

• *Levitical priests only a temporary institution*

• *The temple curtain torn from top to bottom*

1. The Mosaic system was finished for ever

• *The 'law' in the O.T. refers to the Mosaic system*

• *'for ever' often means to the end of a particular period*

• *The law was weak*

• *It could not convict of sin*

• *It gives no help, no assurance*

• *The law made nothing perfect*

2. Jesus and his salvation is altogether stronger

It should now be utterly clear that the priests and high priests who descended from Levi were only a temporary institution in the life of God's people. Once Jesus was crucified the curtain of the temple was torn from top to bottom, a sign that the old covenant system of symbolic access to God was finished. The way into a new intimacy with God was made open. All of the old institutions of the tribe of Levi had in principle finished, and it would not be long before it would become perfectly obvious to everyone with eyes to see that the entire Mosaic system had come to an end. ¹⁸*On the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness, ¹⁹for the law made nothing perfect...*

1. The Mosaic system has finished for ever. It was temporary ('a former commandment'). We should not speak of 'the eternal law of God' (as many do). This is using the word 'law' to mean 'principles of righteousness'. God's 'principles of righteousness' do indeed last for ever, for God is holy and demands holiness. But 'the law' is the Bible's way of referring to the Mosaic system and **that** is not eternal. It is true that regulations in the Old Testament are sometimes said to be 'for ever' but we must remember that 'for ever' often means 'for the rest of my life'¹² or until the relevant period comes to an end (as the passover goes on 'for ever' – to the end of the Mosaic age – Exodus 12:14; see also 12:17, 24; 27:21; 28:43; 29:9; 30:21). The keeping of a sabbath day was 'for ever', says Exodus 31:16–17 but 'throughout their generations' in the same place clarifies its meaning. Actually now that Jesus has come, the 'for ever' of the Mosaic period has ended! The law is now obsolete. We live under Jesus. The eternal principles of righteousness to which 'the law' **pointed** continue but the Mosaic system has finished.

The law was weak. It had little power. At its best it restrained people from wickedness because of the fear of punishment. But as sinners in Israel became more and more shameless, even that restraining function lost its power. The law was ineffective. It could not convict of sin (whatever some might say!). It could not justify; it could not give eternal life (though it could give continuance as a nation if it were kept). It gives no help, no assurance. It does not promote fellowship with God. It sets up a bondage; it irritates and vexes and threatens.

The law made nothing perfect. A later word from God – the word of the oath – appoints a Son who has been made perfect¹. But the law could not do it. Nor can it produce 'completed' worshippers². It cannot 'make perfect those who draw near'. The fact is: nothing of the purposes of God can be brought to full fruition by the Mosaic law or by its system of symbolism in tabernacle-ritual.

2. Jesus and his salvation is altogether stronger. *But on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.* What was 'the hope' when someone drew near with animal sacrifice in the days after Moses? What blessing did the

¹ Genesis 43:9
² see also Exodus 21:6

¹ 7:28
² 10:1

• **Animal sacrifice – no help for serious sin**

• **Acceptable sacrifices to do with the heart**

• **Through Christ – a 'better hope' in forgiveness for every sin**

Mosaic system of worship give? It was largely a matter of the forgiveness of small sins. Ceremonial impurity could be cancelled out. Sacrifices could be made in the hope of cleansing from skin diseases or unhygienic impurities. But serious sins received no help. An adulterer, an idolater, a juvenile delinquent, a murderer – there was no hope in the law for such people. Even a cleansed conscience did not come by the law itself. The sacrifices acceptable to God had to do with the heart, even in the days of Moses. A broken spirit brought more than ritualistic obedience to Mosaic legislation.

But we Christians draw near with a better hope. Our 'drawing near' is no longer a matter of ceremony or approaching a sacred building. It has more to do with prayer and increasing intimacy with God. There is an altogether 'better hope'. What is it? It includes the hope of forgiveness even for serious transgressions. 'People may be forgiven for every sin and blasphemy against God'¹ – except refusing the way of forgiveness, Christ himself.

¹ Matthew 12:31

3. The place of the oath

• **No oath given to the Levites**

• **An oath given to Jesus**

• **God cannot change his mind**

3. **We must notice the place of the oath.** Anything which is the subject of an oath cannot be changed. Before an oath is taken a promise might be lost by unbelief and impatience. A threat might be withdrawn when the threatened sinner repents. Changes may take place if there has been no oath. But once an oath has been taken no change is possible. In the case of Jesus, he was appointed by God and an oath was given at the time of his appointment. ²⁰*And it was not without an oath. For those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath, ²¹but this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him, 'The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest for ever."* In the case of the Levites no oath was given. God was free to 'change his mind' when the time came for the end of the Levitical high priests. But God cannot 'change his mind' about Jesus. Jesus will reign until every child of God has reached heavenly glory. God has sworn and will never change his mind. Jesus will never stop interceding for us. Glory is sure. And a high **level** of honour is within the reach of every child of God.



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