

# The Royal Priest

## Study Notes Collection

In the Bible, the role of priests is quite clear: represent God to the people and the people to God. And we first see this type of calling on the opening pages of the Bible with Adam and Eve. In the garden, God called humans to a royal priestly role, but humans rarely live up to this calling. These biblical stories of humanity's failed attempts at priesthood point to the ultimate royal priest, Jesus, the one who will restore the blessings of Eden so that all humanity can become the royal priests we were made to be.

In our video series The Royal Priest, we take a close look at the Bible's portrayal of the royal priest, from Eden and the first humans, to Abraham and Melchizedek, Aaron and Moses, and King David, until we finally see the culmination of this rich biblical image in the person of Jesus. Jesus fulfilled the royal priestly role and made a way for humans to live out the calling first received in the garden. Use these study notes to dig deeper into the ideas introduced in our video series The Royal Priest.

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# Royal Priests of Eden

## Introduction to Priests in the Bible

In order to understand this important biblical theme, we have to first look at what it means to be a priest according to the Bible.

A priest is someone who presides over the overlapping boundary of Heaven and Earth. Their primary function is to represent God to people and people to God. Priests act as mediators between Heaven and Earth, between the divine and human. They are embodied representatives of the divine.

The first person called priest (Heb. *kohen* / כהן) in the Bible is Melchizedek, who was the king-priest over ancient Jerusalem (Genesis 14).

After that we meet a series of priests.

- Genesis 41:45: Joseph in Egypt marries the daughter of a priest in Egypt.
- Exodus 2:16: Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, is the priest of Midian, a tribal group inhabiting the deserts southeast of Canaan.
- Exodus 31:10: Aaron is to be appointed as the high priest of Israel.

But there is a core problem that arises when talking about priests in the Bible. Priests are introduced in the Bible in a way that leaves ambiguous who they are and what they do. This is not a bug—it's a feature of the storyline.

## God's Presence Embodied in Human Form

Priest is a biblical category used to describe someone whose job it is to represent and embody God's heavenly divine presence on Earth, specifically in sacred spaces and roles.

But priests are not the only ones who do that. There are actually three overlapping roles in the Bible where people represent God. In addition to priests there are:

- **Prophets:** Represent God's power and purpose to people on Earth, specifically to those in covenant relationship with God.
- **Kings:** Represent God's presence and powerful rule on Earth in the context of a group's social and political life.

Priest, prophet, and king are all later biblical categories that only partially represent something core to each category: the concept of God's presence, word, and power embodied in human form.

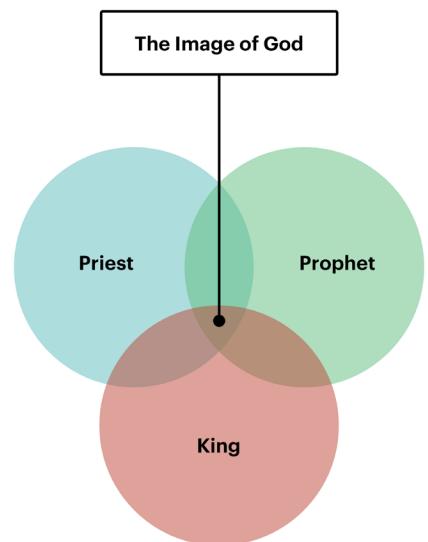
The priesthood is only one part of this triad, focused specifically on the role of representing God in a sacred space. But the core idea is more fundamental.

The story of the Hebrew Bible is about how all humanity was created as God's image and made to rule and represent the divine presence, power, and purpose on Earth. It is only after the introduction of human rebellion that these roles break off from one another and separate.

The story of Jesus is about how all of these separate roles are reunited in the person of Jesus, which is why Jesus is depicted as a prophet, king, and priest, but mainly called "the son of humanity," or "the human one."

When we only focus on the theme of priesthood in the Bible apart from its narrative dynamic that begins with humans as the image of God, we are putting the cart before the horse, so to speak.

To explore the theme of priesthood in the Bible, we must begin with the concept of the image of God introduced in Genesis 1.



## Humanity As God's Royal Image

Within the framework of the six days of Genesis 1, the appointment of humanity as God's image is clearly the climactic act of God's work, as this moment is saved for the last. This key moment in Genesis 1:26-28 is designed as a literary symmetry.

And God said,  
"Let us make human  
in our image,  
according to our likeness;  
and let them rule  
over the fish of the sea  
and over the birds of the sky  
and over the cattle  
and over all the land,  
and over every creeper that creeps on the land."  
And God created human in his image,  
in the image of God he created him;  
male and female he created them.  
And God blessed them,  
and God said to them,  
"Be fruitful and multiply,  
and fill the land,  
and subdue it;  
and rule over the fish of the sea  
and over the birds of the sky  
and over every living creature that creeps on the land."

Genesis 1:26-28

Notice the use of the term "rule" in this passage ("and let them rule over," "in order that they may rule"). In Hebrew grammar and syntax, when you have a verb of command or invitation, called an imperative (ex: "Be fruitful and multiply"), followed by a clause that also has what's called a jussive (ex: "and let them rule..."), this is a classical Hebrew way of making a purpose statement. For more on this, see Thomas Lambdin's *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (1971 edition), section 107c.

As noted above, the purpose of humanity's appointment as the divine image is royal rule over creation. In Genesis 1, it is clear that God alone has the unique mastery and power over the chaotic nothingness—he alone can speak reality into an ordered existence. But now, humanity is appointed as God's delegated ruler, as embodied physical images of the divine rule.

"Just as powerful earthly kings, to indicate their claim to dominion,  
erect an image of themselves in the provinces of their empire  
where they do not personally appear, so humans are placed  
on the earth in God's image as God's sovereign emblem."

Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis*, pg. 60.

"The imago Dei refers to human rule, that is, an exercise of power on God's behalf in creation... This delegation of, or sharing in, God's rule suggests the image is 'representative,' designating the responsible office and task entrusted to humanity in administering the earthly realm on God's behalf... [However] the meaning of 'rule' goes well beyond our contemporary hermeneutical preconceptions. The royal metaphor...integrally includes wisdom and artful construction. The God who rules creation by his

authoritative word is also the supreme artisan who constructs a complex and habitable cosmic structure... The humans are called to imitate or continue God's own creative activity by populating and organizing the remaining unformed and unfilled earth. God has, in other words, started the process of forming and filling, which humans, as God's earthly delegates, are to continue."

J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1*, pgs. 88-89.

## History of Ancient Near Eastern Royal Representatives

To understand the significance of this calling for humanity, it's important to look at how other ancient Near Eastern cultures referred to royal figures as representatives of their deities.

The statue of the Syrian king Hadad-iti (9th century B.C.) is dedicated to Adad (Baal), the patron storm God of Syria. The statue is described in precisely the language of Genesis 1:26: The statue of the king represents Adad's authority, which Hadad-iti embodies and represents.

In Egyptian royal ideology, the Pharaoh was called "the image of Re" (the sun deity, chief of the Egyptian pantheon).

Pharaoh Ahmose I (1550-1525 B.C.) was called "the prince of Re, the child of Qeb, his heir, the image of Re whom he created, the representative for whom he has set himself on earth."

Queen Hatepshepsut (1479-1457 B.C.) is described as the "superb image of Amon, the image of Amon on earth, the image of Amon-Re to eternity, his living monument on earth."

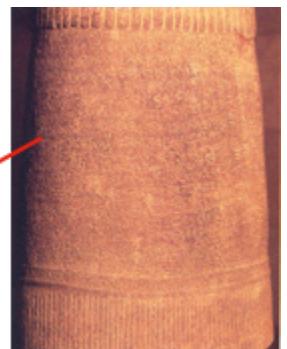
Amenhotep II (1427-1400 B.C.) was titled "image of Re," or "image of Horus," or "holy image of the lord of gods."

Amenhotep III (1390-1352 B.C.) was called by Amon "my living image, creation of my members, whom Mut bore for me."

For more examples and discussion, see David J.A. Clines, "The Image of God in Man," Tyndale Bulletin vol. 19 (1968), pgs. 53-103.

"Central to this ideology was the divinity of the pharaoh, by which he was set apart from all other human beings... [T]he central function of the king was his cultic, intermediary function of uniting the earthly and divine realms. The pharaoh was thought, in a fairly strong sense, to be a physical, local, incarnation of the deity, analogous to that of a cult statue or image of a god, which is also such an incarnation... The king... was a place where the god manifested himself and was a primary means by which the deity worked on earth."

J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1*, 109-110.



## Mesopotamian (Assyrian and Babylonian) examples:

- A letter from Adad-shumu-usur as court astrologer in the reign of Assyrian king Esarhaddon (670s B.C.): "The king, the lord of the world, is the very image of Shamash."
- Another letter from Adad-shumu-usur to Esarhaddon, where he describes both the king and his late father: "The father of the king, my lord, was the very image of Bel, and the king, my lord, is likewise the very image of Bel."
- Discussed in Simo Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars*, letters #196 and #228.

In ancient royal ideology "the king is the image of the god. This widely attested functional similarity between the king and god in Mesopotamia, whereby the king represents the god by virtue of his royal office and is portrayed as acting like the god in specific ways, provides the necessary background for understanding the descriptions of the king as the image of a god... [This] provides the most plausible set of parallels for interpreting the *imago Dei* in Genesis 1... Humanity is dignified with a status and role...that is analogous to the status and role of kings in the ancient Near East. Genesis chapter one...thus constitutes a genuine democratization of ancient Near Eastern royal ideology. As *imago Dei*, humanity is called to be the representative and intermediary of God's power and blessing on earth."

J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1*, 121.

## God's Idol Statue in His Cosmic Temple

The words "image" (Heb. *tselem* / סְלֵם) and "likeness" (Heb. *demut* / תְּמַד) are most commonly used to refer to physical statues of stone or wood, and these words are usually translated "idol" or "statue" in such contexts.

*Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, "When you cross over the Jordan into the land of Canaan, then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their figured stones, and destroy all their molten images and demolish all their high places.*

Numbers 33:51-52

*All the people of the land went to the house of Baal and tore it down; his altars and his images they broke in pieces thoroughly.*

2 Kings 11:18

What we can conclude from the above is that in biblical theology, the royal-priestly image of God is an incarnation of the divine presence.

"Genesis 1:26 can only be understood against the background of an ancient Yahweh statue...humanity is regarded as the statue of God... The terms "image" and "likeness" are used as synonyms denoting a statue. Humans were thus created to be the living statues of the deity... There was no need of a divine image because humans represented Yahweh as a statue would have done."

H. Niehr, "In Search of Yahweh's Cult Statue in the First Temple," pp. 93-94.

"The priestly image-of-God-in-humanity theology says that idolatry is ruled out of court because to locate the divine presence and action in another part of creation or in that which we create is to absolve ourselves of our own responsibility to bear divine presence and action...Idolatry [from this perspective] is to cling to those objects made in our image and believe that they will affirm our being and guarantee security and prosperity. The true humanity in the biblical vision is one which affirms, gives security to, and makes multiply the life of creation."

