–Save This Page as a PDF–

The Former Priesthood Has Changed
7: 11-14

The former priesthood has changed DIG: Why could those Jews to whom the author was writing discard all the sacrifices and the priesthood? What was prophesied that showed YHVH never intended for the Levitical priesthood to remain forever? What is the meaning of perfection as used by Rabbi Sha'ul? As used by the writer of Hebrews? Why was new priesthood necessary? What is the significance of the fact that that the former priesthood had changed? How is Messiah's priesthood superior to the priests descended from Levi and Aaron? In what ways is Yeshua like Melchizedek portrayed here?

REFLECT: Many Jews resisted change to such a degree that they ended up stoning those who spoke the truth (Acts 7:51-60). Are you one who resists change because you are intimidated by the unfamiliar? I think we are always more comfortable in our familiar ruts. But are you possibly missing spiritual growth, progress, or blessing because of an arbitrary decision to "do things the way they've always been done?" If you are a member of a committee, a board of elders or some other decision-making group, pray that you would be open to the Spirit's leading as you consider new issues.

Drawing near to God (7:19b CJB) is the ultimate desire for mankind. And **ADONAI's** desire is for believers to draw **near to Him** and come into **His** presence. This is the essence of our faith, but sometimes we forget this. Some believers look at **Messiah** only as a means to their salvation and happiness. If they believe they are saved and are fairly happy with their circumstances, they consider their lives fulfilled. They are looking for security and happiness. They find these in **Christ** and are satisfied. Others see their lives as a continuous growing relationship with **YHVH** through study and obedience to **His** Word. This life is much more mature than the first. But the key is **drawing near to God**. The fullest expression of faith is to enter into the presence of **Ha'Shem** in **His** heavenly Most Holy Place and to fellowship with **Him**. For all those, except the Levitical high **priest** once a year, this was impossible for the average Jew to do. The veil was always there.

Only in the B'rit Chadashah can we go behind the veil. Only by the blood of **Jesus Christ**, only by **His priestly** intercession at the right hand of **God**, based on **His** perfect sacrifice on the cross, was access to **ADONAI** opened. Aaron's **priests** could never bring us inside the veil. The veil could not be removed because **sin** had not been fully put away. But the fact that **Messiah** was a **priest** in **the Order of Melchizedek** opened the way. **He** could remove the veil because **He** had paid for our **sins** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ, to see link click Lw – Accompanying Signs of Jesus' Death**). And after the cross and **His** ascension back to the right hand of **the Father**, **the Levitical priesthood** was no longer necessary and **God** put it aside. You do not need a symbol when you have the real thing. Now that **the perfect** had come, the imperfect passed away. In Hebrews, **perfection** means access to **God**, not the spiritual maturity of believers.[176]

If completion, or perfection (Greek: *teleiosis*) **could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood (since in connection with it, the people were given the Torah), why was there still need for another** kind of **priest** (Hebrew: *cohen*) **to come, one "after the Order of Melchizedek" (Hebrews 7:11** quoting **Psalm 110:4 CJB), not to be compared with Aaron?** The word **perfection** implies the act or process of **completing**. An institution is **perfect** or **complete** when it effects the purpose for which it was instituted. The purpose of **the priesthood** was to remove the obstacle, **sin**, which kept mankind from **YHVH** and make a way of access for to **ADONAI**. **The Levitical** sacrifices merely covered over **sin**, they could not remove it. As such, **the priesthood** and sacrifices were an index finger pointing to **Messiah** and **His** permanent substitutionary death on the Cross. If the Jewish readers had truly discovered and learned that **Jesus** had superseded **the Levitical priesthood**, then they would see for themselves that **the Torah** had been done away with.

A portion of **Hebrews 7:11** is quoted in **Hebrews 10:16-17**, where the point is made that where there is true forgiveness of **sin**, sacrifice is no longer necessary. Once **Christ** made the final sacrifice on the cross, faith/trust/belief in **Him** would free us from all **sin** and guilt. But all through the Dispensation of Torah (see the commentary on **Exodus Da – The Dispensation of the Torah**) the Israelites were troubled because their **sins** were never fully forgiven. They were anticipating the perfect sacrifice.

Hebrews 9:8-9 makes the same basic point. Because **the high priest** was the **only one** who could **enter the Most Holy Place once a year, the Ruach Ha'Kodesh was showing** us **that the way into it had not yet been disclosed**

as long as earthly **Tabernacle was functioning. This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered there were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper.** Those sacrifices could not take the Israelite behind the veil into **perfect** access to **God**.

