

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 since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession.

15 For we do not have a high priest incapable of sympathizing with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way just as we are, yet without sin.

16 Therefore let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and find grace whenever we need help.

5:1 For every high priest is taken from among the people and appointed to represent them before God, to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.

2 He is able to deal compassionately with those who are ignorant and erring, since he also is subject to weakness,

3 and for this reason he is obligated to make sin offerings for himself as well as for the people.

4 And no one assumes this honor on his own initiative, but only when called to it by God, as in fact Aaron was.

5 So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming high priest, but the one who glorified him was God, who said to him, *“You are my Son! Today I have fathered you,”* [Ps 2:7]

6 as also in another place God says, *“You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.”* [Ps 110:4 (LXX 109:4)]

7 During his earthly life Christ offered both requests and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death and he was heard because of his devotion.

8 Although he was a son, he learned obedience through the things he suffered.

9 And by being perfected in this way, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him,

10 and he was designated by God as high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

Rebuke for Negligence in Obeying God’s Word

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

12 For though you should in fact be teachers by this time, you need someone to teach you the beginning elements of God’s utterances. You have gone back to needing milk, not solid food.

13 For everyone who lives on milk is inexperienced in the message of righteousness, because he is an infant.

14 But solid food is for the mature, whose perceptions are trained by practice to discern both good and evil.

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

6:1 Therefore we must progress beyond the elementary instructions about Christ and move on to maturity, not laying this foundation again: repentance from dead works and faith in God,

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

3 And this is what we intend to do, if God permits.

Warning—You Are in Danger of Apostasy!

4 For it is impossible in the case of those who have once been enlightened, tasted the heavenly gift, become partakers of the Holy Spirit,

5 tasted the good word of God and the miracles of the coming age,

6 and then have committed apostasy, to renew them again to repentance, [while] they are crucifying the Son of God for themselves all over again and holding him up to contempt.

7 For the ground that has soaked up the rain that frequently falls on it and yields useful vegetation for those who tend it receives a blessing from God.

8 But if it produces thorns and thistles, it is useless and about to be cursed; its fate is to be burned.

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

9 But in your case, dear friends, even though we speak like this, we are convinced of better things relating to salvation.

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

11 But we passionately want each of you to demonstrate the same eagerness for the fulfillment of your hope until the end,

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

13 Now when God made his promise to Abraham, since he could swear by no one greater, he swore by himself,

14 saying, *“Surely I will bless you greatly and multiply your descendants abundantly.”* [Gen 22:17]

15 And so by persevering, Abraham inherited the promise.

16 For people swear by something greater than themselves, and the oath serves as a confirmation to end all dispute.

17 In the same way God wanted to demonstrate more clearly to the heirs of the promise that his purpose was unchangeable, and so he intervened with an oath,

18 so that we who have found refuge in him may find strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us through two

unchangeable things, since it is impossible for God to lie.

19 We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, sure and steadfast, which reaches inside behind the curtain,

20 where Jesus our forerunner entered on our behalf, since he became *a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek*. [[Ps 110:4](#) (LXX 109:4)]

Melchizedekian Priesthood Superior to the Levitical Priesthood

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

2 To him also *Abraham apportioned a tithe of everything*. [cf. [Gen 14:20](#) (LXX)] His name first means king of righteousness, then *king of Salem*, that is, king of peace.

3 Without father, without mother, without genealogy, he has neither beginning of days nor end of life but is like the son of God, and he remains a priest for all time.

4 But see how great he must be, if Abraham the patriarch gave him a tithe of his plunder.

5 And those of the sons of Levi who receive the priestly office have authorization according to the law to collect a tithe from the people, that is, from their fellow countrymen, although they too are descendants of Abraham.

6 But Melchizedek who does not share their ancestry collected a tithe from Abraham and blessed the one who possessed the promise.

7 Now without dispute the inferior is blessed by the superior,

8 and in one case tithes are received by mortal men, while in the other by him who is affirmed to be alive.

9 And it could be said that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid a tithe through Abraham.

10 For he was still in his ancestor Abraham's loins when Melchizedek met him.

Melchizedekian Priesthood Implies the Need for a Change of Law

11 So if perfection had in fact been possible through the Levitical priesthood—for on that basis the people received the law—what further need would there have been for another priest to arise, said to be in the order of Melchizedek and not in Aaron's order?

12 For when the priesthood changes, a change in the law must come as well.

13 Yet the one these things are spoken about belongs to a different tribe, and no one from that tribe has ever officiated at the altar.

14 For it is clear that our Lord is descended from Judah, yet Moses said nothing about priests in connection with that tribe.

15 And this is even clearer if another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek,

16 who has become a priest not by a legal regulation about physical descent but by the power of an indestructible life.

17 For here is the testimony about him: "*You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek*." [[Ps 110:4](#) (LXX 109:4)]

18 On the one hand a former command is set aside because it is weak and useless,

19 for the law made nothing perfect. On the other hand a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.

Contrasts Between Jesus and the Levitical Priesthood

20 And since this was not done without a sworn affirmation—for the others have become priests without a sworn affirmation,

21 but Jesus did so with a sworn affirmation 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 accordingly Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.

23 And the others who became priests were numerous, because death prevented them from continuing in office,

24 but he holds his priesthood permanently since he lives forever.

25 So he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

26 For it is indeed fitting for us to have such a high priest: holy, innocent, undefiled, separate from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.

