah understands the Davidic priest-king to be the messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. He writes of a “righteous Branch” who would spring up from David. This Branch would have a kingship that would exceed that of David and a priesthood that would eclipse that of the Levites.⁹⁶ This coming messiah would sit on David’s throne eternally, and his priesthood would surpass the Levitical priesthood, such that he would stand in God’s presence and make eternal sacrifice. In no uncertain terms, Jeremiah makes the point that “the Levitical covenant is made as permanent as the covenant with David and the covenant with all creation.”⁹⁷

The Old Testament draws to a close with the writings of the prophet Malachi.⁹⁸ He warns the Levites, of his day, that they are in danger of enduring severe consequences as priests because they have broken the covenant (Mal 2:1-9). Because the priests failed to “guard knowledge” and failed to be a faithful source of “instruction” for those who seek it, because they “turned aside from the way” and because they “caused many to stumble” by their instruction, they “corrupted the covenant of Levi.” Their curse resulted in the spreading of dung on their faces, an act that would disqualify them as priests, make them unclean and unfit to serve God in the sanctuary, and ultimately require that they be removed or “taken away” from the camp along with the dung (Exod 29:14; Lev 4:11ff.). Importantly, however, the Lord issues this censure through Malachi so that his “covenant with Levi may stand” (Mal 2:4). Thus, even in the face of priestly disobedience and discipline, Malachi affirms the perpetuity of the Levitical covenant.

⁹⁶ Schrock, “A Biblical-Theological Investigation,” 223-24.

⁹⁷ Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 170.

⁹⁸ That is to say chronologically, not canonically, according to Hebrew Scripture.

Though the fidelity of the priests' ministry following Malachi's time would enjoy some level of revitalization, the priesthood would ultimately return to corruption,⁹⁹ requiring the coming of another priest who would not fail. Malachi spoke of a messenger who would come to prepare the way for a second messenger who would be the messenger of the covenant (Mal 3:1). Interpreting this text in light of Matthew 11:10-14, the first messenger Malachi refers to is John the Baptist. The second messenger is referred to as Lord. Indeed, the second messenger would be the messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, the one for whom John the Baptist came to prepare the way (Matt 3:1-12).

The Levitical priesthood was always meant to point forward as a type to the perfect and greater priesthood of Jesus Christ. His priesthood would accomplish all that the office was intended to accomplish, and it would do so perfectly without all the priestly shortcomings revealed in the Prophetic writings. The Levitical priestly covenant economy was not God's original plan for Israel but was rather "a remedial response to their hardheartedness" and an architectural "scaffolding erected around the House of Israel in order to repair it."¹⁰⁰ With the coming Christ, the "scaffolding of the Levitical covenant may be removed, because the purpose for which it had been constructed—the restoration of Israel's royal priestly primogeniture—had been accomplished in Christ"¹⁰¹ (Heb 1:2, 6; 7:1-28; 10:11-18), the long-awaited obedient son, and is manifested in the new covenant priesthood, the church (Eph 4:8ff.; Heb 1:6; 1 Pet 2:5;). The details for how the Levitical covenant relates to the new covenant and the priesthood of Christ will

⁹⁹ Stuart reminds his readers that "after Malachi's ministry, the priesthood was reformed by Ezra (arrived 458 B.C.) and Nehemiah (arrived 444 B.C.), who set the course of worship properly back where it should have been . . . They removed rebellious priests and purified worship in Jerusalem." Stuart, "Malachi," 1313. Yet, this revitalization would be short-lived, requiring a completely new order to be instituted. Schrock explains, "Thus, in the short term, God's judgment on the priests was averted, but in time, the corruption of the priesthood returned, and a whole new order was needed (cf. Heb 5-10)." Schrock, "A Biblical-Theological Investigation," 163.

¹⁰⁰ Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 167.

¹⁰¹ Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 170.

be explored in the next chapter. For now, it must suffice to state that, in the new covenant and in the priesthood of Christ, “the Levitical covenant is in one sense replaced, and in another sense, maintained and fulfilled.”¹⁰²

Summary: Israel’s Priesthood

Following the patriarchal priesthood, God determined in his providence to bring about a new development in the priesthood. While Israel was declared to be the son of God, and, thus, a royal priesthood and kingdom of priests, the nation’s priestly status was sadly forfeited following the covenant breach that occurred as the nation constructed and worshiped the Golden Calf. God’s response was to institute the Levitical covenant with the faithful Levitical tribe who alone stood for God in the face of the nation’s idolatry. Along with issuing the Law to his covenant people through the ministration of Moses, God instituted a formalized priesthood with the Levites that would serve him and the covenant people of Israel. Moreover, God granted his people a more permanent land to call their own and introduced new sanctuaries into the narrative wherein his special presence resided, such that he now tabernacled among his priestly people. Israel’s priesthood consisted of people who enjoyed privileged access to the divine presence, seeking to guard the holiness of the sanctuary and the people of God as they served him by attending to the Word of God, border management, sacrifice, and mediation. While Israel’s priesthood accomplished much in the way of moving God’s people closer to achieving his cosmic plans for the world, its undulating and declining faithfulness proved the need for a new and better priesthood, anticipating the new covenant and the advent of the obedient son and great high priest, Jesus Christ.

¹⁰² Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 170.

CHAPTER 5

THE PRIESTHOOD OF JESUS CHRIST

Transitioning now to the New Testament, a new era is ushered in with the coming of Jesus Christ, the establishment of the new covenant, and the institution of the church. Each of the previous stages in redemptive history produced priesthoods that lacked the ability to carry out their priestly responsibilities to perfection.¹ As time marched on and as the Old Testament drew to a close, it became quite evident that the Israelite priesthood had settled into a deep corruption, transgressing the covenant of God. The prophets heralded their castigations against priestly wickedness and voiced their messages of hope that a better priesthood would eventually come.

This old covenant priestly failure set the stage for the institution of a new covenant and a new and better priesthood. Both would be ushered in and fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. This chapter examines how the priesthood is fully realized in Christ and observes that Christ, as the antitype of all previous priestly types, perfectly embodied and fulfilled the priesthood in his person and ministry. While previous priesthoods enjoyed divinely granted access to the presence of God, the very presence of God is manifested in and through Jesus Christ. Jesus was entrusted with serving God by guarding the holiness of his temple and his people through attending to the Word of God,

¹ With each successive stage in redemptive history, new developments in the priesthood occurred, giving hope that perhaps a priest would be a faithful covenant partner. However, each new priesthood fell short of perfection, devolving into sin: “At various stages in the OT the engine of the new creation gets started again, and its missional expansion seems to begin but stalls and ultimately breaks down because of sin.” Gregory K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 63. Thus, the need for a faithful covenant partner remained. Ultimately, Christ would be that faithful priest and perfect covenant partner.

border management, sacrifice, and mediation. Unlike previous priesthods, however, Jesus' priesthood was and is without flaw or blemish. Indeed, his priesthood is superior in every way to other priesthods.

Jesus Christ: The True Priest and Temple

Understanding the significance of the person of Christ and his priesthood requires one to study him within the proper redemptive-historical and biblical-theological categories. Part of this discipline includes the need to give attention to the way typology is utilized throughout the Bible to speak of Christ.² In fact, Christ and his apostles considered Jesus to be the locus and antitype of Old Testament types.³ Jesus' priesthood is the antitype of all previous priesthods, which were merely types and shadows that pointed forward to Christ's priesthood.⁴ Indeed, the overall office of the priesthood, as it

² Differing views exist concerning what is meant by "typology." A traditional view of typology interprets the relationship between type and antitype to be sovereignly and divinely instituted, to be grounded in actual historical persons, places, events, and institutions, to be purposeful and intentional, to be prophetic and predictive, and to be escalating and intensifying from type to antitype. See Stephen J. Wellum, "Editorial: Thinking About Typology," *SBJT* 21, no. 1 (2017): 5. A more critical view approaches this relationship with skepticism, doubting its significance. Paul Hoskins explains the two approaches. Paul M. Hoskins, *Jesus as the Fulfillment of the Temple in the Gospel of John* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 18-36. For the purposes of this dissertation, a more traditional view is endorsed; the following definition of typology is affirmed: "The idea that persons (e.g., Moses), events (e.g., the exodus), and institutions (e.g., the temple) can—in the plan of God—prefigure a later stage in that plan and provide the conceptuality necessary for understanding the divine intent (e.g., the coming of Christ to be the new Moses, to effect the new exodus, and to be the new temple)." Graham A. Cole, *He Who Gives Life: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 289. For similar definitions, see Gregory K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 14; Richard Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical ΤΥΠΟΣ Structures*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series 2 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 1981); Leonard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1982).

³ Wellum writes, "He is the Son, the last Adam, our great prophet, priest, and king, the true Israel, vine, and so on. All of these descriptions, whether they are names, titles, or roles he fulfills, are built on typological structures, rooted and grounded in the OT. It is impossible to think biblically about Jesus apart from thinking about typology." Wellum, "Editorial: Thinking About Typology," 5. Christ came not to abolish the law but to fulfill it (Matt 5:17); moreover, he is "the end of the law" (Rom 10:4). "All of the promises of God find their yes," their fulfillment, in Christ (2 Cor 1:20; cf. Rom 15:8). He is the "true form" and "substance" of the old covenant shadows (Col 2:17; Heb 8:5; 10:1).

⁴ The Old Testament prophet Jeremiah, for example, anticipated that a "righteous Branch" would come as the fulfillment of both kingly and priestly types (Jer 33:14-22). This Branch would be both king (2 Sam 7:16) and priest (Ps 110:4). Christ would come to fulfill both of these Old Testament types in himself as their antitype, reigning as the eternal righteous king and eclipsing the Levitical priesthood as the great high priest (2 Sam 7:16; Jer 25:5; 33:14-22; 1 Chr 17:11-12). See F. B. Huey, *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, NAC, vol. 16 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1993), 302. Jeremiah also notes how the righteous Branch would fulfill the covenant with Levi (Mal 2:1-9); Jer 33:18 promises that this righteous

has developed from one epoch to the next and from the prototypical priest Adam to John the Baptist (Mal 3:1), is a type of Christ. Thus, Jesus stands as the true priest, the righteous priest, the one who perfectly and faithfully fulfilled the office in a way all of his predecessors did not. His priesthood was the true form and substance to which all the Old Testament priestly shadows pointed.⁵

Branch would, in his priesthood, be the antitype of its type, the Levitical priesthood. Rather than being a full restoration of the Levitical priesthood to its previous status, and thus with its sacrificial system, it is a promise that Christ would eventually fulfill the priestly role. Huey, *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, 302. And yet, if Jeremiah's prophecy regarding the Levitical priesthood was fulfilled in Christ, one must reckon with the reality that Christ's priesthood was of the order of Melchizedek and not of the Levites (Heb 7-9). Christ himself explains how he did not come to abolish the Law but rather to fulfill it (Matt 5:17-18). It is not that the Levitical priesthood was an inherently flawed priestly economy (though its representative priests were certainly flawed and sinful); it is only that it was instituted as a remedial priesthood, one that was designed for a specific purpose and one that was ultimately to be fulfilled and replaced by Christ's superior priesthood. John Peter Lange, *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Jeremiah* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1960), 294.

Paul's quotation of Ps 68:18 in Eph 4:8 provides insight into how the Levitical priesthood is to be understood in the new covenant. When read in light of Num 8:6, 16-19, it is clear that Ps 68:18 is referring to the Levites who were "taken" captive or received by God from among the sons of Israel as captives for his service and who were also regarded as "gifts" that are "given" to Aaron, his sons, and the children of Israel to do the work of priestly ministry. Again, in Num 18:6 the Levites are "taken" from the people of Israel and are "given" as a "gift" to do the service of priestly ministry in God's sanctuary. In these texts, both the captives and the gifts are the Levitical priests. The Levites are taken captive from among the rebellious Israelites and are given back to the Israelites so that they might attend to the priestly ministry in God's dwelling place. Paul adds in Eph 4 that, when Christ ascended, he in turn "gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Eph 4:11-12). Paul, thus teaches that Christ gives spiritual gifts to all of the members of the church so that they themselves, in turn, might be gifts to the church as all the members collectively serve one another in carrying out the work of the ministry. When taken together with Isa 66:20-21, where Isaiah speaks of a future time when God will "take" foreigners from the nations "for priests and for Levities," Ps 68, Num 8 and 18, and Eph 4 communicate the notion that, in Christ, the new covenant priesthood is comprised of a new order of "Levitical" priests who descend not only from the tribe of Levi but from every nation, priests who are given spiritual gifts so they might themselves be gifts to the church. Thus, the indication is that this new covenant priesthood would eventually be comprised of people from all nations and not only from the tribe of Levi. This new order of priests serves together in the new covenant not because of common ethnic descent but because of the common Spirit given them through Christ. Gary V. Smith, "Paul's Use of Psalm 68:18 in Ephesians 4:8," *JETS* 18, no. 3 (Summer 1975): 181-89.

⁵ Debate regarding the nature and application of typology continues within evangelical theology; the specifics for how typology is applied are often very different, depending on which hermeneutical framework (e.g., dispensationalism, progressive dispensationalism, covenant theology, progressive covenantalism) governs one's approach to biblical interpretation. Wellum, "Editorial: Thinking About Typology," 5. For a helpful summary of the interpretive grids associated with these different camps, and for how these hermeneutical systems approach typology, see Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 39-80, 121-26. Whereas dispensationalism and covenant theology appear to be inconsistent in their application of typology, identifying types and their associated antitypes—dispensationalism, with its views concerning national Israel and the temple, and covenant theology, with its views regarding circumcision/baptism—progressive covenantalism asserts that "typological structures of Scripture are developed primarily through the covenants" as they ultimately believe all Old Testament types to find their fulfillment in Christ and his people. Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 606; see also Wellum, "Editorial: Thinking About Typology," 6. For a summary of classical dispensationalism, see Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism* (Chicago: Moody, 2007). For a summary of progressive dispensationalism, see Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Wheaton, IL: BridgePoint, 1993); Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids:

Jesus, a New and Better Priest

As one turns to the New Testament with an eye toward discovering the nature of Christ's priesthood, the Epistle of Hebrews has consistently been regarded as "unique by virtue of its emphasis on Jesus' priesthood."⁶ Nicholas Perrin has noted that, "if one prefers to date Hebrews after the destruction of the temple, it is a straightforward move to infer that the concept of Jesus' priesthood was entirely a post-Easter *theologoumenon*, likely occasioned by the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, and almost certainly limited in importance so far as first-century Christian belief was concerned."⁷ Taking issue with this "familiar paradigm," Perrin contends that, in addition to Hebrews' emphasis on Christ's priesthood, "a case can be made for a broad interest in Jesus' priesthood across the NT canon"⁸ and particularly so in the Gospels.⁹ Understanding Christ's priesthood as

Zondervan, 1993). For a summary of covenant theology, see Geerhardus Vos, "The Doctrine of the Covenant in Reformed Theology," in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1979); Michael S. Horton, *God of Promise: Introducing Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006).

⁶ Nicholas Perrin, "Jesus as Priest in the Gospels," *SBJT* 22, no. 2 (2018): 81. Proving the point, Albert Cardinal Vanhoye points out that the Epistle of Hebrews should hold one's attention first regarding the topic of Christ's priesthood since "it is this Epistle that treats the fundamental point, that of the relationship between Christ and the priesthood and its treatment is extensive and profound." Albert Cardinal Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests and the New Priest: According to the New Testament* (Leominster, England: Gracewing, 2009), 65.

⁷ Perrin, "Jesus as Priest in the Gospels," 81.

⁸ Perrin, "Jesus as Priest in the Gospels," 81. Though Hebrews is clearly an informative source for Jesus' priestly work, his sacrificial work is mentioned in other Epistles and in Gospels. Nelson writes, Romans, for example, makes use of potentially priestly concepts in reference to Jesus: atoning sacrifice (Rom 3:21-25), access to God (Rom 5:2), sin offering (8:3), and intercession (8:34). Other examples of New Testament sacrificial metaphor are 1 Cor 5:7, Eph 5:2, 1 Peter 1:19, 1 John 2:2; 4:10, and Rev 5:9. More oblique references to Jesus as priest may be present in the seamless robe of the Johannine passion narrative (John 19:23-24; compare to Josephus *Ant.* 3.714 and Lev 21:10), the robe and sash in Rev 1:13 (Exod 28:4; 29:9), and Christ's ascension blessing with upraised hands (Luke 24:50-51). (Richard D. Nelson, *Raising Up a Faithful Priest: Community and Priesthood in Biblical Theology* [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993], 143)

⁹ Perrin has dedicated a full-length work to investigating Jesus' priesthood in the Gospels. See Nicholas Perrin, *Jesus the Priest* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018). Others have picked up on the Gospels' recounting of Christ's earthly priestly. David Schrock, for example, observes evidence of Christ's priesthood outside the book of Hebrews; he writes,

Admittedly, many scholars overlook Christ's priesthood [in the Gospels] because the title is missing, but this is to ignore how Christ cleanses the temple, upholds the law, teaches the people, makes judgments about lepers, offers himself as a sacrifice, and mediates a new covenant. For those who have eyes to see, Christ in his person and work, . . . is a far better priest than the Israelite priests found in the Gospels. The priests in Jesus' day defiled the temple with their impure hearts; Jesus with 'dirty' hands (Mark 7:14-23) cleansed the temple and purified his people. (David Stephen Schrock, "A Biblical-Theological Investigation of Christ's Priesthood and Covenant Mediation with Respect to the Extent of the Atonement" [PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013], 262)

more than a post-Easter reality, Perrin shows that Jesus assumed the office and role of priest prior to his resurrection and during his earthly life.

According to Perrin, evidence for Christ's priesthood in the Gospels abounds. Detecting verbal links between Jesus' baptism (Mark 1:9-11) and Abraham's near-offer of Isaac as a sacrifice (Gen 22), Perrin views Christ's baptism as his "priestly consecration" through water (Lev 8:6; Num 19), indeed the point at which Christ was ordained as a priest.¹⁰ He is later anointed by Mary with oil (John 12:1-8) just prior to his crucifixion, an anointing that may parallel the oil anointing undergone by priests (Lev 8:12).¹¹ As Jesus began his public ministry, he delivered seed parables (Mark 4:1-34), which, according to Perrin, are to be regarded as priestly messages that anticipate a new eschatological Eden, a sacred space and kingdom that was and is being established through his priestly ministry, one that is reminiscent of the primordial consecrated Garden that was maintained by the primordial priest-king Adam. Jesus' *Pater Noster* (Matt 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4)—in which he as the Son of God addresses God as "Father" and indeed, as the great high priest, calls his priestly people to do the same—is to be interpreted as Jesus "ascribing to his movement the priestly status of sonship."¹²

As Jesus carries out his ministry, numerous other examples are offered to substantiate his priesthood. A demon-possessed man addresses Jesus as the "Holy One of God" (Mark 1:24), a title Perrin believes is a priestly title rather than a royal title, one that was ordinarily reserved for the priests of Israel.¹³ Making his case further, Perrin suggests

¹⁰ Perrin, *Jesus the Priest*, 54-90; Perrin, "Jesus as Priest in the Gospels," 83.

¹¹ Perrin, "Jesus as Priest in the Gospels," 91.

¹² Perrin, *Jesus the Priest*, 53.

¹³ See Gerhard Friedrich, "Beobachtungen zur messianischen Hohepriestererwartung in den Synoptikern," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 53 (1956): 256-311. For a more recent work in favor of this interpretation, see Crispin H. T. Fletcher-Louis, "Jesus as the High Priestly Messiah (Part 2)," *JSHJ* 5 (2007): 57-79.

that while a leper would typically consult a priest prior to his cleansing (Lev 13-14), Jesus assumes the role of priest when he cleanses a leper without the leper first going to another priest; moreover, Jesus is immune to cultic impurity from touching the leper (Mark 1:40-45). Perrin notes further that Jesus acts as a priest when he declares the sins of a paralytic forgiven (Mark 2:5), a “function normally delegated to the high priest under God’s authority.”¹⁴ Jesus heals on the Sabbath (John 5:16-18) and he and his disciples work on the Sabbath (Mark 2:23-28)—acts that were only permissible for priests.¹⁵ In Jesus’ interchange with his opponents regarding the need to pay taxes to Caesar (Mark 12:13-17), Jesus references a Roman denarius, which would have been inscribed with the title, “Caesar Augustus Pontifex Maximus” or “Caesar Augustus Chief Priest.” The idea is that Jesus was calling Caesar’s ultimate priestly authority into question (Caesar functioned as a pagan priest who would have sought to mediate between the gods and humanity) and would instead assert himself as the true image of God and, thus, the true *Pontifex Maximus*.¹⁶

Perrin adds that in his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus delivers the Beatitudes (Luke 6:20-23) from an elevated position on top of a “mountain” (Matt 5:1); following true priestly form, he extends blessings to his audience (Num 6:22-27).¹⁷ In his Farewell Discourse, Jesus speaks of preparing a “place” for his people (John 14:1-4), a “place” that should be understood to be the “eschatological temple.” As a priestly act of consecration, Jesus follows in line with the priests of old who prepared the house of the Lord (1 Kgs 6:16, 19; 2 Chr 8:16); thus, “when Jesus announces his intentions to prepare the eschatological place, he is declaring not only his mission but also his identity as priest.”¹⁸

¹⁴ Perrin, “Jesus as Priest in the Gospels,” 84.

¹⁵ Perrin, “Jesus as Priest in the Gospels,” 84-85, 90-91.

¹⁶ Perrin, *Jesus the Priest*, 240-47; Perrin, “Jesus as Priest in the Gospels,” 85-86.

¹⁷ Perrin, “Jesus as Priest in the Gospels,” 94-96.

¹⁸ Perrin, “Jesus as Priest in the Gospels,” 93.

As Jesus faces Caiaphas' interrogations concerning his claims to messiahship (Mark 14:60-65), he first remains silent and then finally responds, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven" (Mark 14:62). Caiaphas responds, judging Jesus to be a blasphemer and as a false messiah and priest-king. Ironically, as Perrin indicates, Jesus' citation declares Caiaphas himself to be a blasphemer and denotes the judgment of Caiaphas: "Paradoxically, in the very act of accusing Jesus of blasphemy the high priest has made himself potentially liable to the same charge."¹⁹ In so doing, Jesus is declaring his own priesthood to be superior to that of Caiaphas. Perrin offers a bevy of other supporting arguments to prove his premise regarding the priesthood of Jesus.²⁰

While all of Perrin's arguments from the Gospels concerning Jesus' earthly and pre-Easter priesthood may not stand against scrutiny, the overall preponderance of evidence he offers in support of his thesis would seem to substantiate the notion that discussions of Jesus' priesthood should not be limited to the Epistle of Hebrews and, furthermore, that "Jesus' priesthood was no post-Easter construct but remained core to the identity of the historical Jesus himself. Widespread and early, the notion of Jesus' priesthood goes well beyond and arises well before the Epistle of Hebrews."²¹

Perrin's work in no way diminishes the importance of the Epistle of Hebrews as it relates to Christ's priesthood. Indeed, the Epistle provides key teachings that explain Christ's identity as priest. The author of the Hebrews makes numerous connections

¹⁹ Perrin, *Jesus the Priest*, 277. The point is, Mark's Caiaphas and Jesus become mirror images of each other: both are blasphemed yet blaspheming and both are supported by (allegedly) blaspheming followers. But the mirror only succeeds as a literary device if we assume that Jesus' blasphemy was an offence not against divine prerogative but against sacerdotal office. While interpretations of Jesus' confession have generally focused on its significance for either Jesus' divine identity or an underdetermined messianic status, both of these accounts short-circuit the conceptual path which Mark expects his readers to take: tagging Jesus as the Davidic Son of Man, Mark 14.62 asserts Jesus in his role as messianic high priest. (277-78)

²⁰ The above summary represents only a portion of Perrin's overall argument.

²¹ Perrin, "Jesus as Priest in the Gospels," 97.

between the Old Testament and the person of Christ, laboring to show that Jesus reigns supreme over every figure that came before him.²² The Epistle then shifts to devote a large portion of text to Christ's priesthood (Heb 4:14-10:18), showing that he is the new and better priest.²³ The author of Hebrews labors to establish the legitimacy of Christ's priesthood, the primacy of Christ's priesthood, and the fact that Christ is a priest of a better covenant.

The legitimacy of Christ's priesthood. The writer of Hebrews sets out to substantiate the legitimacy of Christ's priesthood when he introduces the mysterious Old Testament figure Melchizedek into his discussion, rooting Christ's priesthood in the line of Melchizedek rather than the Levitical priesthood.²⁴ The prophetic expectation of the Old Testament was that the Levitical priesthood would be supplanted by someone from the line of David who would serve, like David, both as priest and king—a priest-king.²⁵

²² Jesus is superior to angels and humans (Heb 1:4-2:16); he is greater than Moses (Heb 3:1-6) and Joshua (Heb 4:6-11) because their leadership did not accomplish the goal of rest for the people of God (Heb 3:7-19).

²³ In this section, Jesus is introduced as the great high priest (Heb 4:14-5:10). Jesus is later said to descend from the priestly order of Melchizedek (Heb 5:6-10; 7:1-28). It is then argued that Christ is the high priest of a better covenant (Heb 8:1-13). He is the eternal high priest who can enter the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, the one who is also a perpetual and redeeming sacrifice (Heb 8:1-10:22).

²⁴ Jesus would not have been qualified as a high priest during the era of the Israelite priesthood since Israel's high priests had to descend from the tribe of Levi and from Aaron's lineage; Jesus, however, descended from the tribe of Judah (Matt 1:1-6; Luke 3:31-34; Rev 5:5). Hebrews inserts Melchizedek (Heb 5:6-10; 7:1-28; cf. Gen 14:18-20; Ps 110:4) into the story, arguing that Jesus' priesthood was of the order of Melchizedek rather than that of the Aaronic or Levitical priesthood (Heb 5:6).

²⁵ Though the law under the Mosaic covenant intended for the offices of prophet, priest, and king to remain separate (Deut 17-18), some kings disregarded these regulations and were punished for it (1 Sam 13:8-14; 2 Chr 26:16-20). Yet, there seems to be a prophetic expectation that the offices of priest and king would eventually come together in one person. Zechariah, for example, puts Joshua (a priest-king) forward as a type of Christ and expects that these two offices would be merged in the coming messiah, the righteous "Branch" (Zech 6:9-15; cf. Zech 9-14; 3:1-10; Jer 30:21-22).

According to 1 Sam 2:35, the prophetic anticipation was that "Israel's success (read: covenantal blessing) depends on a faithful priest, one who will come from the family of David, not from the line of Levi or Aaron" and that this faithful priest would be a royal priest, that is, a priest-king. Schrock, "A Biblical-Theological Investigation," 205. David exhibits both priestly and kingly behavior, demonstrating that he served not only as a king (2 Sam 6:21) but also as a priest: Dressed in priestly garb (2 Sam 6:14; cf. 2:18), David led a procession of God's people up to the house of God carrying the ark of the covenant; there he acted as a priest as he danced and worshipped God in God's very presence (2 Sam 6:21). He offered sacrifices to God in the tent (2 Sam 6:17) and blessed the people of God (2 Sam 6:18-19). Eugene H. Merrill, "Royal Priesthood: An Old Testament Messianic Motif," *BibSac* 150 (1993): 60. David is regarded as a shadowy figure or type, albeit an imperfect and sinful one, of the priest-king who would

Because of this expectation that the Christ would come as a priest-king, it makes sense that Christ's priesthood would be associated not with the Levitical priesthood but rather with the Melchizedekian priesthood, because Melchizedek himself was also a priest-king (Gen 14:18; Ps 110).²⁶

How, then, is one to understand the "perpetual" covenant made with the Levitical priesthood (Exod 32:26-29; 40:15; Num 18:15-19; 25:11-13)? If Christ's priesthood is of the Melchizedekian order rather than of the Levitical order, and if indeed Christ's priesthood functionally supplants or replaces the Levitical priesthood, then how are the promises of a "perpetual" Levitical covenant kept in the new covenant with the institution of Christ's priesthood? In answer to this question, the author of Hebrews begins by first identifying Jesus as "the firstborn" (τὸν πρωτότοκον; Heb 1:6), a title that ascribes priest-kingly status to Jesus (Heb 7:15-17). This same title is attributed to the church (ἐκκλησία πρωτοτόκων) in Hebrews 12:23, meaning "that the privileges of the firstborn, namely kingship and priesthood, accrue also in some sense to the individual believer"²⁷ and to every member of the new covenant priesthood.

eventually come.

²⁶ Robert Bergen picks up several connections between David and Melchizedek, which serve to further substantiate both figures as types of Christ. He writes, It is unclear from [2 Samuel 6:16-19] whether David actually officiated at these sacrifices or merely directed Levites to perform these tasks. If he did perform the sacrifices himself, he may have been acting in accordance with a precedent set by Melchizedek. Priestly parallels certainly exist between David and Melchizedek in two other matters: pronouncing a blessing upon the Lord's people and providing a food gift for those who had received the blessing (cf. Gen 14:18-19). As David 'blessed the people in [Hb. 'by'] the name of the LORD Almighty' (v. 18), Melchizedek blessed 'Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth' (Gen 14:19). Also Melchizedek brought Abram and his men "bread and wine" (Gen 14:18); David "gave a loaf of bread, a cake of dates and a cake of raisins to each person in the whole crowd of Israelites" (v. 19). (Robert D. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, NAC, vol. 7 [Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996], 332-33)

Gen 14:18 speaks of Melchizedek both as the "King of Salem" and as the "priest of God Most High." Again in Ps 110, Melchizedek is presented as a priest-king. Understood together with Gen 14 and Hebrews' teachings on Melchizedek, "what Psalm 110 communicates is that the forthcoming priest would not be a Levite but a priest-king like Melchizedek. To say it another way, the priesthood would not depend on the law of Moses or the lineage of Aaron, but upon God's sworn oath and the Messiah's greater obedience." Schrock, "A Biblical-Theological Investigation," 211.

²⁷ Scott W. Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant: A Canonical Approach to the Fulfillment of God's Saving Promises* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 170.

Peter concurs with the author of Hebrews when he refers to the members of the church being “built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood” (1 Pet 2:5) and being “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation” (1 Pet 2:9)—a Petrine passage with obvious echoes of Exodus 19:5-6. The message is clear: “for those who believe in Christ, the corporate royal priestly primogeniture promised to Israel prior to the calf incident (Exod 19:5-6) is restored. Everyone ‘born anew’ through Jesus Christ (see 1 Pet 1:3) partakes of this priesthood, *including those who were priests and Levites under the old economy.*”²⁸ The result of the new covenant, therefore, is that the Levitical priests who came to faith in Christ (Acts 6:7) and, thus, “entered into the new covenant did not cease to be priests, but became priests of a different sort. In Christ, the royal priestly firstborn, they became royal priestly firstborns (Heb 12:22).”²⁹ In the end, “the covenant with the Levites is not broken,” although the specific old covenant priestly “economy under which the Levitical priesthood operated is replaced.”³⁰

The primacy of Christ’s priesthood. Not only does Jesus’ association with the Melchizedekian priesthood legitimize Jesus’ priesthood, but it also is said to make Christ’s priesthood superior to that of the Levitical priesthood (Heb 7:1-28).³¹ The author of Hebrews makes the case for the primacy of the Melchizedekian priesthood, and thus

²⁸ Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 171.

²⁹ Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 171.

³⁰ Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 171.

³¹ Phillip Edgcumbe Hughes observes the logic of the author’s argument: The argument now developed is quite plain and easy to grasp. The purpose is to demonstrate how great Melchizedek is in comparison with Abraham—a superiority that is especially startling in view of the fact that Abraham is himself *the patriarch*, that is, the ancestral founder of the Hebrew people, the one to whom the covenant *promises* concerning his posterity had been given by God, and therefore the possessor of a position of primacy in the long history of the Jews. . . . But here is someone in their own Scriptures who is manifestly Abraham’s superior. (Phillip Edgcumbe Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* [Grand Rapids, W. B. Eerdmans, 1977], 251) Moreover, since both “seminally and by representation Levi was present in the person of his great-grandfather,” the author of Hebrews shows that it was Levi who “actually paid tithes through Abraham” to Melchizedek; the point, thus, established is “that the order of Melchizedek, fulfilled in Christ, is superior to the order of Levi, which with the advent of Christ is surpassed and superseded.” Hughes, *A Commentary on Hebrews*, 253-54.

Christ's priesthood, from several points. He first introduces his treatment of Christ's priesthood by accentuating both his divine and human natures as priest. Christ's dual nature made him perfectly suited for the priestly task.³²

Second, the author of Hebrews explains that the priesthood of Abraham and his descendants, the Levites, was inferior to that of Melchizedek because Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek (Heb 7:7-10). Third, Hebrews regards the Levitical priesthood as inferior because perfection was not "attainable through the Levitical priesthood" (Heb 7:11); the new priesthood of Christ, which is of the order of Melchizedek, is able to accomplish what the Levitical priesthood could not, providing followers of Christ "a better hope" (Heb 7:18-19; cf. 9:9; 10:1) than what was provided through the fallible Levitical priesthood.³³

Fourth, the Levitical priesthood is also inferior to the Melchizedekian priesthood because the Levitical priests were mortal and always died, whereas, due to

³² Speaking of his divinity, Jesus is the Son of God (Heb 4:14; 5:5-6). Commenting on the significance of Christ's divinity in relation to his priesthood, O'Brien notes, "In this context the designation of Jesus as 'the Son of God'" reminds the readers of Hebrews of Christ's divinity as the grounds for his efficacy as high priest, encouraging them to hold "fast to their public confession of him as the majestic divine Son." Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2010), 182.

Speaking of his humanity, Jesus is the great high priest chosen from among men (Heb 5:1). Because of his divinity, Christ is able to carry out his priestly duties to perfection. Because of his humanity, Jesus as priest can sympathize with man's weaknesses, suffering, and temptation (Heb 4:15). Writing about how Jesus, as a human priest, had the "ability to sympathize with those for whom he offers sacrifice. . . .," Fanning says, "There is an interchange here between the sympathy of Jesus for human weakness, since he experienced the full range of human temptation and yet was without sin (4:15), and the ability of Old Testament priests to deal gently with sinners, since they were sinners themselves and had to offer sacrifice for their own sins as well as for the peoples'." Buist M. Fanning, "A Theology of Hebrews," in *A Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, ed. Roy B. Zuck and Darrell L. Bock (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 390. Together Christ's divine and human natures combine in the hypostatic union to make Christ the new and better priest.

³³ Writing of the weakness of the law and the "better hope" that Christ's priesthood offered, Hughes says,

The hope of the old [covenant] is far inferior to that of the new. The contrast is between the promise and the fulfillment, the shadow and the substance, the weak and the powerful, the transient and the permanent, the imperfect and the perfect." The hope of those in the old covenant "concentrated itself in the expectation of the coming of him who, as the mediator of the new covenant and their 'priest forever,' would at last take away the sin of the world; whereas we are privileged actually to live in the new age in which he who is our Melchizedek has superseded Levi and his order. Like them [old covenant believers], we too are pilgrims, and in company with them we shall participate in the glorious and eternal consummation of Christ's kingdom; but through him who has now come we enjoy that access into the presence of God himself which was not open to them when they were pilgrims on this earth. (Hughes, *A Commentary on Hebrews*, 266)

Christ's resurrection, the Melchizedekian priesthood is superior "because he continues forever" (Heb 7:23-24), he has an "indestructible life" (Heb 7:16), and "he always lives" (Heb 7:25; 13:20-21).³⁴ The consequence of Christ's never-ending priesthood is that "he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them" (Heb 7:25).

Fifth, the Melchizedekian priesthood is superior to that of the Levitical priesthood because it is ratified by an oath, while the Levitical priesthood is not (Heb 7:20-21). Because the Melchizedekian priesthood was superior to that of the Levitical one (Heb 7:2-8), it seems that it was always God's intention to make the transition.³⁵

³⁴ The specifics concerning the origins of Christ's priesthood have been debated. Some associate the origins of Christ's priesthood with the eternity of his divine person. Pfitzner, for example, writes of Christ's "eternal priesthood," arguing from Christ's divine atemporality, when he says, "Jesus' ministry as heavenly High Priest has no temporal limits." Victor C. Pfitzner, *Hebrews*, ANTC (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 111. Similarly, France roots the permanency of Christ's priesthood in the "eternity inherent in the supernatural character of the Son." R. T. France, *Hebrews*, in *EBC*, vol. 13, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 100. Others conclude that Christ's priesthood was not eternal but rather that it began at his incarnation. Andre Feuillet thinks that Christ's priesthood required that he share in mankind's human nature and, thus, that it began when he took on flesh in the incarnation: "Christ is a priest because of his two natures, the divine and the human, and therefore a priest only from the moment of his incarnation." Andre Feuillet, *The Priesthood of Christ and His Ministers* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), 107.

Though the text of Hebrews speaks of the unending nature of Christ's priesthood, the expression "You are priest forever" (Heb 7:21) should be understood to mean "You will never cease to be a priest." Paul Ellingworth and Eugene Albert Nida, *A Handbook on the Letter to the Hebrews*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: UBS, 1994), 97. Moreover, Heb 7:23-24 speaks of the ongoing nature of Christ's priesthood in contrast to the impermanency of the Levites' priesthood and says that the "former priests" were "prevented by death from continuing in office"; in contrast, Christ "holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever." The idea is that Christ's priesthood will never end, not that it was without beginning.

While Feuillet thinks Christ's priesthood began at the incarnation, this idea would seem to be at odds with the notion that Christ's actual earthly ministry began (Matt 3:13-4:11; 4:12ff.) after he was baptized and then empowered by the Holy Spirit (Matt 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:32-34). While Feuillet's point of human nature being a prerequisite for priesthood may be valid, this does not require that Christ's priesthood began at his incarnation. Rather, it seems most reasonable to conclude that, while Christ's human nature qualified him to be a priest, his priesthood did not begin until he was anointed and consecrated for the office (Isa 11:1ff.; 42:1; 61:1; Acts 10:38; cf. Exod 28-29) at his baptism and the Spirit of God descended on him and remained (John 1:32-33). Such a view corresponds with the reality that it was not until after this key event in Jesus' life that God initiated the public phase of Jesus' ministry on earth. Perrin, *Jesus the Priest*, 54-90; Perrin, "Jesus as Priest in the Gospels," 83. Affirming the beginning of Christ's ministry and priesthood at the point of his baptism and Spirit-empowerment is not a form of adoptionism as it does not preclude his relationship with God prior to this event. For a refutation of the idea that adoptionism is taught in Jesus' baptism, see Herman N. Ridderbos, *Matthew*, Bible Student's Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 59-60.

