

Anonymous Letter to the Christian Community in Rome – Part 2 (c. 63–64)

Hebrews 4:14–10:18

Jesus is Our “Great High Priest”

4:14 Therefore, *because we* have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession.

15 For we do not have a high priest who is not able to sympathize with our weaknesses, but who has been tempted in all *things* in the same way, without sin.

16 Therefore let us approach with confidence to the throne of grace, in order that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

5:1 For every high priest taken from among men is appointed on behalf of people in the things relating to God, in order that he can offer both gifts and sacrifices on behalf of sins,

2 being able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and led astray, since he himself also is surrounded by weakness,

3 and because of it he is obligated to offer *sacrifices* for sins for himself also, as well as for the people.

4 And someone does not take for himself the honor, but is called by God, just as Aaron also *was*.

5 Thus also Christ did not glorify himself to become high priest, but the one who said to him,

“You are my Son, today I have begotten you,” [\[Ps 2:7\]](#)

6 just as also in another *place* he says,

“You *are* a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek,” [\[Ps 110:4 \(LXX 109:4\)\]](#)

7 who in the days of his flesh offered up both prayers and supplications, with loud crying and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard as a result of his reverence.

8 Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered,

9 and being perfected, he became the source of eternal salvation to all those who obey him,

10 being designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

Rebuke for Negligence in Obeying God’s Word

11 Concerning this we have much to say and it is difficult to explain, since you have become sluggish in hearing.

12 For indeed, *although you* ought to be teachers by this time, you have need of someone to teach you again the beginning elements of the oracles of God, and you have need of milk, not solid food.

13 For everyone who partakes of milk *is* unacquainted with the message of righteousness, because he is an infant.

14 But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have trained their faculties for the distinguishing of both good and evil.

Challenge—Allow the Spirit to Carry You Forward to Maturity!

6:1 Therefore, leaving behind the elementary message about Christ, let us move on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and faith in God,

2 teaching about baptisms and laying on of hands, and resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.

3 And this we will do, if God permits.

Warning—You Are in Danger of Apostasy!

4 For *it is* impossible *concerning* those who have once been enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and become sharers of the Holy Spirit,

5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the coming age,

6 and having fallen away, to renew *them* again to repentance, *because they* have crucified again for themselves the Son of God and held him up to contempt.

7 For ground that drinks the rain that comes often upon it, and brings forth vegetation usable to those *people* for whose sake *it is* also cultivated, shares a blessing from God.

8 But *if it* produces thorns and thistles, *it is* worthless and near to a curse, whose end *is* for burning.

God’s Promise and Oath are a Sure and Steadfast Hope

9 But even if we are speaking in this way, dear friends, we are convinced of better *things* concerning you, and belonging to salvation.

10 For God *is* not unjust, *so as* to forget your work and the love which you demonstrated for his name *by* having served the saints, and continuing to serve *them*.

11 And we desire each one of you to demonstrate the same diligence for the full assurance of *your* hope until the end,

12 in order that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who inherit the promises through faith and patience.

13 For *when* God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater to swear by, he swore by himself,

14 saying,

“Surely I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply you.” [\[Gen 22:17\]](#)

15 And so, *by* persevering, he obtained the promise.

16 For people swear by what is greater *than themselves*, and the oath for confirmation *is the* end of all dispute for them.

17 In the same way God, *because he* wanted to show even more to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of his resolve, guaranteed *it* with an oath,

18 in order that through two unchangeable things, in which *it is* impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge may have powerful encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before *us*,

19 which we have like an anchor of the soul, both firm and steadfast, and entering into the inside of the curtain,

20 where Jesus, the forerunner for us, entered, *because he* became a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. [\[Ps 110:4 \(LXX 109:4\)\]](#)

Melchizedekian Priesthood Superior to the Levitical Priesthood

7:1 For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham *as he* was returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, [cf. [Gen 14:17–19 \(LXX\)](#)]

2 to whom also Abraham apportioned a tenth of everything— [cf. [Gen 14:20 \(LXX\)](#)] in the first place, *his name* is translated “king of righteousness,” and then also “king of Salem,” that is, “king of peace”;

3 without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God—he remains a priest for all time.

4 But see how great this man *was*, to whom Abraham the patriarch gave a tenth from the spoils!

5 And indeed those of the sons of Levi who receive the priesthood have a commandment to collect a tenth from the people according to the law, that is, from their brothers, although they are descended from Abraham.

6 But the one who did not trace *his* descent from them collected tithes from Abraham and blessed the one who had the promises.

