

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 8 August 2021. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced, and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

A New Priesthood

Hebrews 7:11-19

As we are assembled here this morning to worship the true Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, many sincere Jewish people throughout the world are eagerly awaiting the appearance of a man whom they will *think* to be their Messiah. The man whom they are awaiting will, in fact, turn out to be the Antichrist—a man who will prove to be the most wicked enemy of the Jewish people (and of God) in human history. I believe it to be very possible that the Antichrist is alive today, and that he is waiting to make his debut on the world stage just after we Christians have been raptured out of this world. Even as we speak, the world is being prepared and conditioned for this event. For example, from 2014-2017, the American TV network HBO aired a TV series called “**The Leftovers.**” The whole storyline of this series is that 140 million people (2% of the world’s population) suddenly, and without warning, disappear from the face of the earth; and over the next seven years, people all over the world try to grapple with this disappearance. Many strange cults are formed—some of which are based upon leaders who claim to be the reincarnation of Christ. Of course, it is not hard to see how the recent push for the disclosure of information about “UFO’s” is prepping the world for this event, as well. No doubt, the Antichrist will blame the disappearance of millions of people upon visitation from aliens. In fact, the “aliens” (who are really Satan’s demons) will probably be *commended* for removing those old-fashioned, bigoted, hateful, Bible-believing pests from the world, so that mankind can now “move forward” in his evolution.

In preparation for their “messiah,” Orthodox Jews in Israel have painstakingly reproduced the items of the ancient Jewish Temple. They have trained up a generation of Levite men to be priests in the Temple, once it is rebuilt. Everything is ready, except for the Temple itself. However, many sincere Orthodox Jews are not daunted by this fact. They are awaiting the right geopolitical moment when the “messiah” will appear, and will make it possible for the Temple to be rebuilt.

We know, from Bible prophecy, that that long-awaited time *will* come; and when it does, it will trigger the beginning of the most horrific seven years in the history of the world. It will be a time of great slaughter and judgment, both for Israel, and for the entire world, as God pours out His wrath upon mankind. It will be a time that Scripture calls “the time of Jacob’s trouble.”

Why do most of the Jewish people fail to see what is really coming? Why can they not see that they are about to be duped by a counterfeit “messiah”? Because they *think* that their observance of the Law brings salvation. They *think* that the Temple and all its rituals, which God ordained in the Law of Moses, *must* be reinstated in order for there to be salvation. They *think* that the Law that God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai is an end in itself. They fail to see that the Law was only temporary in nature.

Now, Jesus made it very clear that He came not to *destroy* the Law, but to *fulfil* it. Christ is the “**end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth**” (Romans 10:4). When Christ died and rose again for our sins, the whole purpose of the Law was fulfilled. The Old Covenant had a built-in “expiration,” which was placed there by God Himself. There was *supposed* to be a “change” of the Law! God *foretold*, in the Old Testament Scriptures, that this change was coming. As Christians, we need to

understand *why* the Old Covenant has been done away, and why the New Covenant has been established. After all, we are holding a Bible with a big section called “The New Testament.” As God’s people, we need to know *why* there is a “New” Testament! The title of this message is *A New Priesthood*.

Read Hebrews 7:11-12.

Why do we born-again Christians believe in the “New Covenant”? It’s simple: **because there is a new Priesthood, with a new High Priest.** This requires several things. First of all...

I. A new priesthood requires a change of the Law (vv. 11-12).

To those of us who are gathered here this morning, the idea of “new priesthood” isn’t earth-shaking, because we believe in “The New Testament.” We accept, without question, that the Old Covenant has been replaced by New Covenant. We have never lived under the Old Covenant; thus, we do not understand what a huge deal it would be for a Jew to be told that the Mosaic system was now been done away with!

So, to help you understand, I am going to transport you back in time. Imagine that you are a Jewish believer who is living in the time of King David (about 1,000 years before Christ). In fact, imagine that you are one of the Levite singers in the Tabernacle. Your *whole life* revolves around the Law of Moses, and the Levitical priesthood. The Law pervades every action of your day; and at the very heart of the Law is the *Levitical priesthood*.

