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The Former Priesthood Was Temporary

7: 15-19

The former priesthood was temporary DIG: What is the significance of the Greek word for another? On what basis were the Levites installed as priests? Was there a single moral or spiritual qualification that a Levite had to meet to become a priest? Rather than a physical one, what kind of claim did Christ have to the priesthood? What happened in 70AD that emphasized the fact that the Levitical system had been done away with? What were the writers of the TaNaKh searching for according to First Peter 1:10-12?

REFLECT: What does it mean to you that Jesus is our High Priest forever? How does that differ from the Levitical priesthood? What are some things that you thought were permanent in your life that turned out to be only temporary? How did you react when you found out? How did you adjust? Why do you think we have a hope of something better through which we are drawing near to God? What is the hope of something better that is introduced?

YHVH never intended for **the Levitical priesthood** to remain forever. This concept is never taught anywhere in the Scriptures. The TaNaKh, in fact, anticipated (as in **Psalm 110:4**) that another priesthood was coming. If **Ha'Shem** predicted another **priesthood** was coming, it would have been reasonable to assume, even without further revelation, that the new **one** would be better than the previous one. Isra'el was told that a greater priesthood was to come, which **Messiah** would be **the High Priest**. If **the priesthood** in the Order of Aaron had been perfect, another would have been unnecessary. Or, if **YHVH** had intended that **the priesthood** in the Order of Aaron would somehow improve and one day introduce the age of perfect access to **Him**, why would **He** have planned for **Christ** to be **a priest in the Order of Melchizedek**? It was no accident or mistake that **God** set aside **the Levitical priesthood**. **He** had planned it that way from the beginning. That was obvious because soon after **He** called **Abraham**, before **He** actually made the covenant with him, **God** introduced him to **Malki-Tzedek** (see the commentary on **Genesis**, to see link click [Ed](#) - **Melchizedek: King of Salem and a Priest of God Most High**), a priest of a higher order than the one who would come from Aaron's descendants.¹⁸¹

A second reason for the transformation (Greek: *metatithemenes*) of **Torah** (see [Bh](#) - **The Former Priesthood Has Changed**) is that **the Levitical priesthood** set up by **the Torah** in the form that Moshe received it from **YHVH** was based on a **rule . . . concerning physical descent** from Levi through Aaron. While Phinehas, Aaron's grandson, was given **the covenant of everlasting priesthood (Numbers 25:13)**, but **Yeshua** has an everlasting **priesthood by the power of an indestructible life** (as pictured by the life of **Malki-Tzedek**). This sets aside the need for a system of passing on **the priesthood** based on physical descent (see [Bk](#) - **The New Priesthood Lasts Forever**).

Like **Melchizedek's priesthood**, however, **Yeshua's** was first and foremost based on who **He** was. It had nothing to do with what the physical body, but everything to do with the eternal **power, the power of an indestructible life**. In the case of **the Levitical priesthood**, no matter how ill-suited a **man** may have been, or how reluctant to take the office, **the Torah** made **him** a **priest** because of the family into which **he** was born and because of certain physical requirements **he** had to meet. **He** had no choice. For **Jesus Christ**, however, **the priesthood** was a result of who **He** was. **He** became, and **He** continues to become, a **priest** by eternal **power** - a **power** that can do what no **Levitical priest** could ever do - **He** gives us access to **God**.¹⁸²

It becomes even clearer by what the writer spelled out in the preceding verses, that **if a another** (Greek: *heteros* meaning *another of a different kind*) **type of priest arises, one like Melchizedek, one who became a cohen not by virtue of a rule in the Torah concerning physical descent, but by virtue of the power of an indestructible life, He** would be superior to the previous one (**7:15-16 CJB**). The writer is saying, in effect, that **the Levitical priesthood** did not measure up to the purpose for which a **priesthood** is instituted, namely, to offer a sacrifice that would pay for sin and make a way for sinful people to be saved. The writer says that it is perfectly obvious that *a different kind of priest* should arise. **For it is declared, "You are a cohen forever, in the Order of Malki-Tzedek" (Hebrews 7:17 CJB quoting Psalm 110:4 CJB).**

Here is the climax of the text: Aaron is replaced by **Christ**. **Thus, on the one hand, the earlier rule is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness (for the Torah made nothing perfect); and, on the other hand, a hope of something better is introduced, through which we are drawing near to God (7:18-19 CJB).** **ADONAI** has **set aside** (Greek: *athetesis*) the old imperfect and has replaced it with the new and perfect. **Setting aside** relates to doing away with something that has been established. It is used, for example, of annulling a treaty, a promise, a law, a regulation, or of removing someone's name from a document. The whole sacrificial system was canceled, annulled, done entirely.

God assured its end when **He** allowed the Temple to be destroyed (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Mt - The Destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple on Tisha B'Av in 70 AD**).

The old **Levitical** system could reveal sin. It could even cover sin temporarily. But it could never remove sin, and so it had to be removed. It brought nothing to conclusion. It gave no security. It gave no peace. People never had clear consciences. But the priesthood of **Jesus Christ** made all of what Isra'el looked forward to a reality. It brought access to **God**.

Kefa tells us: **Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searching intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories and would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things (First Peter 1:10-12)**. Before the cross, the righteous of the TaNaKh only saw salvation from a distance. They were neither fully certain nor secure until **Messiah** came. They trusted in hope, looking ahead for a conscience freed from sin. But because the veil has been removed, we can enter the presence of **ADONAI**, sit down with **Him** and, with the words of Rabbi Sha'ul say: **Abba Father**. In other words, we have access to **God**.

How much better off are we under the Dispensation of Grace (see **Bp - The Dispensation of Grace**), rather than the Dispensation of Torah (see the commentary on **Exodus Da - The Dispensation of Torah**)? In **Christ** we are freed from the debt of all sin, and we can live eternally in the riches of **the One** we love and who loves us. Here is a good illustration of this from John MacArthur's commentary on **Hebrews**.

A young woman had run up a lot of bills and charged far beyond what she was able to pay. She was in debt over her head and saw no way to get out. She was in trouble and the situation looked hopeless. Then a young man came along and fell deeply in love with her. In time, he proposed to her. She also loved him very much, but felt that she should tell him about her debts before she agreed to marry him. When told, he said, "Don't worry. I'll pay all your debts. Just leave them to me." Before the wedding he gave her an engagement ring and reassured her many times that he would take care of her debts. She trusted him implicitly and knew he was a person of his word. She had every reason to be confident and hopeful. But she was not yet actually free of her debts and, consequently, could not be at peace about them. Finally, they were married, and he paid all her debts. Not only that, but he told her that he was wealthy beyond her wildest dreams and gave her a joint checking



account with himself. She would never again need to be concerned about debts. From that time on she was secure in the riches of the one she loved and who loved her.¹⁸³