

EXPOSITON OF HEBREWS

Message #14

Hebrews 7:11-28

I have met many people who really believed they could be right by keeping a few O.T. laws. In fact, I dare say that most people who go to church think they can somehow be right with God or enhance their relationship with God by keeping laws and rules. Many believe that they will have greater access to God by keeping laws. That was the thought of many in Hebrews.

In fact, the word “perfection” (τελειωσις) used in **Hebrews 7:11** is one that means many thought they could really reach a state of completion, fulfillment, and perfection by keeping the O.T. law (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 442). Hebrews says this is impossible (Hebrews 10:1). Many believe if they keep enough laws and rules they can reach a state of real fulfillment and will have great access to God because they will have a complete and almost sinless perfectionism.

However, when we carefully study the Bible, we realize that sinless perfectionism is impossible by our works, and that is revealed in both the O.T. and the N.T.

In **I Kings 8:46**, when Solomon dedicated the Temple, in his dedicatory prayer he said, “for there is no man who does not sin.” Years later, in **Ecclesiastes 7:20** he said, “There is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.”

When we turn to the N.T., we discover the very same thing. When Jesus taught His own disciples how to pray, He taught them to pray every day for daily bread and for forgiveness of sin debts (**Matthew 6:11-12**). When Paul wrote Romans, he never told the believers that they would not sin, but that sin would not have dominion over them (**Romans 6:14**). James, the brother of the Lord, said that “we all stumble in many ways” (**James 3:2**). John used even stronger language when he said, “If we say we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves” and make God a “liar” (**I John 1:8, 10**).

What we conclude is that those who think they can reach some real completed state of sinless perfection as a believer do not get that idea from the Word of God, nor do they get that idea from the O.T. law. Don’t you dare think, as you sit here, that you are a person who can reach a state of real completion of sinless perfection, because not only are you delusional, but you actually make mockery of the priestly work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Hebrews is a book that establishes the fact that everything we have in having access to God as far as salvation and sanctification is found in Jesus Christ! It is not found in us and it is not found in the O.T. law. To prove this point, in this section the writer asks a very simple question in **verse 11**: If it were possible to reach a completed, fulfilled, perfect state by our works and by the O.T. Levitical priesthood who focused on the O.T. law, then why did God decide that another of a different kind of priest was necessary? **Now there is a pronoun used three times in this series of verses and it is the pronoun “another” (ετερος).** It is used in **7:11, 13, 15** and it means another of a different kind. The priestly work of Jesus Christ is totally different than the O.T. law priests.

So the real question here is if we had the potential to really be complete and perfect through the O.T. law then why did God send His own Priest after the order of Melchizedek and not after the order of Levi and Aaron? What we learn here is this:

THE FACT THAT JESUS CHRIST IS NOT A PRIEST LIKE THE LEVITES BUT LIKE MELCHIZIDEK, PROVES THAT BEING RIGHT WITH GOD WILL NEVER COME BY WORKS OF THE O.T. LAW BUT ONLY THROUGH HIM.

Every cult in the world and every legalist in the world should ask these questions: Why didn't God stick with the Old Testament system if it could really make people right with Him? Why did God send His Son into this world if we could be right with God through the O.T. law? If the O.T. law could give us access to God, why did Jesus Christ even bother to come into this world?

Now there are a series of five logical arguments the writer uses to prove his point:

LOGICAL ARGUMENT #1 – When there is a change in the priesthood, there is also a change in the law. **7:12-17**

The O.T. law was linked to one family - Aaron and the Levites. If you change the family you must change the law, because the law goes with the family.

We have moved several times and have had several homes. I have resolved if we ever move again, someone is going to move us because we are sick of it. But when we move we have boxes with our stuff in them. When we go the boxes go with us. We don't leave them for the next person who buys our home. When we go they go. That is exactly what the writer is saying here - **when the priesthood changes ownership, the law goes with the old priests. The law that boxes people in is gone when you have a new Priesthood.**

Now to prove his point that there has been a change of priesthood, the writer offers two proofs:

Proof #1 - Jesus Christ came from Judah, not Aaron. **7:13-14**

Jesus Christ came from a completely different priestly tribe than the one connected to the O.T. law.