³⁵ Thomas Aquinas explains this rationale thusly: the priesthood of the Law was a figure of the priesthood of Christ, not as adequately representing the reality, but as falling far short thereof: both because the priesthood of the Law did not wash away sins, and because it was not eternal, as the priesthood of Christ. Now the excellence of Christ's over the Levitical priesthood was foreshadowed in the priesthood of Melchisedech, who received tithes

Finally, since Jesus is the new and better priest, his sacrificial death is better than and supersedes the Old Testament sacrificial system (Heb 7:27); indeed, the old type disappears when the antitype has arrived (Heb 10:1-4).³⁶

A priest of a better covenant. Not only is Jesus' priesthood better than that of the old covenant, but he also introduced a better covenant. The old covenant was not sufficient (Heb 8:7); it was weak (Heb 7:18-19).³⁷ But, Jesus brought about a better priesthood³⁸ with better promises: "Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises" (Heb 8:6; detailed in 8:7-12). That is, though the old covenant was able to bring awareness of one's sin (Heb 10:3), it was not capable of bringing about perfection.

from Abraham, in whose loins the priesthood of the Law was tithed. Consequently the priesthood of Christ is said to be *according to the order of Melchisedech*, on account of the excellence of the true priesthood over the figural priesthood of the Law. (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province [London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1912-25], 3.22.6)

³⁶ As a sinless priest, Jesus offers himself as a sacrifice once and for all (Heb 7:26-27; cf. 4:15), whereas the high priests of old had to continually offer sacrifices for themselves and for the people (Heb 5:3; 7:27). Peterson asserts that the supremacy of Christ's sacrifice was rooted in the perfection of the sacrificial victim being offered: "Unlike the high priests of Judaism, *he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people.* The perfection of his sacrifice is associated with the perfection of the victim." David G. Peterson, "Hebrews," in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 1338. This better sacrifice affects believers internally—cleansing their conscience (Heb 9:14), perpetually forgiving their sin (Heb 9:12, 24, 25-28), providing personal security of the forgiveness of sins (Heb 10:19-23), and purifying them and making them holy (Heb 2:11; 10:10)—while the Old Testament cultus only affected the individual externally (Heb 10:5-18). See Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 383-400. See also Paul Ellingworth, "Priest" in *NDBT*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 700.

³⁷ The weakness of the old covenant was rooted in the weakness of human nature and man's unwillingness and overall inability to obey God's law (Heb 8:9). In fact, "The author of Hebrews attributes the responsibility for the breakdown of the covenant relationship to Israel's disobedience." Marie E. Isaacs, *Reading Hebrews and James: A Literary and Theological Commentary*, Reading the New Testament Series (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2002), 109. Though the old covenant was "good" (Rom 7:12), it was "weakened by the flesh" (Rom 8:3) since "the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God," "cannot" and "does not submit to God's law," and "cannot please God" (Rom 8:7-8).

³⁸ It is by Christ's priestly offering of his own blood that he is able to be the mediator of this new and better covenant; forgiveness of sins for his people was fully accomplished in and by his sacrifice (Heb 9:15). In so doing, Christ did not have to enter into a holy place that was made by hands, but rather, he entered into heaven and into the very presence of God on behalf of his people (Heb 9:24). While the sacrificial system under the old covenant required repeated sacrifices to atone for sin (Heb 9:26; 10:1-4, 11), Christ's sacrifice was a one-time offering for all (Heb 9:26; 10:9-10, 12-18). The reality of Christ's priestly work leads the writer of Hebrews to offer an encouragement to God's people: "Since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb 10:21-22).

This required the institution of a second covenant, a better covenant (Heb 8:8), one that God had intended in his providence all along.³⁹

The epistle of Hebrews serves to establish the legitimacy of Christ's priesthood, the primacy of Christ's priesthood over the Levitical priesthood, and the superiority of the new covenant over the old covenant. While it is clearly important to understand how the previous priesthood represented a shadow and type of Christ's priesthood, it is also of great importance to understand how the sanctuaries of old served as shadows and types of the new covenant temple.

Jesus, the Temple

Previous chapters have treated the development of the temple of God across the changing epochs of redemptive history. In what follows, Jesus is shown to be the new temple. The sanctuaries of old served as types of Christ and find their fulfillment in him.

In his Gospel, the apostle John records a rather shocking statement from Jesus regarding Israel's temple: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19). Taken aback by the statement, the Jews did not comprehend, first, that Jesus came to replace "the temple as the location where God's presence must be sought and found, and second, [that] Jesus fulfills the temple's sacrifices for atonement."⁴⁰

Jesus, the temple, and God's special presence. When John wrote that Jesus, "the Word," "became flesh and tabernacled (ἐσκήνωσεν) among us" (John 1:14), he reminded his readers of how God's presence dwelt among the people of God throughout their history, but particularly in the tabernacle (Exod 35:1-40:38).⁴¹ That Jesus now

³⁹ In response to the insufficiency of the old covenant, God initiated a new and better covenant that brought about internal transformation among his people, making it so that his law is written on their minds and hearts (Heb 8:10; cf. Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 36:24-28), which gives them power to obey.

⁴⁰ James M. Hamilton Jr., *God's Indwelling Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Academic, 2006), 147.

⁴¹ Susan Booth traces the reality of God's tabernacling presence throughout the biblical

tabernacled with his people signified that Jesus himself was God's "unique place on earth where God's revelatory presence is located."⁴² With the incarnation of Christ, it would no longer be necessary for God's people to visit the temple building in Jerusalem to encounter the special presence of God; now, in the bodily presence of Jesus (John 2:21), his divine presence was available to them.

Supporting his case that Jesus' divine presence tabernacled with God's people as the new temple, John further draws a connection between the glory of God experienced by old covenant believers as it was manifested in his sanctuaries and the divine glory of the Son of God now manifested in Christ (John 1:14).⁴³ No longer would God's manifest presence be associated with previous sanctuaries but would now be exclusively linked to the physical body and location of Jesus Christ, the new temple.⁴⁴

narrative. She does so while keying in on the theme of mission. Susan Maxwell Booth, *The Tabernacled Presence of God: Mission and Gospel Witness* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015).

⁴² G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, NSBT 17 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 178.

⁴³ John associates seeing Christ with seeing God's glory: "the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us, and we saw his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). The divine glory of the Son of God was among men. Similarly, Moses spoke with God at the tent of meeting (Exod 33:9), longed for God's presence to go with him (Exod 33:14-15), and requested that God's glory be shown to him (Exod 33:18). Moreover, upon completion of the construction of the tabernacle, it is written that a "cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle" (Exod 40:34; cf. 1 Kgs 8:10-11). Thus, John makes the connection between God's tabernacled presence and the glory of God in the person of Jesus. Craig Koester, *The Dwelling Presence of God: The Tabernacle in the Old Testament, Intertestamental Jewish Literature, and the New Testament*, CBQMS 22 (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1989), 102.

⁴⁴ Hamilton explains the nature of what has occurred: "The locus of God's presence has shifted from a particular house, in a particular city, in a particular land, to a particular person, Jesus." Hamilton, *God's Indwelling Presence*, 149. Jesus explained that God's special presence was now associated with his own person rather than the temples of old. Referencing Jacob's dream of angels ascending and descending from heaven to earth to "Bethel," the "house of God" (Gen 28:12-19), Jesus explains to Nathanael that while God's special presence was once associated with Bethel, it is now associated with where he is specifically (John 1:42-51). See D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1991), 164.

In Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman, he indicates that the era in which worship should take place in the Jerusalem temple had come to a conclusion (John 4:1-26). Jesus identifies himself as the one who would bring about this change (John 4:26), thus communicating to the Samaritan woman that he was ushering in a new age in which God's people no longer would need to travel to a physical building to worship. Köstenberger communicates this idea when he writes, "Jesus' point here is that since God is spirit, proper worship of him is also a matter of spirit rather than physical location (Jerusalem versus Mount Gerizim)." Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 157. To accentuate this reality further, Jesus points to himself as the very presence of God when he employs the "I am" (ἐγώ εἰμι) statement and suggests that, by standing in his presence, the woman was in fact standing in

Jesus, the temple, and sacrifice. Not only does Jesus' replacement of the old temple have to do with the new location for God's special presence, but it also concerns God's design for a new and consummating sacrifice. Jesus' attack on the money-changers in the temple (John 2:13-17; cf. Matt 21:12-13; Mark 11:15-18; Luke 19:45-47) should probably be understood as an attack against the old temple itself, since shutting down the temple for a time would have caused the animal sacrifices to have ceased, indicating that the forgiveness of sin that the temple and its animal sacrifices once offered was now passing away and that the current temple was awaiting judgment.⁴⁵

After Jesus cleared the temple, the Jews requested a sign from him to signify his authority to do such things. His response was, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it." (John 2:19).⁴⁶ John explains that Jesus had been "speaking concerning the temple of his body" (John 2:21), a reference to his death on the cross and his resurrection three days later. Referring to his own body as the new temple, he was indicating that all the events that were once subsumed under the ministry of the temple would now be carried out in his own body⁴⁷ and that his body would become the new sacrifice for sin.⁴⁸

the presence of God. For an explanation of Jesus' use of the "I am" (ἐγώ εἰμι) statement, see Gerald L. Borchert, *John 1-11*, NAC, vol. 25A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 209-10.

⁴⁵ Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 179.

⁴⁶ The Jews were bewildered by this statement, remembering that it had previously taken forty-six years to build the current temple (John 2:20). Writing of the time that had surpassed from the time of the original construction of the temple and the time of the conversation between Jesus and the Jews, Gangel says, "That magnificent building had been started by Herod in 20 B.C., and this conversation took place in approximately A.D. 26." Kenneth O. Gangel, *John*, HNTC, vol. 4 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000) 34.

⁴⁷ Carson writes, "[It] is the human body of Jesus that uniquely manifests the Father, and becomes the focal point of the manifestation of God to man, the living abode of God on earth, the fulfillment of all the temple meant, and the centre of all true worship (over against all other claims of 'holy space', 4:20-24). In this 'temple' the ultimate sacrifice would take place; within three days of death and burial, Jesus Christ, the true temple, would rise from the dead." Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 182.

⁴⁸ Christ's body would become the new sacrifice for sin. In making this statement, Jesus evidenced his priestly role and his personal replacement of the temple in the fact that he, who would willingly give himself up as a sin offering, can forgive sin (Matt 9:2-6; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:18-26; 7:49-50). The temple was the place where sacrifices were offered in order to forgive sin. Now, Jesus who was the incarnate temple of God had the authority to forgive sins in and of himself.

Jesus did not just metaphorically “tear down the temple,” but he literally and physically tore it down. That is, when Jesus died, “the veil of the temple was torn in two” (Matt 27:51), serving as a “judgment on the temple.”⁴⁹ Through “Jesus Christ’s substitutionary work,” its tearing provided a new way for God’s people to enter God’s presence as it signified that “access to the true Holy of Holies is henceforth free, in the sense that the temple through which we now enter God’s presence is no longer of the Israelite temple of stone, but the temple which is Christ, through his Holy Spirit.”⁵⁰ This tearing of the veil meant the passing away of an old creation and the bringing in of the new⁵¹ as it introduced “access for all believer’s to God’s holy presence in a way that was not available in the old creation.”⁵² Furthermore, it allowed for the bringing in of the Gentiles and the world-encompassing and boundary-increasing priestly commission of Adam to commence, which will ultimately result in the glory of God covering the face of the earth.

Jesus’ Priesthood

Being the new and better priest, Jesus fulfills every aspect of the priestly office. The model for the priesthood was exhibited in the priests of old, and yet they all fell short of who they were designed to be and what they were designed to do as priests.

⁴⁹ Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1992), 724. Davies and Allison rightly point out that, because the priests were “the custodians of the temple,” the “rending of the veil is first of all judgement against them. This is particularly apt in the broader context as it is the priests who have led the prosecution of the Son of God.” W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *Matthew 19-28*, ICC, vol. 3 (London; New York; Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2004), 632.

⁵⁰ Adam J. Johnson, *God’s Being in Reconciliation: The Theological Basis of the Unity and Diversity of the Atonement in the Theology of Karl Barth*, T&T Clark Studies in Systematic Theology (London: T&T Clark International, 2012), 188, 192.

⁵¹ Christ’s work as the new temple (Matt 26:61; 27:40; Mark 14:58; 15:29; John 2:19-21; Acts 6:14) meant that, as the antitype of the temple, he made the old temple obsolete and came as “the beginning of a new creation. His resurrection was the first, great act of new creation,” such that if one is in Christ, he is a new creation (2 Cor 5:15-17; cf. Gal 6:15-16; Col 1:18; Rev 3:14). Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 170. Thus, to refer to Jesus as the “temple” is simply another way of speaking of him as the new creation, because the temple was symbolic of creation itself (176, 29-80).

⁵² Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 190.

They were dim shadows of Christ. Thus, the identity of the priesthood is perfectly realized in the priesthood of Christ. When the “Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14)⁵³ Jesus came as the antitypical replacement of the old covenant temple, becoming the tabernacling presence of God on earth in his incarnation.

Jesus Christ, the incarnate God-man, being filled with the fullness of God and experiencing the indwelling of the Father and the Holy Spirit, was entrusted with the priestly task of serving God by guarding the holiness of his temple and his people. He, like the priests who preceded him, accomplishes this by attending to the Word of God, border management, sacrifice, and mediation. And yet, unlike the priests who preceded him, Christ is the faithful covenant partner, royal son of God, and the faithful priest who does not fail in his priestly duties.

God’s Word. Jesus, as the new and better priest, attended to God’s Word in a way that no previous priest had done. As the new and better priest, he maintained his personal holiness perfectly, living a sinless life, and proved himself to be the “last Adam,” “the embodiment of true Israel,” and the long-awaited obedient son of God.⁵⁴ He also extended the Word of God to others as the supreme teacher of God’s Word.

Like priests of old, Jesus was responsible for guarding his personal holiness (Exod 28-30; Lev 8; 1 Chr 23:13). From his birth, he was consecrated to be “holy.” Indeed, at Jesus’ birth, the angel declared that he “will be called holy—the Son of God” (Luke 1:35), combining ideas of priestly holiness (Lev 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:26; 21:8; 1 Pet

⁵³ In his incarnation, Christ came as a tabernacle, manifesting God’s special presence on earth. Michaels states that when Christ came in human flesh, he literally “encamped among us,” presenting the imagery of Jesus “pitching a tent” akin to the “tenting of God with the people of Israel in their desert wanderings,” such that the glory of the Lord was made manifest to the world through his earthly tent. J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2010), 79-80.

⁵⁴ Crowe articulates a theology of Jesus as the last Adam, true Israel, and the long-awaited obedient son of God. He shows how both Adam and Israel, as sons of God, were expected to be obedient sons. However, both failed. Jesus, on the other hand, comes as the obedient son, doing what neither Adam nor Israel could do. Brandon D. Crowe, *A Theology of the Obedient Life of Jesus in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017).

1:14-16; 2:5) and sonship (Luke 3:23-38; Heb 1:6) in his declaration. Moreover, as Perrin has argued, Jesus would later be called the “Holy One of God” (Mark 1:24; John 6:69), “a title ordinarily reserved for Israel’s high priest.”⁵⁵ Scripture gives its readers a glimpse of Jesus’ childhood when it says that he “amazed” the teachers in the temple with his knowledge (Luke 2:47); afterward, the text says that Jesus “was submissive to [his parents]” (Luke 2:51), left the temple, and followed them home. In both cases, the text evidences that Jesus, even as a young boy, was committed to honoring God while he also respected his parents and “increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man” (Luke 2:52).⁵⁶ Thus, even from his youth, Jesus was dedicated to living a holy, consecrated, and priestly life.

Following his baptism, the point at which it seems that Jesus ultimately began his priestly ministry,⁵⁷ Jesus demonstrated his priestly commitment to obeying God further when he was driven into the wilderness, was tempted by Satan, and—unlike Adam—obeyed the will of God (Matt 4:1-11); whereas Adam was the disobedient priest, Jesus withstood the temptations of Satan, proving himself to be an obedient priest.⁵⁸ Jesus withstood the temptations of Satan in the wilderness; and he would continue to withstand

⁵⁵ Perrin suggests that “Holy One of God” is “a title ordinarily reserved for Israel’s high priest.” Perrin, “Jesus as Priest in the Gospels,” 83. See also Friedrich, “Beobachtungen zur messianischen Hohepriestererwartung in den Synoptikern,” 256-311; Fletcher-Louis, “Jesus as the High Priestly Messiah (Part 2),” 57-79.

⁵⁶ Even from the age of twelve (Luke 2:42) Scripture indicates that Jesus’ life was set apart for service and obedience to God. His obedience to God is demonstrated in this Lukan narrative both in his dedication to his heavenly Father and also in his obedience to his earthly parents: “Jesus is obedient to his parents . . . , since in general obedience to the Lord includes obedience to parents (Col 3:20). Nevertheless, the incident has shown to Mary that Jesus’ obedience to his parents lies within a more fundamental relationship to God.” I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1978), 130.

⁵⁷ Perrin, *Jesus the Priest*, 54-90; Perrin, “Jesus as Priest in the Gospels,” 83

⁵⁸ Sidney Greidanus acknowledges the parallel between Adam’s and Christ’s temptations when he writes, “As Adam was tempted by Satan, so Jesus would be tempted by Satan. But whereas Adam disobeyed God and followed Satan, Jesus obeyed God and sent Satan away (Matt 4:1-11).” Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis: Foundations for Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2007), 69. He further brings attention to Luke’s narrative (Luke 23-38), which “highlights the analogy between Adam and Jesus by inserting Jesus’ genealogy just before Jesus’ temptations and tracing Jesus’ lineage back to ‘Adam, son of God.’” Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis*, 69n9.

every temptation that would come his way throughout his life. While previous priests failed in this capacity and were guilty of sin, Jesus the new and better priest never sinned: indeed, “in every respect [he] has been tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Heb 4:15; cf. 2 Cor 5:21; 1 Pet 2:22; 1 John 3:5). Not only did Jesus claim to be without sin,⁵⁹ but others attested to his perfection as well.⁶⁰

Christ’s perfect obedience to the will of God stands as an example for his followers to emulate; in fact, because of Christ’s success as priest in refraining from sin, he was able to present himself as an example for his people to follow (Eph 5:1-2; 1 Pet 2:20-22; 1 John 2:6). And yet, his sinlessness accomplishes so much more; Jesus’ personal obedience to the will of God made him a suitable sacrifice for sin.⁶¹ As a sinless priest, he did not need to offer sacrifices for himself. Instead, he “became obedient to the point of death” (Phil 2:8) and presented himself to God as a perfect sacrifice—a “lamb without blemish or spot” (1 Pet 1:19).⁶² His perfect sacrifice, thus, served to reconcile his people to the Father, guard them from the consequences of their own sin, and present them to the Father “holy and blameless and above reproach” (Col 1:22).

⁵⁹ Jesus challenged his opponents to prove his guilt (John 8:46), to which there was no reply. Others plotted against him, seeking to entangle him in his words, and yet they were unsuccessful (Matt 22:15). Jesus claimed to do what pleased his Father (John 8:29) and claimed to keep his Father’s commandments (John 15:10).

⁶⁰ At several points throughout Jesus’ life, Scripture records the testimony of eyewitnesses acknowledging Christ’s innocence and perfection: Judas (Matt 27:4), Pilate (six times: Matt 27:24; Luke 23:14, 22; John 18:38; 19:4, 6), Herod Antipas (Luke 23:15), Pilate’s wife (Matt. 27:19), the repentant thief on the cross (Luke 23:41), and the Roman centurion (Matt 27:54).

⁶¹ Sproul writes, “The sinlessness of Christ does not merely serve as an example to us. It is fundamental and necessary for our salvation. Had Christ not been the ‘lamb without blemish’ he not only could not have secured anyone’s salvation, but would have needed a savior himself. The multiple sins Christ bore on the cross required a perfect sacrifice. That sacrifice had to be made by one who was sinless.” R. C. Sproul, *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1992), 87.

⁶² Previous priests had to offer sacrifices to atone for their own personal sin (Lev 4:3-12). Jesus did not because, as a high priest, he was perfectly “holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens” (Heb 7:26). Christ attended perfectly to the Word of God throughout his life, making it so that he might offer himself to God as the perfect sacrifice on behalf of his people. Lea explains the significance of Christ’s superior sacrifice, which was rooted in his perfection: “The Aaronic high priests offered sacrifices first for themselves and then for the people. Since he was sinless, Christ did not need to offer any sacrifice for himself. He needed only to offer a single sacrifice once for all (Heb 10:10). He offered himself for sinful human beings, and he needed to offer no repetition.” Thomas D. Lea, *Hebrews*, James, HNTC, vol. 10 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 138.

As Christ attended perfectly to the Word of God in his personal obedience, he also attended perfectly to the Word of God as a teacher. Being in himself the λόγος (John 1:1),⁶³ he was the very Word of God in himself.⁶⁴ Thus, his teaching was perfectly in concert with the will of God, always teaching what accords with the mind of God. Being the new and better priest, Christ’s teaching never erred; this of course, was contrary to previous priests.

From the very beginning of Jesus’ public ministry, he dedicated himself to preaching and teaching, a ministry that was certainly the prerogative of Israel’s priests (Lev 10:10-11; Deut 33:8-11). In light of the wicked priests of his day, Malachi predicted both John the Baptist’s and Christ’s coming as priestly messengers (Mal 3:1). They did come as Malachi predicted, and Jesus’ initial message was, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15 // Matt 4:17), and he traveled Galilee “teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom” (Matt 4:23; cf. Matt 9:35; 13:54; Mark 1:21; Luke 4:15; John 18:20). Jesus came announcing that a major shift in redemptive history was taking place; the present age was passing away, and Christ was establishing a new one. As he came to establish the

⁶³ The “Word” (or λόγος) is a personal title of the Son of God and should not be confused as being synonymous with “Scripture.” Frame writes, “God’s Word . . . is his self-expression.” John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2002), 471. In this way, the Bible is God’s way of expressing his nature and will to the world. The Bible is not necessary to God’s being. Yet, it is the created media by which God’s Word is delivered or expressed to humanity. Thus, humanity ought to respond to Scripture as to the voice of God.

⁶⁴ Wellum notes that the Word is so integrally identified with God himself that Scripture presents the Word as eternal, sharing “in personal intercommunion with God” and “the intrinsic nature of God.” Crystalizing John’s teaching from John 1 on the λόγος, Wellum writes, We can now summarize what John means by referring to Christ as the *logos* and ultimately giving him the title *theos*: Christ is eternal (‘In the beginning was the Word’; v. 1a); Christ is a distinct person from God the Father (‘the Word was with God,’ v. 1b; cf. ‘the only Son from the Father,’ v. 14); Christ shares the full deity of God (‘the Word was God’; v. 1c). And with the eternity, personality, and deity of the Word-Son-Christ in view, we can now understand just who it is that John says became incarnate: *theos* himself. (Stephen J. Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016], 199-201) When John writes that the λόγος was “with God” and that “the λόγος was God,” he both affirms the uniqueness of the λόγος while also upholding his oneness with the Godhead: “Having distinguished the Word from God, John shows what they both have in common: they are God.” Andreas J. Köstenberger and Scott R. Swain, *Father, Son, and Spirit: The Trinity and John’s Gospel*, NSBT 24 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 49.

rule and reign of God on the earth, his message of the kingdom was one of repentance from sin and belief in the gospel.⁶⁵ Jesus' announcement of the "kingdom of God" being "at hand" communicated not only the notion of Christ's kingship or the idea of the institution of a political kingdom but also the notion of Christ's priesthood and the institution and progressive realization of a sacral or priestly kingdom.⁶⁶

Jesus' identity as a teacher is confirmed throughout the New Testament. In fact, the term "Rabbi" (which means "teacher"; John 1:38) is one of the more common titles predicated of Jesus in the Gospels.⁶⁷ But Jesus was more than just any normal Rabbi.⁶⁸ His teaching was not like that of the scribes; the difference was that he taught "as one who had authority" (Matt 7:28-29). Matthew records Jesus' claims to his own authority in the Sermon on the Mount when Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said . . . , but I say to you . . ." (Matt 5:21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43), proof that "Jesus possessed

⁶⁵ Commenting on the two themes of repentance and belief of Christ's kingdom message, Edwards writes,

The announcement of the kingdom at Jesus' debut in Galilee is presented by Mark as the definitive moment of history. . . . The arrival of God's *kairos* demands a change in thinking. The new and unparalleled possibility presented to humanity in the gospel calls for a unique response. That response is contained in the word "repent" (1:15; see discussion of the term at 1:4), which demands a decisive change. Coupled with the command to repent is the command to 'believe.' If repentance denotes that which one turns *from*, belief denotes that which one turns *to*—the gospel. Both verbs in Greek are present imperatives, that is, they enjoin living in a condition of repentance and belief as opposed to momentary acts. Repentance and belief cannot be applied to certain areas of life but not to others; rather, they lay claim to the total allegiance of believers. (James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, PNTC [Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2002], 47)

⁶⁶ Wessel and Strauss write, "The kingdom is realized not through conquest but through sacrifice. It will be consummated when he returns in power and glory." Walter W. Wessel and Mark L. Strauss, *Mark*, in *EBC*, vol. 9, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 711.

⁶⁷ See Matt 23:7, 8; 26:25, 49; Mark 9:5; 10:51; 11:21; 14:45; John 1:38, 49; 3:2, 26; 4:31; 6:25; 9:2; 11:8.

⁶⁸ Carson explains how the term Rabbi was understood during Jesus' day: The word literally means 'my great one,' but was a common term of honour addressed by a student to his master, his teacher (as John's explanatory aside points out, for the sake of his Greek readers). By the end of the first century AD the word became restricted to certain 'ordained' teachers who had successfully completed an appropriate course of rabbinical instruction. But at this point in the century there was apparently no official ordination; the title was used as a courtesy honorific, applied by respectful people to those they recognized as public teachers of divine subject matter. It is commonly applied to Jesus (John 1:49; 3:2; 4:31; 6:25; 9:2; 11:8), even by Nicodemus, himself a scholarly 'rabbi' (3:1-2). Similarly, the disciples of the Baptist could address their master the same way (3:26). (Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 155)

greater authority than Moses,”⁶⁹ the priest of Israel. In saying this, Jesus was not deprecating the teachings of old; instead, he was accentuating his own divine authority and was identifying himself as the fulfillment of those teachings.⁷⁰ Jesus asserted his teaching authority more fully as he continued in his Sermon on the Mount, delivering numerous commands to his disciples, calling on them to obey his teachings: In the Sermon, “with about fifty imperatives in roughly one hundred sentences, we certainly hear Jesus’ commands. Since the king has arrived and begun to reign, Jesus’ commands explain how disciples ought to live under his authority.”⁷¹

Jesus is the new and better priest, in part, because of his perfect allegiance to the Word of God. In attending to the Word of God, he served to guard it as he maintained his personal holiness and as he perfectly declared God’s will to the world. He succeeded in this as no other priest had ever done. Furthermore, unlike other priests, his teaching continues to transcend his earthly ministry. Truly, he is the eternal Word of God from the beginning (John 1:1), and, following his death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, his teaching has continued through the ministry of the Spirit and the church (Acts 1:1-11; 1 Pet 2:9-10).

⁶⁹ Schrock, “A Biblical-Theological Investigation,” 269.

⁷⁰ When Jesus said, “You have heard that it was said . . . , but I say to you,” he was insisting that “he came not to abolish the Law but to see it fulfilled more effectively.” John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2005), 228. In his interpretation of the law, “Jesus’ understanding of keeping the law meant a great deal more than making sure that the letter of the law was not infringed. For him it was important that the deeper implications of what God had commanded be understood and put into practice.” Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 112. Moreover, as Jesus offers his own words as a “juxtaposition with the speaking of God,” he is making the striking claim to possess the “distinct capacity to speak the demand of God into the present situation.” Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 230. As he offers his “counterassertion,” he “appears to accept the legal focus” of the teachings of old, but he “does so only to parody and discredit it as an adequate framework for appreciating the thrust of the commandment” (230). Jesus, thus, regards himself as the prime interpreter and applier of God’s law and as its fulfillment. As the new and better priest, Jesus established himself as the perfect teacher of God’s Word.

⁷¹ Daniel M. Doriani, *The Sermon on the Mount: The Character of a Disciple* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2006), 8.

Border management. From Adam to the Levitical priesthood, priests were responsible for guarding the holy sanctuary of God from defilement while also guarding the holiness of the people of God. Jesus comes as the new and better priest to accomplish these duties with perfection. In his priesthood, Christ thus “manages the borders” of God’s temple as he serves to defend them, along with the people of God, while also seeking to expand them to the ends of the earth.

In an effort to defend the borders of the sanctuary, Christ fought to preserve the sanctity of God’s temple and his people. Several examples of this follow. First, the episode of Christ removing the money-changers from the temple (John 2:13-22) exemplifies Jesus’ jealousy for the sanctity of God’s temple. His actions, though directed at the money-changers in part, were primarily focused on the failure of the priesthood to maintain the sacredness of God’s holy place.⁷²

Second, not only did Christ’s priestly work concern the spiritual state of his people, but it also had to do with their physical welfare. This point is demonstrated in the fact that Jesus showed compassion to those who suffered from disease. The old covenant dealt with diseased covenant people in one way; Christ came to provide a better solution. In fact, the book of Leviticus says that the disease of leprosy, for example, made one unclean (Lev 13-14) and that other diseases and physical blemishes rendered people unfit to enter the holy place (Lev 21:16-24). The priests of old had no ability to heal such people; this was not true, however, for the new and true guardian-priest, Jesus Christ.⁷³

⁷² Nicholas Perrin, *Jesus the Temple* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 89-92.

⁷³ Schrock notes the “qualitative” difference between the Levitical priesthood and that of Christ as it related to their priestly dealings with disease and healing:
There is no place in the OT which speaks of the priest cleansing lepers, opening the eyes of the blind, or raising the dead but this does not remove the priestly nature of this ministry. It simply demonstrates the qualitative difference between the sons of Levi and the Son of God. Just as the Law instructed priests to judge lepers, declaring them “clean” or “unclean” (Lev 13-15), so the Gospels present Jesus’ not only adjudicating leprosy, but actually making lepers clean. (Schrock, “A Biblical-Theological Investigation,” 272)

Indeed, healing was a prominent feature of Jesus' earthly work as a priest.⁷⁴ Immediately following Jesus' temple-clearing episode in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus is shown to accept and heal the lame and the blind, those unclean people who were once forbidden in the temple (Matt 21:14); such actions fulfilled prophecies (Isa 35:5-6; 56:3-8). Whereas old covenant priests sought to guard themselves from impurity, Jesus offers a "contagious purity" that offers physical healing and purification to those impure so that they could be pure and fit to worship God in his temple.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, Jesus' physical healings during his earthly ministry were evidence that Jesus would eventually restore all physical maladies and, thus, fulfill his role as the priest in establishing the purity of the eschatological temple once and for all.⁷⁶

Third, Jesus serves to guard his people in their own inner battle with temptation and sin. Indeed, Jesus' priesthood is superior to that of his priestly predecessors in that, while the priests of old could only affect the people of God through external means, Jesus is able to influence them internally and supernaturally as a guardian-priest, guaranteeing their perseverance and persistence in holiness. Jude draws a connection between the end goal of Christians being presented blameless to the Father and the priestly role of Jesus to guard his people from stumbling in their earthly lives. At the beginning and end of his letter, Jude presents Jesus Christ in conjunction with the Father as "keeping believers" (Jude 1, 24-25).⁷⁷ Promising to carry out the will of his

⁷⁴ Matt 8:1-4, 5-13, 14-15, 28-34; 9:2-8, 18-19, 20-22, 23-26, 27-31, 32-34; 12:10-13, 22-24; 13:58; 15:21-28; 17:14-21; 20:29-34; Mark 1:23-28, 29-31, 40-45; 2:3-12; 3:1-7; 5:1-15, 22-24, 24-34, 35-43; 6:5; 7:24-30, 31-37; 8:22-26, 27; 9:17-29; 10:46-52; 16:9; Luke 4:31-37, 38-39; 5:12-15, 17-26; 6:6-11; 7:2-10, 11-16; 8:2, 26-39, 40-42, 43-48, 49-56; 9:37-42; 11:14-16; 13:11-13, 22; 14:1-4; 17:11-14, 15-19; 18:35-43; 22:50-51; John 4:46-54; 5:2-15; 9:1-12, 35-37; 11:19-28, 39-44; 18:10.

⁷⁵ Fletcher-Louis, "Jesus as the High Priestly Messiah (Part 2)," 66-71.

⁷⁶ J. P. Heil, "The Narrative Strategy of Pragmatics of the Temple Theme in Mark," *CBQ* 59 (1997), 76-100. See also Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 179-80.

⁷⁷ It is difficult to determine who in this passage should be credited with guarding the people of God. Translators have taken different paths in their interpretation of *τητηρημένοις*: "The Greek dative could be translated either as instrumental ('by Jesus Christ,' NIV) or as a dative of advantage ('for Jesus Christ,' NRSV). Peter H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2006), 38. Either God's people are being guarded by Jesus during this present age, or they are being

Father, Jesus says that he will not lose any of those whom the Father has given him and that he will preserve them until the last day (John 6:38-40; 10:28-29). Jesus guarantees his followers that no one can snatch his sheep out of his or his Father's hands, conveying an "image of utter security on the part of Jesus' followers."⁷⁸ Jesus' assurance for his sheep is this: "Of those whom [the Father] gave me I have lost not one" (John 18:9; cf. 17:12). Jesus' spiritual preservation of his sheep is secured as he, the good shepherd and good priest, physically lays his life down as a sacrifice in their place, thus, securing their eternal salvation (John 10:11, 15, 17-18, 28). Writing of Christ's priestly commitment to his followers, Köstenberger says that Jesus "*will not . . . fail to recognize these individuals as his own and eject them from his fellowship;*" instead, he "*will . . . keep and preserve them.*"⁷⁹ Indeed, Jesus' priestly commitment to preserve his own makes clear "that our continuance in eternal life depends not on our feeble hold on Christ, but on his firm grip on us."⁸⁰ These texts show Jesus as a priest, functioning as a warden, keeping watch, guarding, protecting, and preserving the people of God throughout their lives, keeping them in the faith until the end—a supernatural priestly prerogative belonging

guarded by God the Father so that they will belong to Jesus in the future age. Both points are true. For a view in support of the latter perspective that Christians are being kept by the Father for Jesus, see Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, 38. For support in favor of the former view that Christians are kept by Jesus, see Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, NAC, vol. 37 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 430-31.

Agreeing with Schreiner, it seems best to view the dative as one of agency. Schreiner writes, According to this view, the words "Jesus Christ" (*Iēsou Christo*) denote agency, the notion of being kept by Jesus Christ. If Jesus Christ is the agent, then the two clauses are symmetrical: "loved by God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ." Seeing the dative as one of agency is reasonable and fits with Wallace's own description of a dative of agency: (1) the dative noun must be personal; (2) the person specified by the dative must be portrayed as exercising volition; (3) a perfect passive verb is present; and (4) the agent of the passive verb can also function as the subject of an active verb, while the dative of means normally cannot. Verse 1 fulfills all of these requirements. The dative is personal (Jesus Christ), he exercises volition, we have a perfect passive (participle), and the agent also could function as the subject (Jesus Christ keeps). (Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 431)

For his discussion of the dative of agency, Schreiner references Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 75-76.

⁷⁸ Köstenberger, *John*, 311.

⁷⁹ Köstenberger, *John*, 211.

⁸⁰ Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, rev. ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1995), 463.

only to Christ's priesthood. While other priests have the power to guard the people of God through external means, only Jesus has the power to guard the people of God in this way.

Fourth, Jesus works to manage the borders of the sanctuary and guard his people from external attacks that come from the world. Jesus protected Paul from the persecutions and sufferings he endured at the hands of evil men in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra (2 Tim 3:10-11).⁸¹ Moreover, Jesus stood by Paul and strengthened him in the face of Alexander the Coppersmith, a man who sought to oppose Paul and bring him much harm (2 Tim 4:14-18). Indeed, Jesus rescued him "from the lion's mouth" (2 Tim 4:17) and continued rescuing him from every evil deed until bringing him "safely into his heavenly kingdom" (2 Tim 4:18).⁸² Just as Jesus supernaturally guards his own internally in a way that is unique to Jesus' priesthood, so too does Jesus have the distinctive priestly capacity to guard his own from the external attack from the world.

Fifth, Jesus guards his people from the assaults of Satan and his demons. Satan has had the people of God in his crosshairs from the very beginning (Gen 3:1-15), and it has been a priestly responsibility to guard the people of God against the evil one from the beginning (Gen 2:15). Jesus takes this priestly duty and carries it out with perfection and

⁸¹ Paul writes of the certainty of suffering. Though Paul was spared from some trials (Acts 18:9-11; 2 Cor 1:8-11), he nevertheless endured severe sufferings of various kinds (2 Cor 11:23-33). While Paul was not spared of all suffering, he rested in the assurance of God's protection and preservation. Hendrickson affirms the mysterious nature of the Lord's protecting grace when he writes, "The Lord ever rescues his people, frequently from death, sometimes by means of death. Either way, nothing ever separates them from his love (Rom 8:38-39)." William Hendricksen, *I-II Timothy and Titus*, NTC (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1957), 293.

⁸² In both of these instances in Paul's second letter to Timothy, it appears that ὁ κύριος refers to Christ. It is he who protects Paul. Knight observes this when he writes, Paul affirms that in contrast (δέ, "but") to these people (v. 16), "the Lord stood by me." For the third time Paul refers to ὁ κύριος (cf. vv. 8, 14). Evidence in those verses demonstrated that ὁ κύριος was Christ, and when the NT speaks elsewhere of "the Lord" standing by Paul or strengthening him, as here, Christ is apparently referred to (cf. Acts 23:11; Phil. 4:13). παρέστη (from παρίστημι) is used in the intransitive sense with the special nuance of "come to the aid of, help, stand by" (the one so aided in the dative, μοι; BAGD s.v. παρίστημι 2αγ). The aid provided was that Christ "strengthened" (ἐνεδυνάμωσεν) Paul, an experience that Paul has spoken of before (Phil 4:13; 1 Tim 1:12; 2 Tim 2:1). (George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC [Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1992], 470)

completion. One example was his work in performing exorcisms (e.g., Matt 4:24; Mark 1:21-28; 3:11-12; 5:1-13; cf. Matt 10:1; 12:43-35).⁸³ These occurrences not only indicate Jesus' compassionate guardian-priest work of relieving those who were oppressed by unclean spirits. And yet, Jesus' priestly work of exorcism is "more than an act of compassion."⁸⁴ These exorcisms also demonstrate Jesus' status and authority as priest-king and his mission to deliver the world from Satan and his evil works (1 John 3:8).⁸⁵ Thus, Jesus is carrying out his priestly work of "temple" cleansing as he opposes Satan's oppression of human temples. Ultimately, the Old Testament expectation was that an eschatological priest would come to "remove from the land . . . the spirit of uncleanness" (Zech 13:2).⁸⁶ From Jesus' exorcisms of "unclean spirits" to his ultimate victory over Satan on the cross, Jesus is the victorious priest-king who accomplished in his priesthood what no other priest could do. Though the first Adam failed to guard the borders of the Garden-sanctuary against the evil Serpent, the last Adam—the true and great high priest—is victorious (John 17:15; 2 Thess 3:3).⁸⁷

⁸³ While the existence of the demonic realm is doubted by many skeptics in the field of psychology, their reality according to Scripture is undeniable. Jesus deals directly with demons throughout the biblical narrative and exercises authority over them. Brooks speaks of their existence in light of the secular skepticism that doubts their being:

Mark used the terms "evil [literally 'unclean'] spirit" and "demon" to refer to the same entity. Demons were evil in themselves, and they made the persons they affected both ceremonially and morally unclean. As difficult as the concept of the demonic is for most people today, it cannot be satisfactorily treated as a primitive explanation for various kinds of physical and psychological illness. A better explanation is that there is much less evidence of the demonic today because Jesus won a decisive, although not yet total, victory over it. (James A. Brooks, *Mark*, NAC, vol. 23 [Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1991], 50)

⁸⁴ Schrock, "A Biblical-Theological Investigation," 276.

