**24 January 2016**

**The Priesthood**

***Book of Hebrews:***

*The book of Hebrews is an Apostolic Letter. It was written mainly to the Hebrew believers (Jewish Christians). The author is anonymous, although either Paul or Barnabas was traditionally accepted as the author. It was written approximately 67 A.D. Its purpose was to present the Lord Jesus Christ as perfect and superior in comparison to anything Judaism and the old covenant had to offer. The author was writing to a group of Christians who were under intense persecution and some were contemplating a return to Judaism. He admonished them not to turn away from their only hope of salvation.*

**Foundation Scriptures**

**Hebrews 4: 14 -16** (Jesus was a great high priest)

* Great – Mega, exceeding, large, mighty.
* Hold fast – hold, keep, retain.
* Profession – confession or acknowledgement
* We come boldly to the throne, not the cross.
* Throne – Seat of power & authority (seat of mercy)
  + Old testament “Mercy Seat- Exodus 25: 17 – 22. God would meet with Moses & Aaron at the mercy seat.
  + Blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat for atonement of sin.
  + Never mentioned in the New Testament. Pattern was abolished. It is now referred to as the “Throne of Grace”.
  + Throughout the new testament, seat is referred to as Judgment Seat.”
  + Not so with God’s Throne. It’s a “Mercy Seat”
* Feeling of our infirmities – ‘compassion’. From the Greek we get sympathy. Notice He was touched with our infirmities **NOT** His. (Weakness, feebleness, frailty, sickness & disease)

We have access to God in a way that the Levitical Priesthood could only symbolize.

**Hebrews 5: 1 – 10**

**Hebrews 3:1** (2:17 – merciful and faithful High Priest)

*Principle of First mention (Law of first Mention)*

*The first mention or occurrence of a subject in Scripture establishes an unchangeable pattern, with that subject remaining unchanged in the mind of God throughout Scripture.*

*The principle that requires one to go to that portion of the Scripture where a doctrine is mentioned for the first time and to study the first occurrence of the same in order to get the fundamental inherent meaning of that doctrine*.

**Genesis 14: 18**

**Psalm 110: 4**

**Hebrews 7**

* More important than the Levitical Priesthood
* Implies that the Levitical Priesthood was temporary
* The new order was permanent.

Meanings:

Priest – Principle officer or chief ruler (one officiating)

Priesthood – Priest’s office

They minister on behalf of God - his representatives

Note meaning of ‘ambassadors’ in 2 Corinthians 5:20 (Eph 6:20)

Means – a senior, to act as a representative (only used twice in new testament)

**Melchizedek (King of Righteousness)**

* **melek** means King and **tsedek** means righteousness
* King of Salem (Means peace – many Jewish commentators believe it was an early name for Jerusalem)
* Some bible historians believe he was Shem (son of Noah)
* The priest of the Most High God (Jesus was King and Priest)
* Took communion and He Blessed Abram
* Abram responded by giving a tithe of all *(it wasn’t asked for)*

He gave a tenth of the ALL the spoils (The best of the booty, top of the heap). The kings plundered Sodom and Gomorrah and took ALL the spoils of war. Abram got it all back and gave a tenth to Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:4)

2 Corinthians 9: 6 -8 AMP (The joy of giving from the heart)

He gave of what belonged to him (the best), not the spoils of war.

* Mentioned several times in the bible with progressive revelation of who he was and what he represented.

The beginnings

The fall of man in the garden separated him from God and severed all access to Him.

Relationship had been broken, requiring restoration. That wouldn’t come until the cross.

In he meantime God established covenants with various individuals to keep the ‘blessing’ active in the earth (Noah, Abraham, Moses).

Kingdom of Priests

Exodus 19: 3 – 6

* God’s plan was to make Israel a kingdom of Priests and a Holy nation.

The office of the high priest was hereditary and was traced from Aaron, the brother of Moses of the Tribe of Levi (Exodus 28:1) Refer to chart

The law and the priesthood went together (Hebrews 7:11-12). But neither the law nor the priesthood could bring people to perfection. That is why Psalm 110 spoke of another priesthood. It was not just about a change of the priesthood, it was also about setting aside the Law of Moses, which was useless and couldn’t make anyone perfect (Hebrews 7:18).

Jesus out High Priest is not supporting a performance-based covenant today. The legal framework has been abolished.

Ephesians 2:15

Enmity - means hatred or hostility.

Abolished – Cease, destroy, make void, become of no effect.

All priests were Levites, but not all Levites were priests.

Numbers 16: 1 – 35 (The rebellion of Korah).

* From the line of Levi
* Raised up a rebellion against Moses
* Called to minister at the tabernacle
* Not called to the priesthood
* Rebelled claiming that all the congregation was holy.

The priests had to be ‘whole physically’ (without any physical defects) and holy in conduct (Leviticus 21: 17 - 21)

We are without spot (defect) or wrinkle or blemish (faultless)

Ephesians 5:27

Most important function of the High priest was to perform service on the Day of Atonement (Yon kipper). Only he could enter the Most Holy Place behind the veil to stand before God. Made a sacrifice for him and the people and sprinkled blood on the mercy seat (Leviticus 16: 14 – 15 & 32 - 34)

* ***If God accepted the High Priest, He accepted the nation***.
* Bull offering for High Priest
* Goat offering for sins of the people
* As long as the sacrifice is ok, the man is ok.
* The Priest didn’t look at the man’s sin, he looked at the sacrifice.
* God sees the sacrifice of Jesus not our faults and failings.