Because **the Levitical priesthood** and sacrifices could not actually provide salvation for **sinful** mankind, it follows that **a** new **priesthood** must be instituted that would. And because salvation needed to be provided, **a** new **priesthood** was brought in, and **another** kind of **priest**, **Messiah**, a **priest after the Order of Melchizedek**. The word **another** is the translation of the Greek word *heteros*, meaning *of another kind*. That is, since **the Levitical priesthood** brought nothing to **perfection**, or **completion**, not merely another **priest** was needed, but **another priest** of *a different kind*. It could not be another **priest** of the same kind from the Order of Aaron, but one of a different kind **after the Order of Melchizedek**. There was an inseparable connection between **the Levitical priesthood** and **the Torah**. For one to be changed the other had to be changed. It was in conjunction with **the Torah** that the Order of Aaron had been established.[177] The point of **7:11** is made clear. If **the Levitical priesthood** could have brought this perfection – which was access to **God**, or salvation – why would **God** have provided another **priesthood after the Order of Melchizedek**?

A **change** in **the priesthood** from **the Levitical** to that of **Melchizedek** required a **change** of **the Torah**. Thus, **when the former priesthood was changed** (from **Levitical** to that of **Melchizedek**), **the Torah** took on a different function **(7:12).** So the author of **Hebrews** reaches the same conclusion as Rabbi Sha'ul. **The Torah has become our tutor to lead us to Christ . . . but now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor (Galatians 3:24).** The context here, however, makes it very clear that no **change** or transformation (Greek: *metatithemenes*) in **the Torah** is envisioned other than in connection to **the priesthood** and the sacrificial system. The term **changed** implies retention of the basic structure of **Torah**, with some of the elements rearranged. As **Yeshua Himself** said: **Do not think I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish, but to complete** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Dg – The Completion of the Torah**).[178]

When **Yeshua** revealed **His** Sh'khinah glory on the Mount of Transfiguration (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Gb – Jesus took Peter, James and John Up a High Mountain where He was Transfigured**), **He** said: **This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased.** But then **God** added a sense of

urgency when **He** said: **Listen to Him (Matthew 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35)!** Even though **the apostles** had heard the **Torah (Moses)**, and the Prophets **(Elijah)**, now **they** needed **listen to Him**! Therefore, even before the New Covenant was finalized by the crucifixion and resurrection of **Messiah**, **God** illustrated that the First Covenant represented by **Moses** and **Elijah** would be **changed**.

Malki-Tzedek belonged to a different (Greek: *heteros*) **tribe, and no one from that tribe has ever served at the** bronze **altar** for the sacrifice of **sins (7:13).** Since **the Torah** required that **the priests** should come from the tribe of Levi, a new **priesthood**, not of the Order of Aaron, must be instituted. **Christ** comes from **a different tribe**, not set apart for **priestly** service. Again, the writer reminds his readers that **Psalm 110:4** spoke of a **priest** from David's line. This inferred that the coming **priest** would not be from Levi.[179]

For everyone knows that our Lord arose from Y'hudah (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Ai – The Genealogies of Joseph and Mary**)**, and that Moshe said nothing about this tribe when he spoke about the priests (7:14). Jesus** did not come from **Levi**, which was the only **priestly** tribe. **He** was from **Judah**, which, just as all the other non-**Levitical** tribes, had nothing to do with **priestly** service at the bronze altar of sacrifice. If **Jesus** became a high **priest**, **He** was obviously **a different** order of **priesthood**. **His priestly** qualifications were obviously not hereditary. The hereditary Order of Aaron – the shadow, temporary, and imperfect – was **changed** forever by **the Order of Melchizedek** – the reality, eternal, and perfect.

But this freedom from the demands of the 365 negative and 248 positive commandments of **Torah** does not suggest that we, as believers, have the right to **sin** up a storm. "Free from the yoke of **the Torah**" does not mean "free to **sin**." Rabbi Sha'ul declares: **What conclusion should we reach? "Let's go on sinning because we're not under legalism but under grace?" Heaven forbid (Romans 6:15 CJB)!** Rather, it means that we are free to do the will of **God**. The indwelling of **the Ruach ha-Kodesh** enables us to fulfill **the just requirement of the Torah** as all of **His** righteousness is transferred to our spiritual account.

Sha'ul continues: **Therefore, there is no longer any condemnation awaiting those who are in union with the Messiah Yeshua. Why? Because the Torah of the Spirit, which produces this life in union with Messiah Yeshua, has**

set me free from the “torah” of sin and death. For what the Torah could not do by itself, because it lacked the power to make the old nature cooperate, God did by sending His own Son as a human being with the nature like our own sinful one [but without sin]. God did this in order to deal with sin, and in so doing He executed the punishment against sin in our human nature so that the requirement of the Torah might be fulfilled in us who do not live according to what our old nature wants but according to what the Spirit wants (Romans 8:1-4 CJB).

***Lord Jesus**, You are the eternal **High Priest** who has paid for our sins. **Your priesthood** did what **the Levitical priesthood** could never do: It gave us the chance for eternal life. We give you our lives in love to serve **You** and the congregations of **God**.*[180]