Crispin Fletcher-Louis, "God's Image, His Cosmic Temple, and the High Priest," p. 85.

"[T]his unifying image in humankind has a sacramental as well as an essentially corporal function: Adam beings are animate icons... the peculiar purpose for their creation is 'theophanic': to represent or mediate the sovereign presence of the deity within the central nave of the cosmic temple, just as cult-images were supposed to do in conventional sanctuaries. [This means that] humanity is an inherently ambivalent species, whose...existence blurs, by design, the otherwise sharp distinction between creator and creation."

S. Dean McBride, "Divine Protocol: Genesis 1:1-2:3 as Prologue to the Pentateuch," pp. 16-17.

## Adam and Eve as Priests in the Garden

The language of Genesis 1-2 positions Adam and Eve as royal priests and the garden of Eden as a sacred mountain-temple, the meeting place of Heaven and Earth.

And Yahweh God took the human  
and he rested him in the garden of Eden to work it and to keep it.  
And Yahweh God commanded the human, saying,  
"From every tree of the garden  
you may surely eat;  
but from the tree of the knowledge of good and bad  
you shall not eat from it,  
for in the day that you eat from it  
you will surely die."

Genesis 2:15-17

What should we make of humanity's purpose outlined in this passage—to work and to keep the garden?

### Genesis 2:15 [literal translation]

And Yahweh Elohim took the human and placed him into the garden of Eden **to work it and keep it.**

These two verbs, "work" and "keep," are packed with significance, as they portray the ideal vocation of humanity.

## 'Abad (עֲבָד): "To work," "to serve," or "to worship"

<b>Abad: To work'</b>	Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your 'abad, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any 'abad, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns.  Exodus 20:8-10 (NIV)
<b>Abad: To serve'</b>	May peoples 'abad you, and nations bow down to you. Be master of your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be those who curse you, And blessed be those who bless you.  Genesis 27:29
<b>Abad: To' worship</b>	And God said, "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will 'abad God on this mountain."  Exodus 3:12 (NIV)
<b>:Abodah' Priestly service</b>	But you and your sons with you shall attend to your priesthood for everything concerning the altar and inside the veil, and you are to do your 'abodah.  Numbers 18:7  With the help of Zadok a descendant of Eleazar and Ahimelek a descendant of Ithamar, David separated them into divisions for their appointed order of 'abodah.  1 Chronicles 24:3

The Hebrew word *shamar* (שָׁמַר), meaning "to serve and keep," is used in the Bible to reference a priestly service of worship. These verbs are used together as a phrase only elsewhere in descriptions of the priests and Levites working in and around the temple.

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Bring the tribe of Levi near and set them before Aaron the priest, that they may serve him. They shall *shamar* the *mishmeret* for him and the *mishmeret* of the whole congregation before the tent of meeting, to 'abad the 'abodah of the tabernacle. They shall also *shamar* all the furnishings of the tent of meeting, along with the duties of the sons of Israel, to 'abad the 'abodah of the tabernacle. You shall thus give the Levites to Aaron and to his sons; they are wholly given to him from among the sons of Israel.

Numbers 3:5-9 (NASB95)

They may, however, assist their brothers in the tent of meeting, to *shamar* the *mishmeret*, but they themselves shall 'abad no 'abodah. Thus you shall deal with the Levites concerning their obligations.

Numbers 8:26

But you and your sons with you shall *shamar* to your priesthood for everything concerning the altar and inside the veil, and you are to 'abad the 'abodah. I am giving you the priesthood as a bestowed service.

Numbers 18:7

“To serve, ‘abad, is a very common verb and is often used of cultivating the soil (2:5; 3:23; 4:2, 12, etc.). The word is commonly used in a religious sense of serving God (e.g., Deut 4:19), and in priestly texts, especially of the tabernacle duties of the Levites (Num 3:7–8; 4:23–24, 26, etc.). Similarly, שָׁמַר “to guard, to keep” has the simple profane sense of “guard” (4:9; 30:31), but it is even more commonly used in legal texts of observing religious commands and duties (17:9; Lev 18:5) and particularly of the Levitical responsibility for guarding the tabernacle from intruders (Num 1:53; 3:7–8). It is striking that here and in the priestly law these two terms are juxtaposed (Num 3:7–8; 8:26; 18:5–6), another pointer to the interplay of tabernacle and Eden symbolism already noted.”

Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 67.

“[T]he tasks given to Adam are of a priestly nature: caring for sacred space. In ancient thinking, caring for sacred space was a way of upholding creation. By preserving order, non-order was held at bay... If the priestly vocabulary in Genesis 2:15 indicates the same kind of thinking, the point of caring for sacred space should be seen as much more than landscaping or even priestly duties. Maintaining order made one a participant with God in the ongoing task of sustaining the equilibrium God had established in the cosmos. Egyptian thinking attached this not only to the role of priests as they maintained the sacred space in the temples but also to the king, whose task was “to complete what was unfinished, and to preserve the existent, not as a status quo but in a continuing, dynamic, even revolutionary process of remodeling and improvement.” This combines the subduing and ruling of Genesis 1 with the ‘bd and šmr of this chapter.

John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve*, 106–107.

## Exile from Eden and From the Holy of Holies

God placed his royal images, his human priests, in his garden-temple so that humans could live in the meeting place of Heaven and Earth. But humans quickly forfeited this calling and found themselves cast out of the garden, the Holy of Holies and the hotspot of God’s presence.

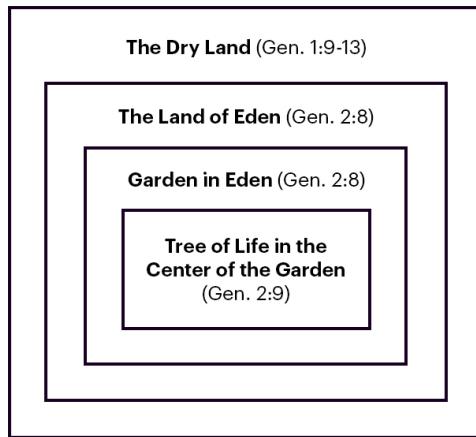
And Yahweh God said, “Look, the human has become like one of us, knowing good and bad, and now so that he won’t send out his hand and take also from the tree of life (תְּבִיבָה), and eat and live (נֶאֱמָן) forever...”

And Yahweh God sent him out from the garden to work the ground from which he was taken, and he banished the human.

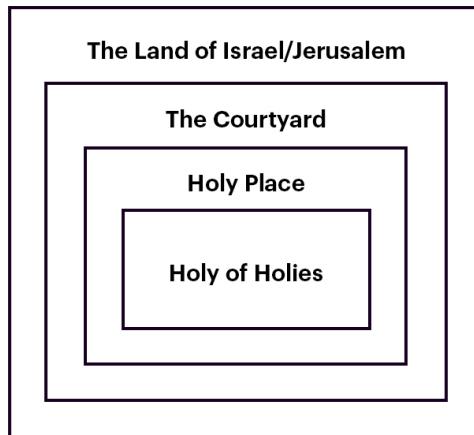
And he made to dwell at the east of the garden of Eden, cherubim and the flame of the whirling sword to guard way to the tree of life (נֶאֱמָן).

## The Three-Part Geography of Eden

The geography of Eden within the dry land of Genesis 1-3 depicts a three-part topography.



This conception of the garden of Eden on the dry land provides a symbolic template for Israel's tabernacle-temple, especially as described in Ezekiel's ideal/restored temple (Ezekiel 40-48).



## The Inversion of the Eden Story's Introduction

After humans rebel, we see the good gifts of the garden inverted in the world outside of God's temple presence.

Before Humanity's Rebellion	After Rebellion
God created the human and placed him in the garden.	The humans are banished from the garden.
God caused the tree of life and knowing good and bad to grow.	Humans are cut off from the two trees.
Before the garden, there was no human to work the ground.	Outside Eden, the human works the ground.
Humans were made mortal, so that by obeying God they could remain in the garden and receive the gift of eternal life.	Humans are cut off and sent into the land of mortality.
Humans were directed to guard/keep the garden.	Humans are now guarded/kept from the garden.

The story's final line about the cherubim and the "flame of the whirling sword" is a condensed hint that sends the reader forward to the design of the tabernacle and temple and into the prophetic visions of the divine throne room.

Cherubim flank the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies (Exod 25:17-22), and in the temple there are designs on the walls of the holy place and on the front doors going into the temple (1 Kgs 6:29-32).

In Chronicles, we read that the sword will appear in the hand of the angel of Yahweh again when David goes to the hilltop in Jerusalem, which at the time was the threshing floor of Ornan (1 Chronicles 21:16).

## Conclusion

Ultimately, the story of Eden and humanity makes clear humanity's deep need for a royal priest who will come to restore the blessings of the garden. The rest of the biblical story develops this theme of the royal priest, introducing key biblical characters, like Abraham, Moses, and David, who all point to the coming ultimate royal priest, Jesus.

# Abraham and Melchizedek

## Abraham as God's Vehicle of the Eden Blessing

In the first video in our Royal Priest series, we learned all about how humanity forfeited their role as royal priests, cutting themselves off from the blessings of Eden. But the story continues. Later in Genesis, we read about how God chose a family, a man named Abraham and his wife Sarah. And he told them that he would use them to bless the nations. So is Abraham the royal priest who's going to set everything right? Not quite. Let's take a closer look.

### God's Covenant with Abram/Abraham

*And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and in you will be blessed all the families of the earth.*

Genesis 12:1-3

## Literary Design of Genesis 14

God delivers Abram's enemies into his hand, and then Melchizedek, the priest king of Shalem (an ancient name short for Jerusalem), blesses Abram.

A	14:1-4: Five eastern kings vs. four western kings (led by Sodom) Round one <i>in the valley of Shiddim</i>	
B	14:5-12: Five eastern kings vs. four western kings Round two <i>in the valley of Shiddim</i>	
C	14:13-16: Abram vs. the eastern kings He recovers the stolen property	
A'	14:17: Abram meets the king of Sodom Round one <i>in the valley of Shaveh</i>	
B'	14:18-21: Abram meets the king of Shalem <i>in the valley of the king</i>	
C'	14:21-24: Abram meets the king of Sodom again Abram refuses to take the property	

This design highlights a contrast between Abram's relationship to the king of Sodom and his relationship to Melchizedek, king of Shalem.

