

**"For Priests and for Levites"**

**Isaiah 66:21**

**by Howard E. Dial**

**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Bachelor of Divinity in  
Grace Theological Seminary  
1966**

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WINONA LAKE, INDIANA**



## PREFACE

This critical monograph is directed at determining the nature of the reference in Isaiah 66:21 to those who will be taken to serve as priests and Levites. And, secondly, to determine what will be the fulfillment of that prophecy. Simply stated there are two paramount questions to be answered in Isaiah 66:21 and they are; Who? and When? The writer's interpretation is based on the premillennial understanding of the prophetic portions of the Word of God. It is the firm conviction of the author that the premillennial approach to the problem of this text gives the only logical and consistent answers.

This critical monograph is dedicated to my loving wife, Beth, whose encouragement, help, and dedication through these years at seminary has been a constant source of strength.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. John C. Whitcomb, faculty advisor, whose aid and suggestions were deeply appreciated.



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## INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

The importance of Biblical prophecy cannot be over-emphasized. Prophecy is an integral part of the Word of God. It is sad that the average church member has only a piecemeal knowledge about the subject of Bible prophecy. The author can well remember his first encounters with prophecy and the grammar involved. Upon my entrance into Bible college, having been saved for about two and a half years, I didn't even know what the word "millennium" meant. I heard it used in relation to the future but there was a general vagueness in my mind about prophecy, and I found myself searching for answers. Never at that time did I think that I would one day be making a specialized study on one aspect of the millennium. As I have grown in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ it has become my increasing desire to know more about God's prophetic program for the ages. The author has especially come to be more desirous about knowing Israel's part in the coming Kingdom of God on earth. It is with this motive that I sought out a verse in the Word of God which has particular bearing on the millennium and Israel's part in that time.

The purpose of this monograph is to properly interpret Isaiah 66:21 in the light of its Biblical context and establish its teaching in relation to the eschatological program of God. In this verse are the words of God as is all of Scripture. It must be said again that these words under consideration are inspired of God. They are His words as is pointed out in chapter sixty-six, verse one, "Thus saith Jehovah" and in verse five, "Hear the word of Jehovah." Verse twenty-one reads "saith Jehovah."

Basically there are two different approaches in interpreting the prophecy of things to come. There is the literal method and the allegorical method. One must at the very beginning establish his basic presupposition as to the interpretation of Scripture and particularly those parts which have to do with prophecy. The allegorical method of interpretation will naturally result in conclusions which are in opposition to the conclusions of the literal method (grammatical-historical method). Oswald T. Allis, a leading spokesman for the amillennial school, states it this way when he writes:

One of the most marked features of Premillennialism in all its forms is the emphasis which it places on the literal interpretation of Scripture. It is the insistent claim of its advocates that only when interpreted literally is the Bible interpreted truly; and they denounce as 'spiritualizers' or 'allegorizers' those who do not interpret the Bible with the same degree of literalness as they do. None have made this charge more pointedly than the Dispensationalists. The question of literal versus figurative interpretation is, therefore, one which has to be faced at the very outset.<sup>1</sup>

It should be quite evident as to the importance of one's hermeneutical approach to the Scriptures and especially to prophecy. This matter will be dealt with later in this monograph but the author of this study on Isaiah 66:21 is convinced that the literal method properly used is the right method in rightly dividing the Word of Truth; and therefore, has adopted the literal method of interpretation. It is the conviction of the author that this is the only correct and consistent approach in studying the Word of God.

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<sup>1</sup> Oswald T. Allis, Prophecy and the Church, (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1945) p.17

Again let it be said that one's hermeneutical method of approach to the Scriptures is of supreme importance. Not only does it determine one's conclusions as to prophecy in general but also especially in regards to the millennial Kingdom of God. And here is where Isaiah 66:21 enters in. This passage concerns that millennial kingdom yet future. It is my firm belief that the coming millennium will be the literal reign of Christ on this earth for one thousand actual years. Dr. McClain states it thus:

The future Kingdom will not be merely an ideal kingdom toward which the world ever strives but never attains. It will be as literal as the historical kingdom of Israel or the kingdom of Great Britain. All prophecy from first to last asserts and implies such literality; in such details as location, nature, ruler, citizens and nations involved; in the fact that it will destroy and supplant literal kingdoms; in its direct connection as a restoration and continuation of the historical and Davidic kingdom.<sup>2</sup>

There are many aspects to the millennial kingdom but Isaiah 66:21 particularly teaches the ecclesiastical aspect (in part).

The purpose of this monograph will be to view Isaiah 66:21 in its proper perspective in relation to the coming millennial reign of Christ on this earth, and to reaffirm the literality of this coming Millennium.

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<sup>2</sup>Alva J. McClain, The Kingdom and the Church, unpublished class notes, Grace Theological Seminary, p.5

HEBREW TEXT

According to Biblia Hebraica, third edition, edited by  
Rudolf Kittel

וְגַם-סַחֲמֵם אֶסֶה לַכֹּהֲנִים

HEBREW TEXT

לְזַלְזֵלֵם אֶסֶר יְהוָה

Note: There are no variants of any significance with  
respect to the problem of this critical.

HEBREW TEXT

According to Biblia Hebraica, third edition, edited by  
Rudolf Kittel

לְגַם-סַחֲמֵי אֶסְקָה לְכַהֲנֵם  
זֶזְזִי לְאֶסְקָה לְכַהֲנֵם

Note: There are no variants of any significance with  
respect to the problem of this critical.

SEPTUAGINT TEXT

According to Septuaginta, edited by Alfred Rahlfs

καὶ οὐκ αὐτῶν ἀλλ' ὡς οὐκ ἐστὶν καὶ οὐκ  
ἐστὶν κίβητος

SEPTUAGINT TEXT

SEPTUAGINT TEXT

According to Septuaginta, edited by Alfred Rahlfs

καὶ ἀπ' αὐτῶν λήμψονται ἐμοὶ ἱερεῖς καὶ Λευῖται  
εἶπεν κύριος

#### ENGLISH VERSIONS

##### King James Version, 1611

And I will also take of them for priests and for Levites,  
saith the Lord.

##### American Standard Version, 1901

And of them also will I take for priests and for Levites,  
saith Jehovah.

##### Revised Standard Version, 1952

And some of them also I will take for priests and for  
Levites, says the Lord.

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## ESSENTIAL BACKGROUND

### The Prophet

Little is known of the life of the prophet Isaiah in comparison to many other writers of Scripture. There are no contemporary writings about him by other writers, and there are only a few traditions as to the facts of his life and death. Therefore, all that can be done is to briefly look at the prophet's writings and see what they tell us of the man and how informed we may be regarding his life.

Isaiah was the son of Amos (Isa. 1:1; he was born with Amos). Isaiah's Jewish tradition says that he was a younger son of Amos, King of Judah. It seems that Amos was a well-known personality. At least thirteen times in the Old Testament the prophet is referred to as "the son of Amos" (Isaiah 1:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13; Isaiah 1:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13). It is very possible that Isaiah was closely related to the royal line.

Isaiah lived in Jerusalem and was a married man with at least two children (Isa. 8:1-4). One of Isaiah's two sons was given a name which was symbolic of a part of the prophet's message (Isa. 8:3).

The name Isaiah, יְהִי שְׁמִי, means YHWH YHWH.  
Isaiah means. Isaiah says in reference to the name Isaiah:

The name Isaiah... would seem to indicate that he was given it as a son of the Lord in the land of Judah and living, perhaps that dedicated his child to be a witness of the truth which the name implied. Isaiah's practice of giving symbolic and suggestive names to his children may have been inherited from his father.

<sup>1</sup> A. A. Millard, Isaiah's Prophecy on the Walls  
1972, Second Edition: Andrews Publishing Co., p. 14, 400

## ESSENTIAL BACKGROUND

### The Prophet

Little is known of the life of the prophet Isaiah in comparison to many other writers of Scripture. There are no contemporary writings about him by other writers, and there are only a few dim traditions as to the facts of his life and death. Therefore, all that can be done is to briefly look at the prophet's writings and see what they tell us of the man and draw inferences wherever legitimate.

Isaiah was the son of Amoz (not to be confused with Amos). Ancient Jewish tradition says that Amoz was a younger son of Joash, King of Judah. It seems that Amoz was a well-known personality. At least thirteen times in the Old Testament the prophet is referred to as "the son of Amoz" (2 Kings 19:2,20; 20:1; 2 Chronicles 26:22; 32:20,32; Isaiah 1:1; 2:1; 13:1; 20:2; 37:2,21; 38:1). It is very possible that Isaiah was closely related to the royal line.

Isaiah lived in Jerusalem and was a married man with at least two children (8:3). Each of Isaiah's two sons was given a name which was symbolical of a part of the prophet's message (7:3, 8:3).

The name Isaiah, יְשַׁעְיָהוּ, means יְהוָה יִשְׁעַ, Jehovah saves. Ellicott says in reference to the name Isaiah:

The name Isaiah...would seem to indicate that he who gave it was a man whose belief in the Lord God of Israel was strong and living, perhaps that dedicated his child to be a witness of the truth which the name implies. Isaiah's practice of giving symbolic and suggestive names to his children may have been inherited from his father.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> C.J. Ellicott, Ellicott's Commentary on the Whole Bible, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Co., ), IV, 409

The prophet Isaiah has been called a "many-sided genius." He was perhaps the greatest of the writing prophets, a poet, an orator and a statesman. It is evidenced from his writings that he was a man of deep culture and refinement, highly educated, and of keen intellect. He may be called a city man for he was city-born and city-reared. Isaiah had a deep love for the city of Jerusalem which is very evident throughout the book.

Isaiah's ministry continued during the reigns of four Kings of Judah--Uzziah, Jothan, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. His ministry must have lasted for approximately forty years. It began towards the end of Uzziah's reign and lasted until near the end of Hezekiah's reign. Therefore, it may be said that Isaiah's ministry began in 739 B.C. and extended to approximately 690 B.C.<sup>4</sup> Isaiah was prophesying when the Northern Kingdom of Israel was taken into captivity by the Assyrians in 722 B.C.

Contemporary with the prophet Isaiah were Hosea and Micah. Amos had just brought his ministry to a close when Isaiah began to prophesy. Like Isaiah both Hosea and Micah prophesied in Judah.

Tradition says that Isaiah was put to death by Hezekiah's son and successor, the wicked Manasseh, even telling us that he was killed by being "sawn asunder." When the prophet fled from Manasseh, he hid in the hollow trunk of a tree which the king caused to be sawn asunder, thus killing the prophet. Many think that this tradition is without

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<sup>4</sup> John C. Whitcomb, Chart of Old Testament Kings and Prophets, (Winona Lake: 1962)

any warrant. George L. Robinson in The International Standard Bible

Encyclopaedia gives the following table for Isaiah's prophecies and

their dates:<sup>5</sup>

Chs.		BC
1-6	written probably	c740-736
7-12	" "	c734-732
15:1 - 16:12; 17	" "	c734
13:1 - 14:23	" "	732-722
14:24-27	" "	732-722
14:28-32	" "	c727
23	" "	722
24-27	" "	722
28:1-6	" "	722
19	" "	c720
38	" "	c714
39	" "	c712
21:11,12,13-17	" "	c711
22:15-25	" "	c711
21:1-10	" "	c709
22:1-10	" "	c709
28:7 - 33:24	" "	701
18	" "	c701
34-35	" "	c701
36-37	" "	c701
40-66	" "	c701

#### The Prophet's Book

The historical background of Isaiah is found in 2 Chronicles and 2 Kings. For about two centuries the kingdom had been divided.

Israel, the Northern Kingdom, had been ruled by a succession of evil kings, "who made Israel to sin."

Since Jeroboam I there had been a steady decline spiritually in the Northern Kingdom. In the period just prior to the ministry of Isaiah the Northern Kingdom was ruled for forty-one years by the

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<sup>5</sup>George L. Robinson, The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1939), III. 1503.

powerful and brilliant Jeroboam II of the house of Jehu.

This was the time of the greatest outward prosperity and enlargement of the Northern Kingdom, but it was rotten at the core and was hastening toward the ultimate judgment of God, as Amos and Hosea showed.<sup>6</sup>

The great world, gentile power during the time of Isaiah was Assyria. Egypt had just preceded Assyria as the leading power but now was on the decline and was involved in a struggle to the death with the rising, aggressive Assyria. This is an important point that must be remembered in interpreting the political allusions throughout the book. During the prophet's lifetime Assyria invaded and destroyed the Northern Kingdom and invaded and was threatening his own country of Judah.

