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### The Doctrine of the Priesthood

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## THE DOCTRINE OF THE PRIESTHOOD

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF HEBREWS  
NUMBER 63  
HEBREWS 9:6

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The little word de lets us know that a new paragraph is begun. The word houtos translated "these things" refers to the Tabernacle and the furnishings of the Tabernacle. Next we have the perfect, passive, participle of kataskeuazo and this word means to build, to construct. It is a temporal participle so we add the word "when." This perfect tense means that the action for building the Tabernacle was completed. It lasted for about 500 years and then was replaced with the Temple which lasted for about 1,000 years.

### They Never Made It An Idol

I think a point should be made here in favor of the Jewish people and the point is they never made idols of the Tabernacle or anything in it and never bowed down to these things as idols. If the Tabernacle had remained after the Temple was constructed, then it would have been very easy for the furniture in the Tabernacle to have become objects of idolatry.

### A Detailed Description

In the Torah (The Book of Exodus) we find a detailed set of plans for the construction of The Tabernacle and every piece of furniture in it. The people never got to go inside and see all these things. The priests were the only ones who were ever permitted inside. But the people could read the Torah, and the priests could explain to them the meaning of all these things. It was very much like going to Bible class today and learning these things just like you are learning them here now.

So thus far we have this--"Now when these things have been constructed in this manner." The plans were written in Exodus 30 and 37. But all the people would ever see was a badger skin covering and the white curtain. They would also see the cloud by day and the fire by night. When the fire or cloud moved, then they moved. When the fire or cloud remained in place, then they remained there. So these things were shadows, waiting for the great reality. Next we have the word "priests" from hierous in Greek or kohen which is Hebrew. The Tabernacle demanded upkeep and the priests had their jobs written out in detail.

## THE DOCTRINE OF THE PRIESTHOOD

There have been several priesthods, but we are mainly concerned with the Levitical priesthood.

### 1. DEFINITION.

A priest is a member of the human race, male type, representing the human race to God. They were always males, from the human race and never from women or angels. The priest must partake of the nature of the people for whom he acts. When he officiates, he represents the human race. He must therefore be a bona fide member of the human race. (Heb. 5:1, Heb. 7:4-5, Heb. 7:14 and 28, 10:5 and 10:10-14) Jesus Christ could not be our High Priest unless he was a bona fide member of the human race.

2. THE SPHERE OF PRIESTLY FUNCTION.

His function was in the sphere of spiritual phenomena. Therefore he was appointed the man's benefit in spiritual things. The priest's function was to read the Torah and know how to teach it, and then to perform in his priestly function in offering sacrifices and taking care of all the furnishings connected with the Tabernacle. THE ONLY ONES WHO COULD DO THESE THINGS WERE THE SONS OF AARON, THE TRIBE OF LEVI. This means Eleazar and Ithamar and their sons and on and on in this line. They only went into the Holy Place, and only the High Priest went into the Holy of Holies and this once a year, after very special preparation. These priests were the teachers of spiritual truth. Then as the material expanded, God raised up prophets. The written shadows came before the constructed shadows. When Christ died the curtain between the holy place and the Holy of Holies was ripped down and immediately every believer in the earth became a royal priest, able to go into the holiest place of all. In fact, positionally, every believer lives with Christ in the Holy of Holies. They had the Tabernacle, the Torah and the teaching priest. We have the Canon of Scripture and a pastor-teacher.

3. CATEGORIES OF THE PRIESTHOOD.

- a. The highest category of priests are royal priests. We find in Hebrews 7:1-3 Melchisedec is the pattern. He was an historical person, a real person. The thing that makes him important for us is that he was a royal priest. Melchisedec, a royal priest, administered to Abraham, a Levitical priest. The reason for this is that we have the reality and they have the shadows. The Levitical priest dealt with animal blood but we deal with the blood of Christ. The animal was put on the altar and his will was not involved in the sacrifice, but our sacrifice, Jesus Christ, said yes to the cross from his volition. (I know he prayed in the garden, "Not my will but thy will be done" but his positive volition had already been committed to the cross in eternity past. There is no Levitical priesthood to equal the royal priesthood.)
- b. Melchisedec gave to Abraham bread and wine. These are the emblems of the royal priesthood. Under the Levitical priesthood the cross was symbolized by animal sacrifice, but under the royal priesthood, we have the Lamb without spot or blemish.
- c. Their priesthood was hereditary, but the royal priesthood is perpetual. Our priesthood does not depend on who our parents were. The symbols of bread and wine remain today, pointing to our relationship to Christ.
- d. The appointment of royal priests doesn't depend on physical birth. Physical blemishes do not disqualify one from the royal priesthood. It is not physical birth, but the new birth that counts.
- e. The next highest rank of the priesthood was the Levitical priesthood. This began with Aaron, the older brother of Moses. Two of Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire before the Lord and they were eliminated from the Levitical priesthood. It was carried on by Aaron's two other sons, Eleazar and Ithamar. These priests could have no physical defects. (Lev. 21:17-21)