A	14:17 <i>And the king of Sodom came out to meet Abram after he returned from striking Chedorlaomer and the kings with him, in the valley of Shaveh, this is the Valley of the King.</i>
B	14:18 <i>But Melchizedek king of Shalem made to come out bread and wine, and he was a priest of God Most High (Hebrew: el elyon).</i>
C	14:19 <i>And he blessed him and said: "Blessed be Abram by God Most High Possessor of skies and land And blessed be God Most High who has delivered over your enemies into your hand."</i>
B'	14:20b <i>And he [Abram] gave to him [Melchizedek] one-tenth of everything.</i>
A'	14:21 <i>And the king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give to me the people, and as for the take for yourself."</i> 14:22 <i>And Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I raise my hand to Yahweh, God Most High, Possessor of skies and land.</i> 14:23 <i>From a strap to a sandal thong, I will not take from anything that belongs to you, so that you cannot say, 'I made Abram rich!'</i> 14:24 <i>Except only what the lads have eaten, and the portion of the men who went with me, Aner, Eshkol, and Mamre, let them take their own portion."</i>

The king of Sodom comes out to take Abram's plunder ("give it to me"), while the king of Shalem gives to Abram both provision and a blessing, generating the response that the king of Sodom was looking for: "and Abram gave Melchizedek one-tenth of everything."

## Genesis 14: The Role and Blessing of Melchizedek

Melchizedek is the first explicit royal priest in the book of Genesis. Adam and Eve are implicitly royal priests, but Melchizedek is called a priest king, though he is not from the line of Seth, Noah, or Shem (or at least not in the text).

Melchizedek rules over Shalem (lit. *shalem* / שָׁלֵם), which later in the Hebrew Bible is identified as Jerusalem (see Psalm 76:1-2, where “God’s tent is in Shalem, his dwelling is in Zion”). It will later be called “Jebus” when it is in the possession of the Canaanites (Joshua 18:28, Judges 19:10-11, and 2 Samuel 5:6-7).

Melchizedek pronounces a blessing on Abraham in the name of *El-Elyon*, the creator/possessor of skies and land. This divine title, and Abraham’s statement in 14:12 that *El-Elyon* is Yahweh, links Melchizedek’s God to Yahweh Elohim of Genesis 1-2. He is a genuine priest of the God of Israel, but before Israel ever existed and before Yahweh was known by that name (see Exodus 3:12-15). This connects him to the line of genuine worship that stems back to Seth in Genesis 4:26.

Melchizedek’s blessing on Abraham links back to God’s promise in Genesis 12:1-3: “Whoever blesses you, I will bless.” Thus, we can expect that Melchizedek and the city he rules will experience God’s blessing some time in the future.

Notice how Melchizedek’s blessing develops God’s own blessing on Abraham. God has promised seed and land, and now Melchizedek adds deliverance from enemies to that blessing. God will bless Abraham with abundant descendants and a promised land, and he will deliver Abram’s descendants from their enemies.

While there are many gaps in the narrative (that will be happily filled in by later generations of readers), Melchizedek is introduced here to show that Abraham encountered Yahweh in and through a royal priest in Jerusalem, long before the time of David. This fixes the category of a royal priesthood in Jerusalem that will be further developed as the biblical narrative progresses.

## Genesis 22: Abraham Surrenders his Seed to God on the Proto-Temple Mount

As we continue reading in Genesis, we see Abraham also develop as a royal priestly figure. He was called by God to restore Eden blessing to the world, and after sin and rebellion, God tests Abraham by commanding him to sacrifice his son on a mountain.

*Now it came about after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains which I will tell you."*

Genesis 22:1-2

This is a shocking passage to read. Didn't God promise to give Abraham many descendants, through whom he would bless the whole world? What is going on here? Let's keep reading.

### Genesis 22:11-18

#### God's Speech #1

**And the messenger of Yahweh called to him from the skies and said,** "Abraham, Abraham." And he said, "Here I am." And he said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do not do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God because **you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.**"

	<b>Abraham's Response:</b> And Abraham lifted his eyes and saw, and look, a ram behind, a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and he offered it up as a going-up offering <b>in the place of his son.</b> And Abraham called the name of that place: <b>"Yahweh will see [to it],"</b> like it is said today: <b>"On the mountain of Yahweh he/it will be seen."</b>
a b a' b'	

#### God's Speech #2

**And the messenger of Yahweh called to Abraham a second time from the skies and said,**  
"By myself I have sworn an oath, declares Yahweh,  
**because you have done this thing and you have not withheld your son, your only son,**  
**I will greatly bless you,**  
**and I will greatly multiply your seed**  
**like the stars of the heavens**  
**and like the sand which is on the seashore;**  
**and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies.**  
**and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed,**  
**because you have listened to my voice.**"

## Mount Moriah Later in the Hebrew Bible

Mt. Moriah (מוריה = Mount Vision) links back to the oaks of Moreh (מורה) from Genesis 12, creating an inclusio between Genesis 12 and 22. Also Mount Moriah has clear hyperlinks forward to the temple mount on which David will later establish the site for the temple.

In Genesis 22:14, the “Mountain of Yahweh” (הר יהוה) is used only elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible to refer to Mount Zion, the temple mount in Jerusalem (see Isaiah 2:4, 30:29, Micah 4:2, and Psalm 24:3). Mount Moriah appears only one more time in the Hebrew Bible, as the location where the events of David’s great test took place in 2 Samuel 24.

*And Solomon began to build the house of Yahweh in  
Jerusalem **on Mount Moriah**, where Yahweh had appeared  
to his father David, which he established at the place of  
David, **on the threshing floor of Ornan** the Jebusite.*

2 Chronicles 3:1

# Moses and Aaron

## The Fractured Priesthood

In Exodus 3-4, the origins of Israel's priesthood is portrayed as a divine concession to Moses' stubbornness and unbelief.

### Literary Design

3:1: "Moses was shepherding the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law ... in the wilderness ... on the mountain of God."			
<b>A</b>	3:1-6: Moses encounters God in the s'neh bush on Mount Horeb. 3:7-10: God commissions Moses to lead Israel out of slavery in Egypt.		
<b>B</b>	3:11: Moses' first objection: "Who am I?"		
<b>C</b>	3:12: <b>I will be</b> (אֶהְיֶה) <b>with you</b> + God gives Moses sign #1: Israel will worship on this mountain.		
<b>B</b>	3:13: Moses' second objection: "What is your name?"		
<b>C</b>	3:14: God reveals his name: " <b>I will be</b> (אֶהְיֶה) what I will be." 3:15-22: Divine name and promise to lead Israel out of Egypt and into the land		
<b>B</b>	4:1: Moses' third objection: "What if they don't trust me or listen to my voice?"		
<b>D</b>	4:2-5: God gives Moses sign #2: snake staff 4:6-8: God gives Moses sign #3: leprous hand 4:9: God gives Moses sign #4: water to blood		
<b>B</b>	4:10: Moses' fourth objection: "I'm not a man of words, but heavy of mouth and tongue."		
<b>C</b>	4:11-12: <b>I will be</b> (אֶהְיֶה) <b>with your mouth</b> and teach you what to say.		
<b>B</b>	4:13: Moses' fifth objection: "Please send someone else!"		
<b>C</b>	4:14-17: <b>I will be</b> (אֶהְיֶה) <b>with your mouth</b> and with your brother Aaron's mouth and I will teach you both what to do.		
3:1: "Moses was shepherding the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law ... in the wilderness ... on the mountain of God."			

Moses meets Yahweh at the S'neh bush on Mount Sinai and is commissioned both to Israel and to Pharaoh.

- Moses is presented as an anti-hero who disagrees with God and objects to his commands.
- Moses becomes the template for later Israelite "un-heroes" who resist their calling and/or doubt God's ability to use them. See Gideon (Judges 6-8) and Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1) for examples of the Moses-like un-hero.

## Aaron's First Problematic Introduction

In Exodus 4, we see Moses' fifth rejection of Yahweh's calling and the introduction of Aaron. The last rejection of Moses is climactic, both in his utter refusal to go to Egypt and in Yahweh's extreme response.

<sup>13</sup>But he said, "Please, Lord, now send the message by whomever you will."

<sup>14</sup>Then the anger of Yahweh burned against Moses, and he said,

"Is there not your brother Aaron the Levite?

I know that he speaks fluently.

and moreover, look, he is coming out to meet you;

and when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart.

<sup>15</sup>You are to speak to him and put the words in his mouth;

and I, even I, will be with your mouth and with his mouth,

and I will teach you what you are to do.

<sup>16</sup>And he shall speak for you to the people;

and he will be as a mouth for you

and you will be as God to him.

<sup>17</sup>And this staff you will take in your hand,

with which you shall perform the signs."

Exodus 4:13-17

After Moses' fifth objection, Yahweh's "anger burns against Moses" (4:14) and he appoints Aaron as a mediator. This narrative is key, as it introduces Aaron's role (and therefore the later priesthood he represents) as a divine concession to Moses' unbelief and stubbornness.

"Aaron's first introduction into the narrative of the Pentateuch comes in conjunction with Yahweh's burning anger and as a concession for Moses' apparently faithless resistance to Yahweh's instructions...Moses was punished for his unwillingness to accept Yahweh's commission and was likewise denied the honor that would have come with it...The glory of fulfilling the task did not belong to Moses alone, but was shared in part by his brother Aaron.' The author seems to be portraying the scenario as gradually deviating from what Yahweh initially envisaged or what the ideal scenario might have been had Moses not responded with such resistance."

Josh Mathews, *Melchizedek's Alternative Priestly Order*, p. 83-84.

## Aaron's Second Problematic Introduction

In Exodus 5-11, Moses and Aaron's behavior regularly contradicts Yahweh's commands, as they only kind of obey his directions in addressing Pharaoh.

Yahweh's Directions	Moses' Actions
<p>Go and gather the elders of Israel...and you with the elders of Israel will come to the king of Egypt and you will say to him, "Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. So now, please, let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to Yahweh our God."</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Exodus 3:16-18</p>	<p>Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered all the elders of the sons of Israel...And afterward Moses and Aaron came and said to Pharaoh, "<b>Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'Let my people go that they may celebrate a feast to me in the wilderness.'</b>"</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Exodus 4:29-5:3</p> <p>Then they said, "The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please, let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to Yahweh our God, <b>otherwise he will fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword.</b>"</p>
<p>The Lord said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in your power; but I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go."</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Exodus 4:21</p>	<p>Moses and Aaron perform no signs in their first approach to Pharaoh—only in the second approach after the suffering of the Israelites has increased!</p>

Moses' actions continually deviate from Yahweh's directions in Exodus 3-7:

- Moses is to gather the elders of Israel and he does it.
- Moses is to go to Pharaoh with the elders of Israel, but he does not. Aaron ends up replacing the elders instead of accompanying them.
- Moses' and Aaron's words to Pharaoh deviate as well. They add to God's words the mention of a "feast to Yahweh" and a threat that Yahweh will bring a plague or sword. Yahweh said nothing about this.
- Moses and Aaron perform no signs and wonders when they first come to Pharaoh, resulting in unbelief and Pharaoh increasing the brick quota of the Israelites.