Almost everything that you, as a Jew, do to demonstrate your faith in God, involves the Levitical priesthood in some way or another. If you have sinned, you take a lamb, bull, or goat to the Temple; and the Levite priest takes that animal, and sacrifices it to God. This is done over and over again, continually, year after year, throughout your entire life. Untold quantities of blood are shed to cover your sins; and it is all through the services of the Levite priest. It is impossible to overstate the importance of the Levitical priesthood in your life.

But then, one day, you and the rest of the choir are handed a new song, fresh from the pen of King David. You and the choir have sung *many* songs that are written by King David; and you know that these songs don’t contain ordinary words. These songs are *given directly by God*. You know that what you are about to sing is, in fact, the Word of God. It is fresh, new revelation. You excitedly open the script, and read the words of this new song; and suddenly, a line in the middle of this song makes you stop and raise your eyebrow! Let’s take a look at this song, and see what these strange words are.

Read Psalm 110:1-7.

How would a Jewish believer in Old Testament times have understood this passage? He surely would have understood that **verses 1-3** are speaking of the coming Messiah, who will set up His kingdom over all the earth. But what would he make of **verse 4**? What would *you* make of it? Remember, your whole life revolves around the Levite priesthood. The Levite priesthood has been established for 500 years. You have always assumed that the Levite priesthood will continue to the end of history. Yet, in this new psalm that you’ve just read, Jehovah declares that the Messiah is not only King, *but Priest!* Furthermore, you read that He doesn’t belong to the order of Levi; He belongs to the “order of Melchisedec”! This would seem to imply that the Messiah will establish an entirely new kind of priesthood!

Are you starting to understand why **Psalm 110:4** is such a big deal? According to this prophecy, the Messiah would one day come; and when He would come, He would be a Priest after an entirely new order. No more priesthood of Levi and Aaron; it would now be the priesthood of Melchisedec; and the Messiah would be the sole Member of this priesthood! The Jews thought there was nothing beyond the Levitical priesthood. However, they were mistaken. David said, “The priesthood of Melchisedec is coming!” God gave Israel the memo long in advance! Now, what does all this mean? It means that if the Messiah were going to establish a new Priesthood (and He was), **then it would require a whole new Law!** To do away with the Levitical priesthood is to do away with the Law of Moses. The Law of Moses is *founded upon* the Levitical priesthood! You can’t separate them.

That is why Paul went to such great lengths earlier in this chapter to explain who Melchisedec was (or, rather, *is*). This man named Melchisedec, who appeared to Abraham, wasn’t a mortal man; He was the Son of God! He *is* Melchisedec, the King of Righteousness. He came to us as the Priest of an eternal priesthood; and in so doing, it was necessary that the Covenant that God made with Israel on Mount Sinai be abolished.

Now, please don’t misunderstand me. The Old Testament Scriptures still stand. Not one jot or tittle of it will ever pass away. The *moral* laws of the Old Covenant still stand, as well. “Thou shalt not commit adultery” still stands. “Thou shalt not bear false witness” still stands. However, the Levitical priesthood, the sacrifices, feasts, and all things having to do with the Temple, have been done away. These things *could not* bring “**perfection,**” or “completion.”

Let’s go back and read **verse 11** again. (**Read Hebrews 7:11 again.**) Paul’s message is clear: if the Levitical Priesthood were a complete and final system, there would be no need for “**another**” kind of priest to arise from “**another**” kind of priesthood. If the Law were complete, then the Levitical priesthood should have been sufficient for time and eternity.

Now, so far, everything we’ve discussed has been drawn from **Psalm 110:4**. We know, from this passage alone, that a new kind of priesthood was coming; and if a new priesthood were coming, then there had to be a new Law. However, God didn’t leave us to guess about it. God stated, very emphatically, that there would, indeed, be a *whole New Covenant* one day!

Read Jeremiah 31:31-34.

We will be looking at this New Covenant in greater detail as we move on into **Hebrews 8**. For now, though, here is what you need to know about the New Covenant. **First**, the New Covenant brings about actual forgiveness of sins. The Old Covenant, with all its ordinances, only *pictured* the forgiveness of sins; but it couldn’t actually take away sins, or give a person the power to obey God’s laws. The New Covenant can do *both* these things. God said, “***I will put my law in their inward parts***” and “***write it in their hearts.***” **Secondly**, the blessing of salvation, which is promised in the New Covenant, extends not just to the Jews, but to all mankind. **Thirdly**, the New Covenant was sealed with the blood of Jesus Christ, and not with the blood of animals. **Fourthly**, the New Covenant gives us the promise of the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit in every believer. **Lastly**, the New Covenant is not a temporary covenant, as the Law of Moses was; it is an *eternal* Covenant. It will never pass away!