Judah was ruled by the descendants of King David. Some of the kings were good and some bad, but in spite of even the "good" ones there was a steady spiritual decline in Judah. Uzziah and his son Jotham were comparatively good kings, but outward prosperity caused Judah to forget God. Jotham's son Ahaz was a wicked man and one who introduced abominable pagan practices into the kingdom (2 Kings 16:2-4). At various times Judah attempted alliances with Assyria and Egypt. Isaiah denounced such actions and cried to Judah for repentance towards God. Isaiah prophesied of the doom of Judah at the hands of Babylon. He told Judah of the coming Babylonian captivity even though the new Babylonian Empire had not become powerful in Isaiah's day.

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<sup>6</sup> Alfred Martin, Isaiah "The Salvation of Jehovah"  
(Chicago: Moody Press, 1956) p.12

In spite of the gradual spiritual decline there was a revival during the reign of Hezekiah. He was one of the best and most remarkable of all the kings (2 Kings 18:1-20; 2 Chronicles 29:1-32:33).

An outline of the prophecy of Isaiah will be given in the following discussion on the unity of the book of Isaiah.

### The Unity of the Book of Isaiah

A word must be said in relation to the unity of this prophecy by Isaiah. Since the year 1750, a great many destructive critics of the Bible have doubted the unity of Isaiah and have sought to disparage it. The critics have evidently desired to be sure that Isaiah has been "sawn asunder" for they have laid great stress upon the theory of a "Deutero-Isaiah" and a "Trito-Isaiah." The writer of Isaiah 1 to 39 is called "Proto-Isaiah," while the author of Isaiah 40 to 66 is called "Deutero-Isaiah." The latter is also referred to as the "Babylonian Isaiah," "the great Unnamed" and "the great Unknown." It is not the purpose of this study to make an investigation of the critical view and give a detailed answer. However, it must be pointed out that the basic issue here is the inspiration of the Bible. If the Bible were merely a human book like other books then the miracles and genuine prophecy would be doubted. But the Bible is a supernatural book and is God-breathed. The critics cannot believe in miracles and genuine prophecy because of their rationalistic approach. Extensive proof of the unity of Isaiah must be left to the field of Old Testament

introduction, the technical commentaries, and other specialized writings. The present treatment of Isaiah is based upon a deep assurance and unwavering faith in the unity of the prophecy of Isaiah. To help bear out that unity the following outline is evident. Isaiah 1 to 35 is a series of messages to Judah and Jerusalem concerning the Assyrian crisis. Isaiah 36 to 39 is historical narrative concerning the sick king Hezekiah. This portion in Isaiah acts also as a transition between the prophet's messages concerning the Assyrian crisis and the Babylonian crisis. Isaiah 40 to 66 is that section which has to do with the coming Babylonian invasion and future restoration. In this portion of the book the prophet is not predicting the Babylonian captivity, but rather he speaks as if he were living towards the end of the seventy years of captivity. Chapters 40 to 66 can be divided into three logical divisions: 40 to 48, deliverance from captivity; 49 to 57, deliverance from sin; 58 to 66, deliverance from everything that is not right. Isaiah ends his prophecy on the glorious and thrilling note of future restoration for all Israel. Ellison in his work on the Prophets gives the following outline:<sup>7</sup>

- A. Assyrian background. Chs. 1-39
  - 1-(a) Ch.1. Introduction to section and whole book.
  - (b) Chs.2-6. Growth of obduracy in the mass of the people. (Chiefly time of Jotham.)
  - 2-Chs. 7-12. Consolation of Immanuel in the Assyrian oppressions. (Chiefly time of Ahaz.)
  - 3-Chs. 13-23. Judgment of the contemporary nations.
  - 4-Chs. 24-27. Judgment of the world and last things.
  - 5-Chs. 28-33. The revolt from Assyria and its consequences. (Time of Hezekiah.)

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<sup>7</sup>H.L. Ellison, Men Spoke from God, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1952) p.42

6-Chs. 34-35. God's avenging and redeeming.

7-(a) Chs. 36-37. Deliverance from Assyria  
(looking back.)

(b) Chs. 38-39. Entanglement with Babylon  
(looking forward.)

B. Babylonian background. Chs. 40-66

1-Chs. 40-48. Deliverance from Babylon.

2-Chs. 49-55. The spiritual deliverance of Israel.

3-Chs. 56-66. The new Zion.

### The Immediate Context

In the closing chapters of Isaiah there is a close mingling of both future glory and judgment. Chapters 64 to 66 may very well be called "The Glorious Consumation." In chapter sixty-six the prophet continues to tell of the future blessings that shall one day be Israel's and even for all the world. God will be served in humble sincerity. The faithful shall be comforted. God's severe judgments shall fall upon the wicked. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself shall be worshipped in His holy mountain Jerusalem. Dr. J. Vernon McGee says in relation to the closing chapter of Isaiah:

One final flash of the coming Kingdom passes before our eyes. There is likewise the flash from judgment fires that are still burning. These but warn us that the Kingdom has not yet come and before that day 'the slain of the Lord shall be many.'

Isaiah does not conclude like a fairy story 'and they lived happily ever after.' There is no saccharine sweetness here. There is the rugged reality of judgment upon sin which must inevitably precede the establishment of the Kingdom. The Kingdom is coming, for this is the persistent

purpose of God and none can deter him. All of God's children can 'rejoice with Jerusalem.' 'The Kingdom is the Lord's.'<sup>8</sup>

For the nation of Israel there is coming a grand and glorious Kingdom and her King shall rule even the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. What a glorious prospect for Israel who needed comfort in the midst of her oppressors. The tragedy of Israel's unbelief and destruction was great but even greater will be her future deliverance and restoration, all of which points to the coming Kingdom of God on earth.

It is the purpose of this monograph to investigate Israel's connection ecclesiastically to this coming literal kingdom.

All Scripture references throughout this monograph are taken from the American Standard Version of 1901.

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<sup>8</sup>J. Vernon McGee, Initiation into Isaiah, (Los Angeles: Church of The Open Door, 1957) p.108

STATEMENT OF PROBLEMS

Major Problem: To what does the Phrase  
of them Refer?

Minor Problem: What shall be the Probable Function  
of the Priests and Levites?

STATEMENT OF PROBLEMS

## STATEMENT OF PROBLEMS

Major Problem: To Whom does the Phrase  
"of them" Refer?

Minor Problem: What shall be the Prophetic Function  
of the Priests and Levites?



## VARIOUS INTERPRETATIONS

Major Problem: To Whom does the Phrase  
"of them" Refer?

### Any Israelite in the Millennium View

This view states that Israelites of the non-priestly tribes shall be brought into the position of priests and Levites in the New Jerusalem. Isaiah 61:6 is given in support of this view.

C. J. Ellicott holds to this view:

We are left to determine whether the promise is that even Gentile converts should be enrolled among the priests and Levites of the new Jerusalem, or that Israelites of the non-priestly tribes should be so enrolled. Was the prophet breaking down in thought the middle wall of partition, or clinging to its maintenance? Chap. 61:6 seems in favour of the latter view, and we are probably right in looking on this thought, that of all Israel being eligible for the priesthood, as that which was in the prophet's mind. Like other such thoughts, however, it was capable of expansion, so as to include the whole Israel of God, who were by faith the children of Abraham.<sup>9</sup>

Another who takes this view is Henderson. He says:

From the close of the following verse, it appears that the persons here spoken of are the recovered Jews mentioned in verse 20, and not the Gentiles, likewise there specified. The language implies that the performance of Divine service shall not be restricted to the tribe of Levi, but shall be the common privilege of the whole people.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>C. J. Ellicott, op. cit., pp. 576-577.

<sup>10</sup>E. Henderson, The Book of the Prophet Isaiah,  
(London: Hamilton, Adams, and Co., ) p.449

## Gentile Converts in the Millennium View

Mehem is said to refer to those who have been converted from among the heathen nations. Delitzsch says:

The latter (heathen), having been incorporated into the priestly congregation of Jehovah are not even excluded from the priestly and Levitical service of the sanctuary...what is here promised must be something extraordinary, and not self-evident, mehem must refer to the converted heathen, by whom the Israelites had been brought home.<sup>11</sup>

Delitzsch quotes Friedlander and Ottensosser as also holding this view.

Mehem, i.e. of those heathen who bring them home, will He take for priests and Levites, for all will be saints of Jehovah; and therefore He has just compared them to a clean vessel, and the Israelites offered by their hand to a minchah.<sup>12</sup>

Others who hold to this view are Cheyne,<sup>13</sup> Fausset,<sup>14</sup> Rawlinson,<sup>15</sup> and Jennings who writes:

This then shall be the joyous call of Israel to the Gentiles; and, in response, the Gentiles bring the scattered Israel to Jehovah, as the priests of the Sanctuary bring a 'gift-offering;' and Jehovah accepts those Gentiles in that way. He even takes some of them for priests and Levites, so that in that millennial day, even in the very temple in Jerusalem, will be found Gentiles serving as priests.<sup>16</sup>

### New Testament Ministers and Teachers View

This view teaches that ΠΠΠ refers to those converts from the Gentiles who become teachers and leaders in the Church in this present age. Calvin holds to this view.

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11. F. Delitzsch, Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah, (Edinburg: T&T Clark, ), p. 514

12. Ibid.

13. T.K. Cheyne, The Prophecies of Isaiah, (New York: Thomas Whittaker, Bible House, 1895), p.

He appears to describe in an especial manner ministers and teachers whom the Lord also chose from among the Gentiles, and appointed to execute this distinguished office; that is, to preach the Gospel; such as Luke, Timothy, and others of the same class, who offered spiritual sacrifices to God by the Gospel.<sup>17</sup>

Benson<sup>18</sup> and Gill<sup>19</sup> also hold this view.

#### Jews of the Diaspora-only View

The holders of this view say that 277 means that

scattered Jews only shall be priests and Levites. Alexander quotes Hitzig and Knobel as holding this view.

Hitzig and Knobel, more consistent in their exposition, go back to the ground maintained by Grotius and the Rabbins, namely, that of them means of the scattered Jews, who should not be excluded from the honors of the priestly office.<sup>20</sup>

#### Both Israelite and Gentile Converts View

This view is held by J.A. Alexander. He writes:

The most natural interpretation therefore seems to be as follows: The mass of the Jewish people was to be cast off from all connection with the church; but the elect who should escape were to be sent among the nations and to bring them for an offering to Jehovah, as the priests and Levites offered the oblation at Jerusalem. But this agency was not to be confined to the Jews who were first entrusted with it; not only of them, but also of the Gentiles themselves, priests and Levites should be chosen to offer this oblation, i.e. to complete the vocation of the Gentiles.<sup>21</sup>

14. A.R. Fausset, A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1945), Vol. 3, p. 767.

15. George Rawlinson, Pulpit Commentary, (Chicago: Wilcox & Follett Co., ), Vol. 2, p. 488.

16. F.C. Jennings, Studies in Isaiah, (New York: Loieaux Brothers, ), p. 770.

17. John Calvin, Book of the Prophet Isaiah, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1948), Vol. 4, p. 437.

### Literal Dispensational View

This view teaches that □ 7 0 has reference to the fulfillment of 1 Samuel 2:35, Jeremiah 33:17-22, and Ezekiel 40:46, 44:15 in that the millennial temple of Ezekiel will have the sons of Zadok as its priests. Among those who hold to this view are McClain<sup>24</sup> and Pentecost who writes:

It is thus to be observed that God has set aside the whole Levitical line because of their apostasy, has singled out the line of Zadok from within the Levitical line, and appointed to his seed the important priestly ministry of the millennial age.<sup>25</sup>

In relation particularly to Isaiah 66:21; Jeremiah 33:15-18 and Ezekiel 20:40-41 he writes:

All of which teach the restoration of a priesthood and the reinstitution of a bloody sacrificial system during that age.<sup>26</sup>

This is the view of the author and it shall be fully defended under the Writer's Interpretation of the Major Problem.

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22. J. Barton Payne, The Theology of the Older Testament, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Co., 1962). p. 378.