7 Now without any dispute the inferior is blessed by the more prominent.

8 And in this case mortal men receive tithes, but in that case it is testified that he lives.

9 And, so to speak, even Levi, the one who receives tithes, has paid tithes through Abraham.

10 For he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.

Melchizedekian Priesthood Implies the Need for a Change of Law

11 Thus if perfection was through the Levitical priesthood, for on the basis of it the people received the law, what further need *is there* for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek and not said to be according to the order of Aaron?

12 For *when* the priesthood changes, of necessity there is a change of the law also.

13 For the one about whom these *things* are spoken belongs to another tribe from which no one has officiated at the altar.

14 For *it is* evident that our Lord is a descendant of Judah, a tribe *with reference* to which Moses said nothing concerning priests.

15 And it is still more clear, if another priest according to the likeness of Melchizedek arises,

16 who has become *a priest* not according to a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life.

17 For it is testified,

“You *are* a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.” [\[Ps 110:4 \(LXX 109:4\)\]](#)

18 For on the one hand a preceding commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness

19 (for the law *made* nothing perfect), but on the other hand *there is* the introduction of a better hope through which we draw near to God.

Contrasts Between Jesus and the Levitical Priesthood

20 And by as much as *this was* not without an oath (for these on the one hand have become priests without an oath,

21 but he with an oath by the one who said to him,

“The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind,
“You *are* a priest forever”), [\[Ps 110:4 \(LXX 109:4\)\]](#)

22 by so much more Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.

23 And indeed many have become priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing *in office*,

24 but he, because he continues forever, holds the priesthood permanently.

25 Therefore also he is able to save completely those who draw near to God through him, *because he* always lives in order to intercede on their behalf.

26 For a high priest such as this indeed is fitting for us, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and having become exalted *above* the heavens,

27 who does not need every day like the former high priests to offer up sacrifices for his own sins *and* then for the *sins* of the people, because he did this once for all *when he* offered up himself.

28 For the law appoints men *as* high priests who have weakness, but the statement of the oath, after the law, *appoints* a Son, who is made perfect forever.

Christ's Ministry Superior to the Levitical Priest's Ministry

8:1 Now *this is* the main point in what has been said: we have a high priest such as this, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven,

2 a minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord set up, not man.

3 For every high priest is appointed in order to offer both gifts and sacrifices; therefore *it was necessary for* this one also to have something that he offers.

4 Now if he were on earth, he would not even be a priest, *because there* are those who offer the gifts according to the law,

5 who serve a sketch and shadow of the heavenly *things*, just as Moses was warned *when he* was about to complete the tabernacle, for he says, "See to it that you make everything according to the pattern which was shown to you on the mountain." [[Exod 25:40](#) (LXX)]

6a But now he has attained a more excellent ministry,

Christ's Covenant Superior to the First Covenant

6b by as much as he is also mediator of a better covenant which has been enacted upon better promises.

7 For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, occasion would not have been sought for a second.

8 For in finding fault with them he says,

"Behold, days are coming, says the Lord,
when I will complete a new covenant with the house of Israel
and with the house of Judah,

9 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers
on the day I took hold of them by my hand
to lead them out of the land of Egypt,
because they did not continue in my covenant
and I disregarded them, says the Lord.

10 For this *is* the covenant that I will decree with the house of Israel
after those days, says the Lord:
I am putting my laws in their minds
and I will write them on their hearts,
and I will be their God
and they will be my people.

11 And they will not teach each one his fellow citizen
and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,'
because they will all know me,
from the least of them to the greatest.

12 For I will be merciful toward their wrongdoings,
and I will not remember their sins *any* longer." [[Jer 31:31–34](#) (~LXX 38:31–34)]

13 In calling *it* new, he has declared the former *to be old*. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old *is* near to disappearing.

The Inadequacy of the First Covenant Cultic System

9:1 Now the first *covenant* had regulations for worship and the earthly sanctuary.

2 For a tent was prepared, the first *one*, in which *were* the lampstand and the table and the presentation of the loaves, which is called the holy place.

3 And after the second curtain *was* a tent called the holy of holies,

4 containing the golden incense altar and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which *were* a golden jar containing the manna and the rod of Aaron that budded and the tablets of the covenant.

5 And above it *were* the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat, about which it is not now *possible* to speak in detail.

6 Now these things having been prepared in this way, the priests enter into the first tent continually *as they* accomplish their service,

7 but only the high priest *enters* into the second *tent* once a year, not without blood, which he offers on behalf of himself and the *sins* of the people committed in ignorance.