⁸⁵ As priest-king, Christ came to eliminate the work of Satan. Jesus began the process of destroying Satan's work with his work on the cross, and he will consummate this endeavor upon his return. Marshall writes, "The task of Jesus was to undo whatever the devil had achieved, to thwart whatever he tries to do." I. Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1978), 185.

⁸⁶ Perrin sees a connection between Jesus' exorcism of "unclean spirits" in the Gospels and Zech 13:2. Perrin, *Jesus the Temple*, 159-63.

⁸⁷ Jesus encourages prayer to the Father as a weapon to be used in spiritual warfare against Satan and his demons: In Jesus' model prayer, he teaches his disciples to ask God to protect and rescue them from the attacks of Satan when he teaches them to pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one" (Matt 6:13). In his high priestly prayer, Jesus prays to his Father, "I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you *keep* them from the evil one" (John 17:15).

Sixth, Jesus guards the holiness of the temple of God and the people of God as he executes judgment. Whereas the priests of the old covenant were responsible for carrying out justice in Israel (Deut 17:8-13; 21:5; 2 Chr 19:5-11; Ezra 10), Jesus is established as the new and better judge of the new covenant. The Father appointed Jesus Christ to judge the world (Acts 17:31), giving “all judgment to the Son” (John 5:22; cf. 5:27). Jesus is the perfectly “righteous Judge” (2 Tim 4:8) as he always judges in concert with the will of the Father (John 5:30; 8:15-16, 26). As the perfect judge, Christ possesses the keys to the eternal sanctuary (Isa 22: Rev 1:18; 3:7; cf. 1 Chr 9:27) and declares who is and who is not forgiven (Matt 16:19; 18:15-18; John 20:23).⁸⁸ Everyone must “appear before the judgement seat of Christ” (2 Cor 5:10; cf. Rom 14:10) and “give account to him” who will come to “judge the living and the dead (1 Pet 4:5; cf. Acts 10:42; Rev 22:12), waging war (Rev 19:11) and meting out righteous judgments against those who do not receive his words (John 12:48).⁸⁹ As guardian-priest, nothing unclean will enter into his eternal sanctuary (Rev 21:27). Only those who have been washed by Christ’s

⁸⁸ Christ possesses the keys to the eternal sanctuary like the priests of old possessed the keys to the old covenant temple (1 Chr 9:27), Speaking of Christ’s authority to judge and his possession of the keys that grant entry into God’s eternal sanctuary, Beale writes,

Whereas the keys in [Rev] 1:18b are those of “death and Hades,” here we have instead a quotation from Isa 22:22: “the one having the key of *David*, who opens and no one shuts, and who shuts and no one opens” (the change from singular “key” to plural “keys” is probably not significant). The substitution is meant to amplify the idea of the original phrase in 1:18b by underscoring the sovereignty that Christ holds over the sphere of “death and Hades” . . . The point of the quotation is that Jesus holds the power over salvation and judgment. In 1:18 the stress is on his sovereignty over death and judgment, while in [Rev] 3:7 the emphasis is on his authority over those entering the kingdom. (G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC [Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1999], 283-84)

⁸⁹ Contrasting Christ’s first advent with the one that is yet to come, Lenski writes, “Jesus rides an ass as the royal Son of David, as the King bringing salvation—now he is the King of kings on the great white charger who comes to do battle, to smite the beast, the whole antichristian power.” R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John’s Revelation* (Columbus, OH: Lutheran Book Concern, 1935), 551. Jesus comes to judge and to do battle:

The two verbs apply also to this final judgment on the beast whom the Faithful and Genuine One comes to judge ‘in righteousness.’ ‘Do battle’ is added because the beast is now to be judged and destroyed in battle. As hitherto, so now in this vision, we translate ΠΟΛΕΜΟΣ and ΠΟΛΕΜΕΙΝ, not ‘war’ and ‘to war,’ but ‘battle’ and ‘do battle,’ as being more exact; ‘war’ involves many battles, skirmishes, etc., while this imagery presents but one clash and one defeat. (Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John’s Revelation*, 551-52)

blood and justified by faith will stand before the judgment seat of Christ and be regarded as righteous, being allowed entry into his holy and eternal temple, heaven.

In addition to “managing the borders” of God’s sanctuary by guardianship, Christ also came as the priest-king to extend the borders of God’s sanctuary across the face of the earth. He did this, in part, in his dedication to work. As a “carpenter” (Mark 6:3), Jesus carried on the trade he apparently learned from his earthly father Joseph (Matt 13:55). Additionally, the original priestly commission delivered to Adam and Eve to be “fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (Gen 1:28) was the initial step to eventually accomplishing God’s intent to fill the earth with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord (Hab 2:14; cf. Num 14:21; Ps 72:19; Isa 11:9). As redemptive history moved forward, God consistently reconfirmed this intent for his people.⁹⁰ As the promised offspring of both Abraham and David, Jesus announced with kingly authority, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:18-19). With the new covenant, Jesus establishes the need to make disciples of all nations, indeed producing and multiplying spiritual offspring throughout the world, spreading the borders of God’s holy sanctuary to the ends of the earth.⁹¹

Sacrifice. In contrast to the priests of old, Christ as the new and better priest offers a superior sacrifice that brings about superior results. His sacrifice provided the definitive basis for him to perpetually guard the holiness of the temple of God and the people of God from defilement. The effects of his sacrifice, thus, carry permanent results, providing lasting benefits for those in the new covenant.

⁹⁰ Gen 9:1; 12; 15; 17; 22:17-18; 2 Sam 7:12-13, 16; Matt 1:1; 4:17; Rom 1:3; Gal 3:16, 29; 2 Tim 2:8.

⁹¹ Matthew Y. Emerson, *Christ and the New Creation: A Canonical Approach to the Theology of the New Testament* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013), 61.

Jesus' sacrifice accomplished everything that was needed for the salvation of his people. As the perfect savior (Heb 4) who suffered as an example for his followers (1 Pet 2:19-25), Jesus laid his life down as a sacrifice—the substance of all Old Testaments sacrifices. Jesus offered himself as a substitute for his people, paying the penalty of their sin.⁹² Offering himself as the penal, propitiatory, and substitutionary sacrifice, Christ is “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world” (John 1:29). He laid down his life ὑπὲρ (for, in behalf of, for the sake of someone)⁹³ the sheep (John 10:11) and gave his life ἀντί (instead of, in the place of)⁹⁴ many. Moreover, his sacrifice served to buy, redeem, or purchase (ἀγοράζω)⁹⁵ his people (1 Cor 6:20; Gal 3:13; 2 Pet 2:1; Rev 5:9) and to pay the price of release or ransom (λύτρον)⁹⁶ for many (Matt 20:28; 1 Pet 1:18-19; 1 Tim 2:6).⁹⁷ The result of Christ offering himself as a sacrifice to the Father is that it propitiated the Father's wrath against his people (Rom 3:25; Heb 2:17; 1 John 2:2; 4:10),⁹⁸ expiated or “canceled out the record of debt that stood against [God's people] . . .

⁹² Like previous substitutionary sacrifices of old (i.e., God's provision of a ram in the place of Isaac (Gen 22) and the sacrificial animals of the Levitical sacrificial cult (Lev 4-7)), Jesus came as the predicted “Suffering Servant” spoken of in Isaiah's prophecies (Isa 53). He would endure the penalty in the place of his people, bearing their grief and carrying their sorrows (Isa 53:4), being pierced and crushed for their sins (Isa 53:4), and ultimately bringing them peace and healing (Isa 53:5). Such a sacrifice would satisfy, please, and propitiate the wrath of God (Isa 53:10). Christ is confirmed in the New Testament as being the one who would bring fulfillment to Isaiah's prophecy.

⁹³ BAGD (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1030.

⁹⁴ BAGD, 87.

⁹⁵ BAGD, 14.

⁹⁶ BAGD, 605.

⁹⁷ While some might suggest that Christ's sacrifice was offered to Satan as a ransom price to be paid for the people of God in bondage (i.e., the “Ransom-to-Satan Theory” of the atonement), Scripture is plain when it explains that Christ offers himself to God: indeed, “Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God” (Heb 9:14) as a ransom for his people. Speaking of Christ's voluntary offering of himself to God, Lenski writes, “‘Christ’ showed himself to be Christ indeed, our Great High Priest (4:14), by offering himself ‘by the eternal spirit,’ his own spirit brought himself as the offering to God. The idea that his act was ethical to the highest degree, voluntary, not only on his part as being the sacrificing Priest, but also as being the sacrificed Lamb, is the gist of what is conveyed.” R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews and of the Epistle of James* (Columbus, OH: Lutheran Book Concern, 1938), 298.

⁹⁸ While the priests of old offered blood sacrifices to God in order to propitiate God's wrath against sinners, thus shielding them from the just consequences of their sin, Jesus' once-for-all sacrifice as the great high priest (Heb 7:26-27; cf. 4:15; 10:12) serves to fully propitiate God's wrath against his sheep (Rom 5:9; 1 Thess 1:10), perpetually guarding them from the just consequences of their sin. Jesus' unique

having nailed it to the cross” (Col 2:14), reconciled his people to himself (Rom 5:10; 2 Cor 5:18-20; Eph 2:16; Col 1:20-21), and dealt the decisive blow against Satan and the powers of evil (John 12:31; 1 Cor 15:24-26; Eph 1:19-23; Col 2:13-15; Heb 2:14; Rev 20:1-3, 10).⁹⁹

Mediation. Jesus also serves as the new and better priest in his work as mediator. Previously, many priests served as mediators between God and his people. Their work was always meant to be temporary and functioned to “prefigure the grand mediation for all by the one Mediator.”¹⁰⁰ Jesus’ service as a better mediator (Heb 8:6; 9:15; 12:24) renders the mediation of the Levitical priesthood associated with the old

sacrifice makes it so that his sheep may approach God in confidence and not fear (Heb 10:19-22). Because of Jesus’ sacrifice, one’s status as a child of God transitions from being that of an enemy of God (Rom 5:10; Col 1:21; Jas 4:4) to that of an adopted son of God (Rom 8:14-17, 23; Gal 4:5-7; Eph 1:5).

⁹⁹ For a more thorough understanding and treatment of these terms surrounding the nature of Christ’s atoning work and for works in favor of the penal substitutionary view of the atonement that is endorsed here, see Leon Morris, *The Atonement* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1983), 106-31; Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1956), 9-59; Steve Jeffery, Mike Ovey, and Andrew Sach, *Pierced for our Transgressions: Re-discovering the Glory of Penal Substitution* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007); John R. W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986); Thomas R. Schreiner, “Penal Substitution View,” in *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views*, ed. James Beilby and Paul R. Eddy (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2006), 67-98; Robert Letham, *The Work of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993).

Numerous views of the atonement exist. The “Socinian Theory” or “Example Theory” of the atonement was taught by Faustus Socinus. Faustus Socinus, *De Jesu Christo Servatore: The Savior Jesus Christ* [1578], quoted in Alan W. Gomes, “De Jesu Christo Servatore: Faustus Socinus on the Satisfaction of Christ,” *WTJ* 55, no. 2 (Fall 1993): 209-31. The “Moral Influence Theory” was taught by Peter Abelard. Peter Abelard, “Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans,” in *The Fathers of the Church: Medieval Continuation*, trans. Steven R. Cartwright (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 3:26; 5:5. Origen introduced the “Ransom to Satan Theory” of the atonement. Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Books 1-5*, 2.13.29 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 161. Anselm taught what has come to be known as the “Satisfaction Theory.” Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo*, trans. Sidney Norton Deane (Fort Worth, TX: RDMc, 2005). Popularized by Hugo Grotius, the “Governmental Theory” of the atonement is another view. Hugo Grotius, *A Defense of the Catholic Faith concerning the Satisfaction of Christ against Faustus Socinus* (Andover, MA: Warren F. Draper, 1889); John Miley, *The Atonement in Christ* (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1879). The “Non-violent” or “Scapegoat Theory” of the atonement was taught by Rene Girard. Rene Girard, *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, trans. Stephen Bann and Michael Metteer (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987). For a treatment of the “Christus Victor Theory,” see Gustaf Aulen, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of the Atonement*, trans. A. G. Hebert (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1931); Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 238-68. For an explanation of the “Kaleidoscopic Theory,” see Joel B. Green and Mark D. Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in New Testament and Contemporary Contexts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

¹⁰⁰ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1961), 407.

covenant priestly economy obsolete, for when Jesus came as priest, his work as a mediator would become consummate and permanent. With the institution of Christ's priesthood, "there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim 2:5). His priesthood, thus, eliminated the need for human priests to serve as intermediaries, as was signified by the tearing of the temple curtain at Christ's crucifixion (Matt 27:51; Heb 10:20).¹⁰¹ As mediator, Christ eliminated the separation brought about by sin, reconciling humanity with God. Indeed, he provided a way for all of God's people—not just the priestly class—to approach the throne of God with boldness and confidence (Heb 4:16).

The benefit of Christ's work as mediator far exceeds that of his predecessors. Christ does not merely take the place of previous priests. It is not as though Christ is merely a new go-between, making it so that God's people must continue to approach him through a separate entity. The reality is that Christ's unity with the Father makes it so that his new role as mediator grants immediate access to the Father as the people of God approach him. This seems to be the point of Galatians 3:19-20, when Paul contrasts Moses' role as an intermediary between God and the people of Israel versus Christ's role as mediator. Paul explains that more than one party was previously required in the

¹⁰¹ Interpretations differ regarding what the tearing of the temple curtain actually signifies. Arguing his case from Eph 2:14, which speaks of the barrier between Jew and Gentile being broken down, Blomberg thinks the curtain in question was "one that separated the court of the Jews from the court of the Gentiles." Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 421. Alternatively, Morris thinks that the curtain was either one that cordoned off the holy of holies or that it was "the curtain that separated the holy place to which priests had access from the adjoining court to which lay Israelite men were admitted." In either case, "the thought is indicating that symbolically the way into the holy place was opened by the death of Jesus." Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 724.

Morris appears to be on more solid ground than Blomberg. The "dividing wall" mentioned in Eph 2:14 is likely referring to the outer wall of the Jerusalem temple that may have served as a barrier to keep Gentiles out of the inner courts. However, the term used in Matt 27:51 and Heb 10:20 is *καταπέτασμα* which means "curtain." Eph 2:14 uses the expression "*μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ*" instead, which can be translated "dividing wall of the fence." While Christ's death, burial, and resurrection certainly tore down the dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles, this does not appear to be the main point of Matt 27:51 and Heb 10:20. An actual curtain is referred to in Matt 27:51 and Heb 10:20, not a wall or fence. The idea is that God's people—whether Jew or Gentile—now have access to God because of what Christ accomplished on the cross. The old covenant priestly class is no longer needed to minister as mediators between God and man. Christ is now the sole mediator between God and man, and all who desire a relationship with God must approach him through Christ.

presentation of the law to the people of Israel. That is, Moses was required to serve as an intermediary as he delivered the law of God to Israel. With Christ now serving as the sole mediator between God and man, no intermediary is needed. Because “God is one” (Gal 3:20) and because “there is one God” (1 Tim 2:15), when one approaches Christ, he simultaneously approaches the entire Godhead.¹⁰²

Jesus’ priestly intercession is limited to those whom his Father gives him; one of the clearest examples of Jesus’ mediation is given in John 17. In his high priestly prayer, Jesus focuses his intercession on those who are his covenant people, the ones whom the Father has given him: “I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours” (John 17:9). Christ says that he is “not praying for the world.” This is not to suggest he is not praying for those lost sheep who are elect and yet to be found, for Christ says, “I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice” (John 10:15-16). Moreover, this does not suggest that God lacks love for the world or that the world is “beyond God’s love.”¹⁰³ Certainly, God indicates that he indeed does love the world (John 3:16). And yet, Christ’s prayer for his people indicates a unique and peculiar love for those who belong to the Father. Carson makes this point when he writes, “However wide is the love of God (3:16), however salvific the stance of Jesus toward the world (12:47), there is a peculiar relationship of love, intimacy, disclosure, obedience, faith, dependence, joy, peace, eschatological blessing and fruitfulness that binds the disciples together and with the Godhead.”¹⁰⁴ It is, thus,

¹⁰² Timothy George, *Galatians*, NAC, vol. 30 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 257-58.

¹⁰³ Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, 642.

¹⁰⁴ Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 560. Elsewhere, Carson has distinguished between God’s different types of love: an intratrinitarian love between the members of the Godhead, God’s providential love for his entire creation, his general love for all humanity, and his special love that is reserved for the elect. D. A. Carson, *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2000).

from the position of his guardian-priesthood that Christ intercedes specifically and peculiarly for his chosen covenant people—those presently in the covenant and those elect yet to enter into the covenant—asking the Father for their protection and sanctification (John 17:1-26).¹⁰⁵

Summary: The Priesthood of Jesus Christ

In sum, Christ's priesthood is truly superior to the priesthoods that preceded him. Indeed, his priesthood was the substance to which previous priestly types pointed and found their fulfillment. Whereas previous priests enjoyed access to the divine presence of God, Jesus Christ manifested the divine presence of God in his person. Jesus' commitment to guarding the holy place of God and the people of God is evident in his work in attending to the Word of God, border management, sacrifice, and mediation. His priestly ministry continues as he institutes a new covenant with the church, commissioning its members to carry on the ministry of the priesthood until he returns.

¹⁰⁵ In a world that is becoming increasingly pluralistic and inclusivistic, affirming Christ's role as the sole mediator between God and man becomes all the more important. Truly, it is a futile effort to approach God through any other mediator than Christ, since only Jesus' mediation with God is efficacious. Thus, as God appoints Christ as the one mediator, he offers him as the "one sufficient ransom (1 Tim 2:6), to be proclaimed to all people everywhere . . . , through whom alone, by faith alone, people may be saved (1 Tim 1:6; Rom 3:21-30; Gal 2:15, 16; 3:8, 14; cf. Acts 4:12; John 14:6)." Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 120-21. Carson responds to the pluralism and inclusivism of today, arguing for the exclusivity of Christ as the only way to God. D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002).

CHAPTER 6

THE NEW COVENANT PRIESTHOOD

With Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, he established himself as the true and better priest. Ushering in yet another era in redemptive history, Jesus forms a new temple and a new priesthood in his people, the church. In what follows, several important points are addressed regarding the identity and the ministry of the new covenant priesthood.

It is argued that the office and status of priesthood is conferred upon the church by Christ himself when the new covenant people of God receive and are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, thus fulfilling old covenant prophecies concerning the coming of the Holy Spirit. Being indwelt by the Spirit, Christians are considered temples of the Holy Spirit, both corporately and individually. All new covenant Christians are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and are likewise regenerated by the Holy Spirit. Without exception, every member of the new covenant shares in Christ's status as the firstborn son of God (Heb 1:6; 12:23) and is designated as a royal priest unto God (1 Pet 2:5-9); yet, there exists diversity within the priesthood. These new covenant priests and Christians are committed to specific local gatherings of the church and are considered members of those local churches. These local churches are to be dedicated to maintaining regenerate church membership, which is ultimately cultivated and maintained through the ministry of the priesthood as priests execute church discipline, both in its formative and corrective aspects.

One of the key expressions of the new covenant priestly ministry is church discipline. In keeping with preceding eras of priests, the new covenant priesthood consists of people who, divinely granted access to the presence of God, are entrusted with

servicing God by guarding the holiness of his temple and his people. New covenant priests accomplish this as they exercise church discipline, with both its formative and corrective expressions, by attending to the Word of God, border management, sacrifice, and mediation.

Christ Confers His Priesthood on the Church

It is of common belief that the church's corporate Christian priesthood was derived from Jesus' priesthood.¹ One dissenting voice in this conversation is Andrew Malone, who, argues that the corporate priesthood of the church receives its priesthood from the corporate priesthood of Israel rather than from Christ.² In both the Old and the New Testament, he sees "two kinds of priests"³—the individual priesthood and the corporate priesthood. He draws two parallels: one between the "individual" priesthood of the Aaronic high priest⁴ and that of Jesus, and a second between the "corporate" priesthood of Israel and that of the church.⁵ Malone believes that the high priesthood of

¹ Roger T. Beckwith, "The Relation Between Christ's Sacrifice and Priesthood and Those of the Church: An Attempt at a Summary Statement," *Churchman* 103 (1989): 231-39; André Feuillet, *The Priesthood of Christ and His Ministers*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975); J. Chrystavgis, "The Royal Priesthood (Peter 2.9)," *GOTR* 32 (1987): 373-77; Gerald O'Collins and Michael Keenan Jones, *Jesus Our Priest: A Christian Approach to the Priesthood of Christ* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

² Andrew S. Malone, *God's Mediators: A Biblical Theology of Priesthood*, NSBT 43 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017).

³ Malone, *God's Mediators*, 6.

⁴ In making a parallel between the Aaronic high priest and the high priesthood of Jesus in the new covenant, Malone emphasizes the "high" priestly role over and against the other priestly classifications. While he sometimes uses the term "vocational" priesthood or simply "Aaronic" priesthood, the prime parallel he seems to be making has to do with the correlation between the high priestly role of Aaron (and his high priestly descendants) and the high priesthood of Jesus. Malone observes a graded level of holiness and differentiation among Israel's priests, suggesting that the Aaronic high priests enjoy the highest "level of holiness," followed by the rest of the Aaronic priests, then the Levites, and finally the corporate priesthood of Israel. Malone, *God's Mediators*, 45. In making his parallels between the Aaronic high priest and Jesus, on the one hand, and the corporate priesthood of Israel and the corporate priesthood of the church, on the other hand, Malone does not seem to have sufficient categories for the Aaronic priests who did not serve as high priests and the Levites. Rather, Malone's scheme identifies a parallel for the "individual" priesthood of the Aaronic high priest and the "corporate" priesthood of Israel with their new covenant referents (i.e., the high priesthood of Jesus and the corporate priesthood of the church), but it strangely seems to ignore those Aaronic priests who were not high priests and the Levitical priesthood, leaving them without new covenant referents.

⁵ Malone, *God's Mediators*, 182.

Aaron is fulfilled in Christ whereas the corporate priesthood of Israel is fulfilled in the church; thus, the church's priesthood did not originate with Christ and is not derivative of Christ's priesthood.⁶

Malone's thesis falls short in several ways. First, it disregards a proper theology of the church's union with Christ, a doctrine that suggests, covenantally speaking, that everything that is true of Christ is true for those who are in Christ,⁷ that "the story of one man (Jesus) is understood to be the story of his people."⁸ In sum, "By virtue of this mystical union, we can be assured . . . that everything that belongs properly to [Christ] is freely given to us."⁹ Accordingly, "it makes most sense that Christians are called a 'royal priesthood' (1 Pet 2:9) *because* in their union with Christ, he has granted them this priestly status."¹⁰ That is, from a proper doctrine of the church's union with Christ, it is sensible to conclude that the church's identity as a priesthood belongs to it because Christ has conferred his own priestly identity upon the church.

⁶ Making this point regarding Christ's priesthood and the priesthood of the church, Malone writes,

There is thus little confidence that we should link the two . . . priesthoods. For all the ways in which the New Testament celebrates the similarities between Jesus and his sisters and brothers (e.g. Heb 2:10-18; Rom 8:1-4), and notwithstanding the expectation that Christians will be conformed to his likeness even in this life (e.g. Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 11:1; 2 Cor 3:18; Phil 3:17-21; 1 Pet 2:21-25; 1 John 2:3-6), there is little reason to see similarities between his priesthood and ours. As with distant cousins in a family tree there is some shared history but no real present connection. (Malone, *God's Mediators*, 184)

⁷ While upholding the principle that the expression "being in Christ" does not "indicate any confusion of personality between Christ and his people," Alan Cairns speaks of the solidarity between Christ and the covenant people of God when he details the scope of the union being spiritual, vital, federal/legal, eternal, and total. Alan Cairns, *DTT* (Belfast; Greenville, SC: Ambassador Emerald International, 2002), 293. See also David Schrock, review of *God's Mediators: A Biblical Theology of Priesthood*, by Andrew S. Malone, *Them* 43, no. 1 (2018): 100-102.

⁸ Grant Macaskill, *Union with Christ in the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1.

⁹ Michael S. Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 597. Similarly, John Calvin wrote, "But since Christ has been so imparted to you with all his benefits that all his things are made yours" John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeil, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 3.2.24.

¹⁰ Schrock, review of *God's Mediators*, 102.

Second, Malone’s thesis removes Christ from his proper place as the antitype and fulfillment of every old covenant type. Suggesting that Christ is the fulfillment of the Aaronic high priestly institution (i.e., type)—while concluding that the church, rather than Christ, is the replacement of Israel’s corporate priesthood—is a hermeneutical and biblical-theological mistake, one that errs by failing to see Christ as the form and substance of every Old Testament shadow. Specifically, Hebrews regards Christ’s priesthood as the vehicle that Christ employed in instituting the new covenant: “For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well” (Heb 7:12).¹¹ “In this sense, the priesthood of Christ is the cause of a new covenant, and thus all the blessings found in the new covenant, including the privilege of priesthood, find their genesis in Christ’s priesthood.”¹² Moreover, it is by Christ’s death and resurrection, which functioned to initiate the new covenant, that he established the new covenant people of God as priest-kings. John writes of “Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth,” the one who “loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood” as the one who has “made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father” (Rev 1:5-6). According to John, “Christ’s death and resurrection (v 5) established a twofold office, not only for himself (cf. also vv 13-18) but also for believers.”¹³ Because of Christ’s new covenant initiating work on the cross, the church has “been constituted kings together with [Christ] and share his priestly office by virtue of their identification with his death and resurrection.”¹⁴

¹¹ France identifies the change in priesthood as the institution that brought about the change from the old to the new covenant: “The Law was . . . only a ‘shadow of the good things that are coming’ (10:1). So it follows that if the Aaronic priesthood was set up by the Mosaic law, a change of priesthood requires a change of law, since priesthood and law are inextricably bound together (v. 11).” R. T. France, *Hebrews*, in *EBC*, vol. 13, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 96.

¹² Schrock, review of *God’s Mediators*, 102.

¹³ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 192.

¹⁴ Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 192.

Third, Malone's thesis does not account for a sufficient view of sonship and its relation to priesthood and kingship. Whereas the priest-king is thematized to include Adam, the patriarchs, the pre-Golden Calf nation of Israel, Israel's priests, the priest-king David, the Davidic son and Melchizedekian priest-king Jesus Christ, and finally the royal and priestly sons of God, the church, Malone's approach suggests that the priest-king status of corporate Israel is transferred directly to the church.¹⁵ New covenant Christians are adopted into the family of God and declared his firstborn sons (Gal 3:26; 4:5-6; Heb 12:23). As royal children of God and co-heirs with Christ (Rom 8:17), this new humanity receives its status as a "royal priesthood" (1 Pet 2:5; Rev 5:9-10) from the new and better priest Jesus Christ, the firstborn son of God (Heb 1:6), not from the old and lesser priesthood of the old covenant. Said more forcefully, because the church enters a new covenant with God in Christ, thus becoming "full members of an eternal family in which God is our Father and Jesus Christ is our elder brother (cf. Heb 2:11-12),"¹⁶ the church, as co-heirs with Christ, inherits its priestly status because its members are sons of God and beneficiaries of Christ's blessings as royal priests. Thus, "it seems unlikely that the Christian church could be a royal priesthood without some measure of spiritual or covenantal union with Jesus Christ."¹⁷

Fourth, while Malone properly accentuates the importance of the mediatorial work of Christ, he overstates the centrality of mediation to the identity of priesthood: "The priest is in every way an intermediary. The priest's own goal is to bring God and people together"¹⁸ Not surprisingly, Malone doubts the priestly status of Adam,¹⁹ the man

¹⁵ Malone, *God's Mediators*, 147-72.

¹⁶ Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, NAC, vol. 27 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 183.

¹⁷ Schrock, review of *God's Mediators*, 102.

¹⁸ Malone, *God's Mediators*, 38.

¹⁹ Malone writes, "It is unclear how much we can describe the first humans as the first priests." Instead, he emphasizes "the formal inauguration of the Aaronic priesthood at Mount Sinai" as the likely originating point of the priesthood in redemptive history. Malone, *God's Mediators*, 66.

who, as this dissertation has argued, was appointed by God as the first priest, before there was ever a need for mediation. Contrary, therefore, to Malone's thesis, mediation should not be viewed as definitive of the office. According to Malone, this responsibility of mediation extends to the high priesthood of Aaron and the high priesthood of Christ, not to the corporate priesthood of Israel or to the new covenant priesthood; thus, the church, just like the corporate priesthood of Israel, depends on the continuing mediation of a high priest to gain access to God.²⁰ What is certain is that, even with the mediatorial work of the old covenant high priests, the corporate priesthood of Israel did not have access to the special presence of God in the Holy of Holies. However, in stark discontinuity from the old covenant arrangement, the once-for-all completeness and finality of Christ's sacrifice gives all of his new covenant people access to the divine presence (Heb 7:27; 9:11-12; 10:10-14). While Malone acknowledges this point, he emphasizes Christ's mediatorial role, to the exclusion of the church's priestly status, as the reason for this new reality.

Peter Leithart seems to be on more solid ground when he observes Christ in the book of Hebrews anointing new covenant Christians as priests;²¹ Christians' hearts are "sprinkled clean" and "washed with pure water" (Heb 10:22), forming the basis for the church's entry into the holy places. He understands this verse to be in reference to atonement and baptism and as a new covenant parallel to old covenant priestly ordination.²² If Leithart is correct, then Christ has sprinkled Christians with his blood, washing them clean, anointing them as priests, and granting them the right to enter the holy place of God. Thus, Christians are enabled to approach the throne of God

²⁰ Malone, *God's Mediators*, 163-72.

²¹ Malone doubts that the book of Hebrews "contributes anything to a study of corporate priesthood" (*God's Mediators*, 164), concluding that it is unlikely that the Epistle offers any "direct teaching on Christian believers as priests to God" (172).

²² Leithart writes, "Hebrews 10:22 describes baptism with imagery borrowed from ordination," that "baptism fulfills and replaces ordination" so that "all those baptized and sprinkled with the blood of Christ have privileges of access beyond those of Israel's High Priests." Peter J. Leithart, "Womb of the World: Baptism and the Priesthood of the New Covenant in Hebrews 10.19-22," *JSNT* 78 (2000): 53-55.

fundamentally because Christ is their mediator and derivatively because Christ has set them apart as priests.²³ Malone’s model seems to wrongly subordinate the new covenant priesthood to the Aaronic high priesthood in terms of its “level of holiness” and overall “graded access to God.”²⁴ But, the new covenant priesthood is not inferior to the Aaronic high priesthood. Rather, Christ’s priesthood has elevated the new covenant priesthood to a superior status, which is unlike and better than either the corporate priesthood of Israel or the high priesthood of Aaron. Indeed, it is superior to those of the old covenant *because* it is established in Christ’s blood as a part of the new covenant and is derived from the very priesthood of Christ. Furthermore, Christ bestowed the new covenant people of God with their priestly identity when he conferred upon them the Holy Spirit, granted them priestly authority to execute judgment by either extending or withholding forgiveness to others, and sent the Holy Spirit to empower them (John 20:19-23; Acts 2).²⁵ Thus, the church’s priesthood is derivative of Christ and not the corporate priesthood of Israel.

²³ The intimate access Christians have to the Father is also in view when Jesus says, “In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God” (John 16:26-27). While not diminishing the importance of his work as the church’s mediator, Jesus speaks of a time after his resurrection when the church’s access to the Father will be unparalleled:

These verses do not denigrate the mediatorial work of Jesus in making intercession for us (cf. Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25) . . . , but they emphasize the wonderful postresurrection access Christians have with the Father through prayer. Because of the new access the followers of Jesus have with the Father in the spirit (name) of Jesus, postresurrection disciples do not need to wait for Jesus to connect them with the Father like some overseas, long-distance operator. Connection is assured because the Father loves (*philei*) the disciples since they have loved and believed in Jesus. (Gerald L. Borchert, *John 12-21*, NAC, vol. 25B [Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002], 178)

It is a possible inference to conclude that the church’s immediate access to the Father is rooted in Christ’s ordination of the church as priests to God.

²⁴ Malone, *God’s Mediators*, 45. Malone makes a parallel between the Aaronic high priest and Jesus and relegates the rest of Israel’s priests to positions of lesser relative holiness. The implication of his model seems to be that the Aaronic high priest would have inherently greater priestly privileges—in terms of his access to the divine presence—than the new covenant priesthood. This strange conundrum is rooted in Malone’s overall view of the disconnectedness between Christ’s priesthood and that of the new covenant priesthood.

²⁵ James Hamilton writes, If the Father sent Jesus as the replacement of the temple, it would appear that, in part, Jesus sent his disciples as the replacement of the temple. When Jesus told his disciples that God would dwell with and in them (John 14:17, 23) and when he gave them authority to forgive and retain sins (John 20:23) he was transferring the mediation of the temple’s blessings [the priestly bestowal of forgiveness of

This critique of Malone serves to establish the point that the priestly office and identity is conferred upon the new covenant church and is transferred to it by its covenant head Jesus Christ, not from the old covenant corporate priesthood of Israel. Thus, it is in Christ that the church operates as a priesthood, and it is Christ's perfect priestly example that the church emulates.

New Covenant Temples and the Holy Spirit

Following Christ's resurrection, his followers are set apart as priests and constituted as temples as they are both individually and corporately indwelt, baptized, and filled with the Holy Spirit (John 20:22; Acts 2),²⁶ signifying the beginning of the new covenant age and the birth of the church (Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 36:22-32; Joel 2:28-32).

Indwelling of the Holy Spirit

As Jesus institutes the new covenant and creates a new priesthood with the church, he also causes all his new covenant people to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit,²⁷ a

sins] from himself to his disciples. (James M. Hamilton Jr., *God's Indwelling Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments* [Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006], 155) When Hamilton speaks of Christ "transferring the mediation of the temple's blessings from himself to his disciples," he is referring to the blessing of forgiveness of sins that comes from the atoning sacrifices that have always been associated with the temple. Old Testament believers experienced the blessing of God's forgiveness when they brought their sacrifices to the temple. Coming as the replacement of the old covenant temple, Jesus extended these same blessings. As the Father sent Jesus as the replacement of the temple and as the new priest, Jesus likewise sends his followers as the replacement of the temple and the new priesthood, commissioning them to continue to extend the priestly blessings of God's forgiveness to those who come to God through faith in Christ. It might be added that temple "curses" are also mediated to the world for those who reject Christ; in that case, the temple's priestly blessings of God's forgiveness are withheld.

²⁶ The details surrounding how John 20:22 relates to Acts 2, along with the particulars of the Spirit's role in indwelling, baptizing, and filling believers, are complex and find numerous and varying interpretations across Christian scholarship. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to untangle the knottiness of these issues.

²⁷ Whereas only certain individuals in the covenant community of Israel were indwelt by God, all of the new covenant believers are indwelt. R. E. Clements explains, "The major difference between the new fulfillment and the old promise is that whereas the Old Testament had spoken of a dwelling of God among men, the New Testament speaks of a dwelling of God within men by the Holy Spirit." R. E. Clements, *God and Temple* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), 139. Thus, in contrast to the Spirit's work in the old covenant, every new covenant member is indwelt by the Spirit and is considered a temple of the Holy Spirit.

At least four views have been taken concerning the question of whether or not old covenant people of God were individually indwelt by the Spirit of God. James Hamilton provides a helpful survey of these positions, along with a bibliographical sampling of adherents to the respective views. See James M.

reality that functions not only to consecrate Christ's followers as priests but also to establish the church as the new covenant temple. Given to the church as a permanent

Hamilton Jr., "Were Old Covenant Believers Indwelt by the Holy Spirit?," *Them* 30, no. 1 (Autumn 2004): 12-22. The following depends on Hamilton's essay:

The first view suggests that old covenant believers were both regenerate and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. See John Owen, *The Doctrine of the Saints Perseverance Explained and Confirmed* [1654], vol. 11 of *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold (1850-53; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), 331; B. B. Warfield, "The Spirit of God in the OT," in *Biblical Doctrines* (1929; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1988), 121-28; Sinclair Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, *Contours of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 68; Daniel P. Fuller, *The Unity of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 70.

The second view agrees with the first, suggesting that old covenant believers were both regenerate and indwelt, but it adds that the new covenant brings about a heightened experience of the Holy Spirit for believers. See Augustine, *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, trans. J. Gibb and J. Innes, in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, edited by Philip Schaff, Series 1, vol. 3, *St. Augustine: Homilies on the Gospel of John, Homilies on the First Epistle of John, Soliloquies* (New York: Christian Literature, 1888), 74.2 (3:334); Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2.10.2 (429), 2.11.9 (458-59); George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1993), 325-26; Daniel Block, *The Book of Ezekiel*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1997-98), 2:360-61; Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 637.

The third view suggests that the old covenant people of God were operated on by the Holy Spirit but were not indwelt; additionally, it takes the position that they were not regenerated. See Martin Luther, *Sermon on the Gospel of John*, ed. J. Pelikan, trans. M. H. Bertram, vols. 22-23 of *Luther's Works* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1957), 22:248-49, 23:278; L. S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947-48), 6:72-74, 123, 7:265; Craig A. Blaising, "The Structure of the Biblical Covenants: The Covenants Prior to Christ," in Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Wheaton, IL: Bridgepoint Books, 1993), 156; D. A. Carson, *The Farewell Discourse* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 46-47; Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1991), 195, 329; Michael Green, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1991), 25-26.

The fourth view concludes that old covenant believers were regenerate but not indwelt by the Spirit. Erickson writes,

The Holy Spirit did not dwell within [Old Testament believers], but exerted an external influence, for example, through the written word. The presence of God was visibly represented by the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle and temple. The law was an external written code rather than the Spirit's imparting of truth to the heart, as would later be the case (John 14:26). But despite these differences, the Old Testament saint, like the New Testament believer, grew in holiness through faith and obedience to the commands of God. This spiritual progress was the work of God. (Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013], 912)

See also J. I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit: Finding Fullness in Our Walk With God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005); J. I. Packer, "The Holy Spirit and His Work," in *Applying the Scriptures: Papers from ICBI Summit III*, ed. Kenneth S. Kantzer (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 51-76; W. A. VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 81-82; Bruce A. Ware, "Rationale for the Distinctiveness of the New Covenant Work of the Holy Spirit," paper presented at annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Wheaton, IL, November, 1988.

James Hamilton adds that "God does not dwell in his people in the OT, but he does dwell among them." Hamilton, "Were Old Covenant Believers Indwelt by the Holy Spirit?," 15. Building his case, he argues, "first, that the OT describes God dwelling in particular locations (e.g., Bethel, Mount Sinai, the tabernacle, the temple in Jerusalem); second, that in the OT the presence of the Spirit upon certain people marks those people out as extraordinary; and third, that the promises of a future outpouring of the Spirit indicate that the believing remnant does not possess the Spirit when the prophecies are made" (15).

possession, the Spirit no longer dwells externally to his people but now dwells in them (John 14:16-17).²⁸

This act of indwelling, this giving of the divine presence, is accurately understood as paralleling the Old Testament occasions when the divine presence indwelt the tabernacle (Exod 40:34-35) and the temple (1 Kgs 8:10-11; 2 Chr 7:1-2). By giving the disciples the Spirit, Jesus “makes the disciples the new locus of God’s presence” and “constitutes [the disciples] as the New Temple.”²⁹ Jesus, who identified himself as the new temple (John 2:19-21; cf. Matt 26:61; 27:40; Mark 14:58; 15:29) and who possessed the Spirit without measure (John 3:34), now gives the Spirit to his disciples, who as embodied people become the “temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor 6:19).