In **verse 13** the writer introduces us to a Person about whom all of these things are speaking. That Person is none other than Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ came from another of a different kind of tribe who had never officiated at anything at the O.T. altar. As **verse 14** says, Jesus Christ came from the tribe of Judah and never did Moses connect Judah to the O.T. law. Moses never gave O.T. priesthood instructions to Judah's tribe, which means if someone comes through this line there has been a major change.

When Matthew tracks the lineage of Jesus Christ, he clearly shows that Jesus Christ came from the line of Judah (Matt. 1:2), who came from Jacob, Jesse, and David (1:6). When you travel through the O.T., there are various predictions that eventually a new Savior would come from this very pedigree (Numbers 24:17; Isaiah 11:1; **Micah 5:2**). Micah says he also would be born in Bethlehem.

When Moses gave instructions for the O.T. law, he never once made any mention of this. He never spoke of any priest who would come from this line of Judah who would be responsible for O.T. law matters. What this means then is **if you have a different priest, there also will be a difference in law matters. The system will move from law to grace (John 1:17).**

Proof #2 - Jesus Christ is like Melchizedek, not Aaron. **7:15-17**

The second proof that there has to be a change in the law when you have a change in the priesthood is the fact that Jesus Christ came in the likeness of Melchizedek. As we have already seen, Melchizedek was a king/priest (7:1ff.), who was appointed by God and in no way even connected to the O.T. law. He was not in the physical line of Aaron (**verse 16**) and there is no record of Him ever dying and being replaced.

What is brought out here is that not only was Melchizedek a king/priest, but his priesthood was forever. In the Aaronic priesthood, priests died and had to be replaced. But not with Melchizedek; there was never any replacement of his priesthood. As we have already discussed, there is no indication that the priesthood of Melchizedek ever ended (Genesis 14:18-20).

That is precisely the point - the priesthood of Jesus Christ is totally different than Aaron, for all the Levitical priests died and Jesus Christ's priesthood is forever. It is a completely different kind of priesthood, not based on death but eternal life. The law works death, but grace gives life which is indestructible.

LOGICAL ARGUMENT #2 – The law has been set aside so we can draw near to God.
7:18-19

Do not miss what is stated right here; the law has been set aside. That word “set aside” (αθετησις) means God has set aside and disannulled the law (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 11). Jesus Christ puts an end to the O.T. law.

There are five stated reasons why God did this:

Reason #1 - The law was weak when it came to drawing people near to God. **7:18a**

The word “weak” (ασθενης) means the law had no strength at all in being able to draw people near God. The law showed people they were sinners, but it could not in any way bring sinners near a Holy God (*Ibid.*, p. 64).

Reason #2 - The law was useless when it came to drawing people near to God. **7:18b**

The word “useless” (ανωφελής) means there was nothing about the law that was profitable in any way in bringing people near to God (*Ibid.*, p. 43).

Do you understand this point? There are no works you can do that will draw you near to God. You only get near to God through Jesus Christ and a relationship with Him.

Reason #3 - The law makes nothing perfect. **7:19a**

The word perfect is the same word used in **verse 11**, which means there is nothing in the law that can add anything to you. It cannot make you complete or perfect. It can show you where you have failed.

Reason #4 - The set aside law brings a better hope. **7:19b**

The law cannot do anything for us as far as bringing us near God; but by setting aside the law, we have a better hope of drawing near to God.

Let me illustrate the point - Suppose a woman becomes engaged to a wealthy man, and before she marries him she informs him that she is heavily in debt. But the man, who loves the woman, says, when we are married I will take care of all of your debts; I'll pay them all. This fiancé would give this girl a “better hope.” That is precisely the matter here. The law puts us in a sin debt to God and we cannot pay the debt. But One who loves us, Jesus Christ, says when you are in a relationship with Me, I'll pay it all. Christ's priesthood gives us a better hope.

Reason #5 - The set aside law can draw us near to God. **7:19c**

The verb “draw near” (εγγιζομεν) means to draw very near to God. Now again notice the point; you cannot possibly be near God by the law. Only Jesus Christ can bring us into a near relationship with God.

In the O.T. the law kept man at a distance from God. If you came to the Temple or Tabernacle area, you were not free to enter into the near presence of God. The Aaronic priesthood would not let you. In fact, Aaron could only enter the holiest place once a year. But now that the law has been set aside, we can draw near to God through Jesus Christ.

