

"Our Great High Priest"

Part 22

Hebrews 4:14-8:5

Introduction: As we enter our study of Hebrews tonight I want to take a few minutes to refresh your memory on the purpose of this letter and then show you a few verses which will connect with the writer's purpose.

The writer of Hebrews is writing to a group of Hebrew believers who have come to Jesus Christ and are reluctant to let go of the Levitical priesthood. In other words they are Hebrew believers who are saved but they are having a difficult time letting go of the ceremonies and the rituals which took place under the Old Covenant. As I had told you before this caused these believers to have a divided allegiance and this divided allegiance was hindering their spiritual growth.

Now I want to take a few moments and show you how serious this problem was with the Jews.

Acts 21:18-21

¹⁸ *And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present.*

¹⁹ *And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry.*

²⁰ *And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law:*

²¹ *And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs.*

Here in these verses we see that there were many Jews who believed in Jesus Christ but they were still zealous of the Law which means they still desired to hold on to the ceremonies and the rituals of the Law. Paul preached to all that they could FORSAKE Moses which means they could let go of the Levitical ceremonies and this teaching was difficult for many of the Jews to accept and for that reason they hated Paul.

We can see this problem again when we consider the book of Galatians. The churches of Galatia had been infiltrated by the teaching of the Judaizers and in those churches many had started to turn back to the Levitical ceremonies and the rituals again.

Galatians 4:9-10

⁹ *But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?*

¹⁰ *Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.*

Here we see that Paul points out that these believers were observing days, months, times, and years. These were connected with the Levitical ceremonies. So I show you this to help you to see that this was a major problem within the early churches.

Now we can get back to Hebrews. We have just worked our way through Hebrews 7:1-10 and in those verses the writer showed how the priesthood of Melchisedec was superior to the Levitical priesthood. The point he was making was that since the priesthood of Melchisedec was superior to Aaron's priesthood and since the priesthood of Melchisedec and Melchisedec himself were TYPES of Jesus and His Priesthood then the Priesthood of Jesus was also Superior to the Levitical priesthood.

This brings us to where we are tonight.

I. The Need for a Better Priesthood

Part 1

Hebrews 7:11-19

Notice Hebrews 7:11

There is much for us to consider within this verse so we shall digest this in small bites. The first thing we need to see as we approach this verse is that the Levitical priesthood was UNABLE to bring anyone to "perfection". Now in order to understand this we need to understand what the word "perfection" means in this context.

According to Charles Ryrie the word "*perfection*" in this verse refers to "**complete communion with God**".

The point is the Levitical priesthood could not take away sin but it only covered sin. This is why there was always a need to sacrifice more animals year after year. But even with the sacrifices and the blood of those sacrifices the common man could never enter into the presence of God.

Hebrews 10:1-5

*For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, **can never** with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the **comers** thereunto **perfect**. [The law could never bring man into complete communion with God]...*

² *For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.*

³ *But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.*

⁴ *For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.*

⁵ **Wherefore** *when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me:*

When Jesus came into the world He declared that God no longer wanted any more animal sacrifices but instead He gave to His Son a body so that He could be THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE for sin. As we said before Jesus did what no Levitical priest could ever do and that was He opened the way into the presence of God for all who will come to Him by faith. Remember what Jesus said in John 14 when He was talking to Jewish men?

John 14:6

⁶ *Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: **no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.***

The Levitical priesthood could never bring the common man into the presence of God. But Jesus can. He has made a way to the Father and THE WAY is through Him for He is the GREAT HIGH PRIEST.

Notice Hebrews 7:11 again.

The Levitical priesthood could not bring men into complete communion with God so there was the need for ANOTHER Priest to arise but not after the order of Aaron but after the order of Melchisedec.

Now I want to draw you attention to the word "**another**" and I want to borrow from the teaching of Pastor Ritchie.

In the Greek there are two words that are translated "**another**" but they have different meanings. There is the word "**allos**" and there is the word "**heteros**". The word "**allos**" means "**another of the SAME kind**". But the word that is used here in Hebrews 7:11 is the word "**heteros**" and it means "**another of a DIFFERENT kind**".

Jesus is "another" priest of a DIFFERENT KIND. We did not need a priest like the Levitical priests because they could never bring man into complete communion with God. We needed "another" Priest of a DIFFERENT KIND and that is exactly what Jesus is. He is our Great High Priest who has torn down the veil and made a way for the common man to enter into the presence of God and have complete communion with Him. But how is Jesus ANOTHER Priest of a DIFFERENT KIND? He is ANOTHER Priest after the order of Melchisedec and NOT after the order of Aaron. This makes Him ANOTHER Priest of a DIFFERENT KIND.

Notice Hebrews 7:12

This verse is so very important especially to the Hebrews whom received this letter.

The first point I want you to notice here is that the priesthood was 'CHANGED". This word is also very important. Let me show you how Vines defines the word "changed".

"To transpose (two things, one of which is put in place of the other)"

The word "transpose" means "two things that completely change places when one is put in the place of the other".