Now, this brings us to another truth about the new Priesthood of Melchisedec.

II. The new priesthood is based upon the endless life of its High Priest (vv. 13-16).

(Read verses 13-16.) Let's start with the first part of **verse 13**, and break down this passage. First of all, who is "*he of whom these things are spoken*"? It's the Man whom Paul has been talking about throughout this chapter. He's talking about **Melchisedec**. He's talking about the Lord Jesus Christ. With this in mind, Paul says that Jesus Christ "*pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar.*" In other words, the tribe that Jesus came from (the tribe of Judah) never served as priests. Yet, the tribe of Judah is very special, because Judah is the tribe from which the Messiah was to come.

Now, this is no news to the Jews. They have known, for the last 3,700 years, that the Messiah was to come from the tribe of Judah. Jacob, the father of the 12 tribes of Israel, made this prophecy shortly before he died; and it has been reconfirmed time and time again. Let's look at that Scripture.

Read Genesis 49:8-10.

The Jewish people, to this very day, are clear on the fact that *the Messiah will be from the tribe of Judah*. This is general knowledge. The Jews in Paul's audience had believed and embraced the fact that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Deliverer from the tribe of Judah. Yet, how could the Messiah also be *Priest*, if only the *Levites* can be priests? There were probably some genuine believers in Paul's audience who were still having trouble wrapping their heads around this teaching.

That is exactly why Paul kept hammering away at the teaching of **Psalm 110:4!** Paul is telling them, "Look, folks, please get rid of this notion that we still need the Levite priesthood. The Levitical priesthood is *over*, because Jesus Christ has come. **He is the Messiah; and as the Messiah, He is both King and Priest.** As King, He is from the tribe of Judah; but as Priest, He is *not* from the tribe of Levi, as the Old Testament priests were. He is not *supposed* to be from the tribe of Levi. He is from His *own* order—the order of Melchisedec! It is an eternal order—one to which only the Son of God could belong. **Psalm 110:4** *proves* this to be so!"

Now, let's read **verses 15-16** again. **(Read Hebrew 7:15-16.)** What is Paul saying here? He's saying, "Since Jesus is from the eternal order of Melchisedec, it is obvious that He didn't become Priest by a "*carnal*" (or fleshly) commandment." The priests of the Old Testament became priests by virtue a *fleshly* pedigree—namely, by birth. They had to be descendants of Levi, and descendants of Aaron. In contrast, Christ's Melchisedec priesthood *has* no requirement of fleshly pedigree. In fact, He *has* no pedigree, because He has no ancestry! As King, Christ meets the fleshly requirement of being a descendant of Judah; but as Priest, He has *no* fleshly pedigree. Why? Because as God, He is without beginning. He is eternal! That's why Paul says that Christ was made a Priest "*after the power of an endless life.*" The Levites were made priests by the "*power*" (or right), of birth; but Christ is made a priest by the "*power*" (or right) of an "*endless life.*"

Once again, Paul quotes **Psalm 110:4** to prove his point. In **verse 17** Paul says, "*For he testifieth, Thou art a high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.*" The importance of

that word “*for ever*” can’t be overstated. It is what makes the “order of Melchisedec” what it is. The order of Melchisedec can be occupied only by the eternal Son of God! It is His by right of His eternal power and Godhead.

Now, there is one more thing we need to know about the new Priesthood:

III. The new priesthood brings completion (vv. 18-19).

(Read verses 18 and 19 again.) Please look carefully at what Paul is saying. He says, “*For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment.*” In other words, “The Old Testament Law has been done away with.” Furthermore, Paul says that this “*disannulling*” of the Old Covenant is “*going before*” (or, “coming about”) because of “*the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.*”

That’s pretty straight-forward, isn’t it? Paul is saying that the Mosaic Law has been done away with. By the way, when God does away with something, He *really* does away with it! Just a few years after this letter was written (in A.D. 70), God allowed the Roman general Titus to destroy the Temple. From that point onward, the nation of Israel could no longer do their sacrifices, because there was no Temple! *Why* did God go to such lengths to do away with the Old Covenant? Because it was “weak and unprofitable.” It could bring nothing to completion. Sin was never truly taken care of under the Old Covenant.

