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All things have become new

Why is the writer going to such lengths to show that Christ's kind of priesthood is better than the Levitical priesthood?

Christ's priesthood is not an alternative to Aaron's; it is a replacement. Do I believe that the Church has replaced Israel? What a contentious question. In simple terms, "no, I do not believe that the Church has 'replaced Israel', but I do believe that the New Covenant has replaced the Old Covenant. Keep listening and see if it becomes clearer.

▼ Heb 7:12

For the priesthood being **changed**, of necessity there is also a **change** of the law. Heb 7:12 NKJV.

The word translated 'changed' here is only used in the letter to the Hebrews but the other instances are significant in understanding its true sense.

▼ Heb 11:5

By faith Enoch **was taken away** so that he did not see death, "*and was not found, because God **had taken** him*"; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

(Hebrews 11:5 NKJV)

The writer at one point speaks of Enoch and says that he was 'translated' from earth to heaven. (Heb 11:5). He 'exchanged' earth for heaven. Enoch's two locations were mutually exclusive; he could not be in both at the same time. His place of residence was 'changed'.

▼ Hebrews 12:27

Now this, "*Yet once more,*" indicates **the removal** of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.

(Hebrews 12:27 NKJV)

Here, again the 'two states' are mutually exclusive. Nothing of the old, shakeable, is left.

▼ **change G3331** μετάθεσις metathesis - Heb 7:12; 11:5; 12:27

▼ Vine: **change G3331** μετάθεσις metathesis - Heb 7:12; 11:5; 12:27

metathesis (μετάθεσις, **3331**), "a transposition, or a transference from one place to another" (from *meta*, implying "change," and *tithēmi* "to put"), has the meaning of "change" in Heb. 7:12, in connection with the necessity of a "change" of the Law (or, as margin, law), if the priesthood is changed (see B, No. 3). It is rendered "translation" in 11:5, "removing" in 12:27. ¶

G3346 - a cognate word - Acts 7:16; Gal 1:6; Heb 7:12; 11:5; Jude 1:4

Μετατιθεμένης Metatithemenēs μετατίθημι (μετά, τίθημι) metatithēmi (meta, tithēmi) **Verb** pres mid part fem sing gen **to remove, change**

. *metatithēmi* (μετατίθημι, **3346**), "to place among, put in another place" (*meta*, implying "change," and *tithēmi*, "to put"), has this latter meaning in Acts 7:16, "carried over."

Acts 7:16; Gal 1:6; Heb 7:12; 11:5; Jude 1:4

RB to ex-change, replace

In the other instance the reference is to the 'removal' of one state so that it can be 'replaced' by another.

This key verse is one we really need to allow to shape our thinking.

Academic scholars sometimes use the phrase 'controlling model' when they speak of exposition and interpretation of scripture. I have a verse which is my 'controlling model' when I am thinking about the New Covenant. Whenever the adjective 'New' is added to the word 'Covenant' it implies a 'contrast' with the 'Old'. So here is my 'controlling model' verse...

▼ Hebrews 10:9

then He said, "*Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.*" He **takes away** the first that He may establish the second. (Hebrews 10:9 NKJV)

away G0337 ἀναιρέω anaireō

▼ Vine:

anaireō (ἀναιρέω, **337**), lit., “to take or lift up or away” (see A, No. 2), hence, “to put to death,” is usually translated “to kill or slay”; [Vol. 2, p. 150] in two places “put to death,” Luke 23:32; Acts 26:10. It is used 17 times, with this meaning, in Acts.

RB. In all the Greek word is used 22 times in the New Testament and 21 time it refers to putting someone to death, but in Hebrews 10:9 it is translated ‘takes away’. “Takes away in a legitimate translation but the other references show how ‘final’ this taking away is.

Matt 2:16; Luke 22:2; 23:32; Acts 2:23; 5:33, 36; 7:21, 28; 9:23–24, 29; 10:39; 12:2; 13:28; 22:20; 23:15, 21, 27; 25:3; 26:10; **Heb 10:9**

The New Covenant is not an additional covenant; it is a replacement. then He said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God." He takes away the first that He may establish the second. Heb 10:9 NKJV. The Messenger of the Covenant did not come to put a New Covenant patch on an Old Covenant piece of clothing. Nor did he come to put New Covenant wine into Old Covenant wine-skins; that could only result in the loss of both wine and wineskin. He had come to consciously 'take away' the first, Old Covenant, so that he would be able to establish the second, New Covenant. These two covenants CANNOT co-exist.