With Christ having laid himself down as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world, and having risen from the dead and ascended, thus defeating Satan, sin, and death,³⁰ Jesus indwells his followers with the Holy Spirit, which functions to set them apart as the new priesthood and the new temple: “The new people of God are not *in* a temple, attending a service led by priests, they *are* the temple and they *are* its priests, themselves conducting the service.”³¹ The disciples’ new status as priests and as the

²⁸ Contrary to previous eras, “God no longer dwells *with* his people in a sanctuary which they make for him; he dwells *in* them and *they* are his temple.” R. J. McKelvey, *The New Temple: The Church in the New Testament*, Oxford Theological Monographs (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 95.

²⁹ Hamilton, *God’s Indwelling Presence*, 159, 146.

³⁰ Atonement was a necessary prerequisite for the Holy Spirit to indwell believers and for them to be constituted as priests and as the new temple:

If the temple was to be replaced as the dwelling place of God and he was to take up residence in individuals and among the community of the Messiah, something was required to answer the need for atonement. Deeds of lovingkindness do not atone for sin. . . . However, once Jesus goes to the cross to glorify the Father and be glorified in him (John 13:31-32) by dying on behalf of the people (11:50) as the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (1:29), there is no longer need for temple sacrifices to make atonement (Heb 9:25-28). After the death of Jesus, sacrifice is no longer necessary, and God can take up residence in a temple where no atoning sacrifices are offered. (Hamilton, *God’s Indwelling Presence*, 158)

After Christ’s atoning sacrifice was offered on the cross, and after his death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, new covenant believers are indwelled by the Holy Spirit (Acts 2).

³¹ Oskar Skarsaune, *In the Shadow of the Temple: Jewish Influences on Early Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2002), 162.

temple is further confirmed when Jesus charges them with the mission he received from his Father to go throughout the world (John 20:21) as indwelt temples of the Holy Spirit (John 20:22; Acts 2) to minister as priests unto God as they are granted the authority to extend forgiveness or withhold it (John 20:23).³²

Corporate indwelling. Scripture indicates that this indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit encompasses both corporate and individual indwelling. Paul addresses the reality of the corporate indwelling presence at several points in his writings. The Ephesian Christians, as individual “members” together with the rest of the people of God, make up the “household of God” (Eph 2:19). The apostles and prophets are metaphorically the foundation of a building structure, Jesus is its “cornerstone” (Eph 2:20), and “all is built on Christ, supported by Christ, and the lie or shape of the continuing building is determined by Christ, the cornerstone.”³³ Elsewhere, Peter presents the members of the church as “living stones” that together are “being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood” (1 Pet 2:5). Collectively, as members of the spiritual house, Christians are built upon this foundation and are “being joined together” as they grow “into a holy temple in the Lord” (Eph 2:21-22).³⁴

³² Making further connections between the reception of the Spirit and the temple, Mary Coloe comments on the relationship between Jesus’ mention of living water in John 4:10; 7:37-39 to believers being indwelt by the Holy Spirit and being temples:

The new Temple, endowed with the Spirit, will be an ongoing source within the world of life-giving waters (John 4:14, 7:38) and cleansing from sin (John 20:23). . . . While Jesus is in the world his body is the Temple of God’s presence and so he can offer living water (John 4:10). . . . Jesus’ words [John 7:37-39] point ahead to the believers, who, having received the Spirit, have been constituted as the new Temple/household of God and can continue to provide access to a source of living water (John 20:22). (Mary L. Coloe, *God Dwells with Us: Temple Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel* [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001], 208-209)

³³ Max Turner, “Ephesians,” in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994), 1232-33.

³⁴ With Christ as the cornerstone, the whole congregation of the Messiah—including both Jews and Gentiles (Eph 2:19)—is united together by the Spirit in this spiritual temple. In fulfillment of old covenant prophecies, which anticipated that a future temple would be the place where people from every nation would one day dwell (Isa 66:18-20; 2:1-5; Mic 4:1-5), Paul’s temple imagery should be regarded as the fulfillment of those promises: “Now through Christ Gentiles have been brought near to God, and along with Jews they have become the new temple, the place where God’s presence dwells.” Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 220. Using this temple imagery, it makes sense that Paul would write about how, in Christ, the church is being “built

Furthering the notion of corporate indwelling, Paul warns, “Do you not know that you are (ἔστέ) God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him. For God’s temple is holy, and you are (ὁμοίως ἔστέ) that temple” (1 Cor 3:16-17).³⁵ As his charge is directed to the church corporately, “Paul is not saying that each individual Christian is a temple within which God’s Spirit dwells, but rather that the Spirit of God dwells in the Christian community *corporately as a community*.”³⁶

Furthermore, when the Corinthian church struggled to remain faithful in its allegiance to God and became “unequally yoked”³⁷ with various competing worldly influences, Paul rebuked them as a congregation for their mixed allegiances and called them to holiness. His reasoning: “For we are the temple of the living God” (2 Cor 6:16).

together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit” (Eph 2:22). As the temple of old was once indwelt by the Spirit of God, now Paul teaches that “membership of this holy temple signifies being indwelt by God’s Spirit” and that, corporately speaking, this new covenant “temple is his people in whom he lives by his Spirit.” O’Brien, *Letter to the Ephesians*, 220-21.

While also observing the corporate nature of the Spirit’s indwelling as it has to do with the local church in Ephesus, Comfort picks up on the universal quality of the eschatological temple. That is, while he believes that the local church in Ephesus experienced the indwelling of the Spirit as a congregation, he envisions the worldwide church—made up of all its local churches—as ultimately comprising a universal temple of the Spirit’s indwelling. He writes, “Paul pictured each local church as providing God with a spiritual habitation in that locality (Eph 2:22) and as growing together with all the other churches into one holy, universal sanctuary for the Lord’s indwelling.” P. W. Comfort, “Temple,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. G. F. Hawthorne, R. P. Martin, and D. G. Reid (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 925.

³⁵ Paul addresses the church using the second person plural “you,” indicating that, in this case, he is referring to the church as a singular temple being made up of multiple people.

³⁶ Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2000), 316.

³⁷ In Paul’s use of this expression, he is likely alluding to Deut 22:10, which prohibits the yoking together of oxen and donkeys. This Mosaic law reminded the Israelites of their consecration to God and to their duty to maintain their holiness, that is, that they were to remain pure as they related to pagan nations, not to be syncretistic and blend the beliefs and practices of the religions of neighboring nations with their own. Paul is referencing this law to illustrate the Corinthian church’s need to remain committed to its exclusive fellowship with God. Paul’s uses the term ἑτεροζυγέω (translated “unequally yoked,” “yoked with another species,” “mismatched,” or “mis-mated”) with regard to his admonition for the Corinthian church to abstain from worshiping pagan idols. Yet, there is reason to believe that Paul’s “warning against being ‘mismatched’ would at least include marital unions,” “sexual unions,” and “close partnerships” with unbelievers. Although “Paul insists on [Christians] remaining in marriages with unbelievers (1 Cor 7:10-16)” unless “the unbelieving partner separates” (1 Cor 7:15), he teaches that “all new marriages should be ‘in the Lord’ (1 Cor 7:39; cf. 9:5).” Craig S. Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, NCBC (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 193-94.

His admonition is directed to the Corinthian church as a congregation and not specifically to its individuals; thus, Paul places his emphasis “on God residing among the whole community and not just in ‘the temple’ of the individual’s body.”³⁸

In keeping with the priesthoods of previous eras, the new covenant priesthood enjoys access to the divine presence. Corporately speaking, this communal indwelling for a local church means that the church, as priests and “as the temple of God, experiences [God’s] manifest presence as it gathers together in Christ’s name and on the basis of forgiveness obtained through his sacrifice, to engage in giving the God of glory the great praise and honor due his name.”³⁹

Individual indwelling. New covenant believers are also temples, and thus have direct access to the divine presence, since they are individually indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Paul warns the adulterous or sexually immoral Corinthians: “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God” (1 Cor 6:19)?⁴⁰ In his writings to the church of Rome, Paul again has the individual Christian in

³⁸ David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, NAC, vol. 29 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 338.

³⁹ Gregg R. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 108.

⁴⁰ That Paul is referring to the indwelling of the bodies of individual Christians is apparent, first, because of the language he uses regarding the nature of sexual immorality (1 Cor 6:14-20). Paul warns that the individual who commits sexual immorality is guilty of sinning against his “own body” (1 Cor 6:18), and the reason that is provided for the grievousness of the sin is that the Christian’s body is the temple of the indwelling Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19). While it may be possible to interpret the scenario as a metaphor for the whole congregation of the church needing to remain pure in its relationship with God, the repeated imagery given in the text is that of a singular individual engaging in sexual sin and being personally rebuked for comingling what has been consecrated to God with the profane. Thus, it seems logical to conclude that Paul has individual indwelling in view.

Furthermore, the grammar and pronoun/noun usage employed in 1 Cor 6:19 adds support to the notion that Paul is writing with the indwelling of the individual Christian in mind. In the verse, Paul uses the plural pronouns for “you” (οἶδατε) and “you” (ὑμῖν) and the singular nouns for both “body” (σῶμα) and “temple” (ναός). That is, Paul says, “Or do you (plural) not know that [your body] (singular) is [a temple] (singular) of the Holy Spirit within you (plural).” From this, Alexander concludes, “Paul’s use of the singular forms ‘body’ and ‘temple’ in conjunction with the plural pronoun ‘you’ would seem . . . to fit with the view that the local church is the temple of God.” T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: And Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), 64n95. However, as Harris has observed, Paul is employing the use of the distributive singular. See Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2005), 505n58. In this grammatical structure, the “plural possessive pronoun and a singular noun” function together so that the intent is to refer “not to the group as a whole, but to the members of the

mind when he speaks of the Spirit's indwelling presence. After commenting on those who "live according to the flesh" (Rom 8:5), Paul reminds the members of the church that "you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit" and that, in fact, "the Spirit of God dwells in you" (Rom 8:9).

Though corporate indwelling may be in view in this text, Paul continues in the next verse to affirm the reality of individual indwelling: "Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him" (Rom 8:9).⁴¹ Any individual who does not possess the Spirit of Christ/Spirit of God is not of God, whereas the Spirit, who dwells in the individual bodies of believers, will give life to the mortal bodies of believers (Rom 8:11). Paul is, thus, referring to the individual members of the church, whose respective individual bodies are indwelt by the Spirit of God.

Each Christian today must, therefore, bear in mind his or her status as an indwelt temple. Such a reality elevates the need for today's Christians to properly

group . . . to each individual within the group." Sunny Chen, "The Distributive Singular in Paul: The Adequacy of a Grammatical Category," *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism* 11 (2015): 105. Turner, thus, offers his translation of the text in this way: "your bodies are temples (ναός) of the Holy Spirit who is in (each of) you." Nigel Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek: Syntax*, vol. 3 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1963), 23. While Paul uses plural pronouns in this verse, he is using them with reference to individual Christians and is, thus, teaching that individual Christians are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and are temples of the Holy Spirit.

Some have suggested that Paul is writing with reference to the corporate indwelling of the church rather than the indwelling presence of the Spirit within the individual Christian. See Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 64n95; Tom Holland, *Contours of Pauline Theology: A Radical New Survey of the Influences on Paul's Biblical Writings* (Fearn, Scotland: Mentor, 2004), 127. However, many contend that the text teaches the view espoused in this dissertation, that is that new covenant Christians are themselves individually indwelt by the Holy Spirit and are, thus, to be regarded individually as temples of the Holy Spirit. The following scholars also hold this position: Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 505n58; Thiselton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 316; Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 107n13; Hamilton, *God's Indwelling Presence*, 145; John S. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), 44; Paul D. Gardner, *1 Corinthians: An Exegetical Guide to the New Testament*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 285; Macaskill, *Union with Christ in the New Testament*, 155n21.

⁴¹ Paul uses the phrase "Spirit of Christ" as an interchangeable way of referring to the "Spirit of God." Morris explains how Paul uses the expressions "Spirit of Christ" and "Spirit of God"—or the Holy Spirit—interchangeably. He writes,

Earlier he has spoken of believers as being 'in Christ' (v. 1). Here he goes on to speak of the Spirit as 'in' believers. He can also speak of Christ as 'in' his people (v. 10; Gal. 2:20), and of the Spirit as likewise 'in' them (here). Paul clearly has the thought of a mutual indwelling; he simply varies the terminology in which he expresses it. His habit, however, is to speak of believers as in Christ (rather than Christ in them) and of the Spirit as in believers (rather than they in him). . . . *The Spirit of Christ* is another way of referring to the *Spirit of God*. (Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, PNTC [Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1988], 307-308)

dedicate and steward their bodies, and indeed their whole persons, according to the ways of God. Moreover, being priests and temples of the Spirit of God, Christians must remember that they are representatives of God as they move throughout the world, seeking to bring him his due glory.

Priesthood of All Believers

When Jesus endowed his followers with the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, he constituted them as temples and conferred upon them the identity, office, and authority of priesthood. Because the Spirit of God indwells and regenerates⁴² every new covenant member without exception (Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 36:25-27; Joel 2:28; John 20:22; Act 2), the identity, office, and authority of priesthood is granted to every member of the new covenant. All people become new covenant members and priests when they are born

⁴² New covenant Christians are without exception indwelt and regenerated by the Holy Spirit. Indwelling should not be confused with regeneration, and yet “after the glorification of Jesus, regeneration and indwelling can be seen as concurrent, though they remain distinct ministries of the Holy Spirit.” Hamilton, *God’s Indwelling Presence*, 143. All of those who comprise the new covenant people of God are regenerate Christians. This reality was not true of those in the old covenant, for Paul wrote of the old covenant Israelites: “Not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring” (Rom 9:6-7). Paul was communicating that “it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring” (Rom 9:8). That is, though every Israelite received covenant membership via his or her natural birth into the nation of Israel, not every covenant member was truly part of the remnant of believing Israelites.

The Mosaic covenant did not produce a faithful covenant people, so God’s redemptive plans anticipated a time when it would become obsolete and replaced with a new covenant. As noted above, the old covenant community was a mixed community of believing and non-believing Israelites. However, in the new covenant, every covenant member would be indwelt and regenerated by the Holy Spirit. This was the expectation of the old covenant prophets; Ezekiel, for example, spoke of a time in the future when God would cleanse all of his covenant people from their unrighteousness (cf. John 3:5), give them a new heart, put a new spirit in them, and cause them to walk in and obey his statutes (Ezek 36:25-27). The prophet Jeremiah also spoke of a future time when God would establish a new covenant with his people; he anticipated that when this would come to pass, the people would be changed at the level of their hearts, when God would write his law on the hearts of his covenant people, a reality that was apparently not yet true for those in the old covenant (Jer 31:31-34). Joel also spoke of this future time when God would pour out his Spirit on his sons and daughters, resulting in powerful manifestations of the Spirit in his people (Joel 2:28-29). Jesus further anticipated a new work of the Spirit that would come following his glorification (John 7:37-39; cf. Acts 1:4-5). All of these prophetic texts point forward to the institution of the new covenant and the inception of the church when God poured out his Spirit on all those who believed at Pentecost (John 20:22; Acts 2). Indeed, on that day, those who believed in Jesus “were all filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:4). This event established the superiority of the new covenant, a covenant where all of its members possessed the indwelling Holy Spirit and were regenerated followers of Jesus Christ. Pentecost, furthermore, stands as the point in history when the new covenant establishment of the church took place. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 70-82.

again, receive the new covenant sign of believer's baptism,⁴³ and then join and covenant with a local church congregation.⁴⁴ From this basis, a locally organized and covenanted group of priests collectively commit to maintaining regenerate church membership.⁴⁵ That is, they commit to maintaining church discipline.

Scripture provides further evidence that the new covenant people of God are all considered priests. John presents Jesus as making all of his new covenant people

⁴³ While the seed of Abraham received the covenant sign of circumcision (Lev 12:3) and were thus members of the old covenant, they were not all truly the people of God; they were the natural seed of Abraham, but not every Israelite was a spiritual seed. Members of the new covenant now relate to its covenant head, Christ, as his spiritual seed, not as his physical seed. The covenant sign of baptism is intended to be delivered only to those who are regenerated believers in Christ (Matt 28:19-20), a pattern that is evidenced in Scripture (Acts 8:5-6, 12, 26-40; 9:18; 16:33; 18:8; 22:16). See Stephen J. Wellum, "Baptism and the Relationship between the Covenants," in *Believer's Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Shawn D. Wright (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 136-37; Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 339-40. Whereas old covenant membership was the right of Israelites by birth and was not dependent on regenerating faith, new covenant membership and its covenant sign of baptism are reserved for those who have been regenerated through saving faith in Christ. Indeed, as articulated above, every member of the new covenant is a regenerated believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴⁴ Rooted in their covenant relationship with God, new covenant Christians are expected to willfully enter into covenant relationship with the local church. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 128. The reality of local church membership is evidenced at several points in the New Testament. The earliest example of the early church shows Christians gathering together—rather than remaining abstracted from fellowship with the other Christians—regularly for worship, fellowship, prayer, ministry, the breaking of bread, hearing the apostles' teaching, giving and sharing finances, belongings, and resources, and evangelism (Acts 2:42-47). Many epistles are written, not to the church at large, but rather to local churches that gathered in specific geographical regions (Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:1; Eph 1:1; Phil 1:1; Col 1:2; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1).

Additionally, the New Testament pattern shows that Christian leaders or pastors were made responsible for specific sheep; Peter wrote to the elders: "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care" (1 Pet 5:2). Paul reiterated the same message to the elders at Ephesus: "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers" (Acts 20:28). The point is that pastors were given the burden of caring for specific Christians; the pastors Peter addressed were responsible for shepherding different Christians than the pastors Paul addressed in Ephesus.

The other side of this point is that early Christians knew the specific leaders to whom they were to be submissive (Heb 3:17) and to whom they were to show honor (1 Tim 5:17). Furthermore, apostates in the early church abandoned specific fellowships (1 John 2:19), and unrepentant church members were removed from specific congregations (1 Cor 5:13). All of this evidence serves to uphold the biblical notion of church membership.

Though non-believers may associate with local churches and attend their worship gatherings, though wolves may masquerade in sheep's clothing, though tares may exist among the wheat, the overall local church gathering of new covenant priests are to do their due diligence to distinguish between those who are truly Christians and those who are not. Jonathan Leeman, *The Church and the Surprising Offense of God's Love: Reintroducing the Doctrines of Church Membership and Church Discipline* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 29-30.

⁴⁵ The purpose of this dissertation is not to make an argument for church membership. Yet, discipline requires attention to regenerate church membership. For an introduction to the doctrine, see John S. Hammett and Benjamin L. Merkle, eds., *Those Who Must Give an Account: A Study of Church membership and Church Discipline* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Academic, 2012); Jonathan Leeman, *The Church and the Surprising Offense of God's Love*; Jeremy M. Kimble, *40 Questions About Church Membership & Church Discipline* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2017).

“priests to his God and Father” (Rev 1:6), “a kingdom and priests to our God” (Rev 5:10; cf. Rev 20:6). Drawing connections to Exodus 19:5-6, John maintains that the new covenant priesthood is both kingly and priestly and “like the OT priests, now the entire people of God have free, unmediated access to God’s presence because Christ has removed the obstacle of sin by his substitutionary blood.”⁴⁶

Peter also speaks of the whole body of Christ as a “holy priesthood” (1 Pet 2:4-5), indeed a “royal priesthood” (1 Pet 2:9), who together perform the ministry of the priesthood. For those new covenant members who believe in Christ, the corporate royal priestly primogeniture, which was promised to Israel (Exod 19:5-6) and forfeited by Israel following its idolatrous covenant breach at the Golden Calf episode (Exod 32), is finally reestablished with the whole new covenant community of believers. Everyone who is “born again” (1 Pet 1:3) is included in this new covenant priesthood (1 Pet 2:4-9).⁴⁷ As Hahn notes, “with the inauguration of the new covenant in Christ, all who enter the new covenant . . . are restored to the original royal priestly primogeniture promised to Israel at Sinai (Exod 19:5-6; 1 Pet 2:5, 9).”⁴⁸

Commenting on this Petrine text, Schreiner underscores the priestly status of the individual Christian while also highlighting Peter’s emphasis on the corporate nature of the priesthood:

Peter was not thinking mainly of each individual functioning as a priest before God. The focus here is on the church corporately as God’s set-apart priesthood in which the emphasis is likely on believers functioning as priests. Western believers tend to individualize the notion of priesthood rather than seeing the community emphasis. In the Old Testament the priestly caste was limited to the tribe of Levi, and in that sense only a portion of Israel could carry out the priestly function. . . . All of God’s people are now his priests. Despite the emphasis on the corporate priesthood, what Peter said applies by implication to individuals as well. That is, all believers have direct access to God by virtue of the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We must

⁴⁶ Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 193.

⁴⁷ Scott W. Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant: A Canonical Approach to the Fulfillment of God’s Saving Promises* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 171.

⁴⁸ Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, 175.

avoid, however, focusing on the individual, for Protestants are prone to individualize the text in a way that blunts or even denies its corporate emphasis.⁴⁹

Making no distinction in class among Christian priests, Peter teaches that regenerate Christian men, women, boys, and girls are all priests, “living stones” (1 Pet 2:5), who together with other living stones and priests are being built up collectively as “a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood” (1 Pet 2:5). A biblical position accounts for the priesthood of each individual Christian while also upholding the corporate nature of the priesthood of the church.

Diversity and complementarity within the priesthood. While each Christian is in every way a priest unto God, there is nevertheless diversity and complementarity within the priesthood. That is, God designates the entire new covenant people of God as priests, and yet the group is not characterized by complete uniformity. Diversity and complementarity are found among priests in three primary areas: spiritual giftedness, office, and gender roles.

The first point of diversity and complementarity among those in the new covenant priesthood is spiritual giftedness. The body of Christ and new covenant priesthood consists of many “Levitical” priests, that is, priests descending from the tribe of Levi and from all the nations (Eph 4:8, 11; Num 8:6, 16-19; 18:6; Ps 68:8; Isa 66:20-21),⁵⁰ each of whom are given varying spiritual gifts and each whom are given to the

⁴⁹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, NAC, vol. 37 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 106-7. Adding further support to the need to uphold both the individual and corporate aspects of the priesthood, Nancy Ammerman comments on the common evangelical misapplication of the doctrine of “the priesthood of the believer,” saying,

While Martin Luther and the other reformers did, indeed, intend to impress on us that each of us can and must go directly to God, I doubt that any of them would have expected the kind of defiant individualism of the twentieth century—“Nobody can tell me what to believe; me and Jesus, that’s all I need.” The sixteenth and seventeenth century reformers never envisioned solo believers standing figuratively alone before God in prayer and Bible reading. They talked about the priesthood of *all* believers, emphasizing the equality, not the aloneness. (Nancy Ammerman, “Priests and Prophets,” in *Proclaiming the Baptist Vision: The Priesthood of All Believers*, ed. Walter Shurden [Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 1993], 56)

Ernest Best adds to this way of thinking: “Christians exercise priestly functions but always as members of a group who all exercise the same function.” Ernest Best, “I Peter II 4-10—A Reconsideration,” *NovT* 11, no. 4 (1969): 287.

⁵⁰ See the discussion and interpretation of Eph 4:8, 11 in chapter 5. In short, Paul interprets

church as gifts for the purpose of “building up the body of Christ” (Eph 4:12) for “the common good” (1 Cor 12:6). Every priest is endowed with at least one spiritual gift, for as Peter writes, “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace” (1 Pet 4:10).⁵¹ God’s “varied grace” has to do with the “varieties of gifts” of the Spirit (1 Cor 12:4) detailed in Scripture (Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 12:8-10; 28-30; Eph 4:11-12; 1 Pet 4:10-11), and these differing spiritual gifts are distributed to the members of the priesthood.⁵² Emphasis is placed on the uniqueness of the Spirit’s gifting for specific individuals: the Spirit “apportions to each one individually as he wills” (1 Cor 12:11). Thus, because of the diversity of gifts distributed among the individuals of the priesthood, each member of the church is dependent upon the others. In this way, the gifts of one priest complement the gifts of the others so that “when each part is working properly, [it] makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love” (Eph 4:16).

The second point of diversity and complementarity among those in the new covenant priesthood is that of office. Among the members of the priesthood, the two offices of pastorate and diaconate function.⁵³ The office of pastor carries with it the

Eph 4:8, 11 in light of Ps 68:8. When understood in connection to Num 8:6, 16-19; 18:6 and Isa 66:20-21, both Eph 4:8, 11 and Ps 68:8 collectively teach that the members of the new covenant priesthood represent a new order of “Levitical” priests—now comprised of people from all nations, no longer only from the tribe of Levi—who are granted gifts and are given as gifts to the church for the purpose of carrying out the ministry of the church and for building up the body of Christ.

⁵¹ Schreiner affirms the following idea:

It is also implied that each believer has received at least one spiritual gift, for Peter addressed his words to “each one” (hekastos). The notion that God has granted charismatic gifts to each believer is also Pauline (1 Cor 12:7). Even though every believer possesses at least one gift, the gifts are not necessarily the same. God’s grace manifests itself “in its various forms,” so that the diversity of gifts reveals the multifaceted character of God’s grace. (Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 214)

⁵² These passages are commonly cited in detailing the variety of spiritual gifts. See Thiselton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 936-37; O’Brien, *Letter to the Ephesians*, 298; Graham A. Cole, *He Who Gives Life: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 250; Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 538-50.

⁵³ The office of apostle is acknowledged here as a biblical office, but it is asserted that apostleship was an office that ceased during the time of the early church after the death of the last apostle since “no person today can meet the stated requirements for apostleship—being with Jesus from the outset of his three-year ministry and an eyewitness of his resurrection.” Allison, *Sojourners and Stranger*, 210. With regard to the pastorate, the New Testament uses three synonymous terms interchangeably to speak of the same office: elder (πρεσβύτερος, Acts 11:30; 15:2; 20:17; 1 Tim 5:17; Titus 1:5; 1 Pet 5:1), bishop (ἐπίσκοπος, Acts 20:28; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:7), and pastor (ποιμήν, Eph 4:11; cf. John 10:11;

responsibilities of leadership, teaching, shepherding, and intercession. While other members of the congregation may engage (or assist) in these ministries in some way, the pastors of the congregation bear the primary responsibility and burden to make certain that they are carried out faithfully. The second office in the church, the diaconate, is appointed to the office as exemplary servants of the church who have demonstrated consistent devotion to meeting all the other ministry needs of the church that are not the responsibility of the pastors. Certain derived authority (from God) is entrusted to the pastors—and to some degree, the deacons (under the leadership of the pastors)—to govern the overall body of the congregation.⁵⁴ And yet, whereas some throughout church history have sought to interject a hardline distinction between the clergy and the laity, many in the early church and throughout history have affirmed that while God has designed the church with its offices of pastor and deacon, there is nevertheless no distinction in class among those in the new covenant priesthood.⁵⁵ While there are

Heb 13:20; 1 Pet 2:25; 5:4). In Titus 1:5-7, the terms “elder” and “bishop” are applied to the same office, and in 1 Peter 5, the same church leaders are called “elders” (1 Pet 5:1), “pastors” (1 Pet 5:2), and “bishops” (1 Pet 5:2). In Acts 20:17, Paul sends for the elders (πρεσβυτερους) of the church in Ephesus to come to him. In the immediate context of Paul’s address, Paul tells the elders in Acts 20:28 to “be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers (ἐπισκοπους), to shepherd (ποιμναιειν) the church of God which he purchased with his own blood.” While the New Testament affirms only one teaching office in the church, it also affirms one office of service, the deacon (διάκονος, 1 Tim 3:12; cf. Acts 6:1-7; Rom 16:1-2). Nathan A. Finn, “The Rule of Elders: The Presbyterian Angle of Church Leadership,” *Those Who Must Give an Account*, ed. Hammett and Merkle, 214-17.

Allison affirms the interchangeability of these three New Testament words in relation to the office of elder/bishop/pastor:

The New Testament uses several words to refer to this office. Most commonly, ἐπίσκοπος (*episkopos*) and πρεσβυτερους (*presbuteros*) are used; these words are usually translated, respectively, *bishop* or *overseer*, and *elder* or *presbyter*. Another word, ποιμήν (*poimen*), is found less frequently even though its translation, *pastor*, is a common English word used in churches to refer to this office. Importantly for our discussion, the New Testament uses these words interchangeably. (Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 211-12)

⁵⁴ This understanding of the offices of pastor and deacon is largely dependent on the work of Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 211-47.

⁵⁵ Cyril Eastwood has traced the development of the theme of priesthood throughout church history, beginning with the early church and concluding with the contemporary church. He gives particular attention to the question of how priesthood has been understood in relation to the whole church versus the clergy. He argues that the early church affirmed a strong doctrine of the priesthood of every believer. However, beginning primarily with Cyprian, the church began acknowledging a greater distinction in class between the clergy and laity. This distinction remained in place throughout the Middle Ages until some began to oppose the notion during the time of the Reformation, arguing once again for a more biblical understanding of the priesthood of every believer. Cyril Eastwood, *The Royal Priesthood of the Faithful: An Investigation of the Doctrine from Biblical Times to the Reformation* (London: Epworth Press, 1963);

different roles and responsibilities among the priesthood, each priest possesses the same priestly identity and dignity as the next, regardless of whether or not he holds an office within the church.

The third point of diversity and complementarity among those in the new covenant priesthood is that of gender roles. God has assigned different and complementary roles to men and women. In short, the primary burden of spiritual leadership is assigned to qualified men in the sphere of the church (1 Tim 2:11-15; 3:2; 4:11-13; 5:17; Titus 1:9; 2:7-8).⁵⁶ In the local church, the office of pastor is reserved for qualified males as women are not permitted to teach or exercise authority over men (1 Tim 2:11-15). Paul grounds his instruction in two points: (1) the order of creation: “Adam was formed first, then Eve” (1 Tim 2:13); and (2) the sin of Eve: “Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor” (1 Tim 2:14).⁵⁷ Moreover, the reasoning for this arrangement stems from the theological understanding

Eastwood, *The Priesthood of All Believers: An Examination of the Doctrine from the Reformation to the Present Day* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1960).

⁵⁶ This pattern of gender diversity and complementarity extends not only to the male/female relationship in the church but also to the male/female relationship in the home (Eph 5:22-6:4; Col 3:18-21; 1 Pet 3:1-17). The home features a specific familial ordering in which the husbands are the heads of their wives, whom they are called to love as Christ loves the church, and wives are to respect and be subject to their husbands as the church respects and submits to Christ. This arrangement is designed with the intent of ultimately resembling the Christ-church mystery. Further, children are expected to obey their parents. In each of these familial relationships, care is to be given that authority is not exercised in a dishonorable, harsh, uncaring, or provoking sort of way. Mutual love and respect are to be extended to every member of the family.

The ecclesial gender relationship is connected with the design of the familial gender relationship. That is, “Just as husbands and fathers ought to exercise godly leadership in their human families, so wise, mature men ought to be appointed as fatherly leaders in the church.” Vern Sheridan Poythress, “The Church as Family: Why Male Leadership in the Family Requires Male Leadership in the Church,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991), 233. Furthermore, women are not permitted to be pastors of churches “because such a role would not harmonize with the general relationship between men and women in marriage” (238). As a result, “the differences between men and women within the context of marriage and family carry over into differences in roles that men and women may assume within the church.” In sum, “Male leadership in the family means male leadership in the church” (238).

⁵⁷ For an explanation of how Paul’s teaching roots this gender distinction in creation, see George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1992), 140-44.

of authority and submission within the Trinitarian relationship;⁵⁸ Paul argues, “But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God” (1 Cor 13).⁵⁹

This Complementarian viewpoint affirms that every Christian, whether male or female, is gifted as a priest by the Holy Spirit and bears great responsibility for the

⁵⁸ Wayne Grudem and Bruce Ware have popularized a view of eternal subordination among the members of the Trinity, affirming ontological equality and functional or economic subordination. Some have criticized their position, concluding that such a view entails the heresy of ontological subordinationism or Arianism. See Millard J. Erickson, *Who’s Tampering with the Trinity? An Assessment of the Subordination Debate* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009); Kevin Giles, “The Subordination of Christ and the Subordination of Women,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity Without Hierarchy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 334-52. Grudem and Ware deny these charges and contend that their views are in keeping with orthodoxy, upholding the Son’s eternal deity and denying his inferiority to the Father. Schreiner asserts that believing in a Trinitarian hierarchy “would only be a heresy if one asserted that there was an ontological difference (a difference in nature or being) between Father and Son. The point is not that the Son is essentially inferior to the Father. Rather, the Son willingly submits himself to the Father’s authority. The difference between the members of the Trinity is a functional one, not an essential one.” Thomas R. Schreiner, “Head Coverings, Prophecies and the Trinity: 1 Corinthians 11:2-16,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, ed. Piper and Grudem, 120. Schreiner insists further that because 1 Cor 11:3 refers to “Christ” and not to the “Son” the verse is referring to “Jesus’ earthly ministry, to the incarnation, and not to his eternal sonship as the second person of the Trinity,” such that the verse is in reference to “Christ’s work as a human, so that the focus is on his redemptive work instead of the inner life of the Trinity.” Thomas R. Schreiner, *1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 226-27. And yet, Schreiner notes that the “economic Trinity reflects what is true of the persons of the Trinity in their personal relations to one another. The Father is always the Father, the Son is always the Son and the Spirit is always the Spirit. The Father sends, the Son willingly goes and the Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son” (227). For Grudem’s and Ware’s teachings on the topic, see Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 248-56; Bruce A. Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, and Relevance* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 71-85.

⁵⁹ As the text relates to gender roles, Schreiner asserts that the “headship of the Father over the Son (the functional submission of the Son) grounds the relationship between men and women. . . . We have an analogy between the Trinity and male-female relationships . . . Jesus is the God-Man, and as the eternal Son of God he shares every attribute that belongs to the Father. Yet, as the eternal Son, he voluntarily and gladly submits to the Father.” Schreiner, *1 Corinthians*, 227. Though the analogy is not an exact parallel, the text affirms the equality of persons both in the Trinitarian relationships and the male-female relationship and the difference of role in the Trinitarian relationships and in the male-female relationship (226-28).

The intended meaning of the term κεφαλή (head) has been debated among Complementarians and Egalitarians. Some defend the translation “source,” others suggest “pre-eminent” or “foremost,” and others affirm “authority.” For works supporting the view that κεφαλή means “source,” see Richard S. Cervin, “Does Kephale Mean ‘Source’ or ‘Authority’ in Greek Literature? A Rebuttal,” *TJ* 10, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 85-112; Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1987), 502-505; Berkeley Mickelsen and Alvera Mickelsen, “What Does Kephale Mean in the New Testament?” in *Women, Authority and the Bible*, ed. Alvera Mickelsen (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 97-110; Catherine Clark Kroeger, “Appendix III: The Classical Concept of Head as ‘Source,’” in *Equal to Serve: Women and Men in the Church and Home*, ed. Gretchen Gaebele Hull (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1987), 267-83. In favor of “pre-iminent” or “foremost,” see Thiselton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 811-22. For the view that κεφαλή should be understood as “authority,” see Schreiner, *1 Corinthians*, 222-26; Wayne A. Grudem, “Does κεφαλή Mean ‘Source’ or ‘Authority Over’ in Greek Literature?” A Survey of 2,336 Examples,” *TJ* 6, no. 1 (Spring 1985): 38-59; Grudem, “Appendix 1: The Meaning of κεφαλή (‘Head’): A Response to Recent Studies,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, ed. Piper and Grudem, 424-76.

building up of the church. While men and women exercise their priesthood in differing and complementary ways, they have both been set apart as new covenant priests to God.⁶⁰ Though the Old Testament places significant emphasis on the male's role as priest, with the new covenant, the priestly status of women is accentuated and brought into focus, perhaps in a way unlike previous eras of redemptive history. This covenantal shift may be observed from several points.

First, Jesus demonstrates this new covenant shift as he opposes the sexism of his day. Jesus modeled what it is to show honor, love, and respect for women. While numerous examples of this exist throughout the Gospels (Luke 7:36-50; 8:2-3; 10:38-42; John 7:53-8:11; 11:5), none is clearer than Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman when he speaks with her at the well (John 4:1-45). After Jesus speaks and deals kindly with the woman, the text records that his disciples "marveled that he was talking with a woman" (John 4:27). The disciples' "unvoiced surprise that he was talking with a Samaritan woman reflects the prejudices of the day."⁶¹ Jesus opposed such a negative view of women and instead upheld their dignity.⁶² This is further illustrated in Jesus'

⁶⁰ The debate between proponents of Complementarianism and Egalitarianism has the potential to be a thorny one, particularly in a culture where radical feminism regards any form of Complementarianism, patriarchy, or view of male headship as an antiquated, offensive, oppressive, and (to some) abusive affront against women, a view they correlate with misogyny and male chauvinism. Care must be given, on the one hand, to articulate and live out a biblical ethic that upholds the dignity of women in the home, church, and society and, on the other hand, to resist the cultural pressure to disregard the clear biblical teaching regarding differing gender roles. Much has been written on the topic; some of the more helpful resources available, which articulate an evangelical Complementarian view of gender roles, are: Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth: An Analysis of More Than One Hundred Disputed Questions* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004, 2012); John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*; Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 223-40. For resources in favor of Egalitarianism, see John G. Stackhouse Jr., *Partners in Christ: A Conservative Case for Egalitarianism* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2015); Stackhouse, *Finally Feminist: A Pragmatic Christian Understanding of Gender*, Acacia Studies in Bible and Theology (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005); John Temple Bristow, *What Paull Really Said About Women: An Apostle's Liberating Views on Equality in Marriage, Leadership, and Love* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988); Richard Clark Kroeger and Catherine Clark Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman: Rethinking 1 Timothy 2:11-15 in Light of Ancient Evidence* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1992); Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, and Gordon D. Fee, eds., *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity Without Hierarchy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004).

⁶¹ Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 227.

⁶² Illustrating the common sexist attitude tomorrow women of the day, Carson writes, Some (though by no means all) Jewish thought held that for a rabbi to talk much with a woman, even his own wife, was at best a waste of time and at worst a diversion from the study of *Torah*, and

ministry as he chooses to include women in his teaching audiences, involving them in his teaching illustrations, and applying his teaching to them (Matt 10:34ff.; 13:33; 22:1-2; 24:41; Luke 15:8-10). Jesus called on Martha to cease from her labors in serving those in her household so that she might join Mary and the others who “sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to his teaching” (Luke 10:39). Again, in a counter-cultural act, Jesus allows women to touch him as he heals them from their ailments (Mark 5:25-34; Luke 13:10-17).⁶³ In another striking event, following his resurrection, Jesus chooses to appear first to a woman—Mary Magdalene—rather than to men.⁶⁴

Second, the remainder of the New Testament agrees with Jesus’ positive views of women and demonstrates how, with the new covenant, the priestly role of women is to be valued. While maintaining diversity among the genders (Eph 5:22-33), Paul affirmed

therefore potentially a great evil that could lead to Gehenna, hell (*Pirke Aboth* 1:5). Some rabbis went so far as to suggest that to provide their daughters with a knowledge of the *Torah* was as inappropriate as to teach them lechery, *i.e.* to sell them into prostitution (Mishnah *Sotah* 3:4; the same passage also provides the contrary view). Add to this the fact that this woman was a Samaritan (*cf.* notes on v. 9), and the disciples’ surprise is understandable. Jesus himself was not hostage to the sexism of his day. (Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 227)

⁶³ In these texts, Jesus touches and heals one woman on the Sabbath and another woman who had been menstruating for an extended period of time. In both occasions, the old covenant regulations concerning menstruation and touching someone who is menstruating, (Lev 15:19-27) and working on the Sabbath give way to a new covenant approach to showing love and compassion to women in need. James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2002), 163-66; I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1978), 556-59.