Now, when a sincere, pious, Orthodox Jew hears words like this from the New Testament, it is, understandably, very upsetting to him. “How dare Paul say these disparaging words against the Law of Moses? How dare Paul say that the Law is ‘weak’ or ‘unprofitable’?” Perhaps *you* are even a bit surprised by these words. Perhaps you are thinking, “Why would Paul use these kinds of words to describe the Law? After all, didn’t *God* give the Law? If God gave the Law, why would it be ‘weak’ and ‘unprofitable’?” The answer is: “Yes, God did give the Law.” *However*, God never intended for the Mosaic Law to be permanent.

There are at least two reasons why it could not have been permanent. First, God never intended the Law to be permanent **because it could not actually take away sins!** The blood of the animals only *pictured* the blood of Jesus, which would be shed in the future. The blood of animals could not, in fact, take away anyone’s sins. It was only *symbolic*. In contrast, the blood of Jesus Christ takes away the sins of all who place their trust in Him for salvation.

Secondly, God never intended the Law to be permanent **because it could not produce any inward change.** The blood of animals could not create a pure heart in anyone. Only God can do this, by the blood of His Son! Saints in the Old Testament times may not have understood exactly how salvation would play out; but they knew that only God could take their sins away. David wrote, “*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.*” David understood that the Law could only *condemn* him; therefore, he looked to *God* to wash away his sins, and to create a pure heart in him. All this is made possible by the blood of the New Covenant, which would one day be established upon the basis of Christ’s shed blood.

Read Ezekiel 36:25-27.

Read Romans 3:10-20 / 5:1-11 / 6:17-23.

When a person repents of his sin and believes on Christ, Christ “justifies” that person (declares him to be “righteous”). He is now accepted before God. However, this is more than a judicial matter. God now *imparts a new nature* to the sinner. He sheds His love abroad in his heart. He gives that person a “*new heart,*” and a “*new spirit.*” The saved, justified sinner is now *able* to fulfil the Law, and to produce *actual righteousness* in his life. All this was made possible because Christ died for our sins, and conquered sin and death. This is all the provision of the “New Covenant” that God promised in **Jeremiah 31** and **Ezekiel 36**.

Now, what about the believers in Old Testament times? Christ hadn’t died for their sins yet. Could they, then, really have assurance that their sins were forgiven, as we have today? Absolutely! They weren’t walking around with guilty consciences, wondering if their sins were really forgiven. In **Psalm 32**, David didn’t sound the least bit unsure of whether his sins were forgiven. He boldly said, “*Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity.*” Old Testament saints knew that they were forgiven for the same reason that Christians *today* know that they are forgiven. They knew they were forgiven because they had placed their faith in God’s promise of a coming Saviour; and God counted their faith for righteousness.

Yet, at the same time, there was a kind of “distance” between them and God. They were saved on the basis of what Christ *would* do for them on the cross one day; yet, Christ had not actually come yet, and their sins had not actually been paid for. Thus, for the time being, they approached God through the sacrificial system. Their sins were “covered” by the blood of animals--but not actually taken away. By way of illustration, a credit card “covers” the cost of merchandise until the transaction is actually made a few days later. Similarly, the blood of animals “covered” Old Testament believers’ sins; but it did not take them away. However, the price for our sins has now been made; therefore, animal sacrifices are no longer necessary. Our sins have *actually* been removed. We now have direct, free access to God. We don’t have to go to a Temple, and demonstrate our faith in the coming Saviour by placing a lamb on the altar. We can go directly to God through Jesus Christ in prayer.

That is why Paul says that the Law made nothing perfect: but, “*the bringing in of a better hope did.*” Jesus Christ is the One who brought in that “*better hope.*” There is now free, open access to God’s throne through our High Priest. No earthly Temple is needed. No animal sacrifices are needed to express our faith. We can go directly to God, through Christ.