- f. These Levitical priests got their support from 13 Levitical cities. They also got a tithe from the people. (Joshua 21:13-19 and Lev. 23:10) Other money for their support came from the ransom money of the firstborn. (Numbers 18:16)
  - g. The third category of priests were the family priests. Men like Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. These came prior to the Levitical priesthood and the Royal Priesthood.
4. THE ROYAL HIGH PRIEST OF THE CHURCH AGE.
- a. Jesus Christ is the royal high priest of the Church Age.
  - b. Christ fulfilled the first function of the priesthood, he offered a sacrifice--He offered himself as a sacrifice. Once Christ offered himself on the cross, he fulfilled every animal sacrifice that had ever been made.
  - c. From Christ's sacrifice on the cross came the first victory in the Angelic Conflict--represented in the resurrection, the ascension, and the session at God's right hand in heaven. (Hebrews 10:5-14)
  - d. The Levitical priest was a priest for this life, but the royal priest is a priest for all eternity. So a person who is a Jew can become a royal priest forever by believing in Christ.
  - e. The royal priesthood was assigned to the Melchisedec battalion in Hebrews 6:20.
  - f. The appointment of Jesus Christ as the divine royal high priest was accompanied by a divine oath in Hebrews 7:20.
5. EVERY BELIEVER IN THE CHURCH AGE IS A PRIEST.  
(1 Peter 2:5 and 9, Rev. 1:6, 5:10 and 20:6)
6. THE PURPOSE OF THE ROYAL PRIESTHOOD IS FOR THE BELIEVER TO REACH SUPER GRACE. (Heb. 6:17-20, Eph. 3:17-21, 4:11-16)  
We eat Christ into our inner being every day when we take in doctrine.
7. THE FUNCTION OF THE ROYAL PRIEST.  
This is outlined in Hebrews 13 and we will leave this for a future study.

Next in this verse we have the word "went" and this is a present, active, indicative of eiseimi and it means "to enter." They were the only ones who could enter that holy place. Next we have the word "always" but it should be translated "constantly." Then we have eis skene which means into the holy place, the first tent. On that beautiful curtain into the Holy of Holies were those big beautiful cherubim saying to them, "Don't come in here." Only the High Priest could go past that curtain once a year. The next word is "accomplishing" and this is the present, active, participle of epiteleo and it means to complete, to perform. That is the only place they could function. Service is from the word letreia and it means "worship function."

So the verse correctly translated says, "Now when these things had been constructed in this manner, the priests constantly entered into the first tent performing the sacred functions."

Summary

1. We notice first that only the priests were able to enter and all the other people stayed outside. No matter how important people thought they were, and no matter from which tribe they came, they stayed outside.
2. The entrance of the priests was a daily routine. They maintained the various items of the furniture in the Tabernacle. They performed the sacred functions related to doctrine.
3. The function of this priest entering in to do his sacred work illustrated the entrance of the royal priest in the Church Age entering into the presence of God daily to learn the Word of God.
4. In this way the royal priest appropriates the filling of the Holy Spirit and maximum doctrine in the soul. (The filling of the Holy Spirit deals with the soul and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit deals with the body.)
5. The priest could enter the Holy Place but could not enter the Holy of Holies. This was reserved for the High Priest once a year. This depicts the ascension of Jesus Christ and his being seated at God's right hand.
6. All of this is to remind us that this was a perfect shadow, pointing to the perfect reality which is Christ.
7. The outer court had two pieces of furniture, representing the area of the world. Here is where there is evangelism (The brazen altar) and the lavre (the place of confession and cleansing).
8. The holy place had two pieces of furniture and this represents the believer and his relationship with God. He is now a growing believer and the light and the bread represent Christ the living Word and the written word.  
This depicts the believer in union with Christ.
9. Therefore the whole Tabernacle portrays positional truth. That Tabernacle meant that the Lord was with them. We enter in and the Lord is in us.
10. Our Royal High Priest is in that Holy of Holies and we enter in and have fellowship every day with him.