It is Christ's testimony that is heard in Hebrews 10:9. Christ came to 'do the will of God' and as the writer to the Hebrews expounds it... He takes away the first (covenant) the He may establish the second (Covenant). Both Paul, in Galatians, and the anonymous author of the Epistle to the Hebrews have just 'two covenants' in mind in their declaration; the First (Sinai) Covenant and the Second (Calvary) Covenant.

the 'Law' has been changed

But there is a second serious consequence to this that we have already noted.

▼ Heb 7:12

For the priesthood being changed, *of necessity* there is also a change of the law. Heb 7:12 NKJV.

We cannot change the priesthood and leave the basis of the law unchanged. There is an absolute 'necessity' that the law must be changed also. Not merely the ceremonial law but the whole basis and pattern of the law. The Sinai law, as we saw

earlier, was inseparable from the priesthood. The Law on its own would have instantly brought the covenant to an end with the first transgression. The covenant parties had their individual responsibilities under the covenant. God must keep his promises and his people must keep theirs. These were the conditions of the covenant and if the conditions are not kept the covenant is in breach. It was the provision of the priesthood with its sacrifices that provided a continuing maintenance of the covenant by making it possible for God to continue to reside in the midst of a sinful people. Without the Levitical priesthood the Sinai Covenant is dead in the water. It is utterly unworkable. The Levitical Priesthood, referred to as the Covenant with Levi

▼ Malachi 2:4,8

And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, that **my covenant may be with Levi**, saith Jehovah of hosts.(Malachi 2:4 ASV)

But ye are turned aside out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble in the law; ye have corrupted **the covenant of Levi**, saith Jehovah of hosts. (Malachi 2:8 ASV)

▼ The covenant of Levi

At that time **Jehovah set apart the tribe of Levi**, to bear the ark of the covenant of Jehovah, to stand before Jehovah to minister unto him, and to bless in his name, unto this day. (Deuteronomy 10:8 ASV)

And Moses wrote this law, and delivered it unto the priests the sons of Levi, that bare the ark of the covenant of Jehovah, and unto all the elders of Israel.
(Deuteronomy 31:9 ASV)

The 'Old' has passed away

The Levitical priesthood's 'term of office' was terminated by Christ's death on the cross. For some years the Levitical priests would continue to go through the motions but their priesthood no longer had any efficacy. The reality of Christ's death made the Old Testament shadows of his death redundant. When there is no clear sight of the reality shadows and patterns can serve a valuable purpose but when the true has come into view then the shadows may only serve to obscure. When the shadow is no longer a help it becomes an obstacle to clear sight.

The Sinai Covenant Community

Now this is going to have other consequences because it was that Sinai Covenant that brought the covenant people of Israel into being as a spiritual entity. Israel did not simply evolve from the descendants of Jacob; Israel was a unique bara-creation. Isaiah 43:15 NKJV.

The covenant was not based on sentiment or on nostalgia. It was based on a legal understanding agreed by both parties;

▼ Ex 24:8

And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, "This is the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you according to all these words." Ex 24:8 NKJV.

The 'words' referred to are the words that Moses had written in the Book of the Covenant. This is what we said earlier, in Chapter 2, when we described the Sinai Covenant as being 'Book-based' or 'bible-based'.

Even though the legal documents in stone and parchment had been lost God had maintained his faithfulness to his covenant people, but now the agreement had ended, and both the terms and conditions are all terminated.

Where does this leave the Old Covenant community? Its promises originating in Abraham are transferred into the New Covenant. Old Israel is not rejected. The New Covenant is specifically addressed to the 'house of Israel' and the 'house of Judah';

they are not excluded. But the terms of the New Covenant constitute a New Israel in which believing Jews and believing Gentile are 'at peace' in one new man.

The Old (Sinai) Covenant is no more but, together with the Covenant with Levi that was part of it, and the Covenant of David have passed into history, having been fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ, our High Priest and God's Beloved Son and King.

Mediators and better promises

Melchizedek had functioned as a mediator between God and Abraham.

Moses had functioned as a mediator between God and the nation of Israel.

Continuing its theme of contrast and things 'better', the epistle tells us, that Christ has fulfilled the shadows and patterns of the Sinai administration;

▼ Heb 8:6

But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises. Heb 8:6 NKJV.

What are the better promises? They are the promises found in the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Promises of God's law written in hearts and minds. Promises that God would 'cause' his people to walk in his ways. Promises of a new inner centre, a new heart and a new spirit. Promises that God's own Spirit would come to indwell.

Access

With breathtaking boldness the writer again contrasts the Levitical priesthood and Christ's High Priesthood with a telling insight.

In the old, Sinai, Levitical, Covenant God established ceremonies that were in themselves shadows and patterns. The great embroidered curtain that separated the Holy Place where the priests served and the Holy of Holies where God dwelt in shekinah glory was also a shadow and pattern.