23. Ibid. pp. 496-497.

24. Alva J. McClain, The Greatness of the Kingdom, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Co., 1959). p. 243.

25. J. Dwight Pentecost, Things to Come, (Findlay, Ohio: Dunham Publishing Co., 1958). p. 521.

26. Ibid. p. 517.

## WRITER'S INTERPRETATION

### Major Problem: To Whom does the Phrase

### "of them" Refer?

### The Literal Disposition of the

The author will not take each of the opposing views on this

problem but instead will give a thorough treatment to what he believes

to be the only consistent and correct answer in relation to the phrase

"of them". The conclusion reached in solving this problem will

invalidate all of the opposing interpretations, and will validate the

proper interpretation.

## WRITER'S INTERPRETATION

However, it must be pointed out again that the basic hermeneu-

tical presupposition of the writer is that all of the Word

### Major Problem: To Whom does the Phrase

of God be the part of the Word of God or grammatical-

### "of them" Refer?

historical method. Therefore, defines this method as follows:

The literal method of interpretation is that method of interpretation that gives to each word the same direct basic meaning it would have in actual, ordinary, customary usage, whether employed in writing, speaking or thinking. It is called the grammatical-historical method to emphasize the fact that the meaning is to be determined by both grammatical and historical considerations.<sup>27</sup>

It is on this basis that the following study is made.

Now Stated

This view simply stated, is that, none of them, refers

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27. J. Dwight Pentecost, op. cit., p. 2.

## WRITER'S INTERPRETATION

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### The Literal Dispensational View

The author will not take each of the opposing views on this problem but instead will give a thorough treatment to what he believes to be the only consistent and correct answer in relation to the phrase "of them". The conclusion reached in solving this problem will invalidate all of the opposing interpretations, and will validate the proper interpretation which is stated and defended in the following pages. However, it must be pointed out again that the basic hermeneutical presupposition to this passage of Scripture and all of the Word of God on the part of this author is the literal or grammatical-historical method. Pentecost defines this method as follows:

The literal method of interpretation is that method of interpretation that gives to each word the same exact basic meaning it would have in normal, ordinary, customary usage, whether employed in writing, speaking or thinking. It is called the grammatical-historical method to emphasize the fact that the meaning is to be determined by both grammatical and historical considerations.<sup>27</sup>

It is on this basis that the following study is made.

#### View Stated

This view simply stated, is that, הֵמָּה, of them, refers

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<sup>27</sup>. J. Dwight Pentecost, op. cit., p. 9

to the sons of Zadok who are called out from the 12,000 Levites who are sealed in the tribulation period (Rev. 7:7). Therefore, in the broad sense "of them" does refer to Israel, but it must be applied even more particularly to the Zadokian Levitical priests. The author feels along with many others that this is the best, in fact the only way, to interpret this passage.

God has definitely promised to the line of Zadok an everlasting priesthood (I Sam. 2:35, cf. I Kings 2:27, 35), which confirms His promise of an everlasting priesthood to his ancestor Phinehas (Num. 25:13), which also confirms His promise of an everlasting priesthood to Aaron (Exodus 29:9, 40:15), these three men being in the same line (I Chron. 6:3, 50). Furthermore, this promise of an everlasting priesthood was strongly confirmed by God through Jeremiah (33:17-22), who links the perpetuity of the Levitical priests with the perpetuity of the Davidic kingship and the perpetuity of the earth's rotation upon its axis! In view of these tremendous promises of God, how comforting it is to see that He means exactly what He says, and that the millennial temple of Ezekiel will have the sons of Zadok as its priests! (40:46, 44:15). The intrinsic probability of this being fulfilled literally is strengthened immensely by the mention of 12,000 Levites who are sealed by God during the yet future seventieth week of Daniel (Rev. 7:7). For us, at least, it is difficult if not impossible to conceive of literal Levites ministering in a purely idealistic temple! And, if God's promises to Aaron, Phinehas, and Zadok are to be spiritualized, why insist that His promises to David will be literally fulfilled? (II Sam. 7:13, 16).<sup>28</sup>

So in essence Isaiah 66:21 and the prepositional phrase

וְיָבִין refer to the re-institution of a Levitical order in which the sons of Zadok are set aside for a priestly ministry.

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28. John C. Whitcomb, Jr., The Millennial Temple of Ezekiel 40-48, unpublished class notes, Grace Theological Seminary, p. 1.

## Reasons for Literal Dispensational View

### Proper Interpretation of Scripture Argument

The whole basis for this view is the hermeneutical approach to Scripture involved. And it is the firm conviction of the author that the literal method of approach is the most consistent and correct interpretation. The allegorical approach (amillennial and post millennial) would make 272 refer to the church. This is their conclusion because they teach that all the prophecies to Israel are fulfilled in the church. The allegorizers make the accusation that a thoroughly literal interpretation of Scripture is impossible. Allis gives the following reasons in making this assertion:

- (1) The language of the Bible often contains figures of speech.
- (2) The great theme of the Bible is, God and His redemptive dealings with mankind. God is a Spirit; the most precious teachings of the Bible are spiritual.
- (3) The fact that the Old Testament is both preliminary and preparatory to the New Testament is too obvious to require proof.<sup>29</sup>

These statements are of course only the lead part to a more detailed explanation and vindication to the allegorical method of approach. Let me hasten to say that a true "literalist" would be the first to agree with Dr. Allis on these points. It is an error in thinking to say that one who interprets the Bible literally ignores these important truths; that is, there is the use of symbols in the Word of God to teach spiritual truth. There is a place for the use

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<sup>29</sup>. Oswald T. Allis, Prophecy and the Church, (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1945), pp. 17-18.

of figures of speech such as similies, metaphors, etc. The language of Scripture is in the language of the common man. God gave it to be understood by all Spirit-filled Christians and not just the "clergy."

Dr. Ryrie sums it up this way:

Literal interpretation results in accepting the text of Scripture at its face value. Based on the philosophy that God originated language for the purpose of communicating His message to man and that He intended man to understand that message, literal interpretation seeks to interpret that message plainly. In the prophecies of the Old Testament, plain interpretation finds many promises which, if interpreted literally, have not yet been fulfilled.<sup>30</sup>

It is the error of the amillennialist and all allegorizers to say that the word Israel means the Church and vice versa. There is a distinction and to deny this and equate the two as basically one is a grave and disastrous hermeneutical mistake. Does not even the Apostle Paul make a distinction when he says, "Give no occasion of stumbling, either to Jews, or to Greeks, or to the church of God."

#### Immediate Context of Isaiah 66:21 Argument

That the prophet Isaiah is speaking of the future in this portion of his prophecy is unquestionable. Even those who would allegorize this part of Isaiah's prophecy assert that that which is spoken of is a time yet future to the historical circumstances. In the whole latter portion of the book Isaiah the central theme is that of the coming Babylonian captivity, the immediate restoration from it and a coming even more glorious restoration. This "glorious restoration" yet future

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<sup>30</sup>. Charles C. Ryrie, Dispensationalism Today, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1955), p. 98

Dr. Allis should be reminded of the fact that the point Stephen is was not realized by Israel and the prophecies involved in it could not yet be fulfilled. Yes, the main thought in chapters sixty to sixty six is that the Redeemer is coming to Zion. Dr. Martin says of chapters sixty four to sixty six:

The great panorama of the second part of the book sweeps before us in its portrayal of deliverance from Babylon as a foretaste of an even greater deliverance; in its description of the Messiah, the Servant of Jehovah, through whom deliverance comes; and in its building up to this climax of the glorious future for the nation of Israel.<sup>31</sup>

He goes on to say in particular about chapter sixty six:

The concluding chapter describes God's final judgments in the restoration of Israel and vengeance upon the transgressors.<sup>32</sup>

The fact unquestionably stands established that the prophet is looking beyond his own time to that of one centuries later. It is in the word "later" that the crux of the matter lies. The amillennialist says that Isaiah's prophecies concerning Israel were and are fulfilled in the Church. Dr. Allis says concerning the prophecies of Isaiah sixty six:

The statement, "Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands," is clearly meant to be axiomatic. It suggests 1 Kings 8:27, but is directly supported by appeal to Isa. 66:1, which as used by Stephen can only mean that an earthly temple has no proper place in the dispensation ushered in by the preaching of the gospel (cf. Acts 6:14). The conclusion is unavoidable that Stephen applies Isaiah's words directly to the Church age.<sup>33</sup>

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31. Alfred Martin, op. cit., p. 117

32. Ibid.

33. Oswald T. Allis, Prophecy and the Church, op. cit., p. 142.

Dr. Allis should be reminded of the fact that the point Stephen is driving home in this particular part of his sermon is the truth of God's omnipresence. He cannot be contained in any building, no matter how magnificent. Dr. Allis fails to distinguish between the application of a prophecy to point out a spiritual truth and its actual fulfillment. But all does not stand or fall on this one point. There are other portions in this closing portion of Isaiah which necessitate a future millennial reign of Christ on earth and the restoration of Israel to her land.

In Isaiah 66:10-14 it is prophesied that "in that coming age" there will be the distinctive mark of the fulness of joy. Would anyone dare teach that joy is the distinctive mark of this age, especially for Israel? The fulness of joy that is one day to be Israel's when she is back in the land is not to be taken from her and applied to the Church age as the allegorizers would do.

But not only is that coming age to be one of joy. It is also to be one of peace. There will be the removal of the curse as is stated in Isaiah 65:25, "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox; and dust shall be the serpent's food." Animal creation will be changed so as to lose its venom and ferocity.

In the final chapter of Isaiah one reads such statements as these; "...with Jerusalem" "...nations...they shall come" "to my holy mountain Jerusalem," (66:10, 13, 18, 20). These verses and the abundant testimony of Scripture as a whole verifies the fact that there shall be a re-gathering of Israel to the land of Palestine. This is the particular

theme of Isaiah 66:20-22. The promise of a regathering of Israel to her land is inescapable. Charles Hodge, a postmillennialist, argues futilely that there is to be no restoration of the Jews to the Holy Land. He gives six arguments to support this assertion but only the selection of two shall be mentioned here. He says first of all:

The argument from the ancient prophecies is proved to be invalid, because it would prove too much. If those prophecies foretell a literal restoration, they foretell that the temple is to be rebuilt, the priesthood restored, sacrifices again offered, and that the whole Mosaic ritual is to be observed in all its details.<sup>34</sup>

Dr. Hodge goes on to say in relation to the Jew and Gentile:

The idea that the Jews are to be restored to their own land and there constituted a distinct nation in the Christian Church, is inconsistent not only with the distinct assertions of the Scriptures, but also with its plainest and most important doctrines. It is asserted over and over again that the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile has been broken down; that God has made of the two one; that Gentile believers are fellow-citizens of the saints and members of the household of God.<sup>35</sup>

It is not the purpose of this monograph to answer the problems involved in the foregoing statements, but yet it must be stated emphatically that there is to be a restoration of Israel to the land and that there is a difference between Israel and the Church. What a shame it is to see all the wonderful promises to the nation Israel land in the scrapheap of spiritualization. Dr. Walvoord, a leading premillennialist sums up the whole matter of the prophecies to Israel and her return to the land of Palestine in the following way:

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<sup>34</sup> Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., N.O.), Vol. 3, p. 808.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. p. 810

The united testimony of the prophets is all to the same point, that Israel will yet be regathered from the nations of the world and reassembled in their ancient land. The beginnings of this final regathering are already apparent in contemporary history with almost two million Jews, or approximately one in six of all the Jewish population of the world, now living in Palestine. Scriptures make clear that the regathering will continue until consummated after the second advent of Christ. The promises of regathering linked as they are in Scripture to the original promise of the land as an everlasting possession of Israel, coupled with the fact that no possession of the land in history has approached a complete fulfillment of these Scriptural promises, make it clear that Israel has a future, and in that future will actually possess all the land promised Abraham's seed as long as this present earth continues.<sup>38</sup>

One glorious day when Christ comes again to earth with His bride the church, the nation of Israel shall be regathered into the Promised Land. It is with this event in mind that the prophet Isaiah writes; "And they shall bring all your brethren out of all the nations of an oblation unto Jehovah...to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith Jehovah.. .into the house of Jehovah." (Isaiah 66:20).