⁶⁴ Borchert comments on this event:

It is intriguing, indeed, that John opens his appearance accounts not with well-known male disciples but with a woman at the tomb. Yet that is the point of the envelope. The evangelist wrapped the Mary Magdalene story around Peter and the beloved disciple and thus creatively focused on bringing the two stories together in such a way that he could highlight two people, the beloved disciple and Mary (a man and a woman). The beloved disciple believed without an appearance, and Mary Magdalene recognized the Lord . . . when her name was called (20:16). Thus, in his creative way the evangelist has continued to highlight the presence of both men and women in the company of Jesus. (Borchert, *John 12-21*, 296)

Carson adds,

It is worth recalling that the Synoptists, who mention several women at the tomb, agree in naming Mary Magdalene first. This probably reflects the early church’s memory of the fact that she was the first person to see the resurrected Jesus. Her witness was not as greatly utilized in the primitive preaching as was that of, say, Peter, doubtless owing to the fact that a woman’s evidence was not normally admissible in court (*e.g.* Mishnah *Rosh ha-Shanah* 1:8). The Evangelists have nevertheless taken pains to honour her, and thoughtful Christians will remember that God delights to choose what the world deems foolish to shame the wise, so that no-one may boast before him (*cf.* 1 Cor. 1:27-29). (Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 636)

the mutual equality of the genders (Gal 3:28). In so doing, Paul sought to abolish any feeling of masculine superiority or feminine inferiority.⁶⁵ He further showed that his ideology of male/female equality was more than mere platitudes when he records that he “labored side by side” with women in the work of the gospel (Phil 4:3; cf. Rom 16). While reserving the teaching and leading office of the pastorate for the male, he may have opened up the serving office of the diaconate to both genders.⁶⁶ Furthermore, Paul taught that the gifts of the Spirit are not gender-specific.⁶⁷ Moo asserts,

The New Testament makes it plain that Christian women, like men, have been given spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:7-11). Women, like men, are to use these gifts to minister to the body of Christ (1 Peter 4:10); their ministries are indispensable to the life and growth of the church (1 Corinthians 12:12-26). There are many examples in the New Testament of just such ministries on the part of gifted Christian women . . . To be true to the New Testament, then, the contemporary church needs to honor those varied ministries of women and to encourage women to pursue them.⁶⁸

In this covenantal shift, the New Testament calls on women to use their gifts to engage in numerous forms of ministry.⁶⁹

Scripture affirms that all new covenant Christians are priests. And yet, both diversity and complementarity within the body of the new covenant priesthood are also affirmed. The entire body of priests works together to perform the ministry God has given to the church to execute. Christ poured out the Holy Spirit on his disciples,

⁶⁵ Bruce notes Paul’s teaching on the equality and diversity among the genders when he writes, “In the family the cooperation of husband and wife, father and mother, depended (as it still does) on the distinction between them. But superiority and inferiority of status or esteem could have no place in the society whose Founder laid it down that among his followers ‘whoever would be first . . . must be a slave of all’ (Mk. 10:44).” F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1982), 190.

⁶⁶ Allison favors the position that the diaconate, when understood to be an office dedicated to the service of the church and not one of teaching/leadership, is open to both genders. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 244-47.

⁶⁷ Though the exercise of their gifts is governed by Scriptural parameters, “there is no gender-specific gift or gifts.” Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 225.

⁶⁸ Douglas Moo, “What Does it Mean Not to Teach or Have Authority Over Men?: 1 Timothy 2:11-15,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, ed. Piper and Grudem, 179.

⁶⁹ John Piper lists over one hundred kinds of ministries that are open to women. See John Piper, “A Vision of Biblical Complementarity: Manhood and Womanhood Defined According to the Bible,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, ed. Piper and Grudem, 47-50.

constituted them as new covenant temples, conferred upon them his own priesthood, and effectively brought about the birth of the church. In this new covenant, every Christian is regenerated, indwelt by the Spirit, and is a member of the new covenant priesthood.

Regenerate Christians gather with, covenant with, and submit to the mutual accountability of a local church, seeking to maintain its regenerate church membership; the means whereby new covenant churches accomplish this is church discipline.

The Ministry of the New Covenant Priesthood: Church Discipline

The new covenant priesthood is entrusted with the responsibility of executing all the priestly ministries associated with the office. In what follows, it is shown that the main corpus of the priest's ministries is encapsulated by the new covenant practice of church discipline. Such discipline, both its formative and corrective aspects, is rooted in and expressive of the church's identity as a priesthood. The new covenant ministry of the priesthood is, thus, largely carried out through the exercise of church discipline.

The new covenant priesthood maintains solidarity with the priesthoods of prior epochs while also advancing toward God's eschatological and world-encompassing plan of redemption. Indeed, the priestly identity that has characterized each of the priesthoods from previous eras remains consistent with that of the new covenant. Still the new covenant priesthood features elements of transformation in God's progressive plan of redemptive history. One of the key ways this transformation is manifested is church discipline. New covenant priests exercise church discipline, and will continue to do so until the end of the age, as they guard the holiness of the temple of God and the people of God by attending to the Word of God, border management, sacrifice, and mediation. But first church discipline must be defined.

Defining Church Discipline

Church discipline entails two distinct but interrelated facets—formative and corrective discipline. Both are essential to a full understanding of church discipline. One without the other undercuts the intent of church discipline altogether. Both require some explanation.

Formative discipline. The exercise of church discipline begins with the practice of formative discipline⁷⁰ in which the goal is to progressively transform the disciple into the image of Christ (Eph 4:11-16). Such formative discipline occurs in a variety of settings, both in the corporate setting—involving expository preaching, gospel liturgy, the observance of the ordinances, singing hymns of praise, and the like—and in the day-to-day mundane rhythms of life.⁷¹ Formative discipline involves the holistic discipleship of the Christ follower so that his mind, heart, and behavior experience sanctifying transformation⁷² as he lives and serves as a priest among the membership of the church⁷³ and throughout the world.⁷⁴ Formative discipline seeks to be a preventive

⁷⁰ Wills notes how, “traditionally, Baptists thought of discipline as ‘corrective discipline,’ the censure of transgressions among members. Antebellum Baptists recognized that the church also had the task of ‘formative discipline,’ the spiritual training of its members.” Gregory A. Wills, *Democratic Religion: Freedom, Authority, and Church Discipline in the Baptist South, 1785-1900* (New York: Oxford, 1997), 135.

⁷¹ Basil Manly Sr. explained it this way: “Discipline means instruction. It therefore includes the whole order of a Christian church. Preaching is discipline; the administration of the ordinances is discipline; the infliction of church censures is discipline; and all the ways in which the edifying of the body of Christ is promoted, constitute discipline.” Basil Manly, “Circular Letter,” *Christian Index*, March 24, 1843, 179.

Formative discipline takes place in numerous settings. Practically speaking, formative discipline occurs in the mundane day-to-day activities of life, and it occurs in times of great joy or in times of great sorrow and suffering. It happens in conversations at the table when families sit down for evening supper, when individuals listen to a sermon, read their Bibles, or attend a Bible study class, when a Christian disciplines himself to be on time for work or to be a good steward of his body and overall health, when a person engages in any form of ministry or is the recipient of service, when a man and woman celebrate their marriage or the birth of their child, or when great tragedy strikes one’s health, family, or marriage. Life circumstances and experiences present Christians with the opportunity to respond in obedience or disobedience. Formative discipline takes place when God’s uses his people and/or his word to positively shape the Christian amidst all these life circumstances.

⁷² Rom 8:29; 12:2; 1 Cor 15:49; Phil 3:21; Col 3:10; 1 John 3:2.

⁷³ Findley Edge expands on what is meant by formative church discipline, noting the responsibilities both of the individual and the congregation:

Formative church discipline is that process of teaching and training by which the Christian is increasingly formed in the image of Christ. . . . This process is lifelong in scope and is not optional in

means for the Christian in helping him to abstain from falling into waywardness. It is a preparatory discipline that sets out to ready the individual to withstand temptation whenever it may come. Together with his covenant church family, the individual is spurred along in his aim of persevering in the faith until the end.

Corrective discipline. Unfortunately, the goal of formative discipline is not always achieved—either because of the church’s faulty human judgment in admitting an unbeliever into the membership or because a true believer persists in unrepentance and needs to be called to account—and so corrective discipline is required. Providing a definition for corrective church discipline, Gregg Allison writes, “Church discipline may be defined as a proleptic (or anticipatory) and declarative sign of the divine eschatological judgment, meted out by Jesus Christ through the church against its sinful members and sinful situations.”⁷⁵ Allison explains that as a proleptic sign, corrective church discipline functions as a present forecasting of the expected eschatological judgment to occur in the last day. Further, as a declarative sign, though not infallible, it serves as the church’s pronouncement of judgment against the unrepentant church

nature. . . . Formative discipline is exercised in the Christian community as the members express genuine concern for one another and become dynamically involved with one another in deep interpersonal relationships, recognizing that all are held accountable by God for their stewardship of life. Its purpose is to enlighten, encourage, stimulate, support, and sustain one another and the group in the discipline under which they live and in the fulfillment of their divine mission. (Findley B. Edge, *A Quest for Vitality in Religion: A Theological Approach to Religious Education*, rev. ed. [Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 1994], 178-79)

Edge, thus, emphasizes the requisite “process” of formation and its progressive nature that occurs over the lifetime of a Christian in the context of Christian community. Each priest, therefore, has the duty to tend to his own soul, and yet he also has the obligation to tend to the souls of those in his church. Moreover, the entire congregation shares in the responsibility of soul care for all of the church members.

⁷⁴ Thomas R. Schreiner, “The Biblical Basis for Church Discipline,” in *Those Who Must Give an Account*, ed. Hammett and Merkle, 106.

⁷⁵ Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 181. Allison credits Jeremy Kimble for this notion. Kimble was inspired by Michael Horton’s comment, “Just as God’s future ‘intrudes’ on the present through Word and sacrament (the inauguration, sign, and seal of the new creation and the wedding feast), excommunication is an eschatological sign of the last judgment in the present.” Michael S. Horton, *Eschatology and Covenant: The Divine Drama* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 272. See Jeremy M. Kimble, *That His Spirit May Be Saved: Church Discipline as a Means to Repentance and Perseverance* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013), 2n5.

member, resulting in his or her expulsion from the church fellowship. Jeremy Kimble elaborates on these ideas:

Ecclesial discipline, particularly the step of excommunication, serves as a warning of potential eschatological judgment. Thus, one must hold in constant tension the reality of discipline serving as a warning, not as a definitive declaration, knowing that the church is fallible and Christ has been given ultimate authority to judge. Also, however, the authority granted by Christ to the church must be properly respected and seen, when done correctly, as a potential pointer to eternal judgment should the sinner refuse to come to repentance.⁷⁶

As a priesthood, the church has been given the “keys of the kingdom” (Matt 16:19; 18:15-18) and granted the authority by Christ to judge the members of the church as it extends or withholds forgiveness (John 20:22-23); this priestly prerogative of gatekeeping is rooted in Old Testament priestly texts where the priests controlled the gates of the temple (1 Chr 9:22-27). Indeed, these Levitical priests worked, taking shifts guarding the points of entry to the temple, seeking to ensure that only qualified people passed through the gates.

Isaiah further provides a background for the new covenant practice of corrective discipline as he speaks of Eliakim as a priestly figure. God bestows Eliakim with “authority” and clothes him with priestly garb. Eliakim, who is set in place to serve God under king Hezekiah, is said to have “the key of the house of David on his shoulder,” which he is to use to control who could and could not enter into the presence of the king: “He shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.” As Eliakim is installed as a priest, the priestly keys are being taken away from unworthy Shebna and given to Eliakim (Isa 22:15-25). Understanding these texts as the Old Testament background for church discipline, Beale postulates, “could the idea be that the keys to the true temple are being taken away from old Israel and transferred to true Israel, Jesus and his followers?”⁷⁷ It certainly seems to be the case.

⁷⁶ Kimble, *That His Spirit May Be Saved*, 117-18.

⁷⁷ G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, NSBT 17 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 188.

This corporate authority to act in judgment, which carries with it the divine presence (Matt 18:20; John 20:22), not only includes forgiveness of sins (i.e., loosing) but also the retention of sin (i.e., binding) and, thus, the judgment and expulsion of unrepentant sinners from the assembly (1 Cor 5; Matt 18:18; 16:19; John 20:23).⁷⁸ Being given the keys to the kingdom⁷⁹ and the authority to bind and loose, “the church is given the authority from Jesus to remove those members who are unrepentant.”⁸⁰ Such authority to carry out the expulsion and excommunication of an impenitent church member requires that the church be granted the prerequisite right to exercise judgment over the member. Though the authority of the church is derived from and is subordinate to that of Christ, and hence is not ultimate, the judgments of the church are nevertheless to be regarded with a sense of gravity and are to be received with the utmost seriousness.

As it concerns corrective discipline, the church has specifically been charged with the duty of judging those who are part of the covenant community of faith. That is, Christians are responsible for judging other Christians, particularly those who are in covenant relationship with their specific local church.⁸¹ Paul explains that “the church is responsible to . . . discipline those within its care”⁸² and considers the notion to be self-

⁷⁸ Hamilton, *God’s Indwelling Presence*, 168.

⁷⁹ After Peter confesses Jesus as “the Christ, Son of the Living God” (Matt 16:16), Jesus promises that he will build his church and give Peter and the other apostles the “keys of the kingdom.” Jesus’ mention of “keys” likely concerns authority and judgment (Isa 22:22; Luke 11:52; Rev 3:7; 9:1; 20:1). Jesus tells Peter, “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matt 16:19). Though this authority is directed to Peter initially, the same authority is given to the entire church just two chapters later (Matt 18:18).

⁸⁰ Benjamin L. Merkle, “The Biblical Basis for Church Membership,” in *Those Who Must Give an Account*, ed. Hammett and Merkle, 41.

⁸¹ Reserving the authority of judging unbelievers—those outside the church—to God (1 Cor 5:13), Paul writes, “For what have I to do with judging outsiders” (1 Cor 5:12)? Paul assumes the obvious answer to his rhetorical question is “nothing” and removes all doubt when he says, “God judges those outside” (1 Cor 5:13). That is, Paul teaches that “it is not the church’s responsibility to judge outsiders, in the sense of censuring their behavior and undertaking discipline to change them.” Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2010), 219. Indeed, “such people make no pretense of being Christians, and God alone will judge those.” Richard L. Pratt Jr., *I & II Corinthians*, HNTC, vol. 7 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 77.

⁸² Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 219.

evident when he asks a rhetorical question: “Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge” (1 Cor 5:12)? Lenski suggests that this judgment takes place at all times among the church membership: “And all of us are judged by our brethren, namely as to whether we really belong within or not, whether we really are the brethren we profess to be.”⁸³ That is, Christians consistently make judgments of one another, seeking to uphold the faith profession of each of its covenant members. When any covenant member settles into a lifestyle of impenitence, the church is duty-bound to make a judgment on the status of the legitimacy of his profession. Though judgments should be made with care, they are nevertheless necessary for the good of the sinner and the health of the congregation.⁸⁴

The hope is that the church’s actions prompt repentance, such that restoration is reached; indeed, the intent of corrective discipline is “to restore [the unrepentant sinner] to the fellowship of the redeemed community.”⁸⁵ However, when repentance and restoration is not achieved, corrective discipline requires the priesthood to protect the church body, removing the unrepentant sinner from the covenant membership of the congregation.

⁸³ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1963), 231.

⁸⁴ Some decry the idea of judgment altogether, citing “Judge not” (Matt 7:1). Jeremy Kimble writes, “The idea of judging another person is seen as arrogant and narrow-minded, and this verse is often used as ammunition against a concept like church discipline. This, however, would be a misreading of the text.” Kimble, *That His Spirit May Be Saved*, 135. Judgment should be offered from a heart of mercy and love, with the good of the other in mind, by those who are walking in the Spirit (i.e., “those who are spiritual”; Gal 6:1). Paul exhorts those “who are spiritual” among the community of faith—those who are spiritually mature: those Christians who walk in the Spirit and are led by the Spirit—to confront those who have been “caught in any transgression.” Paul, thus, “impresses on them that one test of true spirituality is a readiness to set those who stumble by the wayside on the right road again in a sympathetic and uncensorious spirit.” Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 260. And yet it is essential to remember that “gentleness must not be confused with weakness.” Thomas R. Schreiner, “The Biblical Basis for Church Discipline,” 115. The call to gentleness in judgment does not remove the church’s responsibility to engage in judgment. To the contrary, Paul’s admonition is to engage in judgment, but to do so with the appropriate goal in mind. The objective of corrective church discipline and judgment is not excommunication; instead, it is the restoration of the sinner. Judgment, when enacted appropriately, is a loving gesture toward the one caught in sin because the church genuinely longs to see that person restored to a proper relationship with God under the lordship of Christ.

⁸⁵ Schreiner, “The Biblical Basis for Church Discipline,” 106.

In terms of biblical support for the practice of corrective discipline, Matthew 18:15-20 serves as the foundational text.⁸⁶ Jesus presents a progressive four-step process that is to be followed when carrying out corrective church discipline. First, the one who has been sinned against meets privately with the guilty party and seeks his repentance.⁸⁷ Second, the innocent party brings one or two others along to again pursue repentance.⁸⁸ If these steps do not succeed in bringing about repentance, a third step is required in which the guilty party and his misdeeds are brought before the church.⁸⁹ If the guilty individual is absent from the church conference, then the members of the church take a fourth step and are given the chance to seek the repentance of the individual on their own. If

⁸⁶ While this text forms the foundation for the practice, other texts lend support to formulating the doctrine and practice. Heb 12:1-14 establishes the point that God disciplines the ones he loves. The writer of Hebrews points out that living a life under God's discipline is essential to living a Christian life and that it is actually good for the Christian. Thus, church discipline stems from the fundamental idea that God disciplines his own. Paul addresses matters of corrective church discipline with regard to sexual immorality (1 Cor 5; cf. 2 Cor 2:5-11), sloth and refusal to work (2 Thess 3:6-15), divisiveness (Titus 1:10-16), sinning leaders (1 Tim 5:19-20), and faithlessness (1 Tim 1:18-20).

⁸⁷ Jesus explains the first step of the process: "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone" (Matt 18:15). This first step requires a private conversation between the offended and the offender; the sin is mentioned and repentance is sought. If repentance is reached, then the matter is resolved (Matt 18:15). Eleazar Savage helpfully classifies five different types of offenses and recommends how each offense should be handled:

Every offence is, on the whole, minor, requiring gentle admonition and forbearance; or private, requiring private correction, but justifying no farther proceedings, for want of evidence; or strictly personal, requiring the employment of the three steps of labor, according to [Matthew 18:15-20], if the wrong be persisted in; or public, requiring the notice and public correction of the church; insufferable, demanding prompt exclusion for the honor of Christianity among men. (Eleazar Savage, *Manual of Church Discipline*, 2nd ed. [Rochester, NY: Sage, 1845], 19)

⁸⁸ If the offender does not repent, then a second step is demanded, which requires bringing along one or two witnesses (Matt 18:16). As Schreiner notes, "It is not entirely clear whether they are brought in because they are witnesses to the original sin or if they function as witnesses in the sense that they support the original charges being made." Schreiner, "The Biblical Basis for Church Discipline," 108. Because the first step requires a private confrontation, the latter option seems most likely. Interestingly, the word translated "witnesses" here in Matt 18:16 is *μάρτυς*, whereas the New Testament uses other words for "eyewitnesses," including *αὐτόπτης* (Luke 1:2) and *ἐπόπτης* (2 Pet 1:16). Either way, the witnesses add their voices in pleading for the sinner to repent.

⁸⁹ If the matter is not resolved, then a third step follows in which the privacy of the guilty party is no longer honored, and the church is made aware of the charges and what has transpired in the previous two meetings (Matt 18:17). The guilty party, if present, should be allowed to make his case during this stage. The church, after hearing from those involved and after having had a chance to cross-examine those involved, should be allowed to make a congregational decision on the matter.

repentance is not reached, then the church should reconvene and move to “let him be as a Gentile and a tax collector” (Matt 18:17) and excommunicate the unrepentant member.⁹⁰

Of the examples of corrective discipline recorded in Scripture, perhaps the most instructive instance is recorded in Paul’s first letter to the church at Corinth when he tells the church to mete out judgment on one of its members who was living in grievous sin. A man was guilty of incest—“a man has his father’s wife” (1 Cor 5:1). In such cases when church members remain in a lifestyle of impenitence, and when the church judges that a member’s profession is illegitimate based on his impenitence, then that church member must endure the appropriate consequences. Paul immediately renders a judgment against this man’s unrepentant behavior, saying that this sort of sin “is not tolerated even among pagans” (1 Cor 5:1). Rather than withholding judgment as the Corinthians had been doing, Paul chastised them asking, “Ought you not rather to mourn?” (1 Cor 5:2) and proceeded next to spell out what the Corinthian church must do to in response to the sin of their incestuous church member. Paul does not ignore the sin or the sinner; he confronts the sin and renders a judgment against the sinner. The sinner is judged to be guilty, and he must pay the consequences: he is to be handed over to Satan, he is to be removed and expelled from the covenant membership of the church, and he is to be excommunicated. All of this is to be done for the good of the sinner and for the protection of the whole congregation: the “church must expel the wicked man in the hope of regaining him and, above all, to protect its standing before God and the world.”⁹¹

⁹⁰ Treating the excommunicated member as a Gentile and tax collector “means to treat him . . . as unredeemed and outside the Christian community.” Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 279. He is removed from the fellowship and membership of the church. While the church most certainly continues to love the one whom they excommunicated and seek his repentance—just like with every other unbeliever—there is a relational shift that has taken place between the church and the excommunicated. The church should not fellowship with him as though he is a believer. Instead, while the church should “continue to reach out to these people and call them to repentance,” the church must also uphold the relational shift that has occurred so “that he may be ashamed” (2 Thess 3:14; Blomberg, 279). Paul’s advice in such a scenario is instructive: “Do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother” (2 Thess 3:15). The Christian brother has a duty to the excommunicated: warning him that unless he repents, he should anticipate the eschatological judgment to be meted out against him.

⁹¹ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 221.

The first consequence to be paid by the unrepentant sinner is that he be delivered “to Satan” (1 Cor 5:5). Paul’s teaching here calls to mind Jesus’ prior teaching on the matter when he taught that an unrepentant church member ought to be regarded by the church as a “Gentile and tax collector” (Matt 18:17)—an unbeliever. Delivering the man to Satan “means that he is removed from the sphere of salvation and that he resides in Satan’s sphere.”⁹² That is, he is no longer to be considered a Christian and is thought to be outside the realm of salvation. Having rejected the lordship of Christ, he has revealed his allegiance to his true master Satan, the “ruler of this world” (1 John 5:19) and the “god of this age” (2 Cor 4:4). There is no use pretending that the individual belongs to the lord Jesus since his lord is, in practice, Satan.

The second consequence meted out against the impenitent church member is his removal from the fellowship and membership of the church (1 Cor 5:2, 13). When the church makes a decision to exercise its authority, rooted in an authority derived from Christ’s, to expel one of its impenitent members, the church collectively and “explicitly enacts a formal pronouncement as a speech-act of verdict and directive,”⁹³ declaring the reality of the sinner’s impending eschatological judgment that awaits him unless he repents. His removal from the covenant fellowship is a declaration that he is not only being cut off from the fellowship of the church but that he is also being cut off from fellowship with the head of the church, Christ.

When Paul urges the Corinthian church saying, “Purge the evil person from among you” (1 Cor 5:13),⁹⁴ he is quoting a common expression found throughout Deuteronomy (13:5; 17:7; 19:19; 21:21; 22:21; 24:7; cf. Judg. 20:13) in which the individuals are not only driven out or expelled from the covenant community, they

⁹² Schreiner, “The Biblical Basis for Church Discipline,” 116.

⁹³ Thiselton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 388.

⁹⁴ The idea Paul communicates is that he “wants the incestuous man to be removed, *out of your fellowship*, literally, ‘out of your midst.’” Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 202.

endure the just consequences of the rule of *lex talionis* and, in these cases, the death penalty. Pratt explains Paul's application of these old covenant principle to the new covenant church:

In Old Testament Israel, God ordained execution as the means by which the nation was to purge itself of severe wickedness. Paul applied these standards of holiness to the church, God's New Testament people, but he applied the law somewhat differently by recommending excommunication rather than execution. Nevertheless, the fact that he used language typical of death sentences from the Old Testament reflects that he considered excommunication in the New Testament age to be quite serious.⁹⁵

The new covenant shift is severe, and yet it is gracious, such that when the unrepentant sinner is excised from the community and turned over to the "destruction of the flesh" (1 Cor 5:5), the destruction is focused not on the whole creature (as was the case in some instances in the Old Testament) but rather on the person's domineering sinful nature, with the hope that the individual's allegiance to his fleshly desires would be destroyed and that he would be restored to a life of repentance, faith, and purity, one marked by walking in the Spirit rather than in the flesh.⁹⁶

While Paul does not endorse the physical execution of the impenitent sinner, he is certainly declaring the reality of his spiritual deadness when he commands the church to purge the evil person from the covenant community. The unrepentant sinner is cut off from the spiritual life that is only found within the bounds of the covenant people

⁹⁵ Pratt, *I & II Corinthians*, 78. Schreiner adds to this notion when he writes, In the Old Testament the command to purge someone from the community appears in civil contexts and often refers to the death penalty. Paul applies this injunction in a fresh way to the church of Jesus Christ. Believers are not summoned to put an evil man to death, for the church is not a civil and political entity. Rather, believers are to remove the person from membership in the church, thereby preserving the holiness of the church. The purity of Israel was maintained by putting to death those who violated certain stipulations, but the purity of the church is not realized through physical violence. The unrepentant person is removed from the community so that it might be a "new batch" (1 Cor 5:7). (Schreiner, "The Biblical Basis for Church Discipline," 126)

⁹⁶ Schreiner writes, "Paul's hope is that the old Adam, i.e., the power of sin which rules in the life of the offender, will be dethroned by the act of church discipline. In other words, the acts of discipline will be the means by which the man is aroused from his sin so that he turns in repentance to the Lord. Thereby he will be saved from God's wrath on the day of the Lord." Schreiner, "The Biblical Basis for Church Discipline," 117.

of God with Christ as their covenant head. Only spiritual death is found outside the boundaries of God's new covenant temple, removed from God's new covenant people.

The third consequence endured by the unrepentant sinner is his excommunication from the covenant community, which is urged "not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one" (1 Cor 5:11). Paul's counsel means the church is to refrain from treating him as though he were one of their own: "What concerns Paul is that believers do not treat one who stubbornly persists in sin in the same way they did when he was a member in good standing. The church must not give the impression to the one being disciplined that 'everything is just fine,' so that life with him proceeds just as it did before."⁹⁷

Paul's intent is not to urge the Corinthian Christians to dissociate from all unbelievers,⁹⁸ for he reminds them that he had written them in a previous letter not to discourage them from spending time with the sinners of the world (1 Cor 5:9) but rather to discourage them from spending time with the impenitent sinner "who bears the name of brother" (1 Cor 5:11). That is, Paul wants the church to refrain from intimate

⁹⁷ Schreiner, "The Biblical Basis for Church Discipline," 125. This overall idea seems to be what is implied when Paul discouraged the church from sharing a meal with the individual. While the Lord's Supper is surely in Paul's mind when he instructs the church "not even to eat with such a one" (1 Cor 5:11), since it would clearly be against his teaching to offer the Lord's Supper to one living in outright rebellion against God (1 Cor 11:17-34), it is also likely that Paul has regular mealtime in mind. While the sharing of meals with an unbeliever may be regarded as a means of hospitality and evangelism to the unbeliever, it also carries with it the notion of fellowship and unity among believers. Paul's intent here is to discourage Christians from sharing a meal with the impenitent person so as to wrongly communicate to him that all is well with his soul. Being banned from the fellowship table, both with regard to the Lord's Supper and ordinary meals, communicates to the individual that all is, in fact, not well with his soul, that he remains out of good standing with the church, that his impending divine judgment is still anticipated, and that his repentance is demanded before he may be readmitted into fellowship and good standing with the new covenant people of God.

⁹⁸ Affirming this point, Ciampa and Rosner write, "These words state clearly that his instruction in the letter was not concerned with having associations with outsiders. There are of course some forms of social intercourse with unbelievers that Paul would not allow, such as dining with them in an idolatrous temple (see 10:14-22), but that is not his point here." Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 216.

fellowship with those who claim to be Christians and yet refuse to live under the lordship of Christ and under the discipline of the church.

Paul's counsel to excommunicate the individual may not entail an absolute elimination of the person from all interaction with the members of the church.⁹⁹ The hope is that by dissociating themselves from such sinners, the impenitent individuals "will be ashamed of their behavior and turn from their sin,"¹⁰⁰ having been warned (2 Thess 3:14-15).¹⁰¹ Any ongoing relationship with the impenitent person must, therefore, be the kind of relationship that continually reminds him of his impenitence, one that warns him of the severity of his situation, and one that regularly upholds the position of the church regarding his anticipated impending eschatological judgment.¹⁰²

When exercised together, the formative and corrective elements constitute a complete and faithful model for church discipline. And it is these two aspects of church discipline that are key expressions of the ministry of the priesthood. When the new covenant priesthood is carrying out its ministry faithfully, its members will carry out

⁹⁹ Paul gives a similar instruction to the members of the church of Thessalonica who were dealing with individuals who were lazy and unwilling to work. To the person who was unwilling to work, Paul told the church to "have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed" (2 Thess 3:14).

¹⁰⁰ Schreiner, "The Biblical Basis for Church Discipline," 124.

¹⁰¹ The church's ongoing posture toward the individual should be one that does "not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother" (2 Thess 3:15). Instead of writing the individual off entirely, Paul counsels the church to warn him "evidently in the hope that he will repent and be restored to full fellowship." Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 216.

Lenski seems to disagree with this idea when he writes of the incestuous individual in the church at Corinth, "Here the principle is to be applied 'entirely': no association of any kind with such a man." Lenski, *First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 228. This position may be too extreme. While Paul clearly counsels the church to maintain some measure of separation from the excommunicated individual, Paul's counsel to continue to "warn" the impenitent individual seems to leave room for an ongoing relationship of some kind.

¹⁰² Indeed, "The salvation of the person being disciplined is at stake, and this must be communicated in interactions with him. . . . If he does not repent, he will not be saved on the last day." Schreiner, "The Biblical Basis for Church Discipline," 125. With this motivation in mind, excommunication may be the most loving thing that the church can do for the impenitent person. Jonathan Leeman asks, "Could it be that the exclusivistic nature of church discipline, when rightly practiced, is, in fact, loving? Also, though church discipline can no doubt be motivated by things other than love, could it be that the members of a local church who love one another and the world in a godly fashion will sometimes be required to pursue the course of excommunication?" Leeman, *The Church and the Surprising Offense of God's Love*, 119.

church discipline as they serve God by guarding the holiness of his temple and his people through attending to the Word of God, sacrifice, mediation, and border management.

God's Word

At the heart of church discipline and the overall priestly ministry is the priests' responsibility to attend to the Word of God. God's Word is central to the formation of a Christian, and it is key to the correction of a wayward church member. New covenant priests are responsible for attending to God's Word personally and for speaking and applying God's Word to the church's entire membership. In so doing, they serve to guard the holiness of their personal and corporate temples.

Personal holiness. New covenant priests have an obligation, first, to attend to personal holiness. Peter calls new covenant priests to adhere to the same commitment to personal holiness expected of old covenant priests (Lev 11:44; 17-20): "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy'" (1 Pet 1:14-16). As a "holy priesthood" (1 Pet 2:5; cf. Exod 19:5-6), new covenant Christians are consecrated to God and are to be committed to separating themselves from earlier sinful behaviors and passions, purifying themselves in obedience to the truth (1 Pet 1:22), and yearning for the "spiritual milk" of God's Word (1 Pet 2:1). Contrary to those who "do not believe" (1 Pet 2:7) and "stumble because they disobey the word" (1 Pet 2:8), the new covenant "royal priesthood" is regarded as a "holy nation" (1 Pet 2:9), and its members are called to bring God glory as they engage in "good deeds" (1 Pet 2:12).

New covenant priests are individually responsible for disciplining themselves to know, obey, and share the truths of Scripture with others. At several points throughout the New Testament writings, individual commitment to God's Word is expected; Timothy, for example, is challenged to remain committed to the "sacred writings" (2 Tim

3:14-15).¹⁰³ His devotion to God's Word did not end with personal study; instead, he was exhorted to personally teach it to others as a means of church discipline, to use it to reprove or rebuke others in sin, to correct or redirect straying sinners back to the way of obedience, and to train others in the ways of righteousness so that they might be equipped to live lives of devotion to Christ (2 Tim 3:16-17).¹⁰⁴ Paul, thus, makes the connection between personal attendance to the Word of God and one's personal responsibility to properly steward it in relation to others in the church, ministering the Word of God among those in the covenant community. Moreover, the interrelatedness of both formative and corrective church discipline is observed: the Word of God serves both to transform Christians and to correct them in their disobedience.

With the inauguration of the new covenant, Christians are granted new power (Ezek 36:27) to obey God's Word as the Holy Spirit indwells them and gives them the ability to obey, to grow in sanctification, and to persevere in their faith,¹⁰⁵ work that is

¹⁰³ One paradigmatic example of this is found when Paul reminds his pupil Timothy of his past devotion to studying God's Word and exhorts him further to continue in his personal devotion to the Word of God, saying, "But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings" (2 Tim 3:14-15). From the time of his childhood, Timothy had been dedicated to learning God's Word, the "sacred writings," and now he is challenged to persevere in that discipline. Commenting on Timothy's devotion to God's Word from a young age, Towner writes, "Training in the holy writings has been a way of life for Timothy, stretching back to his early years. Longevity and tradition are factors bearing intrinsic value. . . . What Timothy has learned (from Paul, his family members, and others) is . . . in accordance with the Scriptures in which he was trained." Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2006), 583.

¹⁰⁴ Knute Larson, *I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, HNTC, vol. 9 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 306.

¹⁰⁵ As new covenant priests attend to God's Word, the end result is that they should grow in obedience and sanctification. With the inauguration of the new covenant, things change with regard to one's overall ability to obey God's Word. Previously, the old covenant people of God were marked by disobedience. Speaking of the nature of the coming new covenant, God said, "I will put my Spirit within you, and *cause* you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules" (Ezek 36:27). This promise—that God would indwell his people with his Spirit and give them power to obey his word—has come to be realized now that the new covenant has been instituted and the Spirit has come and indwelled all believers (John 20:22). Thus, in addition to setting the new covenant people of God apart as temples and priests, the indwelling Spirit presently works in Christians to give them power—moreover, to cause them—to obey God's Word and to grow in sanctification (Gal 5:22-23; 2 Thess 2:13; 1 Pet 1:2). Commenting on the unprecedented work of the Holy Spirit, as takes place in the new covenant, Allison writes of the old covenant expectation that the Spirit would eventually come and "indwell the people of God and cause them to obey instead of disobey." Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 71.

synergistically accomplished through human responsibility and God's grace.¹⁰⁶ As Christian priests attend to the Word of God, they pursue, grow in, and persist in obedience until the end,¹⁰⁷ becoming holistically like Christ.¹⁰⁸ Consistent growth in one's personal holiness, along with a commitment to persist in holiness, is essential to the life of a priest, to church discipline, and to his effort to guard the holiness of God's temple.

Corporate holiness. New covenant priests are also responsible for attending to God's Word corporately, communicating and applying God's Word among those in their covenant church community. The corporate expression of attendance to God's Word manifests itself in various ways. First, from the church's inception, all of the members

¹⁰⁶ Both God and the new covenant believer participate in bringing about sanctification and perseverance in the life of the believer (Phil 2:12-13). God plays the primary role (1 Thess 5:23), while Christians play both a passive (Rom 6:13, 19; 8:13; 12:1) and active role (Rom 8:13; 1 Cor 6:18; 2 Cor 6:14; 7:1; Phil 2:12-13; 1 Thess 4:3; 1 Tim 4:7; Heb 12:14; 2 Pet 2:15; 1 John 3:3) in their pursuit of sanctification (a perspective that contradicts much of what is taught by proponents of Keswick theology). See Andrew Naselli, *Let Go and Let God: A Survey and Analysis of Keswick Theology* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2010); Naselli, "Keswick Theology: A Survey and Analysis of the Doctrine of Sanctification in the Early Keswick Movement," *DBSJ* 13 (2008): 17-67.

¹⁰⁷ As a Christian person attends to the Word of God and grows in sanctification, the new covenant expectation is that he also "perseveres until the end" (Matt 24:13). Genuine Christians are kept by God's power and always persevere in their faith as Christians until the end of their earthly lives (John 3:36; 5:24; 6:38-40, 47; 10:27-29; 17:12; Rom 8:1, 30; Eph 1:13-14; Phil 1:6; 1 Pet 1:5; 1 John 5:13). And yet, Scripture calls for an active, persevering, and continuing faith throughout the entirety of one's life (Matt 10:22; John 8:31-32; Col 1:22-23; Heb 3:12-14; 1 Pet 1:5; 1 John 2:19.). Once again, the cooperation and synergism between God's purposes in grace and human responsibility to persevere come into play. See Thomas R. Schreiner and Ardel B. Caneday, *The Race Set Before Us: A Biblical Theology of Perseverance and Assurance* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001).

¹⁰⁸ Sanctification is meant to be holistic (1 Thess 5:23). That is, every part of the human person is to be impacted by God's work of sanctification, including one's spirit (1 Cor 7:34; 2 Cor 7:1), intellect (Rom 12:2; 2 Cor 10:5; Phil 1:9; Col 1:10; 3:10), emotions/affections (Rom 6:17; Gal 5:22; Eph 4:31; 1 Pet 2:11; 1 John 2:15), will (Phil 2:13), and body (1 Thess 5:23). Many evangelicals have neglected Paul's teaching concerning the importance of the human body. Gregg Allison identifies what he believes is the source of the problem: the influence of Platonic philosophy on the church. Rather than embracing a negative view of the body, Allison contends that Christians need to embrace a more holistic understanding of Christian human embodiment. Gregg R. Allison, "Toward a Theology of Human Embodiment," *SBJT* 13, no. 2 (2009): 4-17.