Listen, the greatest need of your inner most self is to draw near to God. True happiness in life is found in close, near fellowship with God. If you have close fellowship and nearness with God, you'll have no problems with self-esteem or self-respect. We will never get self-esteem or self-respect by looking at ourselves; we get it from being close to God. Jesus Christ can keep you very close to God.

LOGICAL ARGUMENT #3 – No oath was ever given to the Aaronic priests, but one was given concerning Jesus Christ. **7:20-22**

This is a specific reference to **Psalm 110:4** which says, “The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind, Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.” God never swore an oath to Aaron or the Levites that they were priests forever, but He did pertaining to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ guarantees us an eternal, permanent covenant relationship with God. **Notice the “guarantee” of our eternal relationship with God is Jesus Christ.** Our guarantee does not lie in us keeping a few O.T. laws; it lies in Jesus Christ.

Most of us have a doctor and it would be nice if one doctor could take care of all of our problems all of our lives. That is typically not possible. That is why there are family doctors, cardiologists, and various specialists. Depending on our physical issues we need different doctors. Under the O.T. law various Levitical priests handled various Tabernacle issues, but never could one priest give anyone an eternal relationship with God. Jesus Christ is the Great Physician of the soul and He gives us a guarantee of an eternal relationship with God.

LOGICAL ARGUMENT #4 – The actual numbers of priests proves Jesus Christ is our only permanent and complete Savior. **7:23-25**

There were great numbers of priests in the O.T. under the law, and there had to be because eventually the priests died (**verse 23**) and you needed replacements. But not Jesus Christ; He is the permanent High Priest. Just as **verse 25** says, Jesus Christ has the “power” (δυναται) to save forever one who comes to Him in faith, because He is always alive to make intercession for us.

Now the word “forever” (παντελης) is very rare. It is a word that means to save in an all-complete and entire way (*Ibid.*, p. 336). Here is one time when the New International Version and the King James Version are better than the New American Standard. The New International Version translates it “save completely” and the King James translates it “save to the uttermost.”

We need to understand this point because most don’t and most churches have missed this. Most churches think the primary purpose of the church is evangelism. This is not the primary purpose of the church, and it is not the primary purpose of the priestly ministry of Jesus Christ. The primary purpose as stated here is to take one who is saved and move them to completion. That is exactly what Paul said in Colossians 1:28. Paul wanted to proclaim the Word of God so that believers would end up “complete in Christ.”

This writer of Hebrews is presenting this solid food doctrine so that these believers could go on to maturity, and it is the priestly ministry of Jesus Christ that makes this possible. No O.T. priest could do this, but Jesus can and will. As we journey through life we need a high priest who can continually clean up our sin stains. Jesus Christ is that priest.

What we all need is an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, not a bunch of rules or O.T. laws. Jesus Christ is able to save us completely to the fullest measure of an award winner.

LOGICAL ARGUMENT #5 – The priests of the O.T. were weak sinners but Jesus Christ is God's perfect Son. **7:26-28**

The things said about Jesus Christ in these verses prove that He is totally and completely different from any other human priest:

- 1) Jesus Christ is holy (οσιος) - perfect righteous piety and holiness. **7:26b**
- 2) Jesus Christ is innocent (ακακος) - untouched and undamaged by any evil. **7:26c**
- 3) Jesus Christ is undefiled (αμικτος) - free from any contamination of defilement. **7:26d**
- 4) Jesus Christ is separated from sinners - completely separated from all sin and sinners. **7:26e**
- 5) Jesus Christ is exalted above the heavens - now seated at the right hand of God. **7:26f**
- 6) Jesus Christ does not need to offer daily sacrifices for His own sins or for others - He is the sacrifice for our sins. **7:27**
- 7) Jesus Christ is greater in His appointment - Christ was appointed by God the Father, not by a pedigree connection to the O.T. law. **7:28a**
- 8) Jesus Christ is God's perfect Son forever. **7:28b**

I read an interesting quote this week, "Growing up is optional but growing old is mandatory." The fact is, we are all getting older physically but that does not mean we are growing up spiritually.

This writer of Hebrews wanted Christians to grow up and go on to maturity. We will never do that by focusing on the O.T. law, but only by focusing on our relationship with Jesus Christ. It is Jesus Christ that can bring us near to God. It is Jesus Christ who can clean us up and develop us, so focus on your relationship with Him.