There is one final prophecy in relation to the millennial kingdom which must be mentioned. Isaiah proclaims that there is to be unified worship of God and God's Messiah in the coming kingdom. All of the world shall be involved in this. This is one of the outstanding characteristics of the restored theocracy, even the adoration given to the Lord Jesus Christ (Isa. 12:1-6; 26:1-26; 61:10-11; 66:23; Jere. 33:11; Ezek. 40:1-46:24). Isaiah 66:23 says, "And it shall come to pass... shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord." The main point of Isaiah 66:20 is that the nations will worship in Jerusalem.

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38. John F. Walvoord, The Millennial Kingdom, (Findlay, Ohio: Dunham Publishing Co., 1963), p. 183.

It is quite significant that lodged within the context which speaks very clearly about future restoration to the land of Palestine and worship of the Messiah is the verse, "And of them also will I take for priests and for Levites, saith Jehovah." (Isa. 66:21). One cannot help but to see that there is something in the future for the nation Israel, and there will be a definite connection between Israel and the worship of the King of Kings on behalf of all in the millennial kingdom. The words of Dr. Walvoord sum up the matter very well:

It should be quite obvious that this is not a situation which exists today and in no literal sense are these millennial prophecies being fulfilled now. This could only be possible under the peculiar circumstances of the universal reign of Christ, the purging out of unbelievers at the beginning of the millennium, and the constant proclamation of the truth regarding Christ.<sup>37</sup>

It is with these words that the argument of immediate context is drawn to a close. The nature of the prophecies in the closing portions of the prophet Isaiah necessitate a future that is distinctly Israel's and it shall be realized in the millennial reign of Christ on earth with His saints.

The presence of Christ, the evident power of the Holy Spirit, and context of the knowledge of the Lord and peace, righteousness, and joy will provide a basis for spiritual life in the millennium far more favorable than any preceding dispensation.<sup>38</sup>

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37. John F. Walvoord, Israel in Prophecy, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Co., 1962), p. 123.

38. Ibid. p. 125

39. Floyd E. Walgren, The Signs of Millennial Reign, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1963), p. 40.

## The Prophetical Zadokian Priesthood Argument

The investigation and interpretation of the prophecies concerning the promises to the line of Zadok of an everlasting priesthood will leave little doubt to the unbiased mind that there will be the literal function of the priesthood in a literal millennial temple. This seems to be a line of Biblical interpretation that the "spiritualizers" conveniently neglect. It is very interesting to read the hermeneutical gymnastics of the allegorizers in their futile attempt to interpret such portions of Scripture as Jeremiah 33:17-24, Ezekiel 40-48, and those parallel portions in Isaiah, especially Isaiah 66:21. The amillenialist in a few sentences seeks to do away with the detailed prophecies concerning the restoration of the temple, sacrifices, and function of the Zadokian priesthood. For instance Hamilton says:

In the first place, for Christians to look forward to a literal temple in Jerusalem, with the restoration of the whole sacrificial system, seems to dishonor the sacrifice of Christ on the cross...any memorials are unnecessary when the one to be memorialized is present in person, as Christ would be after His Second Coming.<sup>39</sup>

Allis says in relation to chapter sixty six of Isaiah:

While Isaiah in one of his most startling prophecies (66) denounces the idea of the rebuilding of the temple and restoration of its ritual sacrifices in the strongest possible terms.<sup>40</sup>

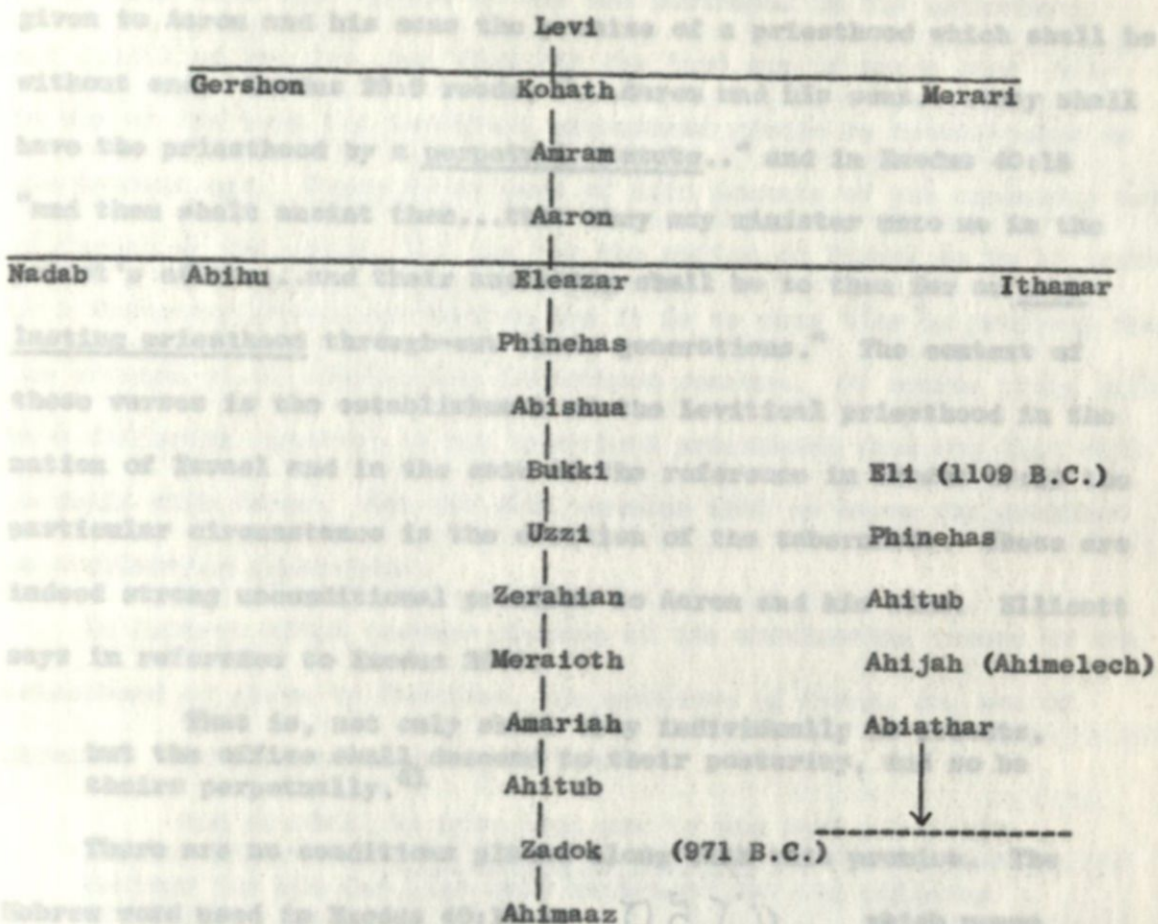
Such statements as these and many others that could be given simply point out the fact that the "spiritualizers" of Old Testament have no real exegetical interpretation for those millennial prophecies in the Word of God.

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<sup>39</sup>. Floyd M. Hamilton, The Basis of Millennial Faith, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1942), p. 40.

It is the firm conviction of the author that 1770  
 refers to the Babylonian priesthood which is prophesied and inaugurated  
 upon in the following parts of the Word of God.

In the Pentateuch we find the word plan of the prophetic concerning  
 the promise of an everlasting priesthood. There is first of all



40. Gould V. Allen, op. cit., p. 49

41. G. J. Simmons, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 222

It is the firm conviction of the author that זקן refers to the Zadokian priesthood which is prophesied and enumerated upon in the following parts of the Word of God.

In the Pentateuch we find the seed plot of the prophecies concerning the promise of an everlasting priesthood. There is first of all given to Aaron and his sons the promise of a priesthood which shall be without end. Exodus 29:9 reads, "...Aaron and his sons....they shall have the priesthood by a perpetual statute.." and in Exodus 40:15 "and thou shalt anoint them...that they may minister unto me in the priest's office;..and their anointing shall be to them for an everlasting priesthood through-out their generations." The context of these verses is the establishment of the Levitical priesthood in the nation of Israel and in the case of the reference in Exodus 40:15 the particular circumstance is the erection of the tabernacle. These are indeed strong unconditional promises to Aaron and his sons. Ellicott says in reference to Exodus 29:9:

That is, not only shall they individually be priests, but the office shall descend to their posterity, and so be theirs perpetually.<sup>41</sup>

There are no conditions placed along with this promise. The Hebrew word used in Exodus 40:15 is זקן which means

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40. Oswald T. Allis, op. cit., p. 63

41. C. J. Ellicott, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 298

everlasting, forever, or continually. It is quite true that the priesthood was reserved for Aaron's descendants as Connell states:

Aaron and his sons died, and when Christ appeared the Aaronic priesthood, which was a type, itself passed away. The meaning here (Ex. 40:15) is that so long as the 42 priesthood remained it was reserved for Aaron's descendants.

It is also true that Christ is the one portrayed in the priesthood and fulfilled the law, but when did the last son of Aaron die? This is not to say that the Levitical priesthood should be reinstituted in the present age. There is no need of this because of the expiatory work of Christ on the cross, but one day the nation of Israel is to be restored to a theocracy in the millennium and it is to this time in prophecy that the promise of an everlasting priesthood reaches. Of course there will be a different function of the Levitical priesthood then and this will be dealt with later. But the fact remains that to Aaron was promised an everlasting priesthood.

In Numbers 25:13 another promise of the everlasting nature of the priesthood is given to Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron, the son of Eleazar. The promise reads as follows:

And it shall be unto him, and to his seed after him, the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was jealous for his God, and made atonement for the children of Israel.

In the midst of idolatry Phinehas stood strong for the Lord. He carried out judgment on Zimri for bringing a foreign woman into the camp of Israel, and it was for Phinehas' obedience that God renewed His promise of an everlasting priesthood in Israel.

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42. J. C. Connell, The New Bible Commentary, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1953), p. 132

In the Historical books of the Old Testament one can see the progress of the promise that was given to Aaron and Phinehas. The seed of this prophetic truth is growing. A man of God pronouncing judgment on Eli the high priest says in 1 Samuel 2:35, "I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in my heart and in my mind; and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed forever." Eli, the high priest, was a descendant of Ithamar, one of the four sons of Aaron. Ithamar and Eleazar ministered coordinately in the priest's office and it was because of this that gradually Eli and his descendants held authority. It is evident that this was an unauthorized usurpation on the part of Eli (1 Sam. 2:27,28,30). The sons of Eli were wicked and desecrated the office of priest. As a result of the situation in general, a prophet was sent to announce the destruction of the house of Eli, and to declare that "a faithful priest" would find his rightful place. This prophecy is fulfilled in 1 Kings 2:27, 35 when king Solomon thrust out Abiathar from being priest and put in his place Zadok. So the proper and promised line of an everlasting priesthood through the descendants of Aaron and Phinehas is restored to the office of priest before Jehovah. It is the opinion of Ellicott that the "faithful priest" promised in 1 Samuel 2:35 is Samuel himself. He so states:

Who here is alluded to by this 'faithful priest,' of whom such a noble life was predicted, and to whom such a glorious promise as that 'he should walk before mine anointed for ever,' was made? Many of the conditions are fairly fulfilled by Samuel, to whom naturally our thoughts at once turn. He occupies a foremost place in the long Jewish story, and immediately succeeded Eli in most of his important functions as the acknowledged chief of the religious and political life in Israel.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>. Ibid. Vol. 2, p.303

But Ellicott himself states the fact later on that Samuel though a Levite was not one of the sons of Aaron. It is not a matter of how well Samuel could have and did measure up to the qualifications to be the "faithful priest" but how much better did Zadok fulfill the requirements. Jamieson in reference to this prophecy of a "faithful priest":

Although not expressed, it is plainly implied that this priest should be in another line, which was fulfilled in the person of Zadok, who was eminent for his fidelity both to God and to the king (1 Kings 2:27, 35; 1 Chr. 24:22).<sup>44</sup>

Who is the one called "mine anointed" that Zadok shall walk before continually? Ultimately it is to be the Lord Jesus Christ, but to Zadok and his office as priest it was king Solomon. However, one day in that millennial reign of Christ, the sons of Zadok shall perform their duties as priests. That "mine anointed," ~Π~ΨΘ~  
~ΙΩΖ, ἐν ὧπιον χριστοῦ μου (Septuagint),  
 points to the coming Messiah is so stated by Jamieson:

The kings of Israel were, from the mode of their consecration, called 'the Lord's anointed.' In this view the permanent elevation to the supreme power, to be conferred by the prophets' unction above that of the high priesthood, must be considered as announced to Eli by the man of God, though it was reserved for David to be informed that this awful dignity should attain an indefinite duration in his family, and should be connected with the final establishment of Israel in a state of peace and happiness. But as the high priest is never said to walk before the kings of Judah or Israel, the phrase must be considered here as to walking before the Lord-viz., the Messiah.<sup>45</sup>

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44. Robert Jamieson, A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1945), Vol. 2, p. 141.