"From his first arrival in the Pentateuch's narrative, there is at least a modest authorial criticism of Aaron and his role in the exodus events. The first mention of his name comes immediately after Yahweh's anger burning against Moses, and his tainted characterization throughout the early chapters of Exodus carry on the negative associations of his introduction. When Moses repeatedly resists Yahweh's first call, Aaron is given as a concession, resulting from Moses' lack of faith. When Moses takes Aaron instead of the elders with him to encounter Pharaoh in a way quite different from the

way that Yahweh instructed Moses, this exhibits disobedience by both Moses and Aaron...Aaron's role in the narrative, and the portrayal of his priesthood in particular, are meant to be seen as less than ideal. They are presented as accommodations necessitated by Moses' disobedience and lack of faith."

Josh Mathews, *Melchizedek's Alternative Priestly Order*, p. 95-96.

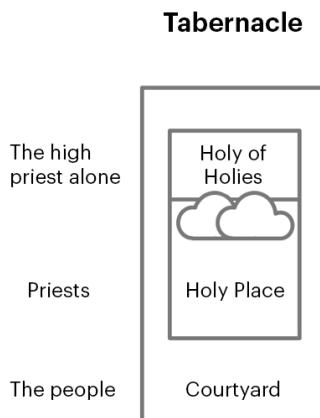
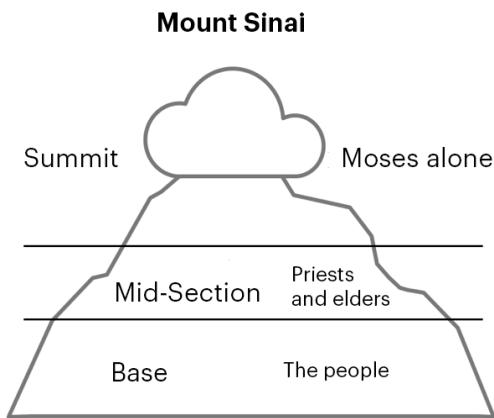
## Exodus 19-31: Moses Ascends to Heaven

### Exodus 24:15-18

15a And Moses went up to the mountain,  
15b and the cloud covered the mountain,  
16 And the glory of Yahweh rested on the mountain of Sinai,  
and the cloud covered it  
for six days;  
and on the seventh day  
he called to Moses from the midst of the cloud.  
17 And to the eyes of the sons of Israel  
the appearance of the glory of Yahweh  
was like a consuming fire on the mountain top.  
18 And Moses entered the midst of the cloud as he went up to the mountain;  
and Moses was up on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

This compositional design highlights Moses ascending the mountain (the opening divine command and the framing nature of Moses' ascent mentioned three times!). It also focuses on his ascent into the cloud of the divine glory, where he experiences a Genesis 1 Sabbath cycle that culminates in rest on the seventh day.

Moses becomes a narrative **image of the image of God resting with God on the high cosmic mountain on the seventh day**. No wonder he starts glowing with God's glory (see 34:29-35).



# The Ideal High Priest: A Shimmering Royal Priestly Humanity Re-entering Eden

## The Literary Design of Exodus 25-31 (Adapted from David

Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament*)

A	<p><b>Instructions for Building the Tabernacle</b> (25:1-27:19) [items listed from most to least holy]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Materials (25:1-9)</li> <li>2. Ark (25:10-22)</li> <li>3. Table (25:23-30)</li> <li>4. Lampstand (25:31-40)</li> <li>5. Tabernacle (26:1-37)</li> <li>6. Bronze altar (27:1-8)</li> <li>7. Courtyard (27:9-19)</li> </ol>
B	<p><b>Regular (Tamid) Maintenance of Lamps</b> (27:20-21)  <i>Before Yahweh from evening to morning / an eternal ordinance</i></p>
	<p><b>Priestly Garments and Dedication</b> (28:1-43)</p> <p>A Command to consecrate Aaron and sons and make their garments (28:1-5): “make holy garments for glory and beauty” (28:2).</p> <p>B The priestly ephod (28:6-14): “engravings of a seal (פֶתַחַת חֹתֶם) you shall engrave” (28:11).</p> <p>C The priestly breastplate (28:15-30): “he will bear the names of the Israelites when he goes into the holy place” (28:29).</p> <p>C’ The ephod robe (28:1-35): “his sound will be heard when he goes into the holy place” (28:35).</p> <p>B The gold priestly plaque (28:36-38): “engrave upon it engravings of a seal” (28:36).</p> <p>A The priestly costs and undergarments (28:39-43): “make garments for the sons of Aaron...for glory and for beauty” (28:40).</p>
	<p><b>C’</b> <b>Ordination of Aaron and Sons to the Priesthood</b> (29:1-37)</p>
B’	<p><b>Regular (Tamid) Maintenance of Daily Sacrifices</b> (29:38-46)  <i>Before Yahweh from evening to morning / an eternal ordinance</i></p>
A’	<p><b>Instructions for Building and Maintaining the Tabernacle</b> (30:1-31:17)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Altar of incense (30:1-10)</li> <li>2. Atonement money (30:11-16)</li> <li>3. Wash basin (30:17-21)</li> <li>4. Anointing oil (30:22-33)</li> <li>5. Incense for incense altar (30:34-38)</li> <li>6. Supervision for Bezalel and Oholiab (31:1-11)</li> <li>7. No work on Sabbath (31:12-17)</li> </ol>

## The Failure of Israel's First Priest: Aaron and the Golden Calf

In Exodus 32-34, Aaron fails in his priestly duties, while Moses intercedes like Abraham but to an even greater degree by offering his own life to maintain the Israelites' covenant with Yahweh.

### Moses' Second Intercession [32:30-35]

<sup>30</sup>On the next day Moses said to the people,  
"You yourselves have committed a great sin;  
and now I am going up to Yahweh,  
perhaps I can make atonement (*כפָר*) **for your sin.**"  
<sup>31</sup>And Moses returned to Yahweh, and said,  
"Alas, this people has committed a great sin,  
and they have made a god of gold for themselves.  
<sup>32</sup>But now, if You will, forgive **their sin**,  
and if not, please blot me out from your book which you  
have written!"

<sup>33</sup>And Yahweh said to Moses,  
"Whoever has **sinned** against me,  
*I will blot him out of my book.*  
<sup>34</sup>And now, go lead the people where I told you.  
Behold, my angel shall go before you;  
and on the day when I punish,  
*I will punish them for **their sin.***"  
<sup>35</sup>Then Yahweh struck the people  
because of what they did with the calf which Aaron had made.

Moses climactically offers his own life in the place of the sinful people, and he calls this an act of "atonement" (Heb. *kipper* / *כפָר*), covering for the sins of the people.

This scene is crucial because we see Moses doing what the appointed high priest is supposed to do in the tabernacle. The priesthood of Aaron is compromised and idolatrous from the beginning. Here we see that Moses provides the true and ultimate portrait of the priestly and prophetic roles.

Moses is the ultimate Noah and Abraham, interceding on behalf of sinners, but he does so in a way that reaches a new high point: Moses offers his own life in the place of the people.

"In relation to the tabernacle, then, there is a sense where Aaron's role was to portray in the drama of liturgy the role of Moses in relation to the cosmic mountain, and thus of Adam to Eden's mount, through entering the tabernacle holy of holies, the high priest as mediator represents the one 'able to ascend' the summit of the cosmic mountain... Precisely as the one who inherits Moses' mediatory role in the Pentateuch, then, Aaron is the chief priest, the Messiah."

Michael Morales, *The Tabernacle Prefigured*, p. 260-61, with embedded quote from Crispin Fletcher-Louis, "Jesus as the High Priestly Messiah," p. 161.

## The Failure of Israel's Priesthood After Aaron

Aarons's priestly lineage continues in his downward spiral:

- Leviticus 10: The failures of Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu
- Numbers 6: The possibility of the "virtual high priesthood" and the Nazirite
  - This was a voluntary office where any Israelite could take upon themselves the sacred status of the high priest.
  - Nazir means "crowned one" and is linked to the "turban crown" set upon the high priests' head, called a nezer.
  - The nazir would take up the lifestyle of a priest: no alcohol, no haircut, no touching corpses, etc.
- 1 Samuel 1-8: The failed priesthood of Aaron and the rise of a royal priesthood
- 1 Samuel 1-4: Eli and his corrupt priestly sons
- 1 Samuel 2:35: God raises up Samuel the nazir ("crowned" one) "a faithful priest..."

### 1 Samuel 2:27-36: The Judgment Speech of the Man of God

<sup>27</sup>And a man of God came to Eli and said to him,

"This is what Yahweh says:

'Did I not clearly reveal myself to the **house of your father**, when they were in Egypt under Pharaoh?

<sup>28</sup>And I chose him out of all the tribes of Israel

**to be a priest for me,**

to go up to my altar,

to burn incense,

and to wear an ephod in my presence.

And I gave to the **house of your father** all the food offerings of the sons of Israel.

<sup>29</sup>Why do you scorn my sacrifice and offering that I commanded for my dwelling?

Why do you honor your sons more than me

by fattening yourselves on the choice parts of every offering made by my people?

<sup>30</sup>Therefore, Yahweh the God of Israel, declares:

**'I had said that your house and the house of your father would walk before me forever.'**

But now Yahweh declares:

**'Far be it from me!**

**Those who honor me I will honor,**

**but those who despise me will be treated as cursed.**

<sup>31</sup>Look, the days are coming

when I will hew off your arm

and the arm of the **house of your father**,

so that none in **your house** will reach old age...

<sup>35</sup>**And I will raise up for myself a faithful priest,**

**who will do according to what is in my heart and soul.**

**And I will build for him a faithful house,**

**and it will walk before my anointed one for all days.**

# David the Priestly King

## David's Priestly Role in Jerusalem

In 1 Samuel 16, David, a lowly shepherd, is anointed as king, but the text's inclusion of the Spirit coming upon David tells us that he will be no ordinary king.

*Then Samuel took the horn of oil and **anointed him** in the midst of his brothers; and **the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David** from that day forward. And Samuel arose and went to Ramah.*

1 Samuel 16:13 (NASB95)

When David becomes king, his arrival in Jerusalem is filled with priestly imagery. He is being crowned as the royal highest priest of Israel. Let's take a look at this imagery found in 2 Samuel 6:12-20.