27 He has no need to do every day what those priests do, to offer sacrifices first for their own sins and then for the sins of the people, since he did this in offering himself once for all.

28 For the law appoints as high priests men subject to weakness, but the word of solemn affirmation that came after the law appoints a son made perfect forever.

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

8:1 Now the main point of what we are saying is this: We have such a high priest, one who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven,

2 a minister in the sanctuary and the true tabernacle that the Lord, not man, set up.

3 For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. So this one too had to have something to offer.

4 Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest, since there are already priests who offer the gifts prescribed by the law.

5 The place where they serve is a sketch and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary, just as Moses was warned by God as he was about to complete the tabernacle. For he says, "*See that you make everything according to the design shown to you on the mountain*." [[Exod 25:40](#) (LXX)]

6a But now Jesus has obtained a superior ministry,

Christ's Covenant Superior to the First Covenant

6b since the covenant that he mediates is also better and is enacted on better promises.

7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, no one would have looked for a second one.

8 But showing its fault, God says to them,

"Look, the 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 *"It will not be like the covenant that I made with their fathers, on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not continue in my covenant and I had no regard for them, says the Lord.*

10 *"For this is the covenant that I will establish with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and I will inscribe them on their hearts. And I will be their God and they will be my people.*

11 *"And there will be no need at all for each one to teach his countryman or each one to teach his brother saying, 'Know the Lord,' since they will all know me, from the least to the greatest.*

12 *"For I will be merciful toward their evil deeds, and their sins I will remember no longer." [Jer 31:31–34 (~LXX 38:31–34)]*

13 When he speaks of a new covenant, he makes the first obsolete. Now what is growing obsolete and aging is about to disappear.

The Inadequacy of the First Covenant Cultic System

9:1 Now the first covenant, in fact, had regulations for worship and its earthly sanctuary.

2 For a tent was prepared, the outer one, which contained the lampstand, the table, and the presentation of the loaves; this is called the holy place.

3 And after the second curtain there was a tent called the holy of holies.

4 It contained the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered entirely with gold. In this ark were the golden urn containing the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant.

5 And above the ark were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Now is not the time to speak of these things in detail.

6 So with these things prepared like this, the priests enter continually into the outer tent as they perform their duties.

7 But only the high priest enters once a year into the inner tent, and not without blood that he offers for himself and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance.

8 The Holy Spirit is making clear that the way into the holy place had not yet appeared as long as the old tabernacle was standing.

9 This was a symbol for the time then present, when gifts and sacrifices were offered that could not perfect the conscience of the worshiper.

10 They served only for matters of food and drink and various washings; they are external regulations imposed until the new order came.

Christ's Blood Superior to the Blood of Sacrificial Animals

11 But now Christ has come as the high priest of the good things to come. He passed through the greater and more perfect tent not made with hands, that is, not of this creation,

12 and he entered once for all into the most holy place not by the blood of goats and calves but by his own blood, and so he himself secured eternal redemption.

13 For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a young cow sprinkled on those who are defiled consecrated them and provided ritual purity,

14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our consciences from dead works to worship the living God.

Christ's Covenant Superior to the First Covenant

15 And so he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the eternal inheritance he has promised, since he died to set them free from the violations committed under the first covenant.

16 For where there is a will, the death of the one who made it must be proven.

17 For a will takes effect only at death, since it carries no force while the one who made it is alive.

18 So even the first covenant was inaugurated with blood.

19 For when Moses had spoken every command to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats with water and scarlet wool and hyssop and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people,

20 and said, *"This is the blood of the covenant that God has commanded you to keep."* [Exod 24:8]

21 And both the tabernacle and all the utensils of worship he likewise sprinkled with blood.

22 Indeed according to the law almost everything was purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no

forgiveness.

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

23 So it was necessary for the sketches of the things in heaven to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves required better sacrifices than these.

24 For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with hands—the representation of the true sanctuary—but into heaven itself, and he appears now in God's presence for us.

25 And he did not enter to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the sanctuary year after year with blood that is not his own, [cf. [Lev 16](#)]

26 for then he would have had to suffer again and again since the foundation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the consummation of the ages to put away sin by his sacrifice.

27 And just as people are appointed to die once, and then to face judgment,

28 so also, after Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many, to those who eagerly await him he will appear a second time, not to bear sin but to bring salvation.

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

10:1 For the law possesses a shadow of the good things to come but not the reality itself, and is therefore completely unable, by the same sacrifices offered continually, year after year, to perfect those who come to worship.

2 For otherwise would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers would have been purified once for all and so have no further consciousness of sin?

3 But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year after year.

4 For the blood of bulls and goats cannot take away sins.

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

5 So when he came into the world, he said,

"Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me.

6 *"Whole burnt offerings and sin-offerings you took no delight in.*

7 *"Then I said, 'Here I am: I have come—it is written of me in the scroll of the book—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 sin-offerings you did not desire nor did you take delight in them"* (which are offered according to the law),

9 then he says, *"Here I am: I have come to do your will."* He does away with the first to establish the second.

10 By his will we have been 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 day after day serving and offering the same sacrifices again and again—sacrifices that can never take away sins.

12 But when this priest had offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, he sat down at the right hand of God,

13 where he is now 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 witnesses to us, for after saying,

16 *"This is the covenant that I will establish with them after those days, says the Lord. I will put my laws on their hearts and I will inscribe them on their minds,"*

17 then he says, *"Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no longer."* [cf. [Jer 31:31–34](#) (~LXX 38:31–34)]

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

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