45. Ibid.

It is clearly seen from the portions of the Old Testament thus considered that the promise of an everlasting priesthood is reiterated time and again. And its prophetic fulfilment is blossoming gradually.

In the Prophetical books the promise to Aaron is once again confirmed and is seen in a clearer light than in any place so far. It is the prophet Isaiah who first makes reference to the future glory of Israel and the priesthood. Isaiah 61:8 says that "...ye shall be named the priests of Jehovah;..." The prophet is here speaking to Israel and it is from Israel that the priests shall be taken and by no means the Gentiles. That is the point of this verse and not that all of Israel will be priests or that this is referring to spiritual Israel. This prophecy is qualified by other references to the everlasting priesthood, but this verse undoubtedly limits the priesthood to Israel and no Gentiles have any part in this.

The next prophet to confirm the everlasting priesthood of Aaron through Zadok is Jeremiah. In the thirty third chapter and verses seventeen through twenty four is found what may be the strongest confirmation of the promise. Jeremiah establishes the time he is speaking about as "in those days." The everlasting nature of the Davidic kingdom is confirmed in verse seventeen and immediately connected with it is the perpetuity of the priesthood. Jeremiah says in verse eighteen:

Neither shall the priests the Levites want a man before me to offer burnt-offerings, and to burn meal offerings, and to do sacrifice continually.

The connection between the Davidic kingdom and the Levitical priesthood is of much significance. Keil says concerning their relationship:

The Davidic kingdom and the Levitical priesthood were the two pillars and bases of the Old Testament theocracy, on which its existence and continuance depended. The priesthood formed the medium of approach for the people into divine favour. The Kingdom assured them of the divine guidance.<sup>46</sup>

With this important relationship between the Davidic kingdom and the Levitical priesthood it is interesting to note the proof given concerning the eternal nature of each. Jeremiah says that as long as there is day and night God will not break His covenant. Yes, the perpetuity of the earth's rotation upon its axis illustrates the everlasting nature of the Davidic kingdom and the Levitical priesthood. And to make even more impressive the pledge given, that the covenant with David and the Levitical priesthood can never be broken, the Lord adds the promise of a numerous increase of the seed of David and the Levites. The comparison with innumerable host of stars and the immeasurable quantity of the sand reminds us of the patriarchal promises. Things were looking very bleak indeed for Israel, for the theocracy had appeared to cease to exist, so the Lord through the prophet Jeremiah pledged the re-establishment and renovation of the kingdom of God. The institution of the Davidic kingdom and the Levitical priesthood shall not fall to the ground but shall stand for ever and ever. Even the amillennialist will adhere to this but the question is whether this promise is to be understood literally or spiritually. It is here that the allegorizer waters down the wonderful promises of God to the nation

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<sup>46</sup>. C. F. Keil, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1874), Vol. 2, p. 73

of Israel. Keil believes in a future fulfillment of such a prophecy as this for he himself says:

As this covenant of nature cannot be broken by men, so also the covenant of grace of the Lord with David and the Levites cannot be broken, i.e. annulled. The covenant with David consisted in the promise that his kingdom should endure for ever (see ver. 17); that with Levites, in the eternal possession of the right to the priesthood.<sup>47</sup>

But yet when it comes to interpreting the time of fulfillment Keil begins his "spiritualization" when he says:

The question that has been raised is rather to be decided in accordance with the general promises regarding the increase of Israel; and in conformity with these, we answer that it will not result from the countless increase of the descendants of Jacob according to the flesh, but from the incorporation, among the people of God, of the heathen who return to the God of Israel. As the God-fearing among the heathen will be raised, for their piety, to be the children of Abraham, and according to the promise, Isa. 56:20 ff., even Levitical priests taken from among them, so shall the increase placed in prospect before the descendants of David and Levi be realized by the reception of the heathen into the royal and sacerdotal privileges of the people of God under the new covenant.<sup>48</sup>

It seems quite inconsistent on the part of the "spiritualizers" to say that they believe in a real David and a real Levitical priesthood and even the existence of a real theocracy but yet when it comes to prophecy concerning these things in the future they abandon their literality and flee to a weak and fanciful interpretation. Jeremiah the prophet saw a literal restoration of the theocracy under David and its Levitical priesthood, but one in which the King of Kings would be in the midst personally. Pentecost says of the Davidic covenant in Jeremiah

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47. Ibid., p. 74.

48. Ibid., p. 76.

thirty three:

This covenant, likewise unconditionally affirmed by God promises a king, a kingdom, and a throne to the seed of Abraham. This covenant promises an everlasting earthly kingdom over which David's son should reign. This covenant, likewise, makes necessary a remnant to whom the promises of the Davidic covenant can be fulfilled.<sup>49</sup>

Therefore, it may be concluded that the promises in the Davidic covenant concerning the king, the throne, and the royal house are fulfilled by Messiah in the millennial age.

The next prophet speaks of the millennial temple and the sons of Zadok serving as its priests more than any of the others. Ezekiel in his prophecy in chapters forty through forty eight sets forth in vivid detail the restoration of the temple and the establishment of the Zadokian priesthood. This is a difficult passage of Scripture to interpret and there are various interpretations given in explaining it. However, the author is convinced that a thorough investigation of this prophecy in light of the rest of the Word of God points to a literal fulfillment during the millennial reign of Christ on earth. The emphasis of the age is to be spiritual with the millennial temple and the Levitical priesthood closely related to the worship of the Messiah.

Only when the Lord has gathered Judah and Israel, when He has established His glorious Kingdom in their midst and delivered His people and the land from the last invader, will this last vision of Ezekiel become history.<sup>50</sup>

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49. Dwight Pentecost, op. cit., p. 291

50. Arno C. Gaebelein, The Prophet Ezekiel, (New York: "Our Hope" Publication Office, 1918), p. 271

The promises to the priesthood, and in particular to the sons of Zadok, lend strong evidence to the fact that there will be a literal temple. No less than eighteen times in chapters forty through forty eight of Ezekiel is the Zadokian priesthood referred to. Let us look at some of these references. Ezekiel 40:46 says:

And the chamber whose prospect is toward the north is for the priests, the keepers of the charge of the altar: these are the sons of Zadok, who from among the sons of Levi come near to Jehovah to minister unto him.

Ezekiel 44:15:

But the priests the Levites, the sons of Zadok, that kept the charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from me, they shall come near to me to minister unto me; and they shall stand before me to offer unto me the fat and the blood, saith the Lord Jehovah:

These verses are the pinnacle of the truth that the everlasting priesthood promised to Aaron is realized in the sons of Zadok serving as priests in the millennial temple. The amillennialists have no exegesis for these chapters in Ezekiel. Blackwood, a contemporary amillennialist, gives evidence to this fact by the way he states the fulfillment of Ezekiel 44:15, 16. He writes:

The reason for choosing the Zadokite priests, like that for rejecting the Levites, is moral. Spiritual leadership must be entrusted to those who have demonstrated their willingness to stand firm for God. The Christian can accept the goal, even while rejecting the hereditary method of attaining it.<sup>51</sup>

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51. Andrew W. Blackwood, Jr., Ezekiel Prophecy of Hope, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1965), p. 258

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52. Merrill F. Unger, Spoken Unspoken Bible Prophecies, (Chicago: Scripture Press Book Division, 1968), p. 33

It should be quite evident from this prophetic application given that the amillennialist has little to offer in the way of interpretation and application of the Ezekiel forty through forty eight prophecy concerning the millennial temple. The promise of an everlasting priesthood to Aaron, Phinehas, and Zadok is taken from the Levitical priesthood of Israel and applied to the church. If the priest Zadok could know about this "robbery" on the part of the allegorizers no doubt he would be greatly saddened. That the millennial temple is to be literal and the Zadokian priesthood its ministers is stated very concisely by Unger:

At the second advent Christ will restore the Judaic system with far greater glory and spirituality than it ever had in the Old Testament period until its complete dissipation with the destruction of Herod's temple in 70 A.D. The heart and center of re-established Judaism will be the millennial temple, in connection with which Judaism will enjoy its final state of development.

The Aaronic priesthood will be reinaugurated, with the sons of Zadok officiating and offering sacrifices (Eze. 44:15-31).<sup>52</sup>

In Ezekiel 44:10-15 strong evidence is given to the fact that the sons of Zadok having an everlasting priesthood will function as the priests of the millennial temple. For in this passage there is a link between the promises given to Aaron, Phinehas, the pronouncement of judgment on Eli and the promise of "a faithful priest." Ezekiel says "the Levites that went far from me, when Israel went astray.." (44:10). And "the priests the Levites, the sons of Zadok, that kept the charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from me." (44:15)

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52.

Merrill F. Unger, Great Neglected Bible Prophecies, (Chicago: Scripture Press Book Division, 1955), p. 52

The reference here seems to be to the earlier part of the prophecy of Ezekiel where he condemns the faithless priests (Ezekiel 8, 26). However, an even stronger allusion is to the faithfulness of Zadok as priest during the time of David and Solomon. Keil writes:

Zadok was the son of Ahitub, of the line of Eleazar, who remained faithful to King David at the rebellion of Absalom, and also anointed Solomon as king in opposition to Adonijah the pretender...From this attitude of Zadok toward David, the prince given by the Lord to His people, it may be seen at once that he not only kept aloof from the wandering of the people, but offered a decided opposition thereto, and attended to his office in a manner that was well-pleasing to God. As he received the high-priesthood from Solomon in the place of Abiathar for this fidelity of his, so shall his descendants only be invested with the priestly office in the new temple.<sup>53</sup>

It therefore seems quite clear that in Ezekiel 44:10-15 Zadok is promised an everlasting priesthood, even the sons of Zadok officiating in the millennial temple, because of his faithfulness to God and God's unconditional promises to Aaron and Phinehas. This interpretation seems much better considering what Gaebelein says concerning it.

Verses 10-14 concern the Levites; they are to bear their iniquity and be degraded as to their office. What Levites are meant, and when did they go away from the Lord? It cannot mean past generations of Levites. The offence must have been committed by them before the Lord appeared in glory. It must be explained by what happened among the people before the Lord came, during the days of the false Messiah. At that time Israel will go far astray from the Lord and turn again to idols. In this apostasy the Levites have a share...When the Lord comes, when their sins are forgiven and they are cleansed, the Lord will deal accordingly with these Levites as announced in these verses.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>. C. F. Keil, Prophecies of Ezekiel, (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1876), Vol. 2, p. 311.

<sup>54</sup>. Arno C. Gaebelein, op. cit., p. 316.

There is no real reason why Ezekiel is not referring to the corruption of the line of Ithamar and the restoration of the priesthood back to the rightful lineage, the line of Phinehas the sons of Zadok (1 Samuel 2:32, 35; 1 Kings 2:35; 1 Chronicles 24:3).

The fact seems inescapable that "of them" in Isaiah 66:21 refers to Israel even the Levites, the sons of Zadok. Ezekiel makes this very plain in his prophecy of the restoration of the temple and the Levitical priesthood. The burden of proof seems to rest upon those who say that chapters forty through forty eight of Ezekiel must be "spiritualized."

Finally the last prophet in the Old Testament, Malachi, proclaims and promises the glory that is to be Israel's one day. Malachi condemns the priests in chapter two for corrupting the covenant given to the tribe of Levi. The covenant he refers to was that one with Aaron and the office of priesthood.

Levi is the tribe of Levi, which culminated in the priesthood. The attitude of God towards the priests is called a covenant, inasmuch as God placed them in a special relation to Himself by choosing them for the service of the sanctuary, which not only secured to them rights and promises, but imposed duties upon them.<sup>55</sup>

In light of this our attention must now be turned to Malachi 3:3.