The world cannot understand this “*better hope.*” To a lost person, this makes absolutely no sense. What’s more, it is offensive and repulsive to many. To the bitter end, most people fiercely cling to their self-righteousness! “You’re saying that *I* am a condemned sinner? *I*, separated from God? *I*, in need of Christ’s righteousness? *How dare you?*”

About 12 years ago, our church participated in a joint Gospel outreach with other Baptist churches around Ireland. We pooled our funds, and put a leaflet called “Missing Answer” through every door in Ireland. Well, soon after the leaflets began to go out, all the preachers who had participated in the effort received a caustic email from a man in Limerick. I looked at his website, and found that he was the leader of a strange cult that denies that most of the books of the New Testament are Scripture. This man especially hated the Apostle Paul’s

epistles; and, like every cult leader, he taught that salvation is through good works. You can hear the bare-faced self-righteousness of the man in this letter he wrote to us. He said:

“You posted your leaflet 'Something Is Missing' through my letter box today. I am presuming that the provision of your email address is an open invitation to challenge its disturbing and evil contents. So here goes.

Amongst the many lies in your leaflet...are two glaring lies in just one statement...You state "As it is written, there is none righteous, no not one." The first lie is that I do not find....anywhere in scripture [that] "there is none righteous, no not one.”

Now, before I move on with this man’s email, I’d like to pause for a minute to explain something. Why did this man not “find” these familiar words of **Romans 3:10** in Scripture? Because he does not regard **Romans 3:10** as Scripture! Remember, this man hates Paul, Peter, and John, and their crystal-clear message of salvation by grace alone; and thus, he denies that these books were really written by Christ’s Apostles. Of course, this raises the question of how he would explain **Psalm 14**. You see, *Paul* is not the one who made this statement, “***There is none righteous, no not one***”: *King David* did! Paul was merely quoting **Psalm 14:1 & 3**! Several of us pastors politely asked this man in Limerick whether he denied that **Psalm 14** is Scripture, as well; but he never answered this question. He merely blasted us with a storm of vitriolic name-calling. But, back to the email. The man went on to say:

“On the contrary, I read numerous examples where it is plainly ‘written’ that there were, and are, many righteous people in the world, including amongst my family and friends and neighbours.”

Once again, I would pause to point out something. You’ll notice that this man regards his *own reasoning*, and *his own assessment of his righteousness*, as “scripture.” He goes on:

“You Christians, especially [you] Baptists, dare to call The Almighty a liar, Who declared: "NOAH [to be] RIGHTEOUS" (Genesis 7:1); [Who declared] "MY PEOPLE (the Jews) [to be] THE GENERATION OF THE RIGHTEOUS" (Psalm 14:5);..."THERE WERE MANY PROPHETS AND RIGHTEOUS MEN" (Matthew 13:17), etc., etc. I do not expect you to repent of your lies, and therefore do not expect the courtesy of a reply.”

Sadly, this man has absolutely no understanding of the grace of God, nor of his own sinfulness. He fails to understand that the righteousness that God declared to Noah, and to many others, was not their *own* righteousness, but rather *Christ’s* righteousness, which He imputed to their account! Unless this man repents of his self-righteousness, admits that He has broken God’s Law, and places His faith in Jesus Christ, he will one day hear God pronounce the awful words, “***Depart from me; I never knew you!***”

You know what, though? Cult leaders aren’t the only ones who will hear those words. Multitudes of professing “Christians” will hear those words. When the trumpet sounds, and the true Christians are raptured out of this world, multitudes of “Christians” will be left behind, and will be deluded by the Antichrist, and will follow him to eternal destruction. Why? Because they had already bought the age-old lie that “*I am righteous.*” They may carry a Bible with the words “The New Testament” in it; but they have not *believed* on the Jesus who procured the New Testament with His precious blood.

Conclusion: Have *you* believed on Jesus Christ? Has it ever occurred to you that your sin has separated *you* from God, and that nothing you do can atone for it? Have *you* trusted in Jesus Christ alone? If not, you must! Won’t you trust Him today? To those of you who are saved, this message has served to

strengthen your understanding of how Jesus serves as your High Priest. However, if there be one main thought that I would like you to “take home with you” today, it is this: **“I am just a sinner saved by grace”!** Even as Christians, we can start to forget that we don’t deserve God’s grace. Maybe there is sin in your life to which you are blinded. If so, please confess it today, and get right with the Lord!

They *think* that Bible-believing Christians like us have “changed” or “annulled” the Law of Moses.