And David went <b>and they brought up the ark of God</b> from the house of Obed-edom into the city of <b>David</b> with gladness. And so it was, when the bearers of <b>the ark of Yahweh</b> had gone six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fatling.	The ark of Yahweh of hosts goes up to Jerusalem.
And <b>David was dancing before Yahweh</b> with all his might, and David was wearing a linen ephod.	
Now, David and all the house of Israel <b>were bringing up the ark of Yahweh</b> with shouting and the sound of the trumpet.	The royal priest obeys God's instruction (See Num. 10:10)
And it happened as <b>the ark of Yahweh</b> come into the city of David that Michal the daughter of Saul looked out the window and she saw <b>King David leaping and dancing before Yahweh</b> ; and she despised him in her heart.	Celebration ...
And they <b>brought in the ark of Yahweh</b> and they set it in its place inside the tent which David had pitched for it; and <b>David offered</b> burnt offerings and peace offerings <b>before Yahweh</b> . And <b>David</b> finished offering the burnt offering and the peace offering,	... leads to worship ...
and <b>he blessed</b> the people in <b>the name of Yahweh of hosts</b> . And he distributed to all the people, to all the multitude of Israel, both to men and women, a cake of bread and one of dates and one of raisins to each one. Then all the people departed each to his house. And <b>David</b> returned <b>to bless his house</b> .	... and blessing for Israel.

## David's Priestly Portrayal

- He is dressed like a priest, in a "linen ephod" (אֲפֻוד בַּד), just as the high priest (Exod. 28:4, 31, 42) and Samuel (1 Sam. 2:18-19).
- He is functioning like a priest officiating over the ceremony and offering sacrifices (2 Sam. 6:13, 17) and setting up the tabernacle (2 Sam. 6:17).

When David has the ark brought into Jerusalem, he carries out several functions exclusively associated with priests: he performs sacrifices (1 Sam. 6:13, 17), an activity ordinarily relegated to priests (Num. 3:6-8, 14-38); he wears an ephod, a privilege normally restricted to the priest (cf. Exod. 28:4); he erects the tabernacle (2 Sam. 6:18), a duty of the Levites (Num. 1:51; 4:1-33), and he blesses the people (2 Sam. 6:18), again, a priestly task (Num. 6:22-27; Deut. 10:8) ... David is being portrayed as taking on the attributes of the head priest of the temple ... he becomes a prototypical high priest.

Nicholas Perrin, *Jesus the Priest*, p. 153-54.

Directly after David establishes Jerusalem and the Eden-tent as the new cosmic mountain, we find the high point of the David narrative: God's promise to David of future seed, land, and a house for God. David's high priestly role culminates in his desire to build a temple for God.

David wants to "rest" God in Jerusalem, and God responds with a covenant promise to David. Let's take a closer look at this covenant in 2 Samuel 7.

## God's Covenant Promise to David (2 Samuel 7)

### Text and Literary Design

<i>Now it came about when the king dwelt in <b>his house</b>, and Yahweh had given him rest on every side, from all his enemies ...</i>	Introduction
<i>7:3: David to Nathan See now, I dwell in <b>a house</b> of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in the middle of the curtain.</i>	David's short speech
<i>7:3: Nathan to David All that is in your heart, go and do, for Yahweh is with you.</i>	Nathan's short speech
<i>7:4-17: Yahweh to David I will appoint a place for my people and plant them ... Yahweh will make <b>a house</b> for you ... I will raise up your seed after you ... He will build a house for my name ...</i>	Yahweh's long speech (197 words)
<i>7:18-29: David to Yahweh Who and I and what is <b>my house</b> ... Who is like you ... and who is like your people Israel ... May <b>the house</b> of David be established ... From your blessing may <b>the house</b> of your servant be blessed forever.</i>	David's long speech (198 words)

	<b>God's Promises to David</b>	<b>God's Promises to Abraham</b>
7:9	<i>I will make your name great.</i>	<i>I will make your name great (Gen. 12:2).</i>
7:10a	<i>I will make a place for my people and I will plant them, and they will dwell in their place.</i>	<i>To your seed I will give this land (Gen. 12:7).</i>
7:10b	<i>They will not be troubled, and sons of evil won't oppress them.</i>	<i>Your seed will possess the gate of their enemies" (Gen. 22:17).</i>
7:11a	<i>I will give you rest from all your enemies.</i>	
7:11b-12	<i>Yahweh will build a house for you, I will raise up your seed after you, one who will come out of your loins and I will establish his Kingdom.</i>	<i>Abraham: One who comes out of your loins, he will be your heir (Gen. 15:4). Kings will come out from you, and I will establish my covenant between me and you and between your seed after you ... as a forever covenant (Gen. 17:6-7).</i>
7:13a	<i>He (the seed) will build a house for my name.</i>	
7:13b	<i>And I will establish the throne of his Kingdom forever.</i>	<i>I will give to you and your seed ... the land of Canaan, as a forever possession (Gen. 17:8).</i>
7:14a	<i>I will be to him as a father, and he will be to me as a son.</i>	
7:14b	<i>When he does evil, I will punish him with the rod-of-humans, and with strikes of the sons of humanity.</i>	
7:15	<i>But my loyal love will not be removed from him.</i>	
7:16	<i>But faithful will be your house and your Kingdom forever before me, your throne will be firm forever.</i>	<i>And Abraham had faith in God, and it was reckoned to him as right-standing (Gen. 15:6).</i>

## Jerusalem as a New Eden

In the book of 2 Samuel, we see David echoing events of the Hebrew Bible and establishing the new royal priesthood in Jerusalem.

Psalm 132

### 1. Literary Design

[see Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, p. 336-337]

<p>Remember, Yahweh, for David's sake, all of his suffering; <b>how he swore an oath to Yahweh,</b> and made a vow to the Mighty One of Jacob,</p>	A: David's oath to Yahweh
<p><i>I will not enter my house, nor lie on my bed; I will not give sleep to my eyes, or slumber to my eyelids, until I find a <b>place</b> for Yahweh, a <b>dwelling place</b> for the Mighty One of Jacob.</i> Look, we heard of it in Ephrathah, we found it in the fields of forest; let us go into <b>his dwelling place</b>; let us worship at his footstool! Arise, Yahweh, to the <b>place of your rest</b>, you and the ark of your strength.</p>	B: Zion, God's place to dwell and rest
<p><b>Your priests, may they be clothed</b> with righteousness, <b>and let your loyal ones sing for joy.</b></p>	C: Priests are clothed and loyal ones sing
<p>For the sake of David your servant, do not turn away the face of your anointed.</p>	D: David is the anointed one
<p><b>Yahweh has sworn an oath to David,</b> a faithful-truth from which he will not turn back. From the fruit of your belly, I will set upon your throne. If your sons will keep my covenant and my testimony which I will teach them, then also their sons shall sit upon your throne forever.</p>	A: Yahweh's oath to David
<p>For Yahweh has chosen Zion; <b>he has desired</b> it as <b>his place to sit</b>; "This is <b>my place of rest</b>, forever; here <b>I will sit</b>, for <b>I have desired it</b>.</p>	B: Zion, God's desire place to sit and rest
<p><b>I will abundantly bless her provision;</b> I will satisfy her needy with bread. <b>And her priests I will clothe with salvation,</b> <b>and her loyal ones will sing for joy.</b></p>	C: Needy are fed, priests clothed, and loyal ones sing
<p>There I will cause the horn of David to sprout up; I have arranged a lamp for my anointed one. His enemies I will clothe with shame, but upon him, his crown shall shine."</p>	D: David's seed will "sprout" as the future anointed

The two-part design of the poem creates something of an “act-consequence” relationship between the two sections.

For example, David’s choice to make Zion the permanent place for God’s dwelling (A), is responded to by God’s choice of the line of David to rule in Zion forever (B).

[T]he first half of Psalm 132 points to David’s role in the ark procession in 2 Samuel 6, while the second half refers to God’s response to David with the covenant in 2 Samuel 7. From the first half of Psalm 132, then, we learn that the ark procession actually represented a sworn act of public piety on David’s part, something not even alluded to in 2 Samuel 6. Thus, Psalm 132 suggests that David’s action in 2 Samuel 6 elicited from God the covenant sworn in 2 Samuel 7.

Scott Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, p. 338 [dissertation edition]

[The poet] composed a poem about two oaths, the one of David to YHWH (w 1-10) and the other of YHWH to David (w 11-18), emphasizing the bond between the deity and the anointed. That bond was established because David carried out his oath to YHWH to establish a place for the deity, which he did by inviting the deity to the (royal) ‘resting place’ — that is, by bringing the ark in procession to Jerusalem. That event resulted in the establishing of a place for David, namely, in the promise of an enduring dynasty for David and the election of Zion as YHWH’s abode. “Here” (הָנֶ, v. 14) the deity chose to be enthroned and “there” (בָּהָ, v. 17) the descendants of David would have their eternal reign.

Choon-Leong Seow *Myth, Drama, and the Politics of David’s Dance*, pp. 202-203

In other words, the poem presents God’s covenant promises to David **as a reward for his desire to bring the ark to Jerusalem**. Psalm 132 adds motivation to David’s choice in 2 Samuel 6. David chose Jerusalem as God’s dwelling place out of pious desire to fulfill God’s previous desire to live in Jerusalem.

The fact that God had previously chosen “the place” for the ark may explain, in effect, the seemingly disproportionate divine reward for David simply fulfilling his sworn duty to bring it into Jerusalem. At the same time, it may also explain why David desired and knew where to bring the ark and build the temple in the first place. In other words, God’s prior choice of Zion may provide the underlying rationale for his extravagant covenant grant in response to King David’s priest-like actions; just as David’s royal-priestly activities may be explained in terms of his own awareness of God’s previous election of Jerusalem.

Scott Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant*, p. 339 [dissertation edition]

## Jerusalem: God’s Choice, David’s Choice, or Both?

To understand the significance of Jerusalem as God’s dwelling place, let’s consider a few questions as we read. How did David learn of God’s prior choice of Jerusalem as the place for his dwelling?

- Why did he bring the ark there in the first place?
- Why did he request to build the temple there afterwards?
- Why did David begin acting like a priest only after he established Jerusalem as the royal sanctuary where all tribes could come to worship Yahweh?
- Why didn’t he do any of these things at Hebron when he was anointed king of Judah?
- **How did David know that God had chosen Jerusalem, and why did he act like a priest king after conquering it?**

**The answer:** To mark the new dwelling place of Yahweh, David established something new in Israel, the royal priestly order of Melchizedek.

Jerusalem was previously called by the names “Jebus” (יְבָוסָ) and “Salem” (שָׁלָם), with established residents going back centuries and an important royal priesthood. The title Salem is used only elsewhere in Genesis 14:17-21, where Melchizedek is mentioned.

God is known in Judah;  
his name is great in Israel.  
His tabernacle is in **Salem**;  
his dwelling place also is in **Zion**.

Psalm 76:1-2

David was intentionally choosing a city with deep roots in Abraham's family history.

[I]t is hardly plausible that David and Solomon could change Jerusalem into the holiest city in Israel solely by their own initiative and actions. In the ancient Near East, the choice of holy places was not left to human arbitrariness but was determined by a manifestation of the god's presence, generally at a certain site with special natural conditions, such as springs, sacred trees, mountains, and so forth. It is thus legitimate to suppose that David intended to utilize the ancient religious traditions of Jerusalem for the creation of the new Yahwistic traditions in the city.