It reads:

and he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi, and refine them as gold and silver; and they shall offer unto Jehovah offerings in righteousness.

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<sup>55</sup>. C. F. Keil, The Twelve Minor Prophets, (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1876), p. 444

H. A. Ironside, Notes on the Minor Prophets, Chapter, New Jersey: Loewman Brothers, 1907, p. 422

The Second Coming of the Lord is in view in the context of this chapter. The Lord Jesus Christ at His Second Coming will judge the unholy and they shall not be able to stand in His presence and it seems quite clear from verse four that in the days when the kingdom is established on earth, sacrifices and offerings will be reinstituted in Jerusalem and the land of Judah. And it will be the Zadokian priests who shall be administering the sacrifices and in the feasts. What a wonderful picture of the coming millennial glory of Christ one finds in Malachi 3:3, 4 but yet what a disappointment to read the words of Keil on these verses.

Moreover, we must not infer from vers. 3 and 4, that Malachi imagined that the Old Testament worship would be continued during the Messianic times; but his words are to be explained from the custom of the prophets, of using the forms of the Old Testament worship to depict the reverence for God which would characterize the new covenant.<sup>56</sup>

In the above words one cannot help but see some beautiful prophecy concerning the restoration of Israel misapplied. How much better it is to read the words of Dr. Ironside in reference to these verses,

As a refiner and purifier He shall sit to purify and purge the Levitical family, setting apart for Himself the sons of Zadok (Eze. 48:11), who shall have turned to Him, owning their guilt and judging themselves for their share in the sins of the priesthood. Upon the rest judgment must burn like fire (vers. 2 and 3).

It seems plain from verse 4, as also the 43rd chapter of Ezekiel, that in the days when the kingdom is established over all the earth, sacrifices and offerings will be reinstituted in Jerusalem and the land of Judah, though only as commemorative of the one great sacrifice of the cross; thus sustaining to millennial saints the same relationship that the Lord's Supper now occupies among Christians.<sup>57</sup>

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56. Ibid., p. 460

57. H. A. Ironside, Notes on the Minor Prophets, (Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, Inc., 1909), p. 452

As one leaves the Old Testament he comes away with the glorious promises of the millennial reign of Christ ringing in his ears. When Christ comes again and regathers the nation of Israel and sets up His kingdom on earth He will fulfill His promises to Aaron, Phinehas, and Zadok in that the sons of Zadok will be taken "of them" to operate in the ministry of the priesthood. Herein lies the fulfillment of the promise of an everlasting priesthood. *Revelation of Ezekiel.* And even the *last* Strong evidence is given in the book of the Revelation that there will be a preserved group of Levites from which the sons of Zadok will be taken to serve as priests. Out of the 144,000 sealed remnant of Israel to enter the millennium there is to be 12,000 of the tribe of Levi. This just adds further to the fact that the reinstitution of the Levitical priesthood in the millennial temple is to be a literal realization. Dr. Walvoord writes: *of Zadok in millennial worship*

Out of the total number of Israel, a representative group of 144,000 are sealed and thereby protected from destruction in this period...In Revelation 14, they are depicted on Mount Zion with the Lamb at the close of the tribulation, still intact and singing praises to the Lord. They form therefore, the core of the godly remnant which will be awaiting Christ when He returns to set up His Millennial kingdom.<sup>58</sup>

That there will be no remnant from which to take the sons of Zadok is certainly disproved by the prophecy in Revelation, and further weight is added to the argument that there will be a literal Levitical priesthood in the millennium.

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58. John F. Walvoord, *op. cit.*, p. 112

## Summary of Arguments

On the basis of the foregoing arguments, it is the firm conviction of the author that the reference, □ □ □, "of them" is unquestionably speaking about the sons of Zadok who are taken from the sealed 12,000 of the tribe of Levi. This prophecy grows from a small seed with far reaching contingencies in Exodus and blossoms into full detail in the prophecies of Ezekiel. And even the last prophet in the Old Testament age adds final assurance that some day Israel shall see a Levitical priesthood functioning in the millennial temple with the Messiah the King of Kings as the object of all worship. This is the only consistent interpretation of the reference in Isaiah 66:21. With the nature of the ones called out to perform as "the priests the Levites" established we will now need to examine the function of the sons of Zadok in millennial worship in the temple. This leads us to the minor problem in this study.

## VARIOUS INTERPRETATIONS

### Minor Problem: What shall be the Prophetic Function of the Priests and Levites?

#### New Testament Church View

This view declares that this prophetic function promised is fulfilled in the church age by Christians who have direct access to God as the priests did in the Old Testament economy. Circularstone is referring to such passages as Ezekiel 40:10; 44:15; Malachi 2:2, etc., says:

#### VARIOUS INTERPRETATIONS

Without doubt we are led by the considerations set forth in previous chapters to interpret Minor Problem: What shall be the Prophetic Function of the Priests and Levites? point to the offering of the living sacrifices of the Christians (Rom. 12:1), to the spiritual sacrifices acceptable through Christ (Eph. 12:18, 19; 1 Peter 2:5), and to the kings and priests of the new covenant (Rev. 1:6), as being foreshadowed in the prophetic word.<sup>50</sup>

Also holding to this view are Foxcroft<sup>51</sup> and Biederwolf.<sup>52</sup>

#### Mediators of the Gospel View

J. A. Alexander is a proponent of this view, and it is his belief that the elect of the Jews and even the Gentiles who bring these of the nations as an oblation to Jehovah perform the ministry of priest and Levite.

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<sup>50</sup> E. B. Circularstone, The Sprayer of Prophecy, (Grand Rapids: Gospel Publications, 1935), p. 65

<sup>51</sup> A. E. Foxcroft, op. cit., p. 707

<sup>52</sup> V. E. Biederwolf, The Illuminating Bible, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1934), p. 145

## VARIOUS INTERPRETATIONS

### Minor Problem: What shall be the Prophetic Function of the Priests and Levites?

#### New Testament Church View

This view declares that this prophetic function promised is fulfilled in the church age by Christians who have direct access to God as the priests did in the Old Testament economy. Girdlestone in referring to such passages as Ezekiel 43:19; 44:15; Malachi 3:3, etc., says:

Without dogmatizing on such passages we are led by the considerations put forth in previous chapters to interpret most of them in the light of the Epistles; and we may fairly point to the offering of the Gentiles (Rom. 15:16), to the living sacrifices of the Christian (Rom. 12:1), to the spiritual sacrifices acceptable through Christ (Heb. 13:15, 16; 1 Peter 2:5), and to the kings and priests of the new covenant (Rev. 1:6), as being foreshadowed in the prophetic word.<sup>59</sup>

Also holding to this view are Fausset<sup>60</sup> and Biedervolf<sup>61</sup>.

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<sup>59</sup>. R. B. Girdlestone, The Grammar of Prophecy, (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1955), p. 80

<sup>60</sup>. A. R. Fausset, op. cit., p. 767

<sup>61</sup>. W. E. Biedervolf, The Millennium Bible, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1964), p. 145

There can be no doubt that this office might be so described in a strongly figurative context, where the functions of the ministry were represented in the same connection as sacerdotal functions. But the only offering here mentioned is the offering of the Gentile converts as an oblation to Jehovah, and the priesthood meant seems therefore to be merely the ministry of those by whom their conversion was effected.<sup>62</sup>

#### Assistants to the Priesthood View

The Jews refuse to understand הַקָּהָן as referring to the Gentiles (and rightly so), but one who does say that the reference here is to the Gentiles insists that service is meant.

Joseph Kimchi, who admits this application as required by the context, avoids all inconvenient consequences by explaining for the priests and Levites, to mean for their service, 'as hewers of wood and drawers of water.'<sup>63</sup>

Kimchi therefore believes that Gentiles will be taken for the aid of the Jewish priesthood.

#### Christian Ministry View

This view asserts that because of the emphasis here on "selection and discrimination" the reference is to the Christian ministry.

Vitringa holds to this view and Biederwolf states it as follows:

Vitringa refers it to the Christian ministry, to which the Gentiles as well as Jews were admitted. He says the words, 'I will take of them', implies selection of some kind from among the mass and so it is not to be allowed to all believers.<sup>64</sup>

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62. J. A. Alexander, op. cit., p. 478

63. Ibid.

64. W. E. Biederwolf, op. cit., p. 145

### Gentile and Israelite Priesthood View

Jennings though a premillennialist says that even some Gentiles will be among the priesthood serving in the millennial temple. Although this view has no important bearing on the function of the millennial priesthood it does warrant mentioning. This view is stated on page 25.

### The Zadokian Priesthood View

In relation to the foregoing investigation and conclusions concerning the nature of "of them" (Major Problem), it is only logical to believe that the millennial function of the priests the Levites will be that which is set forth in the Old Testament prophets, especially Ezekiel 40-48. Many capable premillennialists adhere to this view, such as Merrill F. Unger,<sup>65</sup> Arno C. Gaebelein,<sup>66</sup> James M. Gray,<sup>67</sup> John F. Walvoord,<sup>68</sup> Alva J. McClain,<sup>69</sup> John C. Whitcomb,<sup>70</sup> Charles L. Feinburg,<sup>71</sup> and J. Dwight Pentecost.<sup>72</sup> This view is stated by Pentecost as follows:

It is thus to be observed that God has set aside the whole Levitical line because of their apostasy, has singled out the line of Zadok from within the Levitical line, and appointed to his seed the important priestly ministry of the millennial age.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>. Merrill F. Unger, op. cit., pp. 55-95

<sup>66</sup>. Arno C. Gaebelein, op. cit., pp. 271-273

<sup>67</sup>. James M. Gray, Christian Workers' Commentary, (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1915), pp. 265-266

<sup>68</sup>. John F. Walvoord, The Millennial Kingdom, pp. 309-15

This view is the firm conviction of the author and is the only logical and consistent conclusion which results from the grammatical-historical interpretation of the Word of God.

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69. Alva J. McClain, op. cit., pp. 247-254
70. John C. Whitcomb, op. cit.
71. Charles L. Feinburg, Premillennialism or Amillennialism?  
(Wheaton: Van Kampen Press, 1954), pp. 173-8
72. J. Dwight Pentecost, op. cit., pp. 518-521
73. Ibid., p. 521

#### WRITER'S INTERPRETATION

##### Minor Problem: What shall be the Prophetic Function of the Priests and Levites?

The author in seeking forth his answer to the above problem will not involve himself with taking each of the various interpretations and rejecting them per se. Instead, he will give substantial Scriptural and interpretative evidence to show just what millennial worship ministry the Kingdom priesthood will have. It is unquestionable in the mind of the author that there will be a literal temple, worship, sacrifices, and priesthood functioning in the millennium.

#### WRITER'S INTERPRETATION

##### Minor Problem: What shall be the Prophetic Function of the Priests and Levites?

It would be proper to give the essential meaning of the terms "priest" and "levite." A priest is one who is properly authorized to minister in sacred things and represent the people therein. He is one who is consecrated to and engaged in holy matters.

The Old Testament word for priest, 7773, appears to possess the fundamental meaning of "an authorized minister"; and the term may therefore be used to identify a non-religious government official (1 Sam. 9:10). Ordinarily, however, the significance of 7773 is restricted to God's authorized minister (cf. Num. 3:10, the man who serves at the altar. The prophet speaks for God to the people; but it is the priest who speaks for the people to God.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> J. Barton Payne, op. cit., p. 273

## WRITER'S INTERPRETATION

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The author in setting forth his answer to the above problem will not involve himself with taking each of the various interpretations and refuting them per se. Instead, he will give substantial Scriptural and interpretative evidence to show just what millennial worship ministry the Zadokian priesthood will have. It is unquestionable in the mind of the author that there will be a literal temple, worship, sacrifices, and priesthood functioning in the millennium.

### Definition of Terms

קֹהֵן      לֵוִי  
· · · · ·  
· · · · ·

It would be profitable to state briefly the essential meaning of the terms "priest" and "Levite." A priest is one who is properly authorized to minister in sacred things and represent the people therein. He is one who is consecrated to and engaged in holy matters.