8 The Holy Spirit *was* making this clear, *that* the way *into* the holy place *was* not yet revealed, *while* the first tent *was* still in existence,
 9 which *was* a symbol for the present time, in which both the gifts and sacrifices which were offered were not able to perfect the worshiper with respect to the conscience,
 10 concerning *instead* only food and drink and different washings, regulations of outward things imposed until the time of setting *things* right.

Christ's Blood Superior to the Blood of Sacrificial Animals

11 But Christ has arrived *as* a high priest of the good *things* to come. Through the greater and more perfect tent not made by hands, that is, not of this creation,
 12 and not by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered once for all into the *most* holy place, obtaining eternal redemption.
 13 For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a young cow sprinkled on those who are defiled sanctify *them* for the ritual purity of the flesh,
 14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, cleanse our consciences from dead works to serve *the* living God?

Christ's Covenant Superior to the First Covenant

15 And because of this, he is the mediator of a new covenant, in order that, *because* a death has taken place for the redemption of transgressions *committed* during the first covenant, those who are the called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.
 16 For where *there is* a will, *it is* a necessity *for* the death of the one who made the will to be established.
 17 For a will *is* in force concerning those who are dead, since *it is* never in force when the one who made the will is alive.
 18 Therefore not even the first *covenant* was ratified without blood.
 19 For *when* every commandment had been spoken by Moses to all the people according to the law, *he* took the blood of calves with water and scarlet wool and hyssop *and* sprinkled both the scroll itself and all the people,
 20 saying,

“This *is* the blood of the covenant that God has commanded for you.” [\[Exod 24:8\]](#)

21 And likewise he sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the utensils of service with the blood.
 22 Indeed, nearly everything is purified with blood according to the law, and apart from the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

Christ's Sacrifice Superior to the High Priestly Sacrifice on the Day of Atonement

23 Therefore *it was* necessary *for* the sketches of the *things* in heaven to be purified with these *sacrifices*, but the heavenly *things* themselves *to be purified* with better sacrifices than these.
 24 For Christ did not enter into a sanctuary made by hands, a *mere* copy of the true *one*, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf,
 25 and not in order that he can offer himself many times, as the high priest enters into the sanctuary year by year with blood not his own, [cf. [Lev 16](#)]
 26 since it would have been necessary for him to suffer many times from the foundation of the world, but now he has appeared once at the end of the ages for the removal of sin by the sacrifice of himself.
 27 And just as it is destined for people to die once, and after this, judgment,
 28 thus also Christ, having been offered once in order to bear the sins of many, will appear for the second time without reference to sin to those who eagerly await him for salvation.

The Repetition of the Sacrifices Demonstrated Their Inability to Perfect the Worshipers

10:1 For the law, possessing a shadow of the good *things* that are about to come, not the form of things itself, *is* never able year by year by means of the same sacrifices which they offer without interruption to make perfect those who draw near.
 2 For otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the ones who worship, having been purified once and for all, would no longer have any consciousness of sins?
 3 But in them *there is* a reminder of sins year by year.
 4 For *it is* impossible *for* the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

God's Will Was to Sanctify Us Through the Offering of the Body of Jesus Christ

5 Therefore, *when he* came into the world, he said,

“Sacrifice and offering you did not want,

but a body you prepared for me;
6 you did not delight in whole burnt offerings and *offerings* for sins.
7 Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come—
in the roll of the book it is written about me—
to do your will, O God.’ [[Ps 40:6–8](#) (LXX 39:7–9)]

8 *When he says above,*

“Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and *offerings* for sin
you did not want, nor did you delight in,”

which are offered according to the law,
9 then he has said,

“Behold, I have come to do your will.”

He takes away the first in order to establish the second,
10 by which will we are made holy through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Jesus’ Single Offering Perfected Us for All Time

11 And every priest stands every day serving and offering the same sacrifices many times, which are never able to take away sins.
12 But this one, *after he* had offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God,
13 from now on waiting until his enemies are made a footstool for his feet.
14 For by one offering he has perfected for all time those who are made holy.
15 And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us, for after saying,

16 “This *is* the covenant that I will decree for them
after those days, says the Lord:
I am putting my laws on their hearts,
and I will write them on their minds.”

17 *He also says,*

“Their sins and their lawless deeds I will never remember again.” [cf. [Jer 31:31–34](#) (~LXX 38:31–34)]

18 Now where *there is* forgiveness of these, *there is* no longer an offering for sin.

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