Tomoo Ishida, *The Royal Dynasties in Ancient Israel*, pp. 121-22.

Abraham had two encounters with the city:

- Genesis 14 (Salem = Jerusalem): After trusting God to deliver him from his enemies, he was blessed by Melchizedek, the priest king of Jerusalem who worshiped the same God as Abraham, El-Elyon, otherwise known as Yahweh.
- Genesis 22 (Moriah = Mount Zion): Trusting that God could fulfill his promises even in the face of death, Abraham gave up Isaac's life to God on the same hill where David would later build the temple.

These connections lead us to another psalm, one of the most important scriptural texts in early Jewish-messianic Christianity: Psalm 110.

## Psalm 110 and the New Melchizedek

### Literary Design of Psalm 110

Relating to David: A Song	
<b>An utterance of Yahweh to my lord,</b> "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."	A: Yahweh's promise to David's lord
<i>Your strong scepter, may Yahweh send forth from Zion. Rule in the midst of your enemies!</i>	B: Sharing in Yahweh's rule and victory over enemies
<i>Your people are noble, in the day of your power, in holy array. From the womb of the dawn, the dew is yours, I have begotten you.</i>	C: The king's holy warriors are refreshed
<b>a Yahweh swore an oath, a' and he will not renege,</b> = "You are a priest forever, on account of Melchizedek." <i>Yahweh is at your right hand,</i>	A: Yahweh's oath to David's lord
<b>a he shatters kings</b> in the day of his wrath. b He will judge among <u>the nations</u> , b' making full of corpses, <b>a' he shatters</b> the head over a mighty land.	B: Sharing in Yahweh's rule and victory over enemies
<i>He will drink from the stream on the path, then he will lift up (his) head.</i>	C: The warrior king is refreshed

In this poem, David speaks of someone else that receives the covenant oath of Yahweh, and David calls that someone "lord" (אדני), a common term when addressing a king. It makes most sense that David is speaking of his future "seed" that will receive the messianic inheritance.

The future seed of David here receives two promises from Yahweh.

1. He will share in the rule of Yahweh and so exercise Yahweh's justice against his enemies.
2. He will be a priest king "for the sake of Melchizedek."

Key interpretive challenge: The Hebrew text of Psalm 110:4b reads "for the sake of Melchizedek" (על דברותי מלכי צדק).

- The phrase על דבר ('al debar or 'al dibrah) is a common way in classical Hebrew to make a purpose/result connection between two words or phrases.

*Yahweh struck Pharaoh and his house with great plagues  
on account of ('al debar) Sarah, Abram's wife.*

Genesis 12:17

*In the day of prosperity be happy, but in the day of adversity consider—  
God has made the one as well as the other, on account of the fact that  
('al dibrah) humans won't discover anything that will be after him.*

Ecclesiastes 7:14

*Keep the command of the king, on account of  
('al dibrah) the oath before God.*

Ecclesiastes 8:2

For other examples see: Genesis 20:11, 18, 43:18; Exodus 8:12  
[Hebrews 8:8]; Numbers 16:49 [Hebrews 17:14], 31:16; Deuteronomy  
22:24, 23:4 [Hebrews 23:5]; 2 Samuel 13:22; Psalm 45:5, 79:9.

The original Hebrew meaning of this phrase shows that Melchizedek did something (“on account of”) that resulted in David’s royal line receiving an eternal priesthood.

The translation “according to the order of” found in Hebrews 7:11, 17 (*κατὰ τὴν τάξιν*) is based on the Septuagint’s rendering of Psalm 110:4. It refers to Melchizedek as belonging to a certain mode or type of priesthood, creating an “order of Melchizedek.” While this is not technically what the Hebrew text means, it is actually an accurate interpretive rendering of Psalm 110:4 in its larger context.

## The Royal-Priestly-Prophetic Seed of David in Isaiah

David is a triumphant priest king for Israel, but he is not the royal priest we've been waiting for. Though there is much to celebrate about his legacy as king, he also has huge moral failings, trusting in his own power instead of Yahweh's, taking another man's wife for his own, misusing his royal power, and even murdering one of his soldiers to cover up his sin. So does the hope for a coming royal priest end with David's failure? Let's look to the book of Isaiah, where the prophet speaks of David's seed that will come to fulfill the royal priest duties without failure or corruption.

*Behold, **my servant** will prosper, he will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted. Just as many were astonished at you, my people, so his appearance was marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men. **Thus he will sprinkle many nations**, kings will shut their mouths on account of him; for what had not been told them they will see, and what they had not heard they will understand....*

Isaiah 52:13-15 (NASB95)

*Therefore, I will allot him a portion with the great, and he will divide the booty with the strong; because he poured out himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; **yet he himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors.***

Isaiah 53:12 (NASB95)

*For I know their works and their thoughts; the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and see my glory. I will set a sign among them and will send survivors from them to the nations: Tarshish, Put, Lud, Meshech, Tubal and Javan, to the distant coastlands that have neither heard my fame nor seen my glory. And they will declare my glory among the nations.*

**"Then they shall bring all your brothers from all the nations as an offering to the Lord, on horses, in chariots, in litters, on mules and on camels, to my holy mountain Jerusalem," says the Lord, "just as the sons of Israel bring their grain offering in a clean vessel to the house of the Lord. **I will also take some of them for priests and for Levites,**" says the Lord.**

*"For just as the new heavens and the new earth which I make will endure before me," declares the Lord, "So your offspring and your name will endure."*

Isaiah 66:18-22 (NASB95)

**The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me** to bring good news to the afflicted; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners; to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, to grant those who mourn in Zion, giving them a garland instead of ashes, **the oil of gladness** instead of mourning, **the mantle of praise** instead of a spirit of fainting. So they will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified. Then they will rebuild the ancient ruins, they will raise up the former devastations; and they will repair the ruined cities, the desolations of many generations. Strangers will stand and pasture your flocks, and foreigners will be your farmers and your vinedressers. **But you will be called the priests of the Lord; you will be spoken of as ministers of our God.** You will eat the wealth of nations, and in their riches you will boast. Instead of your shame you will have a double portion, and instead of humiliation they will shout for joy over their portion. Therefore they will possess a double portion in their land, everlasting joy will be theirs.

Isaiah 61:1-7 (NASB95)

# Jesus the Royal Priest

## Jesus, the Royal Priestly Messiah

The downfall of King David and the conclusion of the Hebrew Bible generates an expectation for a coming royal priest. God promises David that there will be a king from his line who will come and restore Israel and do what David could not. The biblical authors refer to this coming king as the Messiah. The Gospel accounts activate specific imagery from the Hebrew Bible to make the message clear—Jesus is the ultimate royal priest and the Messiah the people have been waiting for.

### Jesus' Baptism Anointing (Mark 1:9-11)

Mark 1:9-11, Matthew 3:13-17, Luke 3:21-22

<sup>9</sup>*In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.*  
<sup>10</sup>*Immediately coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him; <sup>11</sup>and a voice came out of the heavens: "You are my beloved Son, in you I am well pleased."*

Mark 1:9-11

This heavenly voice is recalling key moments from the Hebrew Bible to make clear Jesus' identity.

The Heavenly Voice	Hebrew Bible Hyperlinks
You are my Son ( $\Sigma \nu \epsilon \iota \delta \nu \iota \delta \varsigma \mu \nu$ )...	<i>And he said to me, "You are my son (LXX: <math>\nu \iota \delta \varsigma \mu \nu \epsilon \iota \delta \sigma \nu</math>) today I have begotten you."</i> Psalm 2:7
...the beloved one ( $\delta \alpha \gamma \alpha \pi \eta \tau \circ \varsigma$ )	<i>Take your son, the beloved one (LXX: <math>\tau \circ \nu \nu \iota \delta \nu \sigma \nu</math> <math>\tau \circ \nu \alpha \gamma \alpha \pi \eta \tau \circ \nu</math>), whom you love, Isaac ...</i> Genesis 22:2
...in you I am well pleased ( $\epsilon \nu \sigma \circ \iota \epsilon \u03bd \delta \circ \chi \eta \sigma \alpha$ )	<i>Behold, my servant, whom I uphold; my chosen one with whom I am pleased. I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.</i> Isaiah 42:1

This dense intertextual allusion identifies Jesus as the royal priest of the lineage of David, who is going to ascend Mount Zion (Moriah) to surrender his own life as a sacrifice for the sins of his own people (just like the servant of Isaiah 42).

## Jesus' Priestly Mediation of God's Forgiveness

One of the primary ways in which Jesus carries out his priestly and divine authority is by forgiving sins. But unlike the royal priests Jerusalem has known before, Jesus forgives sins by his own authority, the divine authority given to him as the Messiah and Son of God.

Mark 2:1-10, Matthew 9:2-8, Luke 5:18-26

<sup>1</sup>When he had come back to Capernaum several days afterward, it was heard that he was at home. <sup>2</sup>And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room, not even near the door; and he was speaking the word to them. <sup>3</sup>And they came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four men. <sup>4</sup>Being unable to get to him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and when they had dug an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic was lying. <sup>5</sup>And Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, "Son, **your sins are forgiven.**" <sup>6</sup>But some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, <sup>7</sup>"Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; **who can forgive sins but the One God?**"

<sup>8</sup>Immediately Jesus, aware in his spirit that they were reasoning that way within themselves, said to them, "Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts? <sup>9</sup>Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, and pick up your pallet and walk?' <sup>10</sup>But so that you may know that **the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,**" he said to the paralytic,

<sup>11</sup>"I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet and go home." <sup>12</sup>And he got up and immediately picked up the pallet and went out in the sight of everyone, so that they were all amazed and were glorifying God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this."

Mark 2:1-12 (NASB95)

Jesus' pronouncement of forgiveness (Mk. 2:5) is surprising and symbolic, echoing the pronouncement made by the priests in the Jerusalem temple.

And Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic,  
"Son, **your sins are forgiven** (ἀφίενται σου αἱ ἁμαρτίαι)."

Mark 2:5

In the sacrificial guidelines given in Leviticus 4-5 regarding the purification and reparation offerings, the priests were to mediate God's forgiveness.

"So the priest shall make atonement for them, and **their sins will be forgiven** (ἀφεθήσεται αὐτοῖς ἡ ἁμαρτία)" (Leviticus 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:13, 16, 18, 26).

While it is technically possible in Mark 2:5 that Jesus sees himself pronouncing God's forgiveness of the man, this is not how the scribes understood Jesus' words and actions. (i.e. "Why does this man speak in this way? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins, but the one God? (Mk 2:7)).

Notice that Jesus' response makes clear that he is pronouncing divine forgiveness by *his own authority*.

<sup>9</sup>Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, and pick up your pallet and walk?' <sup>10</sup>But so that you may know that **the Son of Man has authority on the land to forgive sins.**" He said to the paralytic,  
<sup>11</sup>"I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet and go home."