The Old Testament word for priest, קֹהֵן, appears to possess the fundamental meaning of "an authorized minister"; and the term may therefore be used to identify a non-religious government official (2 Sam. 8:18). Ordinarily, however, the significance of קֹהֵן is restricted to God's authorized minister (cf. Heb. 5:4), the man who serves at the altar. The prophet speaks for God to the people; but it is the priest who speaks for the people to God.<sup>74</sup>

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74. J. Barton Payne, op. cit., p. 372

Levi was one of the twelve sons of Jacob. It was from the tribe of Levi that Moses and Aaron came. Briefly stated "Levites" was the name given to the descendants of Levi.

At Mt. Sinai the Levites were given specific responsibilities in the nation of Israel. And it was to Aaron that the office of priesthood was given. So to be one of the Aaronic priesthood an Israelite had to be first of all from the tribe of Levi but even more specifically of the line of Aaron. All of the priests were Levites but not all of the Levites were priests. Harrison makes the following distinctions between the priests and Levites:

The Mosaic legislation made a sharp distinction between the priests and non-priests or ordinary Levites. 1. The priests must belong to Aaron's family; the Levites belong to the larger family of Levi. A priest was a Levite; but a Levite was not necessarily a priest. 2. Priests were consecrated (Exod. 29:1-37; Lev. 8); Levites were purified (Num. 8:5-22). 3. Levites were considered a gift to Aaron and his sons (Num. 3:5-13; 8:19; 18:1-7). 4. The fundamental difference consisted of this: only the priest had the right to minister at the altar and to enter the most holy place (Exod. 28:1; 29:9; Num. 3:10, 38; 4:15, 19f; 18:1-7; 25:10-13). The rebellion of Korah, a Kohathite (Num. 16:1), against the uniqueness of Aaron's priesthood illustrated, in the way the rebellion was subdued, the heinous nature of attempting to enter the priesthood without the necessary prerequisites (Num. 16:1). The choice of Aaron was further confirmed by the budding of his rod. (Num. 17:1-11; Heb. 9:4).<sup>75</sup>

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75. R. K. Harrison, Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1963), p. 484

Organization and Function  
of the Priests and Levites  
in the Old Testament

Priests

The nature of the priest's responsibility is threefold. First of all there is involved the principle of representation. This exemplifies the fact that he was the mediator who ministered for the guilty. Secondly, there is the responsibility of offering sacrifice. The chief duty of the priest was to reconcile men to God by making atonement for their sins, and this was brought about by means of sacrifice. Thirdly, involved in the responsibility of the priesthood is the matter of intercession. "There can be no effective advocacy on behalf of the guilty until their guilt is righteously expiated."<sup>76</sup> There were three other functions of the priesthood. 1) The priest was expected, in personal living, to set an example of faithfulness to the testament (Deut. 33:9). 2) The priest, and particularly the high priest, was also to "enquire" of God for divine oracles. 3) The priest, finally, was responsible to teach the law (Lev. 10:11; Mic. 3:11; Mal. 2:7).<sup>77</sup>

It was at Sinai that the legitimate priesthood was restricted to the family of Aaron. Aaron, therefore, became the leader in the offering up of national sacrifice and the chief representative before

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<sup>76</sup>. William G. Moorehead, The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1960), Vol. 4, p. 2440.

<sup>76</sup>. J. Barton Payne, op. cit., p. 373

God of the people of Israel. The first subordinate priests were the four sons of Aaron. Nadab and Abihu were judged for violating their office by being slain (Lev. 10:2). Eleazar and Ithamar carried on the line of appointed priests. Eleazar succeeded Aaron as "the priest" (chief priest). Phinehas in turn succeeded his father, Eleazar, as the next chief priest.

#### Levites

The Levites were next in rank to the Aaronic priests and were their fellow tribesmen. They served as assistants before the sons of Aaron (Num. 8:13). At Sinai they were dedicated to God to assist the Aaronic priests but because of the patriarchal curse they received no tribal district of land in Canaan. In the giving of the law at Sinai the official function of the Levites became the "keeping the charge of the sanctuary" (Num. 3:28, 32; 18:5, 6).

Specifically, 'Yahweh set apart Levi to bear the ark of the testament' (Deut. 10:8; 31:9). It is true that the ministry of the altar and of the area within the veil was restricted to the Aaronic priests (Num. 18:7); the Levite Korah, as a result, died when he attempted to usurp these priestly functions (16:18). But the three Levitical clans of Kohath, Gershon, and Merari were appointed to specific tasks in the transportation of the Tabernacle and of its furniture (1:50).. The Kohathites were not even to look at the holy things until the priests had insured that they were properly covered for the march (Num. 4:20).<sup>78</sup>

In summary, there was a threefold organization of the Levitical tribe as a whole, and in this threefold distinction one can easily see the place of the Aaronic priesthood over the other Levites. The organization of the Levitical tribe as a whole is summarized by Broome:

78. Ibid., p. 3675

1. The top echelon was occupied by Aaron and his sons; these alone were priests in the restricted sense. The priests belonged to the family of Kohath.

2. The middle echelon included all the other Kohathites who were not of Aaron's family; to them were given certain privileges in bearing the most sacred parts of the tabernacle (Num. 3:27-32; 4:4-15; 7:9).

3. The bottom echelon comprised all members of the families of Gershon and Merari; to them lesser duties were prescribed (Num. 3:21, 33-37).<sup>79</sup>

It may be concluded, therefore, that when Isaiah 66:21 speaks of "for priests and for Levites:" it has reference to the Mosaic distinction between the priesthood as promised to Aaron and his sons and the servitude of the rest of the tribe of Levi to the priesthood in being assistants.

#### Millennial Function of the Priests and Levites

Is the Mosaic order Re-established?

It is not the nature or purpose of the monograph to make a detailed investigation concerning the question of animal sacrifices in the millennium. For a full treatment of this matter the reader is referred to J. Dwight Pentecost's book, Things to Come, and John F. Walvoord's The Millennial Kingdom. However, because of the close connection between the observance of animal sacrifices and the officiating of the priests in the millennial kingdom it will be necessary to answer the question which advocates of animal sacrifices in the millennium must answer. Just how important is the issue of

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79. Wick Broomall, op. cit.

whether or not animal sacrifices will again be offered? Allis says:

The crux of the whole question is undoubtedly the restoration of the Levitical ritual of sacrifice. This is referred to or implied a number of times. In Ezekiel XLVI burnt offerings and sin offerings are mentioned. The bullock, the he-goat, the ram are to be offered. The blood is to be sprinkled on the altar. The priests, who are Levites of the seed of Zadok, are to officiate. Literally interpreted, this means the restoration of the Aaronic priesthood and of the Mosaic ritual of sacrifices essentially unchanged.<sup>80</sup>

Allis thinks, and wrongly so, that Dispensationalists hold to a re-establishment of the Mosaic economy. This is indeed a grave error in his observation and conclusion. For as Pentecost replies:

The kingdom expectation is based on the Abrahamic covenant, the Davidic covenant, and the Palestinian covenant, but is in no way based on the Mosaic covenant.<sup>81</sup>

The Mosaic order was a conditional covenant, non-determinative and non-eschatological in intent. The Mosaic order was given mainly for the purpose of governing the children of Israel in their relation to God in the Old Testament economy. There is a decided difference, therefore, in the Mosaic order and the millennial kingdom system of worship. There are similarities and differences between the Mosaic Levitical system and the Levitical system of the millennial age.

#### The Priests

In the millennium the priests will act as representatives of the people by officiating the acts of worship which are offered the King, the Lord of hosts. In Zachariah 14 it is said that from year to year

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<sup>80</sup>. Oswald T. Allis, op. cit., p. 246

<sup>81</sup>. J. Dwight Pentecost, op. cit., p. 518

those from the nations of the world will come to Jerusalem to worship the King. There will be various ways in which these worshipping Gentiles express their adoration of the Lord. And on the basis of Ezekiel 40-48 it is evident that the priests, the sons of Zadok, shall represent the multitudes before the Lord of hosts. So in a sense the priests will represent the people before the Lord as the worship is carried on in Jerusalem at the temple. But it must be pointed out that in no way will the officiating priesthood intercede for the worshipping nations who come to the temple, because it is by virtue of the cross that Christ stands between man and God performing the act of intercession.

In connection with the basic principle of representation there are five definite areas of responsibility assigned to the Zadokian priesthood in the millennium. These are set forth in Ezekiel 44:23-27. First of all it is said that they will teach, "And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and the common." Secondly, it is said that they will exercise the administration of justice, "And in a controversy they shall stand to judge." The third responsibility of the priests will be the regulation of all festal assemblies in accordance with the Divine statutes, "and they shall keep my laws and my statutes in all my appointed feasts."

Of the seven festivals in the Mosaic order only two will be observed during the millennial age. The two annual feasts, Passover (Ezek. 45:21-24) and Tabernacles (Zech. 14:16-19), will be observed; but there will be no passover lamb because Jesus has fulfilled that type.

It is not true that only the feast of Tabernacles will be observed in the millennium as Unger states:

the Feast of Tabernacles.. will be observed in the millennium. The answer is: it is the only one of the seven feasts of the Lord which at that time will be unfulfilled typically and the only one which will be in process of fulfilment by the kingdom itself. The Passover (Lev. 23:4, 5) was fulfilled in the death of Christ the Redeemer (1 Cor. 5:7; 1 Peter 1:19).<sup>82</sup>

It is unfortunate that this is Unger's observation, for the Passover feast will also be observed (Eze. 45:21-25). It is interesting to note that no mention is made concerning the feast of Pentecost in Ezekiel 40-48, and we may assume, therefore, that it will not be observed in the millennial worship. Let it be said at this point that there are many changes and deletions in the Aaronic order as seen in the millennial system. Why is the feast of Pentecost not mentioned? "Pentecost is not mentioned. Portraying distinctively Church truth, it is appropriately omitted."<sup>83</sup> Something will be said later concerning the millennial meaning of those feasts which are observed.

The fourth responsibility of the priests will be the hallowing of Jehovah's sabbaths, "and they shall hallow my sabbaths," (44:24). Fifthly, the final responsibility of the priests will be regulation of and officiating the sacrificial system. All five of the offerings will be observed; the burnt offering (Ezekiel 40:39), the sin offering (Eze. 40:39; 44:27), the trespass offering (Eze. 40:39; 42:13),

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82. Merrill F. Unger, Zechariah, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1963), p. 265

83. Merrill F. Unger, Great Neglected Bible Prophecies, p. 85

the meal offering (Eze. 42:13), and the peace offering (Eze. 45:15, 17). Drink offerings will also be rendered (Eze. 45:17). Morning sacrifices shall be offered daily (Eze. 46:13). The prophet Ezekiel is very precise and detailed concerning the various offerings and the responsibilities of the Zadokian priesthood.

Besides the various responsibilities of the priesthood as described in Ezekiel there are other details which are given in relation to the priests which further necessitates a literal fulfilment of those prophecies on the millennial Levitical priesthood. Regulations are given on the matters of dress, marriage, and support (Eze. 44:15-31). The amillennialist has virtually no exposition for such passages as these, and to show the far-fetched spiritualizing contortions of the spiritualizer we quote Blackwood on Ezekiel 44:17-18. He says:

The requirements that follow should be understood in their deeper meaning. The ceremonial cleanliness of the priest symbolizes the moral cleanliness of the people. He who engaged in the sacred acts of sacrifice stood as representative of the faithful throughout the nation. Linen was considered more clean than wool, in part because it produces less sweat. Only that which is clean may be worn in the inner court.<sup>84</sup>

Many more similar examples could be cited but the above statement is enough to make us realize that the amillennialist or any spiritualizer can give no strong textual exposition and interpretation of those passages referring to a future millennial temple. Concerning the various duties of the priests in the millennial worship Unger says:

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84. Andrew W. Blackwood, op. cit., p. 258

The divine government is manifested in the regulations concerning the ministry of the sanctuary (chapter 44). Jehovah is supreme in every matter in connection with the whole temple building. Specific rules guard the sacred eastern gate, which is to be shut. The prince has the privilege of using it, but entering by the porch (44:1-3). There is a careful definition of the duties of the Levites, who are excluded from the priesthood. Ordinances regulating the service of the gates, the slaying of sacrifices, etc., emphasize the judgment and holiness befitting God's house (44:4-14). Precise rules are formulated for the priests as to their position, their duties, their indispensable descent through Zadok, their garments, marriage, service, separation, and support. Thus the personnel of the sanctuary are also subject to close divine regulation.<sup>85</sup>

The priests will also be designated certain portions of the land in Palestine (Eze. 45:4). Not only will they be given portions of land but there will be special chambers in the millennial temple for the priests (Eze. 42:13). These specifications necessitate a literal fulfilment and the burden of proof rests upon those who deny this to prove otherwise.