Two lines:

Aaronic Priesthood (the Law). Tribe of Levi only through the bloodline of Aaron

Order of Melchizedek (Jesus Christ by Grace through faith)

Priest was a mediator (a middle man)

* Not so today. We can go direct to God Himself.
* Old covenant of law – Spirit came upon Prophet, Priest and King. No other
* New covenant of grace– the Spirit is within

**Transfer of Priesthood**

* John the Baptist (line of Aaron)
* Jesus baptism - He now stepped into the office of High Priest in the ***order*** (arrangement or fixed succession) of Melchisedec (referenced 9 times in Hebrews).
* Matt 3: 13 – 17 (Numbers 4:3) – Qualification for priestly service - must be between 30 – 50 years
* Suffer – forsake, lay aside, leave, let go, put away, remit, yield up
* Becometh us – suitable, fit and properneil@ea.org.au
* Fulfill – finish a period or task, expire, complete or accomplish
* Righteousness – equity (of character or act)
* Luke 1: 5-6

Zachariah came from the line of Abijah (1 Chronicles 24:10)

Elizabeth from the priestly line of Aaron

* Hebrews 7: 11 -19
* Hebrews 7: 28
* Luke 5:24 – Jesus has ‘authority’ on earth to forgive sins. So did the priests under the old covenant.

John 3: 30 – He must increase (to grow), but I must decrease (make lower)

The law demands but grace supplies. There was a bridge between old & new.

**Jesus our High priest**

Hebrews 2: 17,

Hebrews 3:1

Hebrews 4:14,

Hebrews 7: 25 -26 (Our High Priest lives to intercede for us)

* He was human so He knows our needs. He is now in Heaven at the right hand of the father and can effectively intercede for us.

1 Timothy 2:5 (Mediator – A go-between, reconciler or intercessor).

**Priesthood of the believer**

All human priesthood is now abolished

The glorious message of the Gospel is this - ***All Christians are ‘priests’*** and with spiritual sacrifice offer up service to God through our High Priest Jesus.

1 Peter 2:5

You also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Christ Jesus.

The word sacrifice occurs 218 times in KJV Bible.

23 times in the New Testament

4 specific references to New Testament believers

Why? – The sacrifice for sin has already been accepted. Our sacrifice is now a spiritual one as we are spiritual priests and Jesus our spiritual high priest.

* Romans 12:1 (Your body as a living sacrifice)
* Philippians 2:17 (Your faith as a sacrifice)
* Philippians 4:18 (Your giving as a sacrifice)
* Hebrews 13: 15-16 (Your praise as a sacrifice)

1 Peter 2: 5 & 9

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you our of darkness into his marvelous light.

* Chosen generation – Favoured, elect or selected
* Royal priesthood – Kingly priesthood
* Holy nation – Pure, morally blameless, consecrated
* Peculiar people - (God’s purchased possession, acquisition, preservation – 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 – *you have been bought with a price – to redeem*). You are valuable to God
* Revelation 1:6
* Revelation 5:10
* Revelation 20:6

We wear the breastplate of righteousness (Ephesians 6: 14)

Isaiah 61:10

**Hebrews 8**

Describes the new covenant priesthood today

* A more excellent ministry
* Better covenant, established on better promises

**Earthly and Heavenly Priesthood comparison**

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| **Levitical High Priest (Old)** | **Jesus the High Priest (New)** |
| Directs the work of the priests and Levites (Numbers 3) | He is the head of the body of Christ (Colossians 1:18 & 2:10) |
| Enquires of the Lord (Deuteronomy 18:5 & Judges 20:28) | Forever makes intercession (7:25) |
| Consecration of the priests (Exodus 29: 1-37) | Matthew 3: 13 – 17. Baptized in the Holy Spirit and set apart for service. |
| Offered sacrifice on the day of Atonement (Leviticus 23:6).  Sacrifices were ongoing | Offered himself on the day of Atonement. One sacrifice for all men for all sin for all time (Hebrews 7: 27, 9:26, 10:10, 12 & 18) |
| When a High Priest died, those that had accidently caused the death of another and confined to a city of ‘refuge’ were granted freedom (Numbers 35:28). | Jesus death resulted in our freedom (Hebrews 2: 14 – 15) |
| Entered the holy of holies once a year (Leviticus 16: 14 – 15 & Exodus 30:10)  Temporary redemption (Atonement or covering). | Jesus entered the holy place made without hands (Hebrews 9: 1- 28).  Eternal redemption (remissions or wiping away of our sins forever – Hebrews 8:12). |
| He was a mediator between God and the nation of Israel. | There is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5). |
| Melchizedek was a King and Priest (Genesis 14:8) | Jesus is a King and Priest (Hebrews 4:14 & Revelation 19:16) |
| Priests were sinful (Leviticus 16:6 & Hebrews 7: 27) | Jesus was sinless (Hebrews 4:15) |
| Priests offered bulls and goats (Leviticus 16) | Jesus was the lamb sacrifice (John 1:29 & Hebrews 10:12) |

**Comparisons from the book of Hebrews**

**Old Covenant New Covenant**

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| **Priesthood** | Levitical (7:11) | Melchizedek (7:1-22) |
| **High Priest** | Lineage of Aaron | Jesus Christ |
| **Tenure** | Until death (7:23) | Forever (7:17) |
| **Kind of Sacrifice** | Blood of bulls & goats (9:13 & 10:4) | Blood of Jesus (9:14 & 10:10) |
| **Location of sacrifice** | Earthly tabernacle (9:1-8) | Heavenly Sanctuary (9:24) |
| **Frequency of sacrifice** | Continual (10:1 & 11) | Once only (9:28 & 10:12) |
| **Effect** | Annual reminder of sins (9:10 & 10:3) | Permanent forgiveness of sins (8: 12 & 10:18) |
| **Purpose** | Ceremonial cleanness (9:10) | A cleansed conscious / a new heart (9:14 & 10:16) |