Mark 2:9-11 (NASB95)

Jesus speaks of himself (cryptically, so as to avoid open confrontation) as the Son of the Man who has earthly authority to offer divine forgiveness.

For Jesus to speak of "earthly authority" (ἐξουσίαν...ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς) echoes the heavenly dominion and "authority" (ἐξουσία) given to the Son of Man in Daniel 7:14.

Jesus is here combining the royal and priestly motifs already present in the Son of Man figure in Daniel 7, attributing to himself the divine authority to dispense God's forgiveness.

## The Apocalypse of Jesus as the High Priestly Image of God (Mark 9:1-8)

The transfiguration of Jesus on the mountain reveals his true identity to his disciples and makes a clear connection to Moses' vision of the ultimate royal priest at the top of Mount Sinai.

Mark 9:1-8, Matthew 17:1-8, Luke 9:28-36

<sup>1</sup>And Jesus was saying to them, "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Kingdom of God come with power."

<sup>2</sup>Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John and brought them up on a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them; <sup>3</sup>and his garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on Earth can whiten them. <sup>4</sup>Elijah appeared to them along with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus. <sup>5</sup>Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles, one for you, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." <sup>6</sup>For he did not know what to answer; for they became terrified.

<sup>7</sup>Then a cloud formed, overshadowing them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is my beloved Son, listen to him!"

<sup>8</sup>All at once they looked around and saw no one with them anymore, except Jesus alone. <sup>9</sup>As they were coming down from the mountain, he gave them orders not to relate to anyone what they had seen, until the Son of Man rose from the dead.

Mark 9:1-9 (NASB95)

This entire scene hyperlinks to Exodus 24, 28, and 32-34, where Moses ascends Mount Sinai to wait for six days before entering the cloud of the divine glory (Exod. 24:16-18).

There on the mountain, the blueprints of the tabernacle were revealed to Moses, including the high priestly garments (Exod. 28) adorned with sparkling and shining jewels and gold (Exod. 28:12-27, 30), along with a white linen tunic (Exod. 28:39-40).

Also important is the story of Moses' "shining face" (Exod. 34:29-35) that scared the people. All of these details are activated in Mark 9: the six days, the high mountain, the cloud of divine glory, the priestly garments, and Jesus' shining appearance.

But there's more! Jesus is not simply being depicted as a "new Moses" in this story.

- Moses and Elijah appear alongside Jesus, talking to him atop the mountain. In the analogy, Jesus is not being equated with Moses or Elijah but with the person that these prophets encountered, that is, Yahweh himself. Both prophets saw a manifestation of divine glory on the mountain and spoke with Yahweh there (Exod. 32-34; 1 Kgs. 19). Jesus is here being depicted as the image of Yahweh that all of the prophets saw exalted on the cosmic throne (e.g. Isai. 6; Ezek. 1).
- The above point is ironically alluded to by Peter's blundering comment that tells more truth than he knows: "Let us make three tabernacles!" In reality, no tabernacles are necessary because Jesus is the reality to which the tabernacle pointed, a physical embodiment of the divine glory.
- There is also a network of allusions to Genesis 22, the binding of Isaac.

Mark 9	Genesis 22
Jesus “takes along” (παραλαμβανειν) three disciples, and the four of them ascend a “high” (ὑψηλὸν) mountain [Mk. 9:2].	Abraham “takes along” (παραλαμβανειν) Isaac and two servants and they go up to a “high (ὑψηλὸν) land” (in the LXX) [Gen. 22:1-3].
A cloud and heavenly voice overshadows Jesus: “This is my Son, my beloved one, listen to him!” [Mk. 9:7].	A heavenly voice stops Abraham from sacrificing Isaac: “The angel of Yahweh called to him from the heavens” [Gen. 22:11].  “Now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, the one you love (LXX) from me” [Gen. 22:16].  “All nations will be blessed through your seed, because you listened to my voice” [Gen. 22:18].

Jesus is being identified here as the incarnation of the divine glory, who, as the Son of God, is going to give up his life as an act of obedience to the loving Father.

### Jesus and David's Melchizedek-Like Lord (Mark 12:35-37)

Mark 12:35-3, Matthew 22:41-46, Luke 20:41-44

A <sup>35</sup>And Jesus began to say, as he taught in the temple,  
B "How is it that the scribes say that the Messiah is the son of David?  
C <sup>36</sup>David himself said by the Holy Spirit,  
D 'The Lord said to my Lord,  
D' "Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies beneath your feet."  
C' <sup>37</sup>David himself calls him 'Lord'  
B' so in what sense is he his son?"  
A and the large crowd enjoyed listening to him.

Mark 12:35-37

The outer sections provide the narrative frame of Jesus teaching the crowds in the temple, while BB' presents the problem of Davidic sonship. CC' introduces the witness of David, and at the center is the quotation of Psalm 110 (see Joel Marcus, Mark 8-16, p. 849).

*"Is Jesus here repudiating the Davidic origins of Messiah, as some have suggested? This seems unlikely, since elsewhere he doesn't repudiate the title Son of David, but he may well have repudiated certain popular early Jewish notions about the Davidic Messiah, for instance, that he would simply be a normal, though God-empowered, human being like David himself. It is best to say that Jesus is repudiating the adequacy, not the accuracy, of assessing the Messiah by means of his Davidic descent. The point is that in Jesus' view the Messiah is more than, not other than, Son of David."*

Ben Witherington III, The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary, p. 333.

*"[F]or Mark, Jesus' identity is not defined so much by his relationship to David as by his relationship to God. It is revealing that when the Markan Jesus uses Ps 110:1 to establish David's inferiority to the Messiah, he quotes more of the psalm than he needs to for that purpose, citing the picture of "the Lord" telling "my lord" to sit on his right until he has subdued his enemies (12:36bc). A seated position on the right hand of a deity implies co-regency with him (see Dan 7:9-14). The imagery of the quoted portion of the psalm, then, implies that "my lord" stands in a relation of near-equality with God, and the inference for Mark would seem to be that Jesus is not (just) the Son of David but (also) the Son of God."*

Joel Marcus, Mark 8-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary, p. 850-851.

Notice also that Jesus references the poem that describes this “lord of David” as a royal priest like Melchizedek, king of Jerusalem, the very place where Jesus is having this conversation!

## The Anointed Jesus on Trial Before Jerusalem’s Anointed (Mark 14:53-65)

Mark 14:53-65, Matthew 26:57-68, Luke 22:66-71, John 18:12-13, 19-23

### Jesus the Temple vs. the Jerusalem Temple

One of the accusations leveled against Jesus was that he was an anti-Jerusalem (and therefore anti-Roman) terrorist who threatened to destroy the temple.

<sup>56</sup>For many were giving false testimony against him, but their testimony was not consistent. <sup>57</sup>Some stood up and began to give false testimony against him, saying, <sup>58</sup>“We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands.’”

<sup>59</sup>Not even in this respect was their testimony consistent.

Mark 14:56-59

The language of contrasting temples, one “made with hands” ( $\chiειροποίητον$ ) and one “made without hands” ( $\alphaχειροποίητον$ ), is tapping into an important motif in Daniel 2 in which the “stone cut without hands” (LXX  $\alphaνευ\chiειρῶν$ ) shatters the great statues and then becomes a cosmic mountain that fills the land.

This is classic “new cosmic temple” eschatology, similar to Isaiah 11:1-10, Ezekiel 40-48, and Joel 4.

### Anointed Jesus vs. Anointed Caiaphas

<sup>61</sup>But [Jesus] kept silent and did not answer. Again the high priest was questioning him, and saying to him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the blessed one?” <sup>62</sup>And Jesus said, “I am; and you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of Heaven.”

Mark 14:61-62

<sup>63</sup>But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to him, “I adjure you by the living God, that you tell us whether you are the Christ, the Son of God.” <sup>64</sup>Jesus said to him, “You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of Heaven.”

Matthew 26:63-64

This story has important links to Mark 2:1-10, the story of Jesus forgiving and healing the paralyzed man. There Jesus declared himself to be the Son of Man with divine authority on Earth to forgive Israel’s sins, and he was charged with blasphemy. So here he identifies himself as the Son of Man with authority to enter into the heavenly temple on behalf of Israel, and he is charged with blasphemy, apparently for the same reason of claiming divine authority.

*“The trial scene of Jesus before Caiaphas is certainly meant to be the climax of one of Mark’s most important subplots, its most crucial moment: Jesus’ confession as the enthroned, priestly Son of Man, in direct opposition to the regnant high priest.”*

Nicholas Perrin, Jesus the Priest, p. 264.

Jesus here combines Daniel 7:13-14 and Psalm 110:1.

<p>And <b>you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of Heaven.</b></p> <p>Mark 14:62</p>	<p><b>I kept seeing</b> in the night visions, and behold, <b>with the clouds of the heavens one like a Son of Man was coming.</b> And he came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which will not pass away. And his kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.</p> <p>Daniel 7:13-14</p>
<p><b>From now on</b> <b>you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of Heaven.</b></p> <p>Matthew 26:64</p>	<p><i>The Lord says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."</i></p> <p>Psalm 110:1</p>

What exactly is the nature of Jesus' claim here? [See Perrin, *Jesus the Priest*, pp. 273-281 for a full discussion of the history of interpretation.]

Jesus "sitting at the right hand and coming on the clouds" cannot refer primarily (or at least only) to the second coming. Matthew's added clarification, "from now on," closes off that interpretive option. Recall that in Daniel 7, the movement of the Son of Man on the clouds is not from Heaven to Earth but the opposite. The Son of Man is exalted from the earthly realm of the beastly kingdoms up to the heavenly throne room of God where he is installed as the priest king over the nations.

*"All along Jesus has been hinting at his own identity as the royal-priestly Son of Man, in flat contradiction to the high priest's own tenure. [Mark's account] is a tale of two competing priestly powers... and now in Mark 14 Jesus finally comes into direct confrontation with Caiaphas, declaring his doom in unmistakable scriptural terms... Daniel 7 and Psalm 110 share more than a few themes: subjugation of God's enemies, divine rule, judgment...and priesthood. Daniel's*

*Son of Man is a priestly figure, and an exalted sacerdotal office is clearly in view in Psalm 110 with the mention of Melchizedek. In short, both texts present visions of a priestly figure who is in conflict with God's enemies yet proves to be ultimately victorious... For Mark, Jesus is the royal-priestly Son of Man and the Melchizedekian Davidide who will one day displace and judge Caiaphas."*

Nicholas Perrin, *Jesus the Priest*, pp. 276-77.

By placing the trial scene in analogy with the scene in Daniel 7, Jesus is placing himself in the suffering yet vindicated Son of Man role, while also implying that Caiaphas and his supporters (and his Roman sponsors) are the fourth beast of Daniel 7.

