

FROM AN OLD TO A NEW

The book of Hebrews provides us with an in-depth look into the doing away of the temple duties and the establishment of a new priesthood with our Lord Jesus the Christ. Beginning with the first verse of chapter seven, carefully read to the end of chapter eight. After having done this, look at verse five of chapter seven: ***“And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham...”*** Take note that the Levites were to take the tithes of their brethren *“according to the law”*. Now review verses 11 and 12 of chapter seven. From these verses we learn that if the Levitical priesthood had made all things perfect through its offerings and sacrifices, there would have been no reason to change the priesthood, but as we know, this was not so. The tithe offerings and sacrifices did not make everything *“right”* between God and man. The world needed the Messiah so that mankind could come unto God and receive salvation through a once-and-for-all sacrifice of the Messiah himself, thus fulfilling prophecy and the bringing in of a better covenant, not only for the Jews but also for the Gentiles.

Now read Hebrews 7:13 to 16: ***“For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah: of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood. And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest, who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.”*** These verses are basically saying that our new high priest, that is, Jesus the Christ, was not a descendant from the tribe of Levi. As such, we know that there was no binding obligation to pay a stated proportion of one's earnings to the tribe of Judah. In addition to this, note that the verse says that Jesus was a priest *“after the similitude of Melchisedec”* who was not made *“after the law of a carnal commandment”*. What *“carnal commandment”* was being referred to in this verse? The priests that performed the services of offerings and sacrifices in the tabernacle and temple were only those men who were descended from the seed of Aaron (see Exodus 28:1, 41). Therefore, priests inherited their position, which meant a carnal, fleshly heritage system of succession served the Most High in the temple. The most important prerequisite in becoming a priest should not have been who you were descended from, but your spiritual characteristics in relation to piety and serving God. Jesus came and replaced the short-coming of the Jewish method of the hereditary succession of priests by becoming our new chief priest, through spiritual oneness in his relationship with God, and not because he was descended from the lineage of Aaron.

Let us now read Hebrews 7:24: ***“But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.”*** Notice the distinction made here of

the two priesthoods. Jesus, our High Priest, is of the unchangeable, unalterable, perfect priesthood because he, through his resurrection, lives on for ever. Contrast this with the Levitical priesthood which changed priests continually. In verse 27, we read: ***“Who needed not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.”*** Those who are Christians, should give close attention to this last verse.

The author of Hebrews makes clear another distinction of the Aaronic priesthood. In Jesus' unblemished state, he willingly made the supreme sacrifice, offering himself up once, unlike the sacrifices performed by the Jewish priests which was done on a continuous and repeated basis. If we accept Christ as our once-and-for-all-time sacrifice, then we should no longer be holding to those traditions that were done away with at Christ's crucifixion (see Colossians 2:14). Such traditions include the sacrifices carried out by the Aaronic priests. If the sacrifices are done away with, then the offerings which were compulsory to give to the Levites to sustain the priestly order would also be done away with in Christ. Now if the offerings (i.e. the tithes) of the people made to the Levites are no longer necessary, then there is no longer a need to continue to adhere to the commandment of tithing to a priesthood that no longer exists.

As you continue to study on through to Hebrews 9, notice how the perfection of the new covenant under Jesus is contrasted to the old covenant and priesthood which were found to be with fault (Hebrews 8:7, 13). The main point to understand from all these verses is that the old covenant was an imperfect one, and needed to be (and was) replaced by a better covenant. If the old traditions are done away with, that means we are no longer obligated or commanded to keep such laws which included the tithing system.

Even after all the aforementioned texts, some might be dubious about Hebrews 7:4 which reads: ***“Now consider how great this man was [ie. Melchisedec], unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.”*** First of all, we would like to make clear that the law of tithing came into being as a result of Jacob's vow to God, and not because of any vow Abraham, who came before Jacob, had made to God. Regardless of this fact, some will use the verse as support for upholding the Levitical law of tithing. In this case, let us look at the events surrounding the giving of the tenth of spoils being referred to in the previous verse. Turn to Genesis 14, and read from verse 13 to 24. It is important to realize that Abraham, on returning from his victorious battles of war, also had with him the spoils of his enemies. Such spoils would include the many different wares that were once in the possession of the defeated kings. Note that the one-tenth of the spoils given to Melchisedec was a personal, free-will offering and he was not observing a tithe law, since no law of tithing was in existence at that time. Lastly, remember that the tenth given was from Abraham's spoils of

war which had been taken from the vanquished kings and was not given to be used as a sacrifice for Abraham's sins.

“For the priesthood being changed there is made of necessity a change also of the law.” Hebrews 7:12. ***“For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.”*** Hebrews 8:7. The old covenant of the Levitical priesthood was no longer necessary now that the Messiah of God had come into the world, bringing to an end the old covenant at Golgotha, where he was crucified. Hebrews 9:1, 9 to 11: ***“Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary... Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation. But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building.”***

In conclusion, those that are in Christ, are to put away the traditions and doctrines of mankind and put on Christ, which is the Word of Truth. The obligatory law of tithing which made mankind give by a carnal law was ended by Christ and now mankind should give from the heart in a self-willed, but selfless attitude, founded upon one's love of Jesus and His church. Those who are able to give more than 10% of their earnings should do so out of love for Christ. Those who are poor and struggling to make ends meet should not be guilted by their churches into tithing and only give what they can afford, if at all. ***“Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.”*** II Corinthians 9:7.