“continually devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching” (Acts 2:42),¹⁰⁹ indicating a church-wide and consistent commitment to studying God’s Word.¹¹⁰

Second, some members of new covenant churches are expected to bear more teaching responsibility than others. The Spirit of God does not distribute the gift of teaching to all new covenant members (1 Cor 12:29). The responsibility of teaching is limited to those who have proven themselves to be especially gifted, in part, because it carries with it the burden of being judged with greater strictness (Jas 3:1).¹¹¹ Not all those who aspire to teach actually possess the giftedness, capacity, or authority to do so (Col 2:18; 1 Tim 1:6-7; 2:12-15; 3:2; 4:11-13; 5:17; 6:4; Titus 1:9, 10-16; 2:7-8; Jas 3:1). Thus, there is a sense in which specific individuals—and not every member of the congregation without exception—are entrusted with the responsibility of teaching the congregation.

Third, there is another sense, in which every priest is to speak truth to one another. Christians are told to teach and admonish each other through singing songs to “one another” (Col 3:16; cf. Eph 5:19) and to collectively speak the truth to one another

¹⁰⁹ The steadfastness and overall single-minded dedication of the early church to “continually” study God’s Word indicates the regularity and the intense effort that they exerted in this discipline.

¹¹⁰ Explaining what the “apostles’ teaching” likely included, Keener writes, Luke may provide examples of the apostles’ teaching in Acts 3:11-26; 4:8-12; and 5:29-32, though these messages are directed toward outsiders. He can safely assume in the apostles’ teaching the teachings of Jesus already included in his Gospel. Because the apostles’ teaching provided the historic link to Jesus’ ministry (1:21-22), it is essential for Luke in emphasizing the continuity between the mission of Jesus and his church. For Luke’s audience, moral ‘teaching’ may have resembled lectures in a philosophic school (cf. 19:9; 1 Cor 14:24-35); for the apostles within his narrative world, it probably most resembled the sort of midrashic exposition with which they would have been most familiar in the synagogues. Some scholars distinguish teaching here from proclamation, which in Acts tends to be especially deliberative (seeking converts), but it is possible that the apostles also ‘proclaimed’ to believers (Acts 20:25). In a synagogue context, even evangelistic preaching would include Scripture exposition (cf. 7:2-53; 13:16-47). (Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary: Introduction and 1:1-2:47*, vol. 1 [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012], 1001-1002)

¹¹¹ As Richardson observes, the responsibility of teaching in the early church was limited to those who had been appointed to the task after proving themselves to be capable: “To be a teacher within the church is something for which one is recognized; it requires mastering the Scriptures and their application to faith and life. Because self-deception is something all believers are prone to and, more importantly, because of the harsh judgment against those who teach falsely, this limitation should be imposed.” Kurt A. Richardson, *James*, NAC, vol. 36 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 146.

(Eph 4:25), a corporate duty that is key to achieving the body's spiritual growth (Eph 4:15). Collectively, the members of the church—though certainly led by their pastors—are responsible for preserving sound teaching and guarding against false teaching (1 Tim 6:20-21; 2 Tim 1:8-15; 2:15-18).¹¹² Thus, in each of these ways, ministering the Word of God to one another is the responsibility of the entire community of faith—the priesthood of all believers. Indeed, attending to God's Word stands as one of the primary ways in which new covenant priests carry out their duty as guardians and as they uphold the discipline of the church.

Sacrifice

New covenant priests also engage in the priestly ministry of sacrifice as they seek to carry out their overall ministry of church discipline. Though Christ laid down his life, offering his once-for-all atoning sacrifice for his followers that consummately rendered all previous blood sacrifices obsolete, the New Testament indicates that the new covenant priesthood is still duty-bound to offer sacrifices to God. However, the sacrifices of the new covenant priesthood are not blood sacrifices. Instead, the priests of the new covenant are endowed with the responsibility “to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 2:5).

New covenant priests offer sacrifices “by virtue of the work of the Holy Spirit.”¹¹³ While some maintain that these offerings are “spiritual... in the sense of non-

¹¹² Paul consistently exhorted Timothy in his priestly ministry as it concerned guarding the truth of God's Word. In his second letter to Timothy, there was a real threat of false teaching in their midst: the heretics Hymenaeus and Philetus were teaching that the resurrection had already occurred (2 Tim 2:17-18). Their influence had by this point impacted the church there in Ephesus; indeed, “Paul compared the spread of the heresy to the spread of gangrene through the body. The term for gangrene, used only here in the New Testament, describes the death of bodily tissues due to the loss of blood supply. Just as gangrene progressively brought death to the human body, the sickening progress of the heretical teaching worked havoc with the body of Christ in Ephesus.” Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, NAC, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 216. Failure to guard the truth of God's Word in the church is a negligence of the priestly duty to attend to God's Word and to the task of church discipline, which results in the harm of the corporate body of the church.

¹¹³ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 107.

material,”¹¹⁴ they are spiritual as offered in response to the Holy Spirit’s work in and through their lives. As will be demonstrated below, new covenant priestly sacrifices, like old covenant sacrifices, may have material qualities.¹¹⁵ As they carry out church discipline, new covenant priests offer sacrifices to God in their worship, fellowship, service, evangelism, and teaching.

Worship. First, worship is one aspect of the new covenant priesthood’s sacrificial ministry. Indeed, “acceptable worship” is to be offered to God “with reverence and awe” (Heb 12:28). Priests are to “continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name” (Heb 13:15). Such terminology likely has as its background the Psalms (49:14, 23; 50:14, 23), which commends the Israelites to offer sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving to God, and Hosea 14:3 where God’s priestly people are encouraged to approach him with sacrifices of the “fruit” or the “vow” of their “lips.”¹¹⁶ Because Christ offered himself as the once-for-all atoning blood sacrifice, “Now the sacrifice of thanksgiving may be offered by all who have appropriated the perfect sacrifice of Christ for themselves and without the addition of animal sacrifices.”¹¹⁷

Worship to God is expressed in many and varying ways throughout Scripture:

¹¹⁴ J. N. D. Kelly, *The Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, Black’s New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 1969), 91. Kelly neglects the physical aspects of new covenant priestly offerings. While he properly notes the New Testament’s focus on offering sacrifices from a sincere heart, and even the immaterial character qualities and internal motivations that lead to the sacrifices, he seems to disregard the tangible and physical nature of the new covenant sacrifices mentioned in Scripture. As Kelly indicates, the physical sacrifices offered in the old covenant were pleasing to God only if they were offered with the proper motivation (Pss 50:14; 51:16-19; 69:30ff.; 141:2; Hos 6:6; Mic 6:6-8). The same is true in the new covenant, even when physical sacrifices are offered to God.

¹¹⁵ This is not to suggest that the priestly offering of the Eucharist is a physical offering in the sense that Roman Catholics suggest. Instead, as it is explained below, Christians make physical offerings to God when they offer their bodies up as living sacrifices, when they share their physical goods with others, and the like.

¹¹⁶ David L. Allen, *Hebrews*, NAC, vol. 35 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2010), 622.

¹¹⁷ Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2010), 527.

singing songs of praise and thanksgiving to God (Eph 5:19-21; Col 3:16-17), the preaching and teaching of God's Word, prayer, and observance of baptism and the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:42-47; 10:4). Though worship certainly involves "a person's conscience, mind, imagination, heart, and will,"¹¹⁸ Scripture indicates that worship involves the whole person, including a person's body; Allison makes this point when he writes,

Scripture . . . presents an active, physical involvement in worship: the raising of hands, indicative of both blessing God (Ps 134:1) and pleading for his help and mercy (Ps 28:1-2; 88:8-10); kneeling, bowing, and falling down, exhibiting humility and abject shame before the Lord (Rev 4:9-11; 5:8-14; Ezra 9:5-6; 2 Chr 6:12-14; Ps 35:13-14; Neh 8:5-6); dancing or leaping, manifesting intense joy (Ps 149:3-4; Exod 15:20-21; 2 Sam 6:14-17); and clapping and shouting praise to God (Ps 47:1-2; 66:1).¹¹⁹

While much of what is said in the Bible concerning how worship is expressed is rooted in the Old Testament writings, there is no good reason to conclude that these physical expressions of worship were not also part of the normal experience of new covenant Christians.¹²⁰

Fellowship. Second, new covenant Christians offer sacrifices to God as they participate in fellowship with the body of Christ. The earliest Christians were committed to fellowship, hospitality, and caring for the needs of the church; this was true to such an extent that believers "had all things in common" (Acts 2:44-45).

This kind of generosity among the fellowship is elsewhere regarded as the offering of priestly sacrifices. The writer of Hebrews urged his readers to be charitable

¹¹⁸ Allison, "Toward a Theology of Human Embodiment," 9. Noting that William Temple's definition of worship focuses exclusively on these matters to the neglect of the human body, Allison demurs and considers such a definition to be hampered by gnostic thinking. He cites Temple's definition of worship: "Worship is the submission of all our nature to God. It is the quickening of conscience by his holiness; the nourishment of mind with his truth; the purifying of imagination by his beauty; the opening of the heart to his love; the surrender of will to his purpose." William Temple, *Readings in St John's Gospel* (1939; repr., Wilton, CT: Morehouse Barlow, 1985), 67.

¹¹⁹ Allison, "Toward a Theology of Human Embodiment," 9-10.

¹²⁰ Such a statement depends, in part, on how one understands the "regulative principle of worship" and the "normative principle of worship." For a discussion of these issues, see Edmund P. Clowney, *The Church*, *Contours of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 120-23; Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 428-33.

and to share what they had; such good deeds are “sacrifices . . . pleasing to God” (Heb 13:16). Similarly, the Philippian church cared for Paul, supporting his ministry through gifts and financial provision (Phil 4:14-20) that he viewed “a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God” (Phil 4:18). These sacrifices and God’s response to them reminds the reader of Old Testament sacrifices in which the sacrifices emitted a pleasing aroma to God that served to stay his wrath and sooth his anger against human sin (Gen 8:21; Exod 29:18; Lev 4:31); while the Christ’s atoning sacrifice has decisively propitiated God’s wrath against new covenant believers, these sacrificial acts of fellowship still function to “please” God.

In all of these examples, Christians who share their resources with other Christians are said to offer sacrifices and offerings to God. These expressions of *koinonia* are, on the one hand, tokens of friendship from the giver to the recipient, and on the other hand, true sacrifices that are pleasing to God. In this way, this “social act of friendship is a religious act of worship.”¹²¹ These sacrifices “can no longer be measured simply in terms of financial value or social value. God’s pleasure in the gifts reframes them with spiritual, divine significance.”¹²² They are fragrant offerings, sacrifices that are both acceptable and pleasing to God.

Service. Third, new covenant Christians offer sacrifices to God when they serve him. There is a sense in which every pure act of service to God may be considered a sacrifice to him. Paul underscores this point when he urges the Roman church to present their bodies as a “living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God” (Rom 12:1). While the offering of sacrifices typically brings to mind the offering of animal victims that have been slain, the living sacrifice Paul here has in mind for Christians is “the glorious life

¹²¹ G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2009), 323.

¹²² Hansen, *Letter to the Philippians*, 324.

they now live with Christ” that has been “given over entirely to God”¹²³ in service to him. That is, one’s life ought to be entirely consecrated and dedicated to the service of Christ. When this happens, one’s consecrated life of service to Christ is regarded as a sacrifice.

Furthermore, offering one’s body to God as a living sacrifice is considered to be one’s “reasonable service” to God (Rom 12:1). This “service” that is rendered unto God is meant to encompass “the entire range of the Christian’s life and activity.”¹²⁴ Thus, for Paul, this meant that he viewed everything he did in his life in service to God in sacrificial terms.

In this text, the call to offer “living sacrifices” is not necessarily a call for Christians to pursue martyrdom but is rather a call to live one’s life in service to God, presenting one’s whole self in service to him as a sacrifice that is acceptable to God.¹²⁵ And yet, it does imply that a Christian should be willing to embrace a life of suffering for the sake of Christ; recognizing the old covenant language of animal sacrifice in which an animal suffered on behalf of another (Lev 4:1-35), Beale suggests that offering oneself as a living sacrifice implies Christians’ “willingness to suffer for their faith.”¹²⁶ Furthermore, on two other occasions, Paul does view the possibility of his martyrdom as being presented to God as a sacrifice. To the Philippians, he writes of his life being “poured out as a drink offering” (Phil 2:17; cf. Num 4:7; 6:15-17; 15:4-10, 24; 28:7-10, 14-15, 24, 31; 29:6, 11, 16-39). Writing to Timothy from prison and believing that his death was likely very near, Paul reports, “I am already being poured out as a drink

¹²³ Morris, *Epistle to the Romans*, 434.

¹²⁴ Morris, *Epistle to the Romans*, 434.

¹²⁵ Colin G. Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, ed. D. A. Carson, PNTC (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2012), 461-62.

¹²⁶ Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 389.

offering, and the time of my departure has come” (2 Tim 4:6).¹²⁷ “Paul was aware that he was slowly dying in God’s service, and he felt that the shedding of his blood in martyrdom would complete the drink offering to God. He viewed the entire ordeal as a libation to God.”¹²⁸ If Paul’s service to God meant that his life would be required of him, then he was willing to serve God by offering it as a martyr’s sacrifice. Martyrdom, for Paul, was another way that he could serve God by offering himself to God as a sacrifice.

Paul was determined to sacrifice his life in service to Christ no matter the circumstance and no matter the consequence. This was true both as it concerned his life and his death: “It is my eager expectation and hope that . . . Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil 1:20-21). Paul dedicated and offered up his existence to Christ as a sacrifice. Understood this way, all of what Christians do in service to Christ can be considered acts of sacrifice to him.

Evangelism. Fourth, new covenant priests offer sacrifices to God when they engage in evangelism and win the lost to Christ. They offer as sacrifices to God those whom they have won to Christ. This is exactly how Paul describes his work:

I have written you quite boldly on some points to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles. He gave me the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God. I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done. (Rom 15:15-18)¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Contrary to Paul’s discussion in Phil 2:17, “the present tense of the verb [in 2 Timothy 4:6] for ‘being poured out’ suggests Paul’s awareness that this was an act then underway.” Lea and Griffin, *I, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 247.

¹²⁸ Griffin, *I, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 247.

¹²⁹ The New International Version (NIV) is quoted here rather than the English Standard Version (ESV) because it more clearly communicates the notion that it is the converted Gentiles themselves that Paul as a priest offers to God as a sacrifice and not simply an offering that comes from the Gentiles (i.e., offering *of* the Gentiles).

Anticipating a fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy where God says that he is going to "gather all nations and tongues" (Isa 66:18), will bring "brothers from all the nations as an offering to the LORD (Isa 66:20), and "take" them "for priests and Levites" (Isa 66:21), Paul expects that his "priestly duty" of evangelism among the Gentiles would yield the sacrificial fruit of converted Gentiles.

As a missionary to the Gentiles, Paul's "mission [was] to win the non-Jewish population of the world to Christ as his offering to God." That is, Paul sought "to bring the Gentiles to God as one who would go and 'possess' the nations for Christ." In doing so, "he offered them as a 'priest,' dedicating them and setting them apart (sanctifying them) through the ministry of the Holy Spirit to be God's own possession."¹³⁰ The "Gentiles who were once regarded as 'unclean'" and would have, thus, been an inappropriate sacrifice to present to God "are now 'clean' through their faith in the gospel and sanctification by the Holy Spirit."¹³¹ Paul's offering to God consisted of once-pagan individuals who, by the regenerating and purifying power of the Holy Spirit, were made holy and suitable sacrifices to God in response to Paul's work of evangelism.¹³² As a priest and evangelist, Paul procured and offered the sacrifice of human beings to God, men and women who were once God-haters and were now made to be sons and daughters of God. Therefore, when priests win the lost to Christ, they present the physical sacrifices of born-again Christians to God.

Teaching. Fifth, new covenant priests offer sacrifices to God as they teach others in the ways of Christ. Paul understood his work as an evangelist to include more than winning the lost to Christ; it included a fuller picture of discipleship, which involved

¹³⁰ Kenneth Boa and William Kruidenier, *Romans*, HNTC, vol. 6 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 448.

¹³¹ Kruse, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 538.

¹³² Mounce, *Romans*, 266.

teaching new converts to obey the word of Christ (Matt 28:18-20).¹³³ This was Paul's way of preparing, consecrating, and making holy the sacrifices he would offer to God.

For Paul, this meant "leading the Gentiles to obey God by what [he had] said and done" (Rom 15:18). That is, "Paul depicts himself as a 'priest,' . . . who by his preaching and teaching of the gospel seeks to ensure that [the Gentiles] are acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit as they embrace his message."¹³⁴ Thus, when new covenant priests do the work of the Great Commission, make new disciples, and teach them to obey observe all that Christ has commanded them, they present the physical sacrifices of born-again Christians who have grown in holiness and Christlikeness as they have been taught and have come to understand and obey the ways of Christ. The sacrificial work of the priest, thus, requires more than obtaining conversions; it also includes the ongoing formative and corrective work of discipleship, teaching those who have been converted to know, love, and obey the truths of God.

No matter what sacrifice is offered to God, it should be presented to him with the correct motivations (Ps 51:16-17). Most certainly, as guardians of the holy place and of the people of God, new covenant priests must labor to offer pure sacrifices to God. Any sacrifice must, furthermore, be offered to God through Jesus Christ, the great high priest (Heb 13:15). Indeed, as Peter teaches, new covenant priests must "offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet 2:5). Nelson rightly notes that

¹³³ Beale observes what he believes to be a temple context in Matt 28:18-20 as he interprets it in light of 2 Chr 36:23. He draws three parallels between the two texts: "(1) both Cyrus and Jesus assert authority over all the earth; (2) the commission to 'go'; and (3) the assurance of the divine presence to fulfil the commission." Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 176. Of course, Jesus' authority is greater than that of Cyrus; Jesus' authority entails his own presence going with those who set out to fulfill the Great Commission. Additionally, Beale notes, "If the temple construction of 2 Chronicles is in mind, then this is an implicit commission for the disciples to fulfil the Genesis 1:26-28 mandate by rebuilding the new temple, composed of worshippers throughout the earth" (176-77). Thus, as new covenant priests offer sacrifices to God as they teach others in the way of Christ, they are functionally extending the reach of God's temple throughout the world.

¹³⁴ Kruse, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 538.

“their acceptability to God is not a matter of their own qualities, say of being without blemish. The grounds for their acceptability instead center on Jesus.”¹³⁵

The sacrifices of the new covenant priesthood, therefore, constitute a significant aspect of their overall ministry of formative and corrective discipline. These sacrifices make up the regular day-to-day experience of the Christian life as Christians offer sacrifices to God through their worship, fellowship, service, evangelism, and teaching.

Mediation

Though Christ became the “one mediator between God and men” (1 Tim 2:5; cf. Heb 7:25), there is still a sense in which new covenant priests continue the work of mediation as they approach God through Christ. As priests of old labored as mediators, interceding on behalf of the people of Israel, priests of the new covenant continue to make intercession. In the same way that priests burned incense as they offered their prayers in the earthly sanctuary (Ps 141:2; Luke 1:9-11), John envisages the burning of incense accompanying the “prayers of all the saints” in the heavenly sanctuary (Rev 5:8; 8:3-4).

The New Testament speaks of the mediatorial work of the new covenant priests in terms of prayer or intercession. Perhaps gleaned from Christ’s model prayer (Matt 6:9-13), the early church was urged to “be constant in prayer” (Rom 12:12) and to “continue steadfastly in prayer” (Col 4:2). Clearly, Scripture’s emphasis on the call to regular and disciplined prayer indicates that prayer ought to be central to the church’s formative discipline. Throughout the New Testament, the new covenant priesthood is exhorted to engage in intercessory prayer on behalf of themselves individually and on behalf of the church. In both cases, such prayer contributes to the church’s spiritual

¹³⁵ Richard D. Nelson, *Raising Up a Faithful Priest: Community and Priesthood in Biblical Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 163.

formation and its overall formative discipline. Scripture also stresses the need for priestly prayer in the cases of corrective discipline and presents a model of priestly prayer for the redemption of the world.

Intercession for oneself. Paul taught and modeled how priests should pray for themselves: “In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God” (Phil 4:6). Paul’s instruction is given as a remedy to their apparent anxiety regarding the welfare of Paul and Epaphroditus (Phil 1:12; 2:26) and threats of persecution (Phil 1:29-30).¹³⁶ Paul’s solution for their anxiety is that they commit to praying, offering their supplications, petitions, and requests to God. Today’s Christians, thus, should be heartened to pray for themselves, to present their needs and requests, along with their thanksgivings, to God. As contemporary priests, Christians must be reminded of the immense privilege they enjoy—direct access to God through Jesus. They may bring their individual petitions before God on their own wherever they find themselves and do not need to visit a geographical site, temple structure, or specially appointed priest. Christians should be encouraged to believe that their prayers are being heard by God and that they are serving an important purpose in carrying out the will of God. And so, they should not neglect this great gift and stewardship, being quick to bring “everything” to God in prayer.

Paul modeled this in his own life as he prayed for himself in response to his “thorn in the flesh” (2 Cor 12:7-9). Though the details are uncertain concerning what Paul’s “thorn” actually was,¹³⁷ it is clear that Paul initially longed for it to be removed

¹³⁶ Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, 289-90.

¹³⁷ Many have surmised that the “thorn” must have been some sort of bodily ailment, perhaps a pain in the ear or head, malaria, epilepsy, or debilitated vision. Others conclude that it must have been a psychological ailment, possibly a bout with anxiety or depression. Still others think his “thorn” might have been a personal adversary, perhaps an opponent of his ministry such as members of the Judaizers or perhaps even a past estranged relationship. See Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 519-22; Philippe H. Menoud, “The Thorn in the Flesh and Satan’s Angel (2 Cor 12.7),” in *Jesus Christ and the Faith: A Collection of Studies*, trans. Eunice M. Paul, Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series 18 (Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1978): 19-30.

from his life. After pleading with God three times to be delivered from his thorn, he comes to realize that the thorn would not be removed and that he would need to submit to God's will, purpose, and plan for his life. Today's Christians should learn from Paul's scenario, realizing that they do not always know what it best. The reality is that Christians should do their best to discern the will of God, pray according to what they believe the will of God to be, and then believe that God will ultimately carry out his own plan according to his perfect wisdom, trusting him with the results.¹³⁸

And yet, while Paul's intercession for himself did not always yield the results he originally hoped for, his continued expectation is that his prayers would yield tangible results. After many years of longing to see the church in Rome (Rom 15:23), he writes to them expressing this deep desire and mentions that if it is God's will, he will eventually come to them (Rom 1:10). Just as in the case with his "thorn," "the progress of his life and ministry is determined by the will of God, not simply his own plans."¹³⁹ Paul was content to submit to God's will in all things, even concerning the details of his ministry. Paul would eventually reach Rome and preach the gospel there, but "not in the way the apostle might have planned (Acts 25:9-12) nor in circumstances he might have chosen (Acts 28:16-31)."¹⁴⁰

In each of these cases, as individual Christians pray for themselves, they learn dependence on God. All the while, these priestly prayers serve to accomplish God's purposes for them, essentially aligning their thoughts with God's will. Certainly, as Paul

¹³⁸ Paul's mention of praying three times may denote his earnestness, persistence, and devotion to prayer. It is also possible that Paul is drawing a parallel between his experience and that of Christ in Gethsemane, who ultimately learned to accept the will of God:

Paul may be drawing a deliberate parallel to the threefold prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane. As Jesus accepted the cross through fervent prayer, so Paul has resigned himself to submit to God's will about his weakness and no longer makes this request. Times come in our lives when we must learn to accept what is inescapable and then listen for what God is saying to us through it. We might find that we are mistaken about what we think is best for us and for God's work. (Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 522-23)

¹³⁹ Kruse, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 61.

¹⁴⁰ Kruse, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 62.

prayed, he learned to embrace obedience and to accept God's plans and purposes, an experience that surely served to accomplish lasting spiritual formation in his life (2 Cor 12:8-10). Christians today should do the same. God desires that his priests speak to him; indeed, he has granted the privilege to all of his priests to bring their petitions to him. His desire is that his followers trust his will and depend on him as the good Father who cares for his children.

Intercession for the church. The vast majority of the New Testament writings regarding intercession concern exhortations for Christians to pray for the church, indeed, to pray for one another. Paul urges the Ephesians to make “supplication for all the saints” (Eph 6:18). He asks several of the churches to offer prayers to God on his behalf¹⁴¹ and encourages the churches by ensuring them that he was praying for them.¹⁴² He also wrote to remind Timothy that he was praying for him (2 Tim 1:3) and to Philemon, Apphia, and Archippus that he was praying for them (Phil 1-6). The church prayed for Peter while he was in prison (Acts 12:5). James instructs the believers to “pray for one another” (Jas 5:16) and encourages them, saying, “The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working” (Jas 5:16). Thus, Christians are made to believe that their prayers are working to accomplish God's good purposes for them.

The church's prayers for one another play a vital role in bringing about the formation of its members into Christlikeness. Jesus taught the church to pray in this way, asking the Father to preserve his followers amidst temptation and against evil (Matt 6:13; cf. 26:40-41). Following Jesus' example, Paul prays that the Corinthian church would “not do wrong” (2 Cor 13:7). As guardian-priests, Christians pray to God on behalf of the church, asking him for the church's protection and that God would guard the church

¹⁴¹ Rom 15:30; Eph 6:19-20; Col 4:3; 1 Thess 5:25; 2 Thess 3:1-2; cf. Heb 13:18.

¹⁴² Rom 1:9-10; 2 Cor 13:7-9; Eph 1:15-23; 3:14-21; Phil 1:3-6, 9-11; Col 1:3, 9; 1 Thess 1:2; 2 Thess 1:11-12.

against temptation, Satan, and from all evil.¹⁴³ Carrying things further, Paul prays not simply that the Ephesians would abstain from sin but positively that they would be strengthened to understand the fullness of the love of Christ (Eph 3:14-21). Paul prays for the Philippians that their “love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that [they] may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ” (Phil 1:9-10).

In all of these instances, the church is encouraged to minister to one another as priests, approaching God with their petitions and requests. As it was with priests of the old covenant, the new covenant priests are exhorted to believe that their intercessions before God are heard and have the power to bring about real change for those on whose behalf they are praying.

The communal focus of priestly prayer was clearly of great importance for the early church, and it continues to be of great importance today. As priests, today’s Christians must take seriously their responsibility to intercede on behalf of one another. Believing that God is attending to the church’s prayers, Christians should have confidence that their prayers are accomplishing much good for the church. Indeed, prayer is one of the greatest tools the church possesses to employ in today’s spiritual battle, pleading with God to intervene in the lives of his people.

Intercession by the church in corrective discipline. While most of the church’s prayers in the New Testament concern matters of formative discipline, Jesus directs the church to offer intercessions in scenarios when corrective discipline must be enforced. Following Jesus’ teaching on corrective discipline in Matthew 18:15-18, he encourages those in the church who are exercising corrective discipline that their prayers regarding the disciplinary action will be honored: “Again I say to you, if two of you agree

¹⁴³ Matt 6:13; cf. John 17:15; 2 Thess 3:3; 2 Tim 4:18.

on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them” (Matt 18:19-20).

Christ promises his presence to those priests who are seeking to faithfully carry out corrective discipline. Jesus’ promise of his presence comes as a great comfort to those who are embarking on what is always a very difficult exercise: he will not abandon them to themselves but will instead be present, bringing aid to the church as they carry out his will in corrective discipline.

Christ’s promise of his presence in carrying out corrective discipline is accompanied by his promise to answer the church’s prayers as they relate to the disciplinary act, a promise that brings great comfort to those involved in executing the disciplinary act: “The promise to the church that its unified prayers seeking God’s will and his guidance for each step of the process will be heard and answered, encourages the church to proceed despite the many difficulties it is sure to encounter.”¹⁴⁴ Jesus’ promise is not that any wish will be granted whatsoever for those asking, as though he were some sort of “genie in a bottle.” Instead, “Jesus reiterates that actions of Christian discipline, following God’s guidelines, have his endorsement.”¹⁴⁵

As the church seeks to obey the Lord in carrying out church discipline, they must, therefore, saturate the entire disciplinary process in prayer. The matter is clearly of great importance, both for those being disciplined and for the church. The members of the church, thus, need to seek God’s will in the matter, giving their best effort to discern the truth. If restoration does not occur, then the church should move forward in confidence, believing that God is near and that he sanctions the disciplinary action. In many cases, today’s churches endure severe backlash from the excommunicated individuals and from their communities for enacting corrective discipline (i.e., lawsuits, reputation smearing,

¹⁴⁴ Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 187.

¹⁴⁵ Blomberg, *Matthew*, 281.

etc.). This likelihood should not be an impediment to proceeding with the action since Christ has sanctioned the measure and has promised his presence to those who seek him in prayer.

Intercession for unbelievers. New covenant priests also engage in the priestly ministry of praying for the salvation of non-Christians. Because of Christ's meditation and God's desire for his people's salvation, Paul urges "that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people" (1 Tim 2:3-5). In something of a shift from old covenant priests interceding specifically for the covenant people of God, new covenant priests are instructed to pray for those outside the covenant people with the hope that they might become covenant members (Matt 5:44-45; cf. John 10:15-16). In fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant promises pertaining to the future expectation that God's redemptive plan would one day incorporate "all the families of the earth" (Gen 12:3; 28:14), such that "all the nations of the earth" would be blessed (Gen 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; cf. Jer 4:2) through Abraham's offspring (Gen 22:18), Jesus Christ comes as that "offspring" (Gal 3:16) to offer himself up on the cross as an atoning sacrifice so that salvation would not only be made possible for the covenant people of Israel but also so that "God would justify the Gentiles by faith" (Gal 3:8). Thus, in the new covenant, priests offer prayers to God, petitioning him to do as he promised, to bring salvation not only to the people of Israel but also to the Gentiles.

New covenant priests are, thus, committed to "expanding the sacred sphere of God's presence in order that others would experience it and come into the sacred temple themselves."¹⁴⁶ In this way, "Believers are priests in that they serve as mediators between God and the unbelieving world."¹⁴⁷ As priests who are interested in increasing the

¹⁴⁶ Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 399.

¹⁴⁷ Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 399.

borders of the divine sanctuary throughout the world, this new covenant priesthood prays for God's grace to be extended to the nations.

Such a priestly posture was reflected in Paul's desire for all peoples to be saved, even his blinded Jewish kinsmen (Rom 9:1-3). Indeed, he prayed for them: "My heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved" (Rom 10:1). Paul's longing was to win all peoples to Christ and ultimately to produce more priests for God, since "when unbelievers accept the church's mediating witness, they not only come into God's presence, but they begin to participate themselves as mediating priests who witness."¹⁴⁸

Today's priests ought to be committed to praying for unbelievers. Both in their private prayer lives and in their gathered corporate services of worship with the church, priests must not neglect to intercede before God on behalf of both Jews and Gentiles, praying that the lost might be found. Prayers should be made not only for their salvation but also that the churches, and the individuals that comprise the churches, be granted the motivation, the boldness, and the power to proclaim the gospel to unbelievers as a means to their salvation.

Altogether, the ministry of mediation functions as one important aspect of the new covenant priesthood's effort to carry out the discipline of the church. Moreover, priests strive to maintain the holiness of God's temple and his people. To that end, priests engage in the ministry of intercession, pleading with God to accomplish his purposes in the church and throughout the world. They achieve this as they pray for themselves, for the church, for the process of corrective discipline, and for unbelievers.

¹⁴⁸ Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 399.

Border Management

At the heart of the ministry of the new covenant priesthood is the duty to attend to the management of the border of God's sanctuary. That is, priests are custodians and champions of God's sanctuary, upholding and preserving its sanctity and working to make it all that God intends for it to be. They set out to guard the holiness of God's sanctuary and his people while also laboring to enlarge the footprint of God's sanctuary throughout the world. Priests attend to border management as they set out to fulfill the cultural mandate, as they engage in the work of the Great Commission, as they protect against external attacks, and as they exercise corrective church discipline.

The cultural mandate and border expansion. First, the new covenant priesthood attends to its priest-king ministry of border management as it carries out the cultural mandate. Stemming from God's command to Adam and Eve to "rule over" the created order (Gen 1:28), this cultural mandate was set in place so that God's priest-kings would "share with God in the management of all that he had made."¹⁴⁹ From the beginning, this endeavor has involved mankind's need to procreate and fill the earth with God's image-bearers (Gen 1:28) and to subdue, cultivate, work, and care for the created order (Gen 1:28; 2:15, 19-20).

The new covenant priesthood picks up on this cultural mandate in both aspects. First, the new covenant continues to uphold the need for Christians to marry and reproduce. Just as in the old covenant where marriage was established as a covenant relationship between one man and one woman with the intention of raising "godly offspring" (Mal 2:14-15), the new covenant charges the church with raising children "in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph 6:4).

¹⁴⁹ Roger S. Greenway, "The Cultural Mandate," in *EDWM*, Baker Reference Library, ed. A. Scott Moreau, Harold Netland, and Charles van Engen (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 251.

Marriage is not a requirement for new covenant Christians; in fact, not only was Jesus unmarried, but Paul—who himself was single (1 Cor 7:8)—encouraged singleness (without requiring it; 1 Cor 7:9) and even declared that the one “who refrains from marriage will do even better” than the one who chooses to marry (1 Cor 7:38).¹⁵⁰ Nevertheless, if a man and woman choose to marry, Paul teaches that procreation is expected. In the context of a discussion of the order of creation and Eve’s original transgression (1 Tim 2:13-14),¹⁵¹ Paul assures women that they “will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control” (1 Tim 2:15). Paul is not teaching that women earn their salvation through childbearing; instead, “Paul was teaching that women prove the reality of their salvation when they become model wives and mothers whose good deeds include marriage and raising children (1 Tim 5:11, 14).”¹⁵² Both wives and husbands have a responsibility in pursuing

¹⁵⁰ Paul is not communicating that marriage itself is morally evil. Garland writes, “Regarding one choice as better does not make the other choice bad.” David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 342-43. It seems that “Paul’s preference arises from his own experience of a practical freedom in that state which he employs in the single-minded service of Christ. He still leaves the betrothed with the genuine freedom to choose.” Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 363.

¹⁵¹ When Gen 3:16 says that the woman’s “desire” will be for the man, it is best understood in relation to the same term used in Gen 4:17, such that Eve’s “desire” in Gen 3:16 “describes a struggle for mastery between the sexes. The ‘desire’ of the woman is her attempt to control her husband, but she will fail because God has ordained that the man exercise his leadership function.” Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, NAC, vol. 1A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 251.

¹⁵² Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 102. For a history of the interpretation of 1 Tim 2:15, see Andreas J. Köstenberger, “Ascertaining Women’s God-Ordained Roles: An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:15,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 7 (1997): 107-44. Offering his interpretation of 1 Tim 2:15, Köstenberger writes, “The sense of the injunction in the present passage is . . . that women can expect to escape Satan under the condition of adhering to their God-ordained role centering around the natural household” (142). When read in light of the immediate Scriptural context of 1 Tim 2:11-15, he notes further that

all will be well with women who, unlike Eve, adhere to the domain assigned to them by God. Women, on the other hand, who depart from their God-ordained roles in their lives become vulnerable to Satan, particularly if they assume permanent teaching or ruling functions in the local assembly. The Pastorals contrast this focus on procreation and the domestic sphere by the godly woman resulting in her preservation from Satan with the contempt of marriage and procreation found in the church’s environment. Adherence to such teaching led to women’s straying from the home, which, in turn, made them an easy prey for Satan, similar to Eve at the fall. If these lines of thought are correct, the present passage would speak powerfully to a cultural context where many are seeking to ‘liberate’ women from all encumbrances of family responsibilities in order to unleash them on a quest for self-fulfillment apart from such functions. Passages such as the present one appear to indicate that it is precisely by participating in her role pertaining to the family that women fulfill their central calling. Moreover, if the reference to ‘childbearing’ should indeed be understood as a

procreation; indeed, both ought to be mutually supportive in this pursuit as they seek to engage in this priestly endeavor.¹⁵³

For Christians who are blessed with them, children continue to be a “heritage from the Lord,” “arrows in the hand of a warrior” for the purpose of carrying out God’s will on the earth (Ps 127:3-5). As Christian priests engage in this aspect of the cultural mandate, they set out to raise children who will fear the Lord, serve God as priests, and themselves become temples to the Lord throughout the world.

Second, the new covenant priests pick up the cultural mandate as they engage in the discipline of work. Adam was originally created from the ground and was given the charge to cultivate or work it (Gen 2:7, 15).¹⁵⁴ Work is, thus, not an evil necessity, as some think, but it is rather a good thing: “The fact that God put work in paradise is startling to us because we so often think of work as a necessary evil or even punishment. Yet we do not see work brought into our human story after the fall of Adam, as part of the resulting brokenness and curse; it is part of the blessedness of the garden of God.”¹⁵⁵

Work encompasses a vast variety of vocations, and none is inherently better than the next. Contrary to some who might super-spiritualize vocational ministry, the truth is that, in the eye of God, “all vocations are equal” in dignity before God. Said more pointedly, “Pastors . . . are no holier than farmers, shopkeepers, dairy maids, or latrine

synecdoche, even unmarried women are to retain a focus on the domestic sphere and all that it entails (142-43).

See also Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 245n138.

¹⁵³ Certainly, such an expectation and burden is not incumbent on those who are infertile.

¹⁵⁴ Much has been written on a theology of vocation, including the following: Gene Edward Veith Jr., *God at Work: Your Christian Vocation in All of Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002); Timothy Keller, *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God’s Work* (New York: Penguin, 2012); Gustaf Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, trans. Carl C. Rasmussen (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004); Wayne Grudem, *Business for the Glory of God: The Bible’s Teaching on the Moral Goodness of Business* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003); Sebastian Traeger and Greg Gilbert, *The Gospel at Work: How Working for King Jesus Gives Purpose and Meaning to Our Jobs* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013); Os Guinness, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003); R. Paul Stevens, *The Other Six Days: Vocation, Work, and Ministry in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1999).

¹⁵⁵ Keller, *Every Good Endeavor*, 23.

diggers. In the spiritual kingdom, . . . peasants are equal to kings.”¹⁵⁶ From the perspective of the new covenant priesthood, each man and woman is a priest before God and his or her vocation in God’s kingdom plays a unique, important, and complementary role in carrying out God’s cosmic purposes. A priest who “aspires to the office of overseer . . . desires a noble task” (1 Tim 3:1), but so does the priest who pursues gainful work outside of vocational ordained ministry.

While work was originally part of God’s good design,¹⁵⁷ following Adam’s sin, the ground is cursed because of him, and work becomes more difficult, such that, from that point forward, “man will suffer lifelong, toilsome labor” (Gen 3:17-19).¹⁵⁸ Paul had to consistently remind Thessalonian Christians of their need to work (1 Thess 4:11), to stop being “busybodies” (2 Thess 3:11), and to “earn their own living” (2 Thess 3:12). For the one refusing this responsibility, Paul says, “Let him not eat” (2 Thess 3:10).¹⁵⁹ These sinful reactions to work should not be the response of new covenant priests. While work in this fallen world is toilsome, for the priest, it should not be devoid of joy. Christians ought to gain a measure of satisfaction in their work as they contribute to society, build God’s kingdom, and provide for the needs of their families.

Just as the primary duty of work was obligatory of Adam (Gen 2:15), the primary burden for working and providing for one’s family is placed on the shoulders of the man in the new covenant, for Paul addresses males: if any man “does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is

¹⁵⁶ Veith, *God at Work*, 39.

