

**May 11. Read Hebrews 7:11-28.** Although we know the heart of our faith is the transformation of our lives by the word of God and the working of the Holy Spirit, attending Sunday worship and Christmas and Easter celebrations undoubtedly play a big part in our Christian lives. In the same way, although keeping the Law was the daily expression of Jewish faith, the temple sacrifices were major events for the Hebrews. Anyone raised on the Old Testament would feel the importance of the priest, whose role was instituted in the Law. The priest offered sacrifices to God as prescribed. Not just anybody could be a priest. The Law stated he had to be a descendant of Aaron and Levi. So now in declaring how Jesus is a superior priest to Aaron's sons, the writer of Hebrews tells us two things about the superior institution of Jesus' priesthood. The first is that, He is a priest of an order, the order of Melchizedek, which was before and greater than Aaron. He is a priest who is also a king of righteousness and without beginning or end. Second, His appointment is not by genealogy but was given to Him by an oath from God, something in which it is impossible for God to lie. Having shown us our need for a priest, the writer brings us now to consider how wonderful a priest Jesus is. Unlike other priests, Jesus lives forever and needs no successor. His sacrifice of himself once for all never needs to be repeated. Jesus is able to save us in every situation, because He always lives to intercede for us. Hebrews coming to Christ had to deal with their past ties with priests and sacrifices. What religious ties to your past do you need to deal with?

**May 12. Read Hebrews 8:1-13.** The priests offered sacrifices because it was prescribed by the old covenant. But that covenant was not good enough for salvation. With a new high priest it follows there needs to be a New Covenant. Jesus does not just take over doing what the former priests did. The terms of the relationship between God and us have been changed. This new relationship was foretold 600 years before by Jeremiah when the Jews had broken their covenant with God again and again. They had stood at the edge of destruction. Jeremiah's prophecy in Jeremiah 31:31-34 is quoted here in the epistle of the Hebrews. In essence, God said that it would no longer be necessary for people to be taught to keep a set of rules. He will write His law in human hearts. You can never make people good by telling them to follow rules. You have to make people good first before they can change their ways from evil to good. There are many religions in the US and the world, but none has this cure for sin. Only Jesus saves. Even as God forgets our sin, have we truly left our sinful ways so far that we have also 'forgotten' how to sin?

**May 13. Read Hebrews 9:1-10.** Now that the way to the Most Holy Place has already been made possible to us by the death of Jesus, it is good to assess the 'old' from our position of the 'new'. The tabernacle (later, Solomon's temple) was the place where meeting with the God of Israel was made possible. We have here a short account on the tabernacle (vs 1-5). Its description is not the main point here (v 5b). However, the items mentioned here are significant. Next we have the rituals in the tabernacle (vs 6-7). They are temporary. They were in practice while waiting for the better one to be initiated (v 8) and the right time to come (v 10b). We are those who are able to testify to the fact that the 'fullness of time' had come (Galatians 4:4). While the rituals were performed daily in the outer room and once a year in the inner room, we have Jesus, minus these rituals, interceding for us continuously (7:25). These rituals are considered imperfect in that they were unable to cleanse the conscience of the worshippers (v 9). This is because the true barrier to our access to God is an inward problem and not a physical one. It exists in the conscience. Jeremiah's prediction which came to be fulfilled in Christ (8:8-12) assures us of such inward purity of conscience. Let our access to Jesus (prayer and worship) be spontaneous for there is no longer any barrier that keeps us away.

**May 14. Read Hebrews 9:11-28.** To enter the tabernacle, whether earthly or heavenly, requires sacrifice. There was no exception when Christ entered heaven itself (v 24), the greater and more perfect tabernacle (v 11). Christ sacrificed Himself (v 26b) by His own blood (v 12). When we speak about the heavenly tabernacle, we are speaking about things in the spiritual realm. Heavenly things are heavenly realities in the spiritual realm. It definitely cannot be man-made and is not a part of this creation (v 11). It is a greater and more perfect tabernacle (v 11). Naturally the entrance to this 'place' requires better sacrifices than those made at the earthly tabernacle (v 13). It is the general rule that ceremonial cleansing and atonement are effected by means of blood if they are to take away the sins of the people for 'apart from the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness' (v 22). The 'blood' component of the ceremony is for cleansing (vs 13-14, 19, 21-22) and is ultimately necessary for forgiveness (v 22). Thus, blood is required in God's covenant with His people (vs 18, 20) so that God can forgive the sins of His people. If indeed the life of a creature is in the blood (Leviticus 17:11), then Christ must also shed His blood (v 12) so that we may have life. It is a new life. It is a life in Christ because it is purchased by Christ's blood. The sacrifice of Christ was a self-offering (v 14). He did it once for all (v 26). Therefore it is eternal and effective for all people. By His one act He became the mediator of a new and better covenant (v 15). We ought also to offer ourselves to God even as we continue to enjoy this new life.

**May 15. Read Hebrews 10:1-18.** The 'second' can be established only when the 'first' has been set aside (v 9b). The 'second' is made possible by the wholehearted obedience of Christ (vs 7b, 9a). The believers' sanctification is now made possible (vs 10, 14, 16b). Christ and His new order are the good things, which had already come. Definitely these people under the Law knew nothing of these good things where pardon, certainty and peace dwell. The Law was but a shadow (v 1) and not the true form. While they had the annual reminder of sins (v 3), we have a daily reminder of the imputed holiness, righteousness and the very presence of God (v 17, Romans 8:15). John the Baptist declared that Jesus is 'the Lamb that takes away the sins of the world'. David also prophesied: 'A body you have prepared for me' and 'I have come to do your will, O God' (vs 5b, 7b). These were fulfilled in Christ's incarnation and earthly ministry respectively. All our sacrifices will come to nothing unless they are living sacrifices (Romans 12:1) made out of obedience and total devotion to God. This has to originate from our inward cleansing by Christ's sacrifice (v 10) and our secured and consecrated position, which Christ has already provided (v 14). 'It is done.' We must keep on proclaiming this truth. There is no more remembrance of sin (v 17) as compared with the old covenant where there was an annual reminder of sins (v 3). Further, we now have the will and power to obey God because His laws are now in our hearts and minds (v 11) and not on stone tablets. The new order, accompanied by the Holy Spirit, has made obedience (and sanctification) possible (Romans 8:15).

Adapted from: <http://www.su.org.my>