Notice that in Matthew's version (Matt. 26:64) there is the addition, "**from now on** you will see," clarifying Mark's account. The timeframe of Caiaphas' "seeing" begins not in a distant future but in the very moment that Caiaphas condemns Jesus. The moment that Jesus is declared guilty of death and hauled off to be executed is his exaltation to the divine throne.

# The Royal Priesthood

## The Connection Between the Temple and the Priesthood

God's ideal purpose is for creation to be a union of Heaven and Earth and for humans to be a union of divine and human. In Israel's temple, there were two symbols that pointed to this same reality.

		Genesis 1-2	Exodus 25-31
Place	Union of Heaven and Earth	The garden of Eden	The tabernacle/temple
People	Union of Divine and Human	Image of God + Adam and Eve as royal priests	The priesthood

In this way, the temple (place) and the priesthood (people) are matching symbols, except that the priesthood is an animate and personal image of God that can harness and articulate the praises of creation and direct them to the honor of the creator.

As we go through the narrative of the Bible, we find that the royal priesthood plays a number of roles, standing at the intersection of Heaven and Earth:

- **Worship:** Priests gather up the praise of creation and direct it toward God [as in Psalms 104 or 148].
- **Representation:** Priests represent God to people and represent people to God.
  - The priest carries the names of the tribes of Israel over his heart into the presence of God. The priest is Israel.
  - The priest carries the shining glory of God in his clothing and represents the divine glory to the people. The priest is God-embodied.
- **Intercession:** When God's people fail in their responsibility as his partners, the priest is (ideally) supposed to intercede on their behalf and then act. When God appears to fail his people, the priest is to take up their cause and go before God with:
  - Sacrifices and offerings
  - Prayers of intercession
- **Blessing:** Jesus presented himself as the ultimate royal priest and as the true temple. **He claimed to be both the place and the person in whom Heaven and Earth are one.**

## Jesus as Temple and as Royal Priest

During Jesus' Kingdom mission, he presented himself as the true temple, the reality to which the Jerusalem temple was pointing and the place where Heaven and Earth are one. Let's look at some examples from the biblical text where Jesus makes these claims.

John 2:18-22: Jesus is the temple—the place where Heaven and Earth are one

<sup>18</sup>The Jews then said to him, "What sign do you show us as your authority for doing these things?" <sup>19</sup>Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." <sup>20</sup>The Jews then said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" <sup>21</sup>**But he was speaking of the temple of his body.** <sup>22</sup>So when he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.

John 2:18-22 (NASB95)

Matthew 18:20: Jesus is the divine glory, the temple presence of Yahweh dwelling in his new temple—his people

<sup>20</sup>"For where two or three have gathered together in my name, **I am there in the middle of them.**"

Matthew 18:20 (NASB95)

Acts 1:3-9: Jesus' ascension to the "right hand of God" (Psalm 110) is about his enthronement as the cosmic royal priest

<sup>3</sup>To these he also presented himself alive after his suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God ...

<sup>7</sup>He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by his own authority; <sup>8</sup>but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." <sup>9</sup>And after he had said these things, **he was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received him out of their sight.**

Acts 1:3-9 (NASB95)

This scene of Jesus “being lifted up” and having a “cloud receive him” evokes the enthronement of the Son of Man from Daniel 7 and the exaltation of the suffering servant.

<p><b>“He was lifted up”</b></p>	<p><sup>13</sup>Behold, <b>my servant will prosper, he will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted.</b> <sup>14</sup>Just as many were astonished at you, my people, so his appearance was marred more than any man and his form more than the sons of men.</p> <p><sup>15</sup>Thus <b>he will sprinkle many nations.</b> Kings will shut their mouths on account of him; for what had not been told them they will see, and what they had not heard they will understand.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Isaiah 52:13-15 (NASB95)</p>
<p><b>“And a cloud received him”</b></p>	<p><sup>13</sup>“I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, <b>with the clouds of heaven one like a Son of Man was coming. And he came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.</b> <sup>14</sup>And to him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which will not pass away, and his kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Daniel 7:13-14 (NASB95)</p>

Jesus’ enthronement as the cosmic royal priest means that he is doing on behalf of all creation what the priests did in the temple—worship, representation, and intercession.

<sup>1</sup>Long ago, at many times and in many ways,  
God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,  
<sup>2</sup>but in these last days,  
he has spoken to us by his Son,  
    whom he appointed the heir of all things,  
    through whom also he created the world.  
<sup>3</sup>He is the radiance of the glory of God  
    and the exact imprint of his nature,  
    and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.  
**After making purification for sins,**  
**he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,**

Hebrews 1:1-3 (ESV)

<sup>18</sup>I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of his calling, what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, <sup>19</sup>and what is the surpassing greatness of his power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of his might, <sup>20</sup>which he brought about in the Messiah **when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places.** <sup>21</sup>far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. <sup>22</sup>And he put all things in subjection under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the Church, <sup>23</sup>which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Ephesians 1:18-23 (NASB95)

<sup>23</sup>The former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing, <sup>24</sup>but Jesus, on the other hand, because **he continues forever, holds his priesthood permanently.**

<sup>25</sup>Therefore, **he is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.** <sup>26</sup>For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens, <sup>27</sup>who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this **he did once for all when he offered up himself.**

Hebrews 7:23-27 (NASB95)

<sup>1</sup>Now the main point in what has been said is this: **we have such a high priest, who has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, <sup>2</sup>a minister in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle,** which the Lord pitched, not man. <sup>3</sup>For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices; so it is necessary that this high priest also have something to offer. <sup>4</sup>Now if he were on Earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are those who offer the gifts according to the Law; <sup>5</sup>who **serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things,** just as Moses was warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle. For, “See,” he says, “that you make all things according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain.”

Hebrews 8:1-5 (NASB95)

Jesus is currently reigning as the cosmic priest at the intersection of Heaven and Earth. Because of this, his intercession and release of priestly blessing continues into the present.

## Jesus' Body as the Royal Temple

Acts 2: God's presence filled the messianic temple at Pentecost

<sup>1</sup>When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup>And suddenly there came from Heaven a noise like a violent rushing **wind**, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup>And there appeared to them tongues as of **fire** distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. <sup>4</sup>And **they were all filled with the Holy Spirit** and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

Acts 2:1-4 (NASB95)

The appearance of wind and fire "filling" a space brings together the many passages from the Hebrew Bible where God's fiery and windy presence comes to fill the tabernacle and temple (Exod. 40; Lev. 9; 1 Kgs. 8).

<sup>19</sup>So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones, and are of God's household, <sup>20</sup>having been built on **the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, <sup>21</sup>in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, <sup>22</sup>in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.**

Ephesians 2:19-22 (NASB95)

The context is about the unification of non-Jews and Jews into the new temple of Jesus' body (See also 1 Cor. 3:5-17 + 6:19-20).

## Jesus' Body as the Priesthood and the Sacrifice

<sup>1</sup>Therefore I urge all y'all, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, **to present all y'all's bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your true and proper service of worship.**

<sup>2</sup>And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. <sup>3</sup>For through the grace given to me, I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. <sup>4</sup>For just as we have many members in **one body** and all the members do not have the same function, <sup>5</sup>so **we, who are many, are one body in the Messiah**, and individually members one of another.

<sup>6</sup>Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; <sup>7</sup>if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; <sup>8</sup>or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. <sup>9</sup>Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. <sup>10</sup>Be devoted to one another in sibling-love: give preference to one another in honor.

Romans 12:1-10

Paul here depicts Jesus' followers as "his body" that together functions as a priesthood and collectively offers itself as a sacrifice.

Notice the plural "all y'all's bodies" that is followed by the singular "sacrifice." It is as a collective priesthood that they offer a singular sacrifice together. This is a priesthood that offers itself as the sacrifice, like Abraham and Isaac, like Moses, like David. This priesthood is to offer itself as a sacrifice.

<sup>4</sup>And coming to him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, <sup>5</sup>you also, **as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.** <sup>6</sup>For this is contained in Scripture: "Behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious cornerstone, and he who believes in him will not be disappointed."

<sup>7</sup>This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, "The stone which the builders rejected, This became the very cornerstone," <sup>8</sup>and, "A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed. <sup>9</sup>**But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession**, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light; <sup>10</sup>for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

1 Peter 2:4-10 (NASB95)

<p><b>"A chosen race"</b>  <b>Greek:</b> γένος ἐκλεκτόν</p>	<p><sup>16</sup>This is what the Lord says—    he who made a way through the sea,    a path through the mighty waters,  <sup>17</sup>who drew out the chariots and horses,    the army and reinforcements together,    and they lay there, never to rise again,    extinguished, snuffed out like a wick.  <sup>18</sup>"Forget the former things;    do not dwell on the past.  <sup>19</sup>See, I am doing a new thing!    Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?    I am making a way in the wilderness    and streams in the wasteland.  <sup>20</sup>The wild animals honor me,    the jackals and the owls,    because I provide water in the wilderness    and streams in the wasteland,    to give drink to <b>my chosen people</b>  <sup>21</sup>the people I formed for myself    that they may proclaim my praise.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Isaiah 43:16-21 (NIV)</p>
<p><b>"A royal priesthood"</b>  <b>Greek:</b> βασιλείον ιεράτευμα</p> <p><b>"A holy nation"</b>  <b>Greek:</b> ἅγιον ἄγιον</p> <p><b>"A people for God's possession"</b>  <b>Greek:</b> λαὸς εἰς περιποίησιν</p>	<p><sup>4</sup>"You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to myself.  <sup>5</sup>Now then, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, then you shall be <b>my own possession among all the peoples</b>, for all the earth is mine. <sup>6</sup>And you shall be to me <b>a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.</b>" These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Exodus 19:4-6 (NASB95)</p>

What are the sacrifices?

<sup>15</sup>Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. <sup>16</sup>And do not forget to **do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.**

Hebrews 13:15-16 (NIV)

<sup>18</sup>I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus **the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice,** pleasing to God.

Philippians 4:18 (NIV)

## Jesus and His Royal Priests in the New Creation

In the Revelation, John describes the people of Jesus three times in the language of Exodus 19:4-6, the royal priesthood.

<sup>4</sup>John, to the seven churches in the province of Asia: Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, <sup>5</sup>and from Jesus Messiah, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, <sup>6</sup>and **has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father**—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

Revelation 1:4-6 (NIV)

<sup>9</sup>And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.

<sup>10</sup>**You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.**"

Revelation 5:9-10 (NIV)

<sup>6</sup>Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but **they will be priests of God and of the Messiah and will reign with him for a thousand years.**

Revelation 20:6 (NIV)

<sup>1</sup>Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb <sup>2</sup>down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

<sup>3</sup>No longer will there be any curse. **The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him.** <sup>4</sup>They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. <sup>5</sup>There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. **And they will reign for ever and ever.**

Revelation 22:1-5 (NIV)