¹⁵⁷ Supporting the notion that work is inherently good, Veith argues that the “purpose of vocation is to love and serve one’s neighbor.” As God’s representatives, Christians are expected to approach their work with a sense of servitude, aiming at loving and serving those in their vocational sphere. Veith, *God at Work*, 39-40.

¹⁵⁸ Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 252.

¹⁵⁹ This requirement does not apply to the one who is incapable of working: “The saying addresses the case of one who is able but unwilling to work, not the person who is willing but unable to work.” D. Michael Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians*, NAC, vol. 33 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 281.

worse than an unbeliever” (1 Tim 5:8). This text parallels Paul’s comments earlier in his letter concerning the woman’s role in childbearing (1 Tim 2:15); that is, just as women demonstrate the reality of their salvation as they become model wives and mothers, attending to the care of the home, and being committed to their marriage and raising children, men prove the reality of their salvation when they are faithfully committed to working and providing for their families.¹⁶⁰

The Great Commission and border expansion. Second, the new covenant priesthood attends to its priestly ministry of border management as it carries out the Great Commission. Following man’s sin, the cultural mandate alone, as it was initially delivered to Adam and Eve, was insufficient¹⁶¹ to accomplish God’s purposes. Sin brought about the need for redemption, for God’s work of restoring that which was lost in the world. The Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20), thus, became God’s *modus operandi* for accomplishing this purpose.

¹⁶⁰ Just as some circumstances prevent women from becoming wives and mothers (i.e., singleness by virtue of choice/circumstance or barrenness) and keepers of the home (i.e., health reasons), some conditions may prevent men from effectively fulfilling their role as workers/providers; for example, his health or physical limitations might prevent him from working and earning an income for his family. In general, however, the husband bears the primary responsibility of providing for his family. In the case of a single mother, the woman is forced to take on this responsibility in addition to her domestic responsibilities. Similarly, in the case of single fathers, men are forced to take on more domestic responsibilities in addition to their responsibility to provide.

A common trend in today’s society, and even in the church, is the increasing instances of “stay-at-home” fathers who have divested themselves of the responsibility of providing for the financial needs of their families by transferring the responsibility to their wives (either willingly or by compulsion). Explanations offered for such a decision often include: the wife is capable of earning more money than the man; the wife prefers to work, and the husband prefers domestic responsibilities. While Scripture certainly does not forbid a woman from entering the workforce, it nevertheless neither frees her from her domestic responsibilities, nor does it free the man from his vocational responsibilities. This trend is an affront to the familial pattern laid down in Scripture.

¹⁶¹ Much has been written on the relationship between the relationship between the cultural mandate and common grace, particularly as they relate to unbelievers’ role in carrying out God’s purposes on the earth. No matter how one understands things, the intent here is to establish the point that any understanding of the cultural mandate apart from the Great Commission and God’s redemptive and restorative purposes in the gospel yields an incomplete picture of what God intends for his creation. For a more thorough treatment of the topic, see Cornelius Van Til, *Common Grace and the Gospel* (Nutley, NJ: P&R, 1977); Van Til, *Christian Apologetics* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1976); David VanDrunen, *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms: A Study in the Development of Reformed Social Thought* (Grand Rapids, W. B. Eerdmans, 2010).

The goal that God’s glory would cover the earth (Hab 2:14; cf. Num 14:21; Ps 72:19; Isa 11:9) is not realized simply by the physical reproduction of human beings. What is required is that human temples—new covenant priests who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit—spread across the earth.¹⁶² The Great Commission and the new covenant bring about a seismic shift in how God’s glory encompasses his creation: “In moving from the Old Testament to the New Testament, we discover that the Jerusalem temple is replaced by the church and, with its outward expansion from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth, God’s dwelling place also spreads outward.”¹⁶³ The Edenic priestly commission to expand the borders of the Garden-sanctuary to the ends of the earth is now made possible as this Spirit-indwelled new “royal priesthood” and “holy nation” (1 Pet 2:9-10; Exod 19:6) seeks to “mediate God’s blessings to the world”¹⁶⁴ (1 Pet 2:5) as a fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant.

Instead of people being required to come to the temple in Jerusalem, now the temple of the church is filled with the Spirit of God (Acts 2) to be sent throughout the world (Acts 1:8) to declare the glories of God to the nations. This pattern will continue until the “gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (Matt 24:14; cf. Mark 14:9; Rom 10:18). In the end, the knowledge of the glory of God will fill the earth and God’s original plan will be fully realized (Hab 2:14).

As new covenant priests engage in the work of the Great Commission, the establishment of God’s human temples throughout the world is intended to have a

¹⁶² As Beale states, while the “penultimate goal of the Creator was to make creation a liveable place for humans in order that they would achieve the grand aim of glorifying him,” his “ultimate goal in creation was to magnify his glory throughout the earth by means of his faithful image bearers inhabiting the world in obedience to the divine mandate.” Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 82.

¹⁶³ Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 60.

¹⁶⁴ Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 744.

redemptive and restorative effect on its every aspect (Acts 3:21; Rom 8:20-23).¹⁶⁵

Though the proclamation of the gospel, preaching, evangelizing one's neighbors, making disciples, sending out missionaries, reaching unreached people groups, and planting churches all remain primary for Christians, new covenant priests are also to engage in activities and ministries that function to positively impact the culture for Christ.¹⁶⁶

External threats and border protection. Third, the new covenant priesthood attends to its priestly ministry as it seeks to protect the borders of God's temple against external attacks and defilement. Threats of external defilement come against the church in a variety of ways, and so the new covenant priesthood must stand guard, being ready to defend the temple of God and its people against any attack that may come. New covenant priests guard the borders of God's temple against external threats fundamentally as they protect the flock against wolves and as they engage in spiritual warfare.

First, new covenant priests guard the borders of God's temple when they protect the flock against the external attack of wolves. Knowing that evil lurked outside the borders of the church, Paul warned the Ephesian elders "to guard themselves and the flock" (Acts 20:28)¹⁶⁷ from the onslaught of "fierce wolves" who would "come in among

¹⁶⁵ Some theologians emphasize Christians' prerogative and ownership of the cultural mandate: "By making the creation mandate the believer's and the church's cultural mandate, [they] extend the whole idea of evangelism beyond the winning of souls to the redemption and reclamation of every part of society." Cairns, *DTT*, 121. From this perspective, God intends that his priests subdue the earth and work to "study the universe, unlock its secrets, use judiciously its potential, and glorify God for the beauty and variety of creation" while properly stewarding the earth and taking "responsibility for the natural environment, the air, soil, water, plants, and minerals, which must be diligently cared for and never exploited or misused." Greenway, "The Cultural Mandate," 251. This overall topic is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

¹⁶⁶ Greenway, "The Cultural Mandate," 251-52. Examples of such ministries include deeds of mercy, righteousness, and truth where the downtrodden are helped and injustices are opposed with God's truth. Every facet of society should experience the transformative work of God's truth as priests engage the culture through the appropriate avenues.

¹⁶⁷ The elders were exhorted to "pay careful attention," "be alert," or "take heed" to themselves as the leaders of the church, as well as the members of the church. The warning could come as a result of Eutychus falling asleep and then falling out the window (Acts 20:9). Rather than being lazy or irresponsible in their watching over themselves and the flock, the elders were exhorted, essentially, to stay awake and to remain actively on guard. The notion of standing guarding is similar to military guards whose responsibility it is to stand guard with vigilance against enemy invasions. The exhortation is not only for the elders to

[them], not sparing the flock” (Acts 20:29). Paul is likely drawing from the prophets’ use of the same kind of imagery. Ezekiel, for example, rebukes the wickedness of the priests, prophets, and princes of Israel using temple language, noting that the land needed cleansing because of their sin; these evil priests, prophets, and princes of Israel are likened to “wolves tearing the prey, shedding the blood, destroying lives” of the community of Israel for their own “dishonest gain” (Ezek 22:27). Israel’s leaders were guilty of failing to distinguish between the pure and the profane, they were not upholding law, order, and justice, and they were teaching lies and giving false prophecies. The result is that the congregation of Israel was being harmed by these predators (Ezek 22:23-31).¹⁶⁸

Using the same imagery of wolves attacking the flock of sheep, Paul illustrates the ferociousness of the enemies that stood against the temple of God, calling on the new covenant priesthood to be ready to stand against such attacks. While Paul says that the attacks are expected to come against the borders from outside, he nevertheless acknowledges the likelihood that wolves have already penetrated their borders and stand ready “to draw away the disciples after them” (Acts 20:30). These wolves have the power of deception and masquerade among the flock as wolves in sheep’s clothing (Matt 7:15). New covenant priests must, therefore, be alert and remain awake and watchful in its border management, exercising care and discernment as they grant or refuse entry to church membership.¹⁶⁹

False teachers continue to plague the church today. Doing ministry in the Information Age, guardian-priests are faced with ever-changing challenges as it comes to protecting the church against false teaching. With unprecedented access to the messages

“guard the sheep,” but it was also that the elders “guard themselves so as not to abuse the flock.” Keener, *Acts*, 3030-31.

¹⁶⁸ Lamar Eugene Cooper, *Ezekiel*, NAC, vol. 17 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 222-24

¹⁶⁹ Paul’s fear is that the attacks of these wolves would result in the spread of “heresy and schism.” David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2009), 571.

of false teachers—through print, television, social media, and numerous other digital media outlets—the new covenant priesthood is consistently engaged in a battle for the mind. Contemporary false teachers abound: including teachers who proffer the prosperity gospel, others who deny the exclusivity of Christ, those who advance a message of salvation apart from submission to Christ’s lordship, groups who reject the Bible’s moral authority over their lives, those who neglect to address sin, repentance, and the need for atonement, groups who propound a works-based religion, and cultic sects who distort the basic teachings of orthodox Christianity. Some false teachers are easier to spot, while others are subtler and more surreptitious. This means that priests must be all the more diligent in studying so that they are able to distinguish between truth and error and then be able and willing to counter the false teaching with truth. Pastors should address false teaching as a regular part of their pulpit ministry so as to inform their congregations. If error is being taught within the membership, pastors must confront it and put an end to it. If pastors themselves fall into false teaching, the guardian-priests of the church are duty-bound to recognize it and put a stop to it. Altogether the members of the church must be diligent in their effort to protect the flock by guarding the truth of God’s Word from the dangers of false teaching.

Second, new covenant priests protect the borders of God’s temple when they engage in spiritual warfare. New covenant priests have a duty to be vigilant in their battle against Satan and his demons. Though the church’s engagement in spiritual warfare is addressed throughout the New Testament,¹⁷⁰ Paul speaks to the issue with detail in his warning to the Ephesians. In addressing the nature of the threat, Paul explains that the danger posed by the enemy is severe¹⁷¹ and that the battle is not against a physical army

¹⁷⁰ Satan is truly the church’s enemy and adversary and is out to devour and destroy image bearers. Satan is the “prince of demons” (Matt 12:24), the “god of this world” (2 Cor 4:4; cf. John 12:31), and the “father of lies” (John 8:44).

¹⁷¹ Peter reminds the church of the devastation that the devil is capable of inflicting on God’s people, and so he exhorts the church to manage the borders of God’s sanctuary, that is, to actively stand guard, to be clear-minded, and to be alert in the face of Satan’s looming attacks; he writes, “Be sober-

but rather against a “spiritual army”¹⁷² that is, “against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Eph 6:12). Thus, because “the struggle is not physical but supernatural,”¹⁷³ the church’s battle strategies must too be of a spiritual nature.

Readying the priests for battle, Paul shows that their role in spiritual warfare entails both a passive¹⁷⁴ trust in God’s sovereign protection and an active¹⁷⁵ preparation for and engagement in the battle¹⁷⁶ as they are called to “put on” the whole armor of God (Eph 6:11).¹⁷⁷ Some scholars observe parallels between the old covenant priestly

minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world” (1 Pet 5:8-9). The consequences of letting one’s guard down are severe: the devil may devour him. That is, the devil wants to destroy Christians in every way; he longs to bring ruin to every aspect of Christians’ lives. Above all, he wants to demolish their faith: “Believers must remain vigilant and alert until the very end because the devil seeks to destroy their faith. The devil inflicts persecution on believers so that they will deny Christ and lose their eschatological reward.” Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 242.

¹⁷² Max Anders, *Galatians-Colossians*, HNTC, vol. 8 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 190.

¹⁷³ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 825.

¹⁷⁴ Indicating that the battle entails a passive trust in God’s sovereign protection, Paul reminds the Ephesian Christians of their source of strength in battle; as priests, God’s people are told to “be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might” (Eph 6:10) as they face off with Satan and his minions. Though the Ephesians are instructed to put on armor, it is important to note that the armor is God’s:

The ‘armour of God’ can be understood as the armour that God supplies, his own armour which he wears, or even the armour that is God himself. The context clearly implies the first, namely, that God provides this weaponry for believers. . . . The Isaianic references depict the Lord of hosts as a warrior fighting with his own armour in order to vindicate his people. . . . Further, some of the weapons believers are to don, namely, truth, righteousness, and salvation, suggest that we put on God himself, or at least his characteristics. (O’Brien, *Letter to the Ephesians*, 463)

¹⁷⁵ Elsewhere, Paul instructs believers to don “weapons” of warfare (2 Cor 6:7; 10:4) as they engage in the battle and to take up these spiritual weapons and “fight the good fight of the faith” (1 Tim 6:12). Urging Christians to actively oppose Satan, James writes, “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (Jas 4:7). This charge carries with it the idea of vigilantly standing against or withstanding Satan’s attack and even actively opposing Satan. Moo writes, “The verb translated ‘resist’ means to ‘stand against,’ and can also be translated ‘oppose’ or ‘withstand.’” Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2000), 193. For Christians, “resistance . . . is not passive but represents active engagement against a foe. Believers will not triumph over the devil if they remain passive.” Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 242.

¹⁷⁶ Hoehner rightly notes, “This is not about a victory or defeat. It is about holding fast to territory already won by Christ. The believer needs to realize that the devil and his angels are universal and strong, but not omnipotent. Accordingly, the strength of the Lord gained by utilizing the full armor of God is strong than all the power of the wicked.” Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 836.

¹⁷⁷ If these Christians are to have success in the battle, they must decide to arraign themselves with God’s armor: “They are engaged in a deadly spiritual warfare on the side of God against the devil, and if they are to prevail they must put on God’s full armour. . . . It is only by donning the divine panoply that

garments (Exod 28:1-43) and the spiritual armor mentioned here by Paul.¹⁷⁸ The weapons of warfare of which Paul speaks are various, each having unique purposes.¹⁷⁹ The encouragement is this: “If we have our armor in place, if we are firm in our faith, we may resist the devil. If we do, he will flee from us.”¹⁸⁰ Though Satan still has the power to wreak havoc against the church, the reality is that Christ’s victory over Satan on the cross has already decided Satan’s fate. Thus, Christian priests labor in their work of border management and as they stand firm in their faith against Satan, remembering, “The roaring of the devil is the crazed anger of a defeated enemy, and if they do not fear his ferocious bark, they will never be consumed by his bite.”¹⁸¹

Taking its cues from Jesus, who “revolted against [the works of Satan and his demons] as something that God did not will and something that ought to be vanquished by God’s power,”¹⁸² the new covenant priesthood carries out its spiritual battle in a

believers can be properly equipped against the devil’s attacks.” O’Brien, *Letter to the Ephesians*, 462. O’Brien continues, “The expression ‘full armour’ referred to ‘a complete set of instruments used in defensive or offensive warfare’ (462).

¹⁷⁸ Kee, for example, writes, “The basic biblical description of the priestly garb given in Ex 28:3-43; Sir 45:8-12 portrays Aaron in a brief sketch. The virtues linked with the various garments are reminiscent of Eph 6:13-17, where the armor of God is described along similar lines.” H. C. Kee, “Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (Second Century B.C.),” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, vol. 1, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1983), 791nb.

¹⁷⁹ First, when Paul urges Christians to put on the “belt of truth” (Eph 6:14) he is counsels them to trust and follow the truths of God. Wearing the “breastplate of righteousness” means that Christians are clothed in and armed with Christ’s own righteousness, which grants them confidence in the face of Satan’s attacks and challenges them to live according to Christ’s righteousness, actively putting off the unrighteous deeds of the flesh and striving to be imitators of God (Eph 6:14). Christians are also to wear “shoes” so that their feet are fitted with the readiness of the gospel of peace, meaning that Christians ought to stand firm, alert, and prepared for attack (Eph 6:15). The “shield of faith” is also brought to battle, which functions to absorb Satan’s flaming darts; the idea is that Christians ought to cultivate the kind of faith that stands up to Satan’s temptations to engage in ungodliness, to despair, to doubt, or to apostatize (Eph 6:16). Wearing the “helmet of salvation,” believers are given confidence that their salvation is secure because of Christ’s decisive victory over Satan, sin, and death (Eph 6:17). Wielding the “sword of the Spirit,” believers are urged to use God’s Word defensively against Satan’s attacks but also offensively against the powers of darkness (Eph 6:17). Additionally, Paul urges that Christians employ the use of prayer in their spiritual battle (Eph 6:18-20). O’Brien, *Letter to the Ephesians*, 472-90; Anders, *Galatians-Colossians*, 190-91.

¹⁸⁰ Anders, *Galatians-Colossians*, 190.

¹⁸¹ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 242.

¹⁸² Gregory A. Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil: Constructing a Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2001), 36.

“paradox of the already-not yet tension”¹⁸³ where “Satan has in principle been defeated by Christ”¹⁸⁴ and yet “God’s victory has not yet been fully realized on the earth.”¹⁸⁵ As a result, the church continues “to face strong opposition in carrying out God’s will as [it seeks] to establish his kingdom on earth.”¹⁸⁶

Such opposition comes in the form of Satanic attack, demonic oppression, deceptions, lies, and temptations (Matt 17:14-21; John 8:44; Jas 4:7; 1 Pet 5:8-10; Rev 12:9; 20:10). Christians are subject to a consistent barrage of Satan’s schemes that are aimed at destroying individual Christians, friendships, marriages, families, and their churches. He aspires to lead Christians to sin, to harbor bitterness, to withhold forgiveness, to sinfully act in wrath, anger, clamor, slander, and ultimately malice (Eph 4:31). He wants to create confusion, disorder, and chaos (1 Cor 14:33). He sets out to cause dissention and disunity among the church. He aims to cause Christians to believe and be overcome by lies (John 8:44). Ultimately, Satan intends to do whatever is necessary to impede the progress of kingdom advancement and the church’s mission on earth.

Thus, priests must remain steadfast and ever mindful of the war that is being waged against them so that they will not succumb to or be overcome by the wiles of the devil. The battle is most certainly a war, but with the power of God, the church and its priests will not be overcome. For though they be “regarded as sheep to be slaughtered,” though they endure “tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword,” Christians are assured that they are “more than conquerors” because “neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor

¹⁸³ Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 38.

¹⁸⁴ Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 38.

¹⁸⁵ Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 38.

¹⁸⁶ Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 39.

powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 8:35-39). Jesus sought to instill peace in the hearts of his followers, promising them that, even though they will have trouble of all kinds in this world, he has overcome the world with its spiritual darkness, and that in him, his followers will, too (John 16:33).

Corrective discipline and border protection. Fourth, the new covenant priesthood attends to its priestly ministry as it protects the borders of God’s temple against internal defilement through the exercise of corrective church discipline. The church accomplishes this work as it judges its members and as it excommunicates its impenitent members.

As priests, the church must not turn a blind eye to the sinful behaviors of its members, pretending as though their unrepentance is inconsequential or trivial. Instead, priests are duty-bound to take action, to disrupt the status quo and to not only remove or purge the cancer cells from the body but also to refuse the tendency to pretend as though the cancer cells do not exist or that they are somehow healthy cells, ignoring the sins of the impenitent individual for the sake of (false) love and tolerance. The impenitence of a church member calls for drastic measures to be taken, including their excommunication. This is done both for the sake of the individual and the church.

Paul’s instructions regarding excommunication have as their motivation the intent to protect the sanctity and holiness of the temple of God and the people of God. Paul’s “severe words are designed to prevent the leaven of sin from infecting the church”¹⁸⁷ (e.g., 1 Cor 5:6-7). Paul cautions, “Do you no know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?” (1 Cor 5:6), an expression that he roots in the Old Testament practice of removing and refraining from eating leavened bread during the Passover. Failure to

¹⁸⁷ Schreiner, “The Biblical Basis for Church Discipline,” 125.

observe this practice would result in being “cut off from Israel” (Exod 12:15; cf. Deut 16:3). Thiselton, who understands Paul’s instructions to be rooted in these Passover instructions and in view of Zephaniah’s prophetic word that God would search the house of Jerusalem with lamps and punish those he finds to be complacent and apathetic in their spirituality (Zeph 1:12), writes that “the purging of the house of all leaven was understood as a symbol of moral purification, with candles to look into corners. By analogy, the church is to clean out what defiles its identity and purity.”¹⁸⁸

Paul’s concern is that if sin goes unaddressed in the church, it has the potential to “leaven the whole lump” (1 Cor 5:2, 6-7). Commenting on the metaphor, James Thompson explains, “Because the old leaven was subject to impurity, it became a metaphor for an infection that could destroy the entire batch of bread. . . . The identity of the community required that it throw out the old leaven in order to maintain its purity.”¹⁸⁹ Lyle Vander Broek agrees and further notes that the removal of the unrepentant member becomes the responsibility of whole congregation: “The apostle feels that the sinner in their midst is a danger to the life of the community. This leaven . . . might be interpreted as a compromise to the community’s holiness, as an indication that all are responsible for the sin of the one member, or as the threat of further contamination.”¹⁹⁰

Paul, thus, urges the new covenant priesthood to fight to protect the church by executing corrective church discipline against impenitent church members.¹⁹¹ Rather than

¹⁸⁸ Thiselton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 405.

¹⁸⁹ James Thompson, *Moral Formation according to Paul: The Context and Coherence of Pauline Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 48.

¹⁹⁰ Lyle D. Vander Broek, “Discipline and Community: Another Look at 1 Corinthians 5,” *Reformed Review* 48 (1994): 11.

¹⁹¹ Benjamin Merkle speaks of the perils associated with failing to carry out church discipline. He writes,

In 1 Corinthians 5 Paul warns the church about the dangers of not exercising church discipline. He reminds them that “a little yeast permeates the whole batch of dough” (v. 6). In other words, if intentional sin is permitted (and therefore condoned) in the congregation, such sin will spread throughout the entire congregation. So Paul commands the church, “Clean out the old yeast” (v. 7) and, “Put away the evil person from among yourselves” (v. 13). (Merkle, “The Biblical Basis for Church Membership,” 42)

allowing wolves to graze with sheep (Ezek 22:23-31), and thus risk the possibility of the wolves devouring the sheep, Paul instructs the priests to take action and remove the wolves from their midst (1 Cor 5; cf. Matt 7:15; John 10:12; Acts 20:29). Sin must be dealt with in the church, or else by it “the many become defiled” (Heb 12:15). So, the guardian-priest is responsible to enact corrective church discipline so that “sin will be kept from spreading to others.”¹⁹²

Corrective discipline, evangelism, and border expansion. While the new covenant priesthood carries out corrective discipline primarily as a ministry to protect the border of God’s temple, it also employs it—perhaps to a lesser degree—for the purpose of expanding its borders across the face of the world. The boundaries of this new Garden-temple are extended across the world in corrective church discipline through gospel-proclamation. Affirming this notion, Michael Horton regards the priestly work of corrective church discipline to be at the heart of mission and key to the work of properly proclaiming the gospel:

The ministry of binding and loosing, when placed in the context of gospel proclamation, is not ancillary to mission; it *is* the mission of the church in the world. It is the *authorization* to go, given by the one to whom all authority has been given, and to know that “whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me” (John 13:20).¹⁹³

The message of corrective church discipline is that true members of the family of God practice faith and repentance as a pattern of life; if anyone refuses Christ’s lordship and neglects repentance, he is considered an illegitimate family member, is excluded from Christ’s family, and should expect eternal judgment and damnation.¹⁹⁴ Thus, corrective

¹⁹² Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 895.

¹⁹³ Horton, *The Christian Faith*, 897.

¹⁹⁴ The goal of corrective discipline for the new covenant priesthood is not to limit the growth of the new temple. Instead, while priests are committed to the maintenance of its sanctity and holiness, they long to expand “the sacred sphere of God’s presence in order than others would experience it and come into the sacred temple themselves.” Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 399. New covenant priests reproduce themselves in the work of mediating the gospel to a lost world with the hope of creating more priests: “Believers are priests in that they serve as mediators between God and the unbelieving world.

discipline functions evangelistically to confront those impenitent individuals with God's truth and with the warning of their looming eschatological judgment should they persist in impenitence. As Jeschke writes, "To utter this truth in warning to those who have abandoned the obedience of faith is as consistent with the nature of the gospel as informing people in evangelism that unless they repent and believe the gospel they cannot enter the kingdom of God (John 3:5)."¹⁹⁵ Thus, the excommunicative work of corrective discipline is never intended to cut people off from grace; "On the contrary, its function is to prevent persons from anesthetizing themselves against grace. Excommunication is the form under which the church continues to extend the gospel to the impenitent."¹⁹⁶

Being set apart as the gatekeepers of the new covenant temple (1 Chr 9:22-27), being entrusted with the keys of the kingdom of heaven and the weighty responsibility of granting admission into the church's fellowship (Matt 16:19), and being granted the priestly authority to bind and to loose (Matt 18:18), the church preaches the gospel to the ends of the earth with hopes of growing the territory of God's kingdom, expanding the borders of the new temple, and increasing the footprint of God's manifest presence across the world. Part of this overall ministry includes pronouncing sinners as "bound" and under the expectation of the eschatological judgment on the last day; it also includes the pronouncement of those who are "loosed" and forgiven, being accepted into the fellowship of the church, and being granted the marvelous expectation of being accepted into the eternal kingdom of Christ.

When unbelievers accept the church's mediating witness, they not only come into God's presence, but they begin to participate themselves as mediating priests who witness" (399).

¹⁹⁵ Marlin Jeschke, *Discipling in the Church: Recovering a Ministry of the Gospel*, 3rd ed. (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1988), 88.

¹⁹⁶ Jeschke, *Discipling in the Church*, 88 (emphasis removed).

Furthermore, according to Kimble, corrective church discipline should be viewed as missional in that it displays and makes known God’s love for his people to the observing world. That is, corrective “church discipline . . . is a continual proclamation of the gospel to both the outside world as well as its own members. . . . The church, as a ‘window’ to God and the gospel, makes his name known through regenerate membership and remains unstained through church discipline.”¹⁹⁷ Through these means, God establishes the boundaries of the church community, making “the gospel visible and accessible to others outside of the boundaries.”¹⁹⁸ Indeed, the good news leads to changed lives, a transformation that is manifested to the world through the maintenance of regenerate church membership and a commitment to church discipline. Leeman explains, “Insofar as the gospel presents the world with the most vivid picture of God’s love, and insofar as church membership and discipline are an implication of the gospel, local church membership and discipline in fact define God’s love for the world.”¹⁹⁹ Thus, corrective church discipline—as it proclaims the reality God’s impending eschatological judgment for those who reject the discipline and lordship of Christ and as it proclaims the gracious forgiveness of Christ for those who submit to Christ—serves as an evangelistic means of expanding the borders of God’s eschatological temple.

Additionally, as the church faithfully engages in corrective church discipline, the holiness of the congregation shines as a beacon in a dark world. Israel’s commitment to holiness functioned in a similar way among its pagan neighboring nations. Following Israel’s idolatrous worship of Baal of Peor, God reminds the people of Israel of how he destroyed those guilty of idolatry and further reminds the remaining faithful Israelites of their need to persist in their commitment to his statutes and commandments. Moreover,

¹⁹⁷ Kimble, *That His Spirit May Be Saved*, 134.

¹⁹⁸ Kimble, *That His Spirit May Be Saved*, 134.

¹⁹⁹ Leeman, *The Church and the Surprising Offense of God’s Love*, 17.

they are to do so in the sight of “the peoples,” their pagan neighbors, so that the nations might observe Israel’s holiness, hear of God’s righteous statutes, and be moved to worship the God of Israel:

See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’ For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today? (Deut 4:5-8)

In much the same way that Israel’s national holiness, thus, functioned as a light to the surrounding nations, the church’s holiness and overall commitment to the ways of the Lord stands as witness of God’s holiness and righteousness to the world.²⁰⁰

Moreover, Solomon’s prayer was that Israel’s consecrated temple, which was to be the “symbol of God’s presence in the midst of Israel,”²⁰¹ would serve to draw in foreigners so that they might know and serve God (1 Kgs 8:41-43). The temple stood during the age of the old covenant as a reminder to Israel that the ultimate goal of God’s redemptive purposes is “to fill the whole earth with his glorious presence.”²⁰² Furthermore, for the people of that era, the temple provided “the sacrificial system as a way to repair the people’s failure and set them on the right path again” (Lev 9:15-17, 22), it provided a place of “worship to nurture faithfulness” and to “orient Israel toward the nations” (Pss 9:11; 18:49; 67:1-2; 96:2-4; 105:1), and it stood as reminder of “an alternate worldview to that of paganism” and “as a witness to the true God.”²⁰³ If, however, Israel’s temple was desecrated and its holiness not maintained by Israel’s

²⁰⁰ Michael W. Goheen, *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 51-52.

²⁰¹ Goheen, *A Light to the Nations*, 56.

²⁰² Goheen, *A Light to the Nations*, 58.

²⁰³ Goheen, *A Light to the Nations*, 56-59.

priests, then its missional impact would be diminished. The temple of the new covenant church is, thus, intended similarly to be vessels of God's manifest presence throughout the world, functioning to draw in those outside the covenant. However, if the new covenant priestly work of corrective discipline is not carried out faithfully, the mission of the church is compromised.

The excommunication of an impenitent sinner, therefore, functions "in order to restore the holiness of God's temple, the church."²⁰⁴ For this reason, "The primary reason for discipline is the purity of the church and hence the glory of God."²⁰⁵ Kimble adds, "If the leaven of sin is allowed to permeate the church, . . . the Christian community and its distinctive holiness is threatened."²⁰⁶ Indeed, this inward concern for the sanctity of the Christian community carries with it an outward and missional concern for the reputation of Christ and his church in the world. Certainly, the purity of the church and its ability to bring glory to God throughout the world are integrally related. Failure to exercise corrective discipline stands the chance of bringing dishonor to the name of God among the nations. If members of the church refuse their guardian role as priests, tolerating blatant sin and unrepentance in their midst, "then sin will spread like an infection, and the church will lose its witness to the world."²⁰⁷

Working together, both formative and corrective discipline accomplish this evangelistic purpose. As the church grows in holiness and in obedience to Christ, the world watches and God's evangelistic mission goes forward. As Beale contends,

Extending the boundaries of the temple by witnessing and strengthening those receiving the witness is a priestly sacrifice and offering to God. God's presence

²⁰⁴ Brian S. Rosner, "Temple and Holiness in 1 Corinthians 5," *Tyndale Bulletin* 42 (1991), 137. See also Brian S. Rosner, *Paul, Scripture, and Ethics: A Study of 1 Corinthians 5-7* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 61-93.

²⁰⁵ Schreiner, "The Biblical Basis for Church Discipline," 126.

²⁰⁶ Kimble, *That His Spirit May Be Saved*, 128.

²⁰⁷ Schreiner, "The Biblical Basis for Church Discipline," 126.

grows among his priestly people by their knowing his word, believing it, and by obeying it, and they spread that presence to others by living their lives faithfully and prayerfully in the world.²⁰⁸

This idea is consistent with Jesus' teaching on the matter: "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matt 5:16). As the church attends to the priestly ministry of border management, and specifically as the new covenant priesthood engages in church discipline, the Great Commission is forwarded, and the borders of God's temple are expanded.

Summary: The New Covenant Priesthood

A monumental shift in redemptive history and the overall development of the priesthood took place when God, through Christ, established the new covenant with the church. Christ caused his followers to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit, conferred his own priesthood on the new covenant people of God, and constituted the church as the new temple, such that this new covenant priesthood would set out to extend the borders of God's holy sanctuary throughout the world. In keeping with the priesthoods of old, the priesthood of the new covenant continues to consist of those who enjoy access to the divine presence of God and serve him by guarding the holiness of his temple and his people through attending to the Word of God, border management, sacrifice, and mediation. These priestly ministries are carried out by the new covenant priesthood as they engage in church discipline, both with its formative and corrective aspects. Indeed, the New Testament practice of church discipline is rooted in the church's identity as priests. Church discipline will remain the priestly mission of the new covenant priesthood until its Lord returns to bring this age to consummation.

²⁰⁸ Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 400.

CHAPTER 7

THE ESCHATALOGICAL PRIESTHOOD

While the priests of the new covenant play a key role in accomplishing God's cosmic plans of expanding the knowledge of his glory across the entire world, ultimately to be accomplished upon the consummate return of the great high priest, when Christ returns, he will bring all things to completion. In the meantime, as "the covenant community, the church is to be God's temple, so filled with his glorious presence that we expand and fill the earth with that presence until God finally accomplishes the goal completely at the end of time."¹ At that point, the temple-building process of the new covenant priesthood will culminate with the inauguration of the eternal, new, and final temple, the new Jerusalem and the new heavens and the new earth.² In the book of Revelation, John offers a glimpse of the nature of the eschatological sanctuary and the ongoing ministry of the priesthood. What John reveals is that God has plans to create a new eschatological sanctuary wherein his eschatological priesthood will consist of those who gain unfettered access to the divine presence of God and both serve and reign together with Christ, guarding the holiness of his temple and his people through attending to the Word of God, border management, sacrifice, and mediation.

¹ G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, NSBT 17 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 402.

² Alexander writes, "Although the church plays an important role in both modeling and partially realizing God's creation blueprint for the earth, it too, like the Jerusalem temple, has limitations. For the ultimate realization of God's purposes for the world we must look to the New Jerusalem of Revelation 21-22." T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: And Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), 60-61.

The Eschatological Sanctuary

John envisions a time when God will finally and continually dwell with his people. The nature of this new dwelling will be different than any previous sanctuary because its real estate and “architecture”³ will only consist of the Holy of Holies, and God’s manifest presence will envelope and fill all of creation. Any divisions (i.e., the tripartite divisions of previous sanctuaries) that may have characterized previous prototypical temples will be subsumed and replaced by the eschatological sanctuary, one in which an eschatological Holy of Holies encompasses the entirety of the new heavenly city.⁴

John describes this new Jerusalem with temple language (Rev 21:9-21), though he “saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb” (Rev 21:22). John is communicating the idea that in that day “no temple or ‘place of worship’ is needed; for the whole city is hallowed and pervaded by the presence of God.”⁵ In fact, “By associating the temple with God, John appears to imply that the whole city is a sanctuary.”⁶

³ The sanctuary will not be made up of any physical architecture. Instead, it will encompass the physical world, the new creation.

⁴ This idea appears to be consistent with John’s visions in his Apocalypse. In Rev 21:1, John sees a “new heaven and a new earth,” while in Rev 21:2-22:3, John sees a “new Jerusalem,” indeed, a new garden-city. In Isa 65:17-18, Isaiah appears to equate the “new heavens and new earth” with the “new Jerusalem.” He speaks of a future time in which both entities will be created; his parallel use of the term “create,” according to Alexander, “suggests that Jerusalem is *deliberately equated*. . . with the new heavens and the new earth. They are one and the same.” Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 53-54. John appears to be doing the same thing in Rev 21:1-3 with regard to his mention of both the new Jerusalem and the new heavens and the new earth. The take away from this is that “Jerusalem is not only at the centre of the new world, but in fact is coextensive with it. The new creation is the new Jerusalem and vice versa.” Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 467. Because the people of the new Jerusalem will far exceed the number of the old Jerusalem, more real estate will be required to encompass the increased lot of people. Isa 65 proposes the solution: the “new Jerusalem and the new creation will be coextensive” (468). This new Jerusalem is “not just the old city of Jerusalem or the land of Israel. It is that and more—it is a changed and transformed Zion: the whole new creation as the place where God’s people dwell and where God is worshipped (temple)” (470).

⁵ E. W. Bullinger, *Commentary on Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1984), 665-66.

⁶ Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 20.

Additionally, John observes that the dimensions of this new city are a perfect cube (Rev 21:16).⁷ Building upon Ezekiel's prophecies, in which he envisions the eschatological sanctuary with square dimensions (Ezek 40:5; 45:1-5), John sees a gold cubic sanctuary, more consistent with the golden cubic sanctuary depicted in 1 Kings 6:20.⁸ This new Jerusalem is, thus, to be regarded as the new eschatological Holy of Holies, the place of God's manifest presence.⁹ The expectation is that upon Christ's return, God's redemptive plan will be consummated, and the eschatological sanctuary will appear.

In this eschatological sanctuary God will finally and manifestly tabernacle with his people: "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God'" (Rev 21:3). In that day, there will be no interruption in fellowship between God and his people, because he will continually dwell with them.

God's border-expanding agenda, which began with Adam and Eve in the Garden and continued with God's people throughout redemptive history, culminates with an eschatological sanctuary that will have no borders because its reach will have finally met its aim. Commenting on the scope of this new city, Gentry and Wellum note that "the historic city of Jerusalem takes on overtones of a city that is larger than life . . . [and] will

⁷ Rev 21:16 reads, "The city lies foursquare [τετράγωνος, literally "four-cornered"], its length the same as its width. And he measured the city with his rod, 12,000 stadia. Its length and width and height are equal."

⁸ Beale observes this escalation in dimensions: "There is an escalation in dimensions, since the Ezekiel temple was merely square while the Apocalypse's new Jerusalem is cubic. The actual dimensions of the city-temple are also escalated." G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 1073.

⁹ Because the Holy of Holies has always been the locale of God's special presence on earth, it is, thus, reasonable to conclude that "the new creation and Jerusalem are none other than God's tabernacle." Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 24-25. See also Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*, 13. In fact, this dissertation has argued from the beginning that the Garden of Eden serves as a microcosm for the coming New Jerusalem.

be one without walls, where God’s glory will dwell (Zech 2:1-5; Hag 2:9), and into which the Gentile nations will stream, fulfilling the Abrahamic promises (Isa 56:3-7; Ezek 47:22).”¹⁰ They continue, “In addition, this new Jerusalem will take on the very borders of the entire creation (Isa 65:1-66:21). In other words, the prophets anticipate a future day when the ‘land’ will be God’s temple sanctuary and its borders, like the rule of the king, will extend to the entire creation (Ps 72:8-11, 17-19).”¹¹

The Eschatological Priesthood

In much the same way that John presents only a glimpse of what the future sanctuary of God will be like, Scripture presents only a glimpse of the nature and ministry of the eschatological priesthood. Throughout this dissertation it has been argued that priests are people who, divinely granted access to the presence of God, are entrusted with serving God by guarding the holiness of his temple and his people by attending to the Word of God, sacrifice, mediation, and border management. It is reasonable to conclude that, at least to some degree, future priests will maintain the same identity, although they will likely experience some measure of transformation as the last stage of redemptive history dawns. The eschatological priesthood will carry out its ministry as it serves and reigns with the great high priest, Jesus Christ, thus securing the hope of a truly faithful priesthood once and for all.