The point which the writer is making with this word is that the Priesthood of Jesus COMPLETELY replaced the Levitical priesthood. This was very important for the Hebrew believers to grasp because this meant that Judaism and Christianity were NOT to be blended together. Christianity COMPLETELY replaced Judaism. The Priesthood of Jesus Christ replaced the Levitical priesthood and therefore they were to walk completely away from the ceremonies and the rituals of the Levitical system.

There is something else here that I need to add and that is when Christianity is blended together with Judaism then it becomes legalism. That is exactly why the book of Galatians was written by Paul. The Judaizers had convinced the churches of Galatia that in order for a person to be saved they also had to be circumcised. This was an attempt to blend the Law together with Christianity.

The very same thing often happens today within many churches. People begin to combine Christianity with ceremonies and rituals. Some say baptism is required for salvation, some say church membership is required, and others will tell you that you must be confirmed. When people begin to add anything to the finished Sacrifice of Jesus Christ as our High Priest such as church ceremonies or church rituals it becomes legalism. But even beyond that it becomes a perversion of the TRUE Gospel.

Galatians 1:6-9

⁶ *I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:*

⁷ *Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.*

⁸ *But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.*

⁹ *As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.*

You see the Priesthood of Jesus Christ completely replaced the Levitical priesthood and the Priesthood of Jesus Christ is able to bring the common man into complete and perfect communion with God. And this communion with God is possible ONLY because of the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross for our sins. It is not by any church ritual or ceremony.

But there is more to see here.

Notice Hebrews 7:12 again.

Not only was the priesthood changed/replaced but so was the law. Now we need to slow down here and understand what it is that the writer is saying here. He is NOT saying that God's moral law has been replaced. In other words he is NOT saying that the Ten Commandments no longer pertain to man. When the writer speaks of the Law here he is speaking of the part of the Law that pertained to the sacrifices and the ceremonies of the Levitical sacrificial system.

Let us consider what was going on in the lives the Hebrews who received this letter. They had come to Jesus Christ and placed their faith in Him and were saved. But they also felt as though they had to take their sacrifices to the temple and continue the practices of the Levitical system. But here the writer is telling them that entire sacrificial system has been done away with. There was no longer a need for the animal sacrifices. Jesus had made the Perfect Sacrifice. They no longer needed to even go to the temple. In Christ they had access to God at all times any time.

But there was something else in the Law that changed. The Law required that the priests had to be from the tribe of Levi and from the family of Aaron.

Numbers 3:5-10

⁵ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

⁶ Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister unto him.

⁷ And they shall keep his charge, and the charge of the whole congregation before the tabernacle of the congregation, to do the service of the tabernacle.

⁸ And they shall keep all the instruments of the tabernacle of the congregation, and the charge of the children of Israel, to do the service of the tabernacle.

⁹ And thou shalt give the Levites unto Aaron and to his sons: they are wholly given unto him out of the children of Israel.

¹⁰ And thou shalt appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall wait on their priest's office: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death.

Here we see that under the Law the priests came from the tribe of Levi and from the family of Aaron. Anyone who came near the altar who was not of the tribe of Levi and of the family of Aaron was put to death. This part of the Law was also changed.

Notice Hebrews 7:13-14

The Law had to be changed because Jesus came not from the tribe of Levi but He sprang out from the tribe of Juda and under the Law the tribe of Juda had no place at the altar. Therefore, the Law had to be changed. So when Jesus became the High Priest after the order of Melchisedec the Levitical Law no longer continued to be effective. It has now been done away with. Remember what happened to Uzziah?

2 Chronicles 26:1-3, 16-20

Then all the people of **Judah** took Uzziah, who was sixteen years old, and made him king in the room of his father Amaziah.

² He built Eloth, and restored it to Judah, after that the king slept with his fathers.

³ Sixteen years old was Uzziah when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty and two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Jecoliah of Jerusalem.

¹⁶ But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense.

¹⁷ And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the LORD, that were valiant men:

¹⁸ And they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are

consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honour from the LORD God.

¹⁹ *Then Uzziah was wroth, and had a censer in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, from beside the incense altar.*

²⁰ *And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from thence; yea, himself hastened also to go out, because the LORD had smitten him.*

Here was Uzziah a man of the tribe of JUDAH and he was struck with leprosy for stepping into the office of the priest. But when Jesus who was of the tribe JUDAH became a priest the Levitical Law was changed in the sense that it was no longer effective. Jesus became a Priest not after the order of Aaron but after the order of Melchisedec.

Conclusion:

We are going to stop here for tonight but there is a question I want to raise because it is a question I would ask if I were sitting in your seat.

How can the priesthood change and how can the Law change when the Bible tells us that God never changes?

Malachi 3:6

⁶ *For I am the LORD, **I change not**; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.*

This verse tells us that God never changes so how do we explain what is recorded in Hebrews? The answer is that God has never changed but His ways have. Under the Old Covenant animals were sacrificed for sin. We do not need to sacrifice animals today because by one offering Jesus has perfected us forever. The ceremonies and the rituals of the Levitical priesthood were all TYPES of Jesus Christ. When Jesus came those TYPES were all fulfilled in Him and so there is no longer a need for the ceremonies and the rituals. God has never changed but His ways have and the changes are far better than the old ways.