#### The Levites

There is naturally some overlapping in the responsibilities of the Levites with that of the priests since they will serve as assistants to the Zadokian priesthood. But some of their particular duties warrant mentioning. They shall have oversight of the gates of the house of the Lord (Eze. 44:11). They are to slay the animals for the offerings (Eze. 44:11). In general the Levites will only be the keepers of the sanctuary and will minister in the more menial offices,

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<sup>85</sup>. Merrill F. Unger, op. cit., p. 84-85

but they will not be allowed to approach the altar, and by no means are they to execute the office of the priest, (Eze. 44:13). They will occupy this subservient position because of their apostasy in the past.

The Levites are restricted in their ministry to that of guarding and maintaining the temple and are excluded from the priestly ministry, with the exception of the sons of Zadok.<sup>86</sup>

Much could be said about the duties of the priests and Levites in the millennial worship but it should be quite clear to the reader at this point that there will be definite detailed responsibilities for "the priests and the Levites" in the millennial temple.

#### Purpose of the Millennial Priesthood and Worship

Herein lies the answer to the whole perplexing problem of the obvious differences between the Aaronic priesthood and the millennial priesthood (Eze. 40-48) and in general the whole literal interpretation of the restoration prophecies. First of all, it is very evident that there are some glaring differences (changes, deletions, and additions) between the Aaronic and millennial systems. Some of these have already been pointed out but there are many others. For instance, there will be no Day of Atonement which was at the very center of the whole Levitical system, with its ritual of sprinkling of the blood of atonement by the High Priest on the mercy seat.

The absence of that which was most vital to the Levitical system shows that the millennial age will not see the re-establishment of Judaism.<sup>87</sup>

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86. J. Dwight Pentecost, op. cit., p. 521

87. Ibid., p. 522

That there are many deletions from the Aaronic system is pointed out by West as quoted by Pentecost:

There is no Ark of the Covenant, no Pot of Manna, no Aaron's rod to bud, no Tables of the Law, no Cherubim, no Mercy-Seat, no Golden Candlestick, no Shew-bread, no Veil, no unapproachable Holy of Holies where the High-Priest alone might enter, nor is there any High-Priest to offer atonement to take away sin, or to make intercession for the people. None of this. The priesthood is confined to the sons of Zadok, and only for a special purpose. There is no evening sacrifice. The measures of the Altar of Burnt-Offering differ from those of the Mosaic altar, and the offerings themselves are barely named. The preparation for the Singers is different from what it was. The social, moral, and civil prescriptions enforced by Moses with such emphasis, are all wanting.<sup>88</sup>

There are many other similar differences which may be cited, but the heart of the matter is what constitutes the nature, meaning and purpose of the millennial sacrifices. It is in this area of study that there is much dissention and confusion. There is little agreement even among premillennial expositors. One of the reasons that the literal interpretation has come under attack is that the millennial sacrifices have been generally "symbolized." Allis condemns premillennial expositors because they make the sacrifices of the millennium merely memorial and symbolical. For example Pentecost says:

... the sacrifices will be memorial in the character. There is general agreement among premillennialists as to the purpose of the sacrificial system as inaugurated in the millennial age.<sup>89</sup>

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88. Ibid., p. 521

89. Ibid., p. 525

The memorial view is also that of A.C. Gaebelein who says:

The resumed sacrifices will be the memorial of the cross and the whole wonderful story of the redemption for Israel and the nations of the earth, during the kingdom reign of Christ.<sup>90</sup>

The fact that the sacrifices in the millennium are memorial is not incorrect but rather incomplete when considering such passages as Ezekiel 40-48. There was a two fold purpose in the Old Testament sacrifice. First they were designed to be the necessary vehicle for establishment of an individual in communion and fellowship with both the nation of Israel and God. Second, they also gave the actual realization of the forgiveness of sins.<sup>91</sup> It is quite clear that sacrifices in the Old Testament did provide for forgiveness of sins (Lev. 1:4, 4:35, 6:1-7). The key word in these passages and in Ezekiel 45:15 is כָּפַר which means to "cover, pacify, atone, or make propitiation." This means that the sins of the people were hidden from the face of God by means of the shed blood. In light of this it is to be clearly understood that the sacrifices in the millennium will also be efficacious in nature. For we read in Ezekiel 45:15:

...and one lamb of the flock, out of two hundred, from the well-watered pastures of Israel; for a meal offering, and for a burnt offering, and for peace offerings, to make atonement for them.

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90. A. C. Gaebelein, op. cit., p. 312

91. Hobart E. Freeman, The Doctrine of Substitution in the Old Testament. (Unpublished Th.D. thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1961) pp. 349-350

The Hebrew for atonement is כִּפֶּה a piel infinitive constructed from כִּפִּי meaning "to cover, pacify, atone, make propitiation." This word occurs also in verses 17 and 20 in chapter forty five.

If this word had the idea of forgiveness and propitiation in the Mosaic system, it must have the same idea here. At this point let us make clear what is implied in these statements. The Old Testament sacrifices most clearly had an efficacy ascribed to them which has already been stated.<sup>92</sup>

(In conclusion it is clear that the millennial sacrifices will be for an atonement for sin in the sense that the Old Testament sacrifices were for an atonement.) However, they will not be expiatory in the New Testament sense of the word. Old Testament sacrifices were efficacious and not in conflict with the substitutionary work of Christ before He came, it is fair to conclude that similar sacrifices if reinstituted would not be in conflict with the work of Christ subsequent to the cross.<sup>93</sup>

The millennial sacrifices will not only be efficacious but symbolical and memorial in character. Even the feasts observed in the millennium will serve as vivid memorials. The Feast of Passover will point back to Christ's substitutionary death on the cross. The Feast of Tabernacles will cause Israel to reflect upon God's faithfulness in gathering Israel once again back to the land and giving it to her.

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92. John L. Davis, The Problem of the Millennial Sacrifices. (Unpublished term paper, Grace Theological Seminary, 1963) p. 21

93. Ibid. p. 21

The whole world shall see in the sacrifices the Cross and the whole wonderful story of the redemption for Israel and the nations of the earth.

It can be easily imagined how impressive such sacrifices will be during that time, when there will be no other blood shed in the entire world (Isaiah 11:6-9, 65:25, Hosea 2:18, which remind us of the first scene of earthly harmony in Genesis 1:29, 30). Thus the five different offerings, four of them with blood-shedding, will serve as a constant reminder to the yet unglorified millennial Jews of the awful and complete sacrifice which their Messiah, now present in their midst, had suffered centuries before to make their own salvation possible. Instead of being anticipatory sacrifices, as in O.T. times, these sacrifices will be memorial and commemorative.<sup>94</sup>

In the Lord's Supper we commemorate Christ's death, and is it not possible that when this ordinance has ceased at His Coming another memorial will take its place during the millennium? Even during the millennium all the redeemed will meditate upon all that Christ has done in His death on the Cross. H. Bonar as quoted by Walvoord has summed it all up very beautifully:

The temple, the worship, the rites, the sacrifices, have all their centre in the Lamb that was slain. To Him they point, and of Him they speak. Why should they not be allowed to do so in the millennial age, if such be the purpose of the Father? They are commemorative not typical. They are retrospective then, not prospective, as of old. And needful will retrospection be then, especially to Israel? How needful, when dwelling in the blaze of a triumphant Messiah's glory, to have ever before them some memorial of the cross, some palpable record of the humbled Jesus, some visible exposition of his sin-bearing work, in virtue of which they owe all their blessedness and honour, -and by means of which, God is teaching them the way in which the exceeding riches of His grace can flow down to them in righteousness. And if God should have

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94. John C. Whitcomb, op. cit., p. 4

yet wider circle of truth to open up to us out of His word concerning his Son, why should he not construct a new apparatus for the illustration of that truth?<sup>95</sup>

What a glorious fulfilment to the promises given to Aaron, Phinehas, and Zadok that they shall have an everlasting priesthood. This prophecy will one day find its fruition in the sons of Zadok serving in the millennial temple helping to point Israel and the nations to the finished work of Christ through the memorial of sacrifices.

### Objections to the Literal View Answered

#### Contradiction to Hebrews Problem

Some object to the literal interpretation of a Zadokian priesthood on the basis that Christ has "once and for all obtained eternal redemption", Hebrews 7:27, 9:26, etc. We are accused of returning to the Law and belittling the priesthood of Christ. Allis says:

Here is unquestionably the Achilles' heel of the Dispensational system of interpretation. Its literalistic and Old Testament emphasis leads almost inevitably, if not inevitably, to a doctrine of the millennium which makes it definitely Jewish and represents a turning back from the glory of the gospel to those typical rites and ceremonies which prepared the way for it, and having served that necessary purpose have lost for ever their validity and propriety.<sup>96</sup>

The thinking behind this sort of reasoning is the amillennialist's confused understanding of the relation between the Church and Israel. When one fails to separate the two there naturally results some false

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95. Oswald T. Allis, op. cit., p. 248

96. Oswald T. Allis, op. cit., p. 248

assumptions with regard to the priesthood of Zadok and millennial worship. God has a definite plan for the nation of Israel as is revealed throughout the whole Old Testament, and He has a plan for the Church, the bride of Christ. The truth of the Church and the middle wall of partition being broken down for this present age was something unknown to the Old Testament writers. God's plan for the Church was not revealed until the time of the New Testament. God is not through with the nation of Israel and his plan for her will resume at His second coming. Unless it is clear to one that God has a program for the Church and a program for Israel there will naturally be the conclusion that God is through with Israel as a nation and therefore will have no place for a literal millennium. Unger has said well:

Regarding the imagined clash between the teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews and Ezekiel's prophecy, it may be said the whole conflict vanishes when the ground and position of the one are seen to be entirely different from the ground and position of the other. The Book of Hebrews has in view members of the Body of Christ, the Church, since their redemption while Christ is on high. The other is concerned with earthly Israel, and embraces the Glory of Jehovah once more dwelling in the land of Canaan. The epistle concerns Christianity where there is neither Jew nor Gentile, but all are one in Christ. The prophetic chapter deals with restored Judaism, where Israel is blessed directly, and the Gentiles only mediately or subordinately to the Jews - a state of things in diametrical contrast with Christianity.<sup>97</sup>

It is true that animal sacrifices and priests have no place in Christianity but this does not rule out the fact that there will be a place for these in Israel after the rapture of the Church.

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<sup>97</sup>. Merrill F. Unger, op. cit., p. 39

One of the main purposes of the 1,000-year earthly kingdom of Christ will be to vindicate His chosen people Israel before the eyes of all nations (Isaiah 60, 61). What right do we have, then, to insist that Israelites during the Millennium will be Christians without priests, without sacrifices, and without a temple?<sup>98</sup>

In summary there is really no discrepancy in the literal view of the Zadokian priesthood for those prophecies concerning this truth were given to the nation of Israel and not to the Church. "God did not cast off his people which he foreknew." (Rom. 11:2).

#### Summary

God will one day upon the return of His Son to this earth fulfill His promise to Israel as given through the prophet Isaiah. He will indeed call out from among the sealed 12,000 Levites those who are the sons of Zadok to serve as priests in the millennial temple, and He will also take from the 12,000 sealed Levites certain Levites who will serve as assistants to the sons of Zadok. This transaction will be the full bloom of that prophetic seed given to Aaron in Exodus 40:15, "And their anointing shall be to them for an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations."

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98. John C. Whitcomb, op. cit., p. 4

ENGLISH PARAPHRASE

and I will literally take them out of the 12,000 Levites  
who are the sons of Reuben, to actually perform the service  
of being priests **ENGLISH PARAPHRASE** and I will  
also take some from the 12,000 Levites to serve as assistants to  
the sons of Reuben, the priests, with Jehovah.

#### ENGLISH PARAPHRASE

And I will literally take from out of the 12,000 Levites those who are the sons of Zadok, to actually perform the responsibility of being priests in my millennial temple; and I will also take some from the 12,000 Levites to serve as assistants to the sons of Zadok, the priests, saith Jehovah.

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