It made the point that during the time of the Levitical covenant the way into the immediate presence of God was prohibited. The Spirit who inspired Moses and gave the pattern for the Tabernacle was pointing to a significant fact of spiritual life; the Holy Spirit indicating this,

▼ Heb 8:6

that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing. It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience— concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation. Heb 8:6 NKJV.

Although God continued in grace with his people their ceremonies constantly made the point that sinful man was still separated from a holy God. The Levitical High Priest entered, briefly, once in each year, but man could not 'dwell' in the presence of God. The veil with its elaborate embroidery of the angel guardians of God's presence barred the way, just as the angel guardians themselves had barred the way of return into Eden.

▼ Gen 3:24

So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden the Cherubim, and the flame of a sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.
(Genesis 3:24 ASV)

The Tabernacle and Temple were both built on the same alignment. Man, separated by his sin turned 'West' to seek access to God, but the Veil, with its magnificent embroidery of Cherubum barred their access.

Uzziah, who broke through that prohibition was instantly struck with leprosy and lived in strict quarantine for the rest of his reign.

▼ 2Chron 26:16-21

But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up, so that he did corruptly, and he trespassed against Jehovah his God; for

he went into the temple of Jehovah to burn incense upon the altar of incense. And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of Jehovah, that were valiant men: and they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, It pertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto Jehovah, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honor from Jehovah God. Then Uzziah was wroth; and he had a censer in his hand to burn incense; and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy brake forth in his forehead before the priests in the house of Jehovah, beside the altar of incense. And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out quickly from thence; yea, himself hasted also to go out, because Jehovah had smitten him. And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a separate house, being a leper; for he was cut off from the house of Jehovah: and Jotham his son was over the king's house, judging the people of the land.

(2 Chronicles 26:16–21 ASV)

No doubt the Levitical High Priest approached that veil on the Day of Atonement with considerable trepidation. Would the atoning sacrifice be accepted? If not he could never survive the presence of God even for a brief moment.

Now the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews describes Christ as High Priest and sees him coming not with the blood of sacrificial beasts but with his own blood and gaining access to the Most Holy Place. He explains that the blood of Christ, and this is the Bible's way of saying 'Christ's sacrificial death' was the outward expression of an offering in the Spirit as he offered himself, without spot, to God;

▼ Heb 9:14-15

...how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God Heb 9:14-15 NKJV.

Christ did die physically at a specific place in time but it was not the outward suffering that achieved atonement but the offering of himself. The real passion of the cross was invisible to human sight.

As a consequence...

▼ Heb 9:24

Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; Heb 9:24 NKJV.

The human race now has its own representative who has entered into heaven itself to 'appear in the presence of God for us'. He is our sufficient sacrifice, or to mix the language of the law court with that of the temple;

▼ 1 John 2:1-2

we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world. 1 John 2:1-2 NKJV.

And this entering into the Most Holy Place is not a gesture but opens up the way for others to follow him. A race of utterly disqualified men and women may now 'boldly go where no man has gone before';

▼ Heb 10:19-22

Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Heb 10:19-22 NKJV.

This is not 'heaven when we die' but a present reality in the Spirit in which we can now draw near to God. The Old Covenant could never achieve this; as the writer explained earlier

▼ Heb 7:19

for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God. Heb 7:19

There is now a new and living way by which men and women can draw near to God. In the language of Hebrews it is 'through the veil, that is, his flesh'.

This is another vital truth. It is not as though Christ's death has taken the veil away, although several well known hymns suggest he has. The veil is not removed, it is torn, and entrance into the presence of God is only through that tear.

The 'barrier' is not removed, but there is a tear in it that gives access to all who will come, through that tear only, access to God.

This is highly figurative language but the writer is saying what Paul says more plainly in the epistle to the Romans;

▼ Rom 5:1-2

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Rom 5:1-2 NKJV.

Our access is 'through Christ' and through the 'torn veil', the work that he accomplished at Calvary. Find a quiet spot and think about these things for a while and worship him who opened up the way to God by the tearing of his own flesh and reject, once and for all, any thought of repairing that veil repairing that barrier through returning to ritual and priestcraft.

Summary

In this chapter we read of Melchizedek and saw why he can be used as a symbol of a different kind of priesthood; a king-priest. We saw why the author of the letter to the Hebrews declares so defiantly that the New Covenant is better than the Old Covenant. We saw that in Old Covenant times the way into God's presence was symbolically

barred but that in the New Covenant there is a tear in the barrier through which all may enter. We saw the difference between Old Covenant priests who constantly 'stood' and never finished their work, with the New Covenant High Priest who offered one single sacrifice and has now sat down.