

The Mosaic law is finished for the Christian

• A pointer to Christ

• The pointer is not the reality

Our writer is arguing that the entire Mosaic system is finished for the Christian. Jesus is in no way a Levite. His priesthood was **pictured** by the shadows and shapes of the Mosaic law but we are not **actually** under the Mosaic law. I write these words on a train in Germany. We have just passed a sign saying that the train is going to Frankfurt. But the signboard saying 'Frankfurt' is not the same place as Frankfurt itself. I would be foolish to think that I am in Frankfurt. It is still a long way away! In the same way the law is a signboard pointing to Christ. But we would be foolish to think we have arrived at Christian maturity simply because we are keeping the Mosaic law (or think we are!). The Mosaic law is only the signboard. It points to Christ. It points to the need of a clear conscience by the blood of sacrifice. It points to righteousness. But even the ten commandments were only **pointers** to righteousness. We keep them, but it is more important that we keep what they were **pointing** towards. We need to see the radical difference between the signboard and the reality, between the law and the gospel, between the **picture** of full Christian faith in a fully perfect Saviour and the 'full salvation' itself. They are two different things.

The tribal aspect of the matter

• Jesus was not a Levite

Consider the tribal aspect of the matter. Our writer goes on: ¹³*For he of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe, and no one from that tribe has ever served at the altar.* ¹⁴*For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.* Christian faith is not **Levitical**; Jesus was not a Levite. If we are simply keeping the Mosaic law and its ceremonies, then we cannot be ministered to by Jesus since Jesus is not a priest of the Mosaic and Aaronic system. If Jesus is to be our sympathetic high priest it will have to be in a different system altogether, because Jesus was not in the **earthly** priestly tribe.

The prediction of a new priesthood

• Jesus' priesthood is already at work

Consider the prediction of a new priesthood. ¹⁵*And this becomes even more clear if another priest like Melchizedek appears.* ¹⁶*He has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation about his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life. For it is declared, 'You are a priest for ever, in the order of Melchizedek.'* Our writer is not speaking of theories. Jesus has already come and made a sacrifice of himself upon the cross. The high-priestly ministry has begun! Our writer is not theorizing. What Jesus has already done has already made the law unnecessary. The animal sacrifices are unnecessary. The temple in Jerusalem (which was apparently still standing at the time Hebrews was written) is not needed and would be a positive hindrance to us if it were ever rebuilt. The priesthood of Jesus is already at work bringing his people to high levels of reward.

• Resurrection power at work in us

Jesus has appeared as God's unique high priest, resembling what God did in Melchizedek. What enables Jesus to minister to us is the resurrection-power which he already has and which he

• *The new has replaced the old*

is able to share with us. He has been divinely appointed. David's Psalm 110 was addressed to him, and he is already fulfilling it. The new has replaced the old. It will be rebelling against God if we want old-style priests and sacrifices and holy-buildings (so what should we think of what some call 'the sacrifice of the mass'?). Our writer calls upon us to live upon the new – a new Mediator of a new covenant with altogether new hopes and promises.



The high priesthood of Jesus is linked with the kind of person he is, just as the Levitical priests were weak because of the kind of people they were. The Levitical priests died and so their priesthood came to an end when they died (if not earlier still when they 'retired' at the age of fifty). But Jesus is the Son of God! We worship him. He is 'the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being'¹. He is the Creator of all things and not created himself. When God brings his firstborn into the world, he says all the angels are to worship him. He is God and his throne will last for ever and ever. Added to all this, the **incarnate** Son of God, the man, the Son-of-God-come-in-the-flesh, is raised from the dead and enthroned, never to die again. And he is the One who is our great high priest. It is already in effect. How can we ever turn back to fallible, finite, sinful human 'priests' once we have seen the Lord Jesus Christ in his risen-and-ascended glory?

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Seeing who Jesus is

The Hebrew Christians were discouraged and were facing immense pressures. Life would be easier for them if they pretended to be 'only' Jews and talked about Jesus as if he were simply some great angel. But if they do that it will be rebellion of an extreme kind. We too have our own pressures and temptations. The remedy is simply to see who Jesus is. We live 'looking unto Jesus' (as our writer will say later). Jesus' resurrection-life is all-powerful. Nothing can destroy it. But that same resurrection-life can be shared with us. We may know the power of Jesus' resurrection. It is largely a matter of 'drawing near'. In the old covenant worshippers had to 'draw near' with a sacrifice by their side. The Christian fulfils the symbolism. He 'draws near' to God with Christ by his side. And he finds resurrection power at work in his life.

• *The remedy for discouragement*

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