God’s Word

Throughout history, priests have attended to the Word of God. In the new creation, Christ’s completed work will extend to his redeemed people, bringing about their fully realized glorification (Rom 8:30)—being redeemed holistically, body and soul. In this state, not only will all the inhabitants of the new and eternal temple receive their

¹⁰ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 712.

¹¹ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 712-13.

perfected and resurrected physical bodies (1 Cor 15), but they will be perfectly and holistically conformed into the image of Christ (Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 3:18), such that they will be, to use Augustine's term, *non posse peccare*, or not able to sin.¹² Altogether, this means that Paul's prayer that God would sanctify his people completely—spirit, soul, and body (1 Thess 5:23)—will be answered. All of God's eschatological priests will live fully and freely in submission to his will.

Scripture seems to suggest that there will no longer be the need for the Bible in the age to come.¹³ Though some uncertainty on this point exists, Peter appears to shed some light on the matter when he writes, "We have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts" (2 Pet 1:19). Here Peter explains that Christians will have the prophetic word—that is, Scripture—until a certain point in time: "until the day dawns" and "the morning star rises." The idea is that Scripture presently exists for the people of God as a means to shine divine revelatory light into an otherwise darkened existence, but once "the perfect comes" (1 Cor 13:11), once the final day dawns and Christ the morning star returns, Christ will forevermore shine the light of divine truth in such a way that the Bible will no longer be needed.¹⁴ As

¹² Augustine wrote, "The first immortality, which Adam lost by sinning, was the ability not to die [*posse non mori*], the new immortality will be the inability to die [*non posse mori*]. In the same way, the first freedom of choice conferred the ability not to sin [*posse non peccare*]; the new freedom will confer the inability to sin [*non posse peccare*]." Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, 10.30, quoted in *Creeds, Councils, and Controversies: Documents Illustrative of the History of the Church A.D. 337-461*, ed. James Stevenson and B. J. Kidd (New York: Seabury Press, 1966), 232.

¹³ This potentiality, of course, does not mean that God's Word will be contradicted or changed in the age to come. Indeed, as the Psalmist writes, "Forever, O Lord, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens" (Ps 119:89). Commenting on this text, Smith writes, "Yahweh's word is immutable; it belongs to that sphere which is above the ravages of time." James E. Smith, *The Wisdom Literature and Psalms*, Old Testament Survey Series (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1996), 414. Thus, the truths of God's Word, as they have been revealed in Scripture, will remain true and constant throughout eternity. Yet, with unmediated access to the incarnate Word Jesus Christ, the eschatological priesthood may no longer need to possess the written Word since Jesus himself will perpetually be available to the people of God.

¹⁴ Davids writes, "Now the prophetic word . . . is a light in the darkness, but when the darkness disappears with the coming of the dawn, we will know even as we are known. Then the light of Christ will be in our hearts, and we will no longer need the Scriptures. One treasures a love letter while the beloved is absent, but once he or she is present, the letter is laid aside and exchanged for the personal contact." Peter H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2006), 209-10.

eschatological priests enjoy personal access to Jesus, the incarnate Word will replace the need to have access to the written word, the Bible.

If this is true, then this calls into question whether or not eschatological priests will continue in their role as teachers in the age to come. If Christ's manifest presence replaces the need to have access to the Bible, then this new reality might also eliminate the need for priests to teach one another. It is possible that priests will maintain some teaching responsibility (or ability), since they will persist as learners, but there is no doubt that the need for other teachers besides Christ would be lessened (and possibly eliminated altogether). To suggest that priests will continue as teachers would be an entirely speculative assertion, and so it is best to conclude that the matter will remain a mystery until the eschaton.

Yet, it seems probable that eschatological priests will continue learning for eternity. A strong distinction must be held in place between God himself and created humanity. Some might read Paul's words and conclude that, when they see God "face to face" (1 Cor 13:12; cf. Rev 22:4), they will have perfect and comprehensive knowledge of all things, including the mysteries of God. However, this notion neglects to acknowledge the Creator-creature distinction (Rom 1:22-25), a distinction that will remain in place for eternity. What Paul meant was that

he and other believers would know God intimately and personally in heaven, just as God already knows all believers. Human knowledge is imperfect in at least two ways: it is finite and corrupted by sin. In the world to come, believers will be fully redeemed from sin and its effects (Rom 8:29-30), but they will still be finite. Paul did not mean that believers will fully comprehend God in eternity. That would be impossible. Instead, he focused on the personal and direct nature of believers' future knowledge of God.¹⁵

The point of Paul's teaching is not that the new age will bring about comprehensive knowledge of all things for Christians, since such knowledge only belongs to the one

¹⁵ Richard L. Pratt Jr., *I & II Corinthians*, HNTC, vol. 7 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 235.

omniscient God. Rather, God's people will understand things more clearly.

Since this is true, then it is reasonable to conclude that God's priests will continue learning for all eternity. In fact, Christians' session with Christ is such "that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:6-7). That is, while the church grasps some of the greatness of God's grace now, "only in the coming ages will it be fully seen for what it is."¹⁶

Sacrifice

Just as the new covenant priesthood presently offers sacrifices to God through Christ by the ministries of worship, fellowship, evangelism, teaching, and service, eschatological priests will continue to offer similar kinds of sacrifices "before the throne of God" as they "serve [or worship, λατρεύω] him day and night in his temple" (Rev 7:15).¹⁷ Each of these new covenant ministries will either be transformed or eliminated in the eternal age. Evangelism will cease since the age of salvation will be passed. Worship will endure as God's people will continue to celebrate the greatness of God, and yet the current worship experience will pale in comparison to what lies ahead in the glorified state when the saints of God worship him in his presence. Moreover, priests for the first time since the Garden will worship God without the encumbrance of a fallen nature. The people of God will engage in perfect and deep fellowship, both with God and with one another. If priests continue as teachers in the eschaton at all, their teaching role will be drastically transformed as Christ will be the preeminent teacher in the age to come. Priests will forever continue to serve God and one another throughout eternity, though the

¹⁶ Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 173. That is, God's people will continue to learn in the age to come. God will progressively reveal more to his people throughout eternity. It is from this understanding that Jonathan Edwards taught, "The saints will be progressive in knowledge to all eternity." Jonathan Edwards, "The End for which God Created the World," quoted in John Piper, *God's Passion for His Glory* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1998), 37.

¹⁷ Kendell H. Easley, *Revelation*, HNTC, vol. 12 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 131.

ways in which that occurs will inevitably take a different shape. Thus, the eschatological priesthood will continue in its priestly ministry for all eternity, offering perpetual sacrifices to God, and yet the specifics of those sacrifices are not yet known in full. While some aspects of these sacrifices will remain consistent, Christ's advent will transform and perfect them.

Mediation

When Christ brings about the consummation, his people will be fully conformed into his image. However, in the age to come, it stands to reason that Christ will continue to serve as the sole mediator between God and man, since it will continue to be on the basis of his mediatorial work that his people are able to approach the throne of God. And yet, his mediatorial work will accomplish for his people a new kind of access to the manifest presence of God that will compare to the kind of unfettered access to God's presence that was once enjoyed by Adam and Eve in the Garden prior to their fall.

With God's presence encompassing all of creation, eschatological priests will freely enjoy access to the divine presence throughout the world: "In his presence we will dwell for all eternity, not on the clouds of heaven but in a gloriously renewed universe where we will carry out our calling as God's sons for his glory and honour. . . . Eden as the temple sanctuary now reaches its *telos* in the new creation."¹⁸ This relationship will be face-to-face (1 Cor 13:12; Rev 22:3-5).¹⁹ Whereas in "the Christian era, God's face is glimpsed through Christ" and though "sometimes . . . the way seems dark, and God's face has appeared hidden even to the greatest of saints," things will be different in the age to come: "In eternity with the curse removed, all God's servants will see him face-to-

¹⁸ Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 715-16.

¹⁹ In that day, "the covenant relationship which God created us for in the first place is now realized in its fullness as we enjoy the presence of our great and glorious triune covenant God, and serve him in worship, adoration, devotion, and obedience forevermore." Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 716.

face. . . . We cannot begin to imagine what this means, only that it surpasses the most wonderful spiritual experience of God that anyone in this life can have.”²⁰ On that day, “God will grant access to the Edenic temple-city of the new heaven and new earth, and all who have called on the name of the Lord will see God’s face.”²¹ In this eternal home, “no place will ever lack the light of God’s glorious presence. There will be an ongoing, all-enlightening enjoyment of the radiance emanating from the one we worship.”²²

Border Management

In the new age, the eschatological priests’ ministry of border management will experience significant transformation. Much of the priests’ ministry throughout history has revolved around expanding and protecting the borders of God’s sanctuary. In the new creation, many aspects of this ministry find their resolution and fulfillment.

For example, both physical and spiritual procreation will come to an end. Jesus explains that there will be no marriage or procreation in the age to come (Matt 22:30). In the new creation, “God is able to transform us into creatures who do not engage in sexual relations or procreate.”²³ While Jesus does not teach a gender-neutral eternal existence for mankind,²⁴ he does teach that humanity’s procreative purposes reach their *telos* and conclusion with the new creation.

God’s design for marriage and procreation was that both would serve a

²⁰ Easley, *Revelation*, 416.

²¹ James M. Hamilton Jr., *Revelation: The Spirit Speaks to the Churches*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 407.

²² Hamilton, *Revelation*, 406.

²³ Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 333.

²⁴ As Morris says, “Jesus does not say that we will be angels but that we will be *like angels*.” Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1992), 561. This distinction is an important one to make. Jesus only makes the comparison between eschatological humanity and angels with regard to their marriage practices, and he does this without any mention of gender. It, therefore, is best to conclude that humans maintain the gender they received from God at their creation throughout all of eternity. This point is supported by a theology of human embodiment, which insists that, as a fundamental of such embodiment, gender continues into eternity.

temporary purpose, one that would cease with the close of this present age. Procreation was God's plan to create his image bearers (Gen 1:26-27), to populate the earth (Gen 1:28), and to provide a remedy for man's need for community (Gen 2:18). In the new creation, the family of God will have been fully formed, and each of these purposes for which procreation was intended will be met.

Furthermore, Paul explains that God's design for marriage is a profound "mystery," one that "refers to Christ and the church" (Eph 5:32). During this age, marriage and family are temporary and symbolic institutions that refer to a higher and eternal marriage between Christ and his bride, the church. Moreover, the institutions of marriage and family on earth serve the greater purpose of preparing the people of God on earth for their marriage to Christ and relationship with the family of God for eternity. These eternal relationships will be more satisfying than any earthly marriage or relationship: "In the life to come, all interpersonal relationships will no doubt far surpass the most intimate and pleasurable of human intercourse as we now know it."²⁵

Not only will physical procreation come to an end in the age to come, so will spiritual procreation. That is, the window of opportunity to be reconciled with God will be shut. Jesus himself spoke of a time in which the "Master of the house" will rise up and "shut the door" (Luke 13:23-30), bringing the time of salvation to a close. He further spoke of a wedding feast in which five foolish virgins were unprepared for the bridegroom's arrival; because of their negligence, the "door was shut" to the wedding feast, and they were not allowed entry (Matt 25:1-13). In both scenarios, Jesus indicates that once the door of the kingdom is closed, no one else will be allowed access. Moreover, Jesus taught that evangelism would only persist for a limited time (Matt 24:14). The end, of which Christ speaks, marks the point in history when he will return and the opportunity for salvation will cease; instead, Christ will come "in righteousness"

²⁵ Blomberg, *Matthew*, 333.

riding on a white war horse judging and making war against his enemies (Rev 19:11). The “humble Messiah riding on a donkey becomes at the parousia a mighty warrior conquering on a horse.”²⁶ At this point, the church’s evangelistic role as a “light in the darkness” will cease:

Heaven will come down and not only perfectly fill the souls of God’s people, but it will fill every part of the new creation because it will be the new creation. Then there will no longer be a need for the church’s function as a lampstand, since their role of witnessing to God’s light will be finished. They will no longer need to shine God’s light in a dark world, since that world will be gone; instead, in the new creation, “the glory of God” will have “illuminated it, and its lamp [will be] the Lamb” (Rev 21:23; 22:25). The shining function will have shifted to God and the Lamb, and the saints merely will be reflectors of that glorious light.²⁷

God’s redemptive purposes in obtaining a people for himself will finally be accomplished. When the end comes, border expansion will no longer be necessary through physical or spiritual multiplication.

In the new creation, the borders of God’s sanctuary will encompass the entire creation, and so God’s mission of border “expansion” will be complete. However, God’s eschatological priests will still be responsible to cultivate the sanctuary within the borders. At this stage in redemptive history, the cosmos will be prepared for cultivation and exploration since, in the new creation, “no longer will there be anything accursed” (Rev 22:3), and so the curse of sin will be lifted from the created order. Jesus “reverses the curse pronounced in the original paradise (Gen 3:14-19). In the new Jerusalem the effects of that curse are completely overcome.”²⁸ The effects of this curse reversal are momentous. God’s curse against the ground and man’s work will be lifted (Gen 3:17-19; 5:29; Rom 8:20-22). Because of God’s reversal of this aspect of the curse, the cultural mandate given to the first priest-kings will continue on into eternity. While the specifics

²⁶ Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 951.

²⁷ Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 392.

²⁸ George R. Beasley-Murray, “Revelation,” in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 1454.

of man's activity in the age to come are not spelled out, John indicates that the eschatological priests will serve Christ and reign with him (Rev 22:3-5). The implication is that life for eschatological priests will be filled with "great activity, not passive lethargy."²⁹ Indeed, the cultural mandate will persist as priests nurture relationships; learn; build society, infrastructure, and commerce; enjoy animal and plant life; cultivate the arts; engage in forms of sanctified entertainment; expand technology, embark on continued discovery and exploration of the cosmos; and the like. God's original kingdom plans will no longer be frustrated and hampered by the curse, so eschatological priests will engage in the cultivation of the new creation for eternity in unimaginable ways that will not be subject to the limitations of this present age.

Priests throughout redemptive history have functioned largely to guard the holiness of God's sanctuary and his people, defending the sanctuary borders from internal and external defilement. In the new age, Christ makes certain that threats of both internal defilement and external defilement are done away with. Christ's work of redemption has made his bride suitable sanctuary-inhabitants (2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:27; Rev 14:4). No longer will his followers sin and be a threat to internal defilement.

Moreover, the sanctuary will be protected against external defilement. John explains that "nothing unclean will ever enter" (Rev 21:27; cf. 2 Chr 23:19; 29:16; 30:1-20) into the city. The entire sanctuary will, thus, perpetually remain undefiled. This will be true only because the true priest has finally defeated the serpent, sin, and death (1 John 3:8). As a result, the assembly's purity will be maintained once and for all because of the work of the supreme guardian-priest, Jesus Christ. How Christ perpetually and functionally maintains this purity against external defilement is not entirely clear; neither is the degree to which the eschatological priesthood will assist Christ in this work. What

²⁹ Easley, *Revelation*, 415-17.

is clear is that Christ's defeat over evil is permanent and that he has secured the certainty of the purity of the eschatological temple.

Additionally, he has arranged a separate place for the wicked. While the realm of the new Jerusalem encompasses all of the new creation, God has prepared another realm outside the borders of God's eschatological sanctuary, which will house Satan and his wicked seed. In the end, the devil will be "thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur" (Rev 20:10) to be joined by "the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, [the] murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars" whose "portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death" (Rev 21:8). Whereas the faithful eschatological priests "have the right to the tree of life" and "may enter the city by the gates," God has prepared another place "outside" the gates for the wicked (Rev 22:14-15). The image John presents is that of "unbelievers barricaded forever outside the city"³⁰ in a place where its inhabitants "will be tormented day and night forever and ever" (Rev 20:10). Christ, thus, serves as the supreme guardian-priest as he protects his people and his sanctuary from all forms of defilement.

Furthermore, Christ's protection extends to his people in every way as he provides for all of their needs. John again paints a picture of how the Lamb of God cares for and protects his priests:

Therefore they are before the throne of God,
and serve him day and night in his temple;
and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence.
They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore;
the sun shall not strike them,
nor any scorching heat.
For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd,
and he will guide them to springs of living water,
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. (Rev 7:13-17)

John's imagery of Christ is that of a shepherd who comforts his priests, assuring them that their divine guardian-priest is devoted to their care and protection.

³⁰ Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 1141.

Summary: The Eschatological Priesthood

As the narrative of Scripture draws to a close, the reader discovers that God's eschatological purpose to establish his holy sanctuary throughout the world through the ministry of his priests will be realized in the new creation. In that day, because of the ministry of the priesthood—most supremely, the ministry of the great high priest Jesus Christ—the knowledge of God's glory will finally encompass the creation. Moreover, his priests will gain unencumbered access to the divine presence of God, serving and reigning together with Christ, guarding the holiness of God's temple and his people by attending to the Word of God, border management, sacrifice, and mediation for eternity.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

The intent of this work has been to elucidate faithfully the office of the priesthood according to its presentation in Scripture. Whereas the common practice of many previous works has been to describe the nature and identity of the priesthood by focusing on one of its permutations in history to the exclusion of the others, this dissertation has traced its development across the entire narrative of Scripture, beginning with the first priests Adam and Eve, then moving to discuss the different priesthoods that correspond with Scripture's changing epochs. Consequently, a more thoroughgoing and comprehensive examination of the office yields a more complete understanding. From the prototypical priests Adam and Eve, to the patriarchal priesthood, to Israel's priesthood, to Christ's priesthood, to the new covenant priesthood, to the eschatological priesthood, the nature and identity of the priesthood has been presented with respect to a proper biblical-theological framework, accounting for the epochal shifts as they occurred in light of Scripture's covenantal structures and the changing ways in which God has manifested his special presence to his people.

While a measure of discontinuity exists between the differing priesthoods, a great deal of continuity exists as well, in that an underlying unity of nature and identity characterizes the office of the priesthood as a whole across the biblical narrative from beginning to end. In essence, the priesthood consists of people who, divinely granted access to the presence of God, are entrusted with serving God by guarding the holiness of his temple and his people through attending to the Word of God, border management,

sacrifice, and mediation. This definition of priesthood finds expression in each of the different priesthoods that span history.

The Priesthood of Adam and Eve

Scripture introduces Adam and Eve not only as the first humans but also as the first priests. This arrangement was not a human contrivance but was rather the product of divine design. Indeed, God created humanity to serve him as priests. As prototypical priests, Adam and Eve laid the groundwork that functioned to demonstrate the nature and identity of the priesthood. Enjoying privileged access to the divine presence in the archetypal Garden sanctuary, they served God by guarding the holiness of God, his sanctuary, and his people. They accomplished this as they carried out their priestly work of attending to the Word of God, border management, sacrifice, and mediation.

Adam and Eve were recipients of the first divine commandment and were required to obey the Word of God. As priests, it was their duty to live consecrated lives unto God and in accordance to his decree. As guardians of the sanctuary, they were intended to manage the Garden as they were placed there to protect its borders against external and internal defilement and to expand its borders through childbearing and cultivation. Because their original human nature was unmarred by sin, there was no need for either sacrifice or mediation.

After Adam and Eve failed to attend to the Word of God and border management, they were expelled from the divine sanctuary, having their priestly privileges revoked. No longer enjoying direct access to the divine presence, mediation became a necessity, and God instituted blood sacrifice as a means to atone for their sin, restore their relationship with him, and reconstitute their priestly status.

The Patriarchal Priesthood

Picking up the priestly mantle, the priests of the patriarchal period no longer possessed a sacred space where they could meet with God. Having banished the first

priests from the Garden-sanctuary, God instituted a new plan to reclaim a land for himself and his people, one that involved the priestly construction of altars across a divinely chosen geographical area. Priests constructed these altars, consecrating them as designated holy places where they would meet with God, worship him, and offer sacrifices to him on behalf of themselves and their families. As a fulfillment of his covenant promises, God employed the work of priestly altar building to procure a holy land for himself and for his covenant people.

The biblical pattern for the priesthood in this era involved the patriarch of the family serving those in his household as priest. He was entrusted with the privilege and grave responsibility of appropriately approaching God at consecrated altars where he would meet with God, mediate on behalf of his household, and offer sacrifices for them. It was ultimately his responsibility to attend to the Word of God in service to his family as he sought to understand, obey, and teach the Word of God to those under his care. Not only was it his duty to protect the sanctity of the altars and the associated sacrifices offered on them, but it was also his responsibility to protect his household from defilement. He and his wife were called to engage in the priestly task of passing along progeny through procreation and, in so doing, passing along the priesthood to their sons.

Priests of this era carried out their priestly duties with modulating consistency, exercising fluctuating degrees of faithfulness and disobedience. Nevertheless, God remained committed to his covenant promises in spite of their priestly failures. As God's purposes in redemptive history progressed, God chose to bring further changes to the priesthood.

Israel's Priesthood

As God purposed to uphold his covenant promises with his people who were oppressed by Egyptian slavery, he identified the people of Israel as his "firstborn son," an identity that would, at Mount Sinai, be associated with the entire nation's status as a

“kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” As Moses sought to consecrate the people as priests and confirm the covenant between them and God, the people of Israel devolved into idolatry, worshipping the Golden Calf. This event served as a covenant breach and the revoking of the nation’s priestly status. Only the tribe of Levi responded faithfully, and so God established the priesthood with the Levites.

Following a covenant renewal, God issued the Law to his covenant people Israel, which, in part, established a more formal structure concerning the office of the priesthood. Specifically, God consecrated Aaron and his male descendants as the priests of Israel, set apart the tribe of Levi to assist in priestly ministry, and instituted numerous priestly laws that regulated the specifics of their priestly duties. Additionally, God secured a land for his people where he would manifest his presence among them in new sanctuaries, first in the tabernacle and second in the temple. The priests of Israel were uniquely granted the privilege and responsibility of approaching God in the most consecrated chambers of these new sanctuaries, where they would enjoy access to manifest presence of God.

Being entrusted with the task of serving God by guarding the holiness of his sanctuary and his people, Israel’s priesthood consisted of those who dedicated themselves to attending to the Word of God, border management, sacrifice, and mediation. As teachers of the Word of God, Israel’s priests were not only responsible for attending to their personal holiness and obedience to the Scripture, they were also set apart to instruct the covenant people of God and hold them accountable to the Word of God. These priests mediated and offered undefiled sacrifices on behalf of the people of Israel. They were set in place to maintain the holiness of the divine sanctuary and the people of God, protecting the sanctuary from both external and internal defilement. Collectively, Israel’s priests continued to serve God through the acts of procreation and work.

Though Israel’s formalized priesthood represented a development in the redemptive and cosmic purposes of God, it nevertheless was incapable of achieving what

could only be accomplished through a perfect priesthood and a better covenant. Israel's priesthood proved its insufficiency in numerous ways, not the least of which was their eventual decline into grave disobedience.

The Priesthood of Jesus Christ

Being superior in every way to all previous priesthoods, the priesthood of Jesus Christ both served as the fulfillment of prior priestly types and functioned to usher in the new covenant. Coming as the incarnate God-man, the eternal Son of God took on human nature and lived out his childhood, adolescence, and adult life in perfect obedience to the will of God. Unlike previous priests, who were simply granted access to the divine presence, Jesus Christ manifested the divine presence to the world in and through his own person. Being consecrated as a priest at his baptism, Jesus arose from the baptismal pool, the Spirit of God descended on him, he was recognized as God's beloved Son, and he began his public priestly ministry.

Like previous priesthoods, Jesus was entrusted with serving God by guarding the holiness of his temple and his people through attending to the Word of God, border management, sacrifice, and mediation. And yet unlike previous priests, Jesus carried out these priestly ministries with perfection. Being completely obedient to the will of God, Jesus knew, cherished, and followed God's Word. Moreover, as the God-man, he was and is the divine **ΛΟΓΟΣ**, the self-expression of God. As the **ΛΟΓΟΣ**, Jesus perfectly manifested the word and will of God to the world. As the model guardian-priest, Jesus was, is, and will always be committed to protecting the holiness of the temple of God and the people of God. Because his very body replaced the earthly temple, he was dedicated to preserving its sanctity and its overall consecration to God. He, thus, protected himself body and soul from defilement. Moreover, as the guardian-priest of God's people, Jesus is devoted to the protection of his covenant people, seeking to defend them from all forms of internal and external attack. Furthermore, Jesus came to extend the borders of God's

sanctuary across the face of the earth, commissioning his followers to make disciples and spiritual offspring throughout the world. He modeled work, carrying on the carpentry trade of his earthly father. His overall mission is rooted in his priestly work of atonement, which was accomplished on the cross. His penal sacrifice did away with the need for old covenant blood sacrifices, providing once-for-all forgiveness of sins to his covenant people. Jesus continues to serve his people as the sole mediator between God and man.

The New Covenant Priesthood

When God, in Christ, established the new covenant with the church, the priesthood experienced significant transformation. As Christ caused the priests of the new covenant to be indwelt with the Holy Spirit, he declared them to be adopted sons and conferred his own priesthood on them. In so doing, he established the church as the new temple and commissioned this royal priesthood to extend the borders of God's holy sanctuary throughout the world via the Great Commission.

Unlike the priesthods of previous eras, every member of the new covenant is a priest. This includes every man, woman, boy, and girl who is reconciled to God through faith in Jesus Christ. While numerous points of diversity and complementarity characterize this new covenant priesthood, each priest plays an integral role in fulfilling the mission of the new covenant priesthood. Maintaining continuity with previous priesthods, the new covenant priesthood consists of people who enjoy access to the divine presence of God and are appointed to serve him by guarding the holiness of his temple and his people through attending to the Word of God, border management, sacrifice, and mediation.

This dissertation has asserted that the priestly ministry of the new covenant priesthood is largely encapsulated by what has come to be known as church discipline. Indeed, the New Testament practice of church discipline, with both its formative and corrective aspects, is rooted in the church's identity as priests. To say it another way, one

of the key expressions of the new covenant priesthood is church discipline. Church discipline will continue to be the priestly mission of the new covenant priesthood until Christ returns.

The Eschatological Priesthood

Upon Christ's return, he will bring about the consummation, which in turn will bring about another change in the priesthood. Though the revealed details about this future reality are somewhat scant, what is disclosed is enough for one to understand that the eschatological priesthood will experience a measure of both modification and continuity in the age to come. Scripture reveals that God's eschatological purposes both for his eternal sanctuary and his priestly people will be realized in that day. His sanctuary and his divine presence will be made manifest to his people throughout the world, and this eschatological priesthood will forever consist of people who serve and reign with Christ, guarding the holiness of the temple of God and the people of God as they attend to the Word of God, border management, sacrifice, and mediation. The beauty and majesty of the priesthood of Jesus Christ will be on full display for all to see, and he will at last be worshiped without encumbrance by his people as he alone deserves.

A Final Word

May it be that this dissertation aids the church in fulfilling its purpose at this stage in redemptive history. It is hoped that Christians will be benefitted as they come to fully grasp the nature and identity of the priesthood, how their own priesthood fits within the metanarrative of Scripture, and particularly how their status and ministry as new covenant priests should contribute to realizing the mission of God. Until the great high priest Jesus Christ returns, may new covenant priests throughout the world be found faithful as they engage in church discipline, serving God by guarding the holiness of his temple and his people through attendance to the Word of God, border management, sacrifice, and mediation.

APPENDIX

ORIGIN OF THE PRIESTHOOD

What follows addresses the reality that there is some debate among critical scholars concerning the origin of the priesthood. Many critical scholars contend that the priesthood originated within paganism.¹ There is no denying the existence or even the prevalence of pagan priests among the nations surrounding Israel. A cursory reading of the Old Testament reveals the regular presence of priests among the pagan nations that surrounded the people of Israel. Non-Jewish priests—those priests who carried out their work among Israel’s neighbors—are said to have performed similar duties to those done by Israel’s priests in the Old Testament.² The Old Testament also makes mention of several unidentified or unnamed non-Israelite priests,³ while the New Testament presents only one reference to a non-Israelite priest.⁴ Each of these non-Israelite priests is “introduced into the biblical narrative without explanation, and thus without distinguishing their functions from those of Israelite priests; the existence of priests outside Israel is presupposed and not questioned.”⁵ The point here is simply to

¹ The general consensus among critical scholars is that the biblical office of priesthood originated in paganism and, thus, borrowed the notion from pagans. See the following resources: Gunnar Landtman, *The Origin of Priesthood* (Ekenaes, Finland: Ekenaes, 1905); Leopold Sabourin, *Priesthood: A Comparative Study* (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1973), 2-17; Charles Meeks, “Priesthood,” in *LBD*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012-14).

² Scripture itself bears this out. Potiphara, the priest of On or Heliopolis (Gen 41:45, 50; 46:20); Jethro (or Reuel), the priest of Midian (Exod 2:16; 3:1; 18:1); Mattan, the Phoenician chief priest of Ba’al (2 Kgs 11:18); and Melchizedek, king of Salem (likely Jerusalem) and priest of the God Most High (*‘El ‘Elyon*; Gen 14:18-20; cf. Ps 110:4; Heb 7:1-10) each stand as examples.

³ These include those pagan priests of Egypt (Gen 47:22), of Ba’al in Samaria (2 Kgs 10:19), of Dagon in Philistia (1 Sam 5:5; 6:2), of Chemosh in Moab (Jer 48:7), of Milcom/Molech in Ammon (Jer 49:3), and of the high places (1 Kgs 12:32; 13:2).

⁴ In this case, the priest of Zeus at Lystra is said to make an attempt at offering a sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:13).

acknowledge that the Bible records the existence of priests among pagan nations and religions.

Richard Nelson observes that “the origin and development of the priesthood in Israel has been the subject of considerable scholarly debate.”⁶ Being sympathetic to the higher-critical approach to understanding the Bible, he is persuaded that the Israelite religion borrowed much from pagan religions: “Israel’s religion was much like that of its neighbors, involving, along with priests and sacrifice, common elements such as prophets, myths of primeval origins, a concern for fertility, and the conviction that their national god fought for them in their wars.”⁷ In the end, Nelson believes that the office of priesthood originated in, and thus was borrowed from, paganism; indeed, its origination was “a matter of human history rather than . . . something explicitly instituted by God.”⁸ Instead of dismissing the Israelite religion altogether, Nelson concludes that its uniqueness should be sought “in the nature of Israel’s God, not in the features of their

⁵ Paul Ellingworth, “Priest,” in *NDBT*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 696-97.

⁶ Nelson details the “official” account of the office’s origin according to the Bible: “At God’s direction, Moses inaugurated the offices of high priest, priest, and Levite in the period before Israel entered the land. Aaron and his sons Eleazar and Ithamar became the progenitors of the priests, while all other members of the tribe of Levi were to serve in a subordinate position as Levites.” Richard D. Nelson, *Raising Up a Faithful Priest: Community and Priesthood in Biblical Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 3. Nelson, however, believes the story of the origin of Israel’s priesthood to be much more complex than what he infers from his reading of the Bible. He notes similarities between Israel’s and Canaan’s use of terminology for words relating to priest, sacrifice, and sanctuary personnel. He points this out in his reference to Ugaritic texts and Punic inscriptions, particularly the Carthage and Marseilles Tariffs (3); see also James B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts: Relating to the Old Testament*, ed. James B. Pritchard, 3rd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 656-57. Nelson also makes mention of the local shrines of Canaan—including Bethel and Penuel—that Israel used for their worship of Yahweh. He infers from this that it may be assumed that both Canaan and Israel shared similar ritual practices. Nelson, *Raising Up a Faithful Priest*, 3. Moreover, he draws some connections to both Egypt and Midian. With regard to Egypt, he says, “It is significant that many of these non-indigenous aspects of Israel’s tradition (such as the exodus or Egyptian personal names like Moses or Phinehas) are associated with the tribe of Levi” (3). Furthermore, he suggests that Jethro’s priesthood in Midian must have influenced Moses’ understanding of the priesthood and, thus, the entire office of priesthood within the nation of Israel (3).

⁷ Nelson, *Raising Up a Faithful Priest*, 4.

⁸ Nelson, *Raising Up a Faithful Priest*, 5.

religion.”⁹ Nelson is content to concede pagan origins for the substance of the Israelite religion, while he attempts to maintain a distinctiveness for its deity.

Nelson’s conclusion, one that is shared by many other critical scholars, is unnecessary. While it is certainly true that similarities existed between Israel’s religious practices and those of surrounding pagan nations, it must not be supposed that Israel borrowed their notion of the priesthood from pagan ideology. Instead, it is best to conclude, as this dissertation has argued, that the office of priesthood originated in the mind of God and was from the very beginning part of God’s design for all of humanity, being constituted and established with the very first existing human being, Adam.

Critical scholars like Nelson err in their conclusions when they assume that Israel’s priesthood began during the ministry of Moses.¹⁰ While it is true that the title “priest” is not used of an Israelite in Scripture until the time of Moses, when it is used in reference to Aaron and his sons (Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar; Exod 28:1ff.), such a view fails to regard the priestly status of Adam and the many patriarchal priests who served their households as priest prior to Moses and the monarchical period. In the end, there is no reason to believe that priests did not exist among God’s people prior to Moses. Indeed, as this dissertation argues, God instituted the priesthood with the first human being, Adam, in the garden sanctuary, Eden, and that office has continued throughout human history, even to the present day.

The parallels that are observed between the biblical priest and the pagan priest may still cause concern for some. According to G. K. Beale, the similarities that existed between Israel’s priesthood and that of pagan nations can be attributed to the likelihood

⁹ Nelson, *Raising Up a Faithful Priest*, 4.

¹⁰ Nelson believes that the Bible teaches that the priesthood originated among the people of Israel during Moses’ ministry. He writes, “The origin and development of the priesthood in Israel has been the subject of considerable scholarly debate over the past century. The Bible’s ‘official’ account of the matter is straightforward enough. At God’s direction, Moses inaugurated the offices of high priest, priest, and Levite in the period before Israel entered the land.” Nelson, *Raising Up a Faithful Priest*, 2.

that general revelation and the common grace of God, which are extended to all mankind and to all image bearers, could have led to “institutions [among pagan nations] that resembled the truth about the true God and his designs for humanity.”¹¹ That is to say that the general revelation and common grace of God could have led pagan image bearers to institute the office of the priesthood within their own pagan religions.

Because the stamp of the image of God is imprinted on all humanity—including pagan humanity—and is not erased but only distorted, it is “plausible that some of the affinities in ancient pagan beliefs and religious institutions to that of Israel’s may be due to the fact that they are garbled, shadowy representations about the being of the biblical God and of his design for his dwelling place”¹² and the office of priesthood. Moreover, this resemblance can be attributed to a “refracted and marred understanding of the true conception of the temple [and priesthood] that was present from the very beginning of human history.”¹³

To put it another way, Daniel Strange writes that “non-Christian religions are sovereignly directed, variegated and dynamic, collective human idolatrous responses to divine revelation behind which stand deceiving demonic forces.”¹⁴ While a complete and accurate understanding of the temple and the priesthood was preserved among the faithful remnant of God’s people through God’s divine special revelation, mere “glimmers” of truth concerning God’s original design for the temple and the priesthood—albeit incomplete and imperfect—continued among image-bearing pagans, resulting in temples and priests that maintained aspects of God’s original design.¹⁵ Without special revelation,

¹¹ G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, NSBT 17 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 51.

¹² Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 51.

¹³ Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 29.

¹⁴ Daniel Strange, *Their Rock is Not Like Our Rock: A Theology of Religions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 42.

¹⁵ Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 29.

however, the efforts of pagan priests in their pagan temples were futile, misdirected, and idolatrous. Such idolatrous and pagan religions were, thus, “antithetically against yet parasitically dependent upon the truth of the Christian worldview.”¹⁶

Additionally, Beale suggests that the similarities are not to be viewed as an Israelite attempt to mimic the religious traditions of those countries around them. Instead, their record is “intended at times to be a protest statement that, while the pagan nations think that they have cornered the market on divine revelation from their gods who dwell in their temples, in fact, their gods are false and their temples purely idolatrous institutions, which are really the den of demons (Deut 32:17; Ps 106:37; 1 Cor 10:19-20).”¹⁷ Thus, the Scriptural instances in which Israel alluded to these similarities functioned for Israel as polemical protestations against the pagan nations. That is, Beale thinks that, in addressing the commonalities, Israel was declaring that what the pagans thought to be true of their gods was, in fact, only true of Israel’s God.¹⁸

The conclusions of critical scholars like Nelson regarding the origin of the Israelite priesthood are, therefore, shortsighted and fail to properly locate the office’s divinely instituted beginnings with Adam and his Edenic sanctuary instead of with pagan religions. Understanding the office of the priesthood to have originated with Adam not only dispenses with ideas of pagan origins but also has a large bearing on how one comprehends the priestly identity as a whole. When the office of the priesthood is recognized as having been derived from the mind of God rather than being a mere manmade imitation of pagan religion, the priestly identity becomes inherently more significant. Instead of being a concocted idea of heathen origins, it stems from the

¹⁶ Strange, *Their Rock is Not Like Our Rock*, 42.

¹⁷ Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 51.

¹⁸ Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 29-30.

purposeful mind and plan of God. Truly, the priesthood is in no way a human invention, but is wholly God's idea.

Moreover, when it is determined that God purposefully placed Adam, the first human, in the Garden to serve as the world's first priest, then one's conception of the priestly identity is inevitably influenced as well. Once the priesthood is no longer regarded as a reactionary institution, one that allegedly originated in response to sinful humanity's sad plight before God, and is instead viewed positively as an office given to the first man prior to his fall into sin, corruption, and overall alienation from God, then one's perception of the priestly identity must once more be influenced so that the priesthood is understood to be an entity that was created by God and purposed by God to accomplish his will.

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ABSTRACT

THE GUARDIAN-PRIESTHOOD, THE SPECIAL PRESENCE OF GOD, AND CHURCH DISCIPLINE: A BIBLICAL- THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE PRIESTHOOD

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2019
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This dissertation contends that the priesthood consists of people who, divinely granted access to the presence of God, are entrusted with serving God by guarding the holiness of his temple and his people through attending to the Word of God, border management, sacrifice, and mediation. Many scholars present an incomplete picture of the priesthood because they fail to understand its development in light of Scripture's biblical-theological framework. This dissertation shows that the priesthood is understood more fully and accurately when it is analyzed according to the changing epochs of redemptive history, centered on the priesthood of Christ, and in relation to the special presence of God.

After chapter 1 introduces the theme and thesis of the dissertation, the chapters that follow analyze the priesthoods and the corresponding temples of Adam and Eve (chapter 2), the patriarchs (chapter 3), Israel (chapter 4), Jesus Christ (chapter 5), the new covenant people of God (chapter 6), and the eschatological people of God (chapter 7). Chapter 8 offers a summary of the dissertation, along with concluding thoughts.

From beginning to end, this dissertation traces the historical development of the priesthood, showing how each permutation of the office remains consistent with the above thesis. Though a measure of discontinuity and transformation occurs in the priesthood from one era to the next, much continuity characterizes the office throughout

its development.

Each priesthood prior to Christ's is flawed, and each finds its fulfillment in his. Jesus institutes the new covenant priesthood, charging the church to carry forward his cosmic mission to extend the borders of his holy sanctuary throughout the world until he returns and establishes the eschatological priesthood, which will serve God in the new creation. Until then, the church, as a divinely indwelt temple, attends to the priestly ministry of church discipline, with both its formative and corrective aspects. Church discipline, being rooted in the priestly identity, will continue as the mission of the new covenant priesthood until Christ returns and brings his priestly work to consummation.

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