

LEVITICUS.

Having looked at Exodus and the main salvation themes of deliverance, law, tabernacle, Sabbath etc., we now turn to **LEVITICUS**.
[Time 1400 BC]

Now I would imagine that most people, having set out with great hopes of reading through the Bible, hit their first stumbling block when they reach Leviticus with all its strange rules and regulations.

After the interesting and exciting stories in Genesis and Exodus, Leviticus seems complicated and boring.

It deals with matters that do not seem relevant to Christians.

However, a patient study of Leviticus will reap some very rewarding results and will help us to see the wonder of our salvation – for example, chapter 16, describes that greatest religious day in the Jewish calendar, the ***Great Day of Atonement***, which the book of Hebrews interprets this for us, showing that Jesus is both the High Priest and the perfect sacrifice.

As we study the Book of Leviticus, I would encourage you to read through this book.

TITLE:

The Hebrew title for the book is taken from the one Hebrew word that can be translated; *'and he [the Lord] called'*, which emphasizes that Leviticus is a continuation of the Exodus story.

1:1 The Lord called to Moses and spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting. He said, "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'When any of you brings an offering to the Lord, bring as your offering an animal from either the herd or the flock'"

In a sense, Leviticus interrupts the narrative of the Pentateuch.

The story line flows naturally from the conclusion of Exodus to Numbers chapter 11.

Leviticus and Numbers 1-10 form an interruption of legal materials.

Read **Exodus 40:34-38**

(Exo 40:34) And the cloud covered the tabernacle of the congregation, and the glory of Jehovah filled the tabernacle.

(Exo 40:35) And Moses was not able to enter into the tabernacle of the congregation because the cloud stayed on it, and the glory of Jehovah filled the tabernacle.

(Exo 40:36) And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the sons of Israel journeyed on in all their journeys.

(Exo 40:37) But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not journey until the day that it was taken up.

(Exo 40:38) For the cloud of Jehovah was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, in all their journeys.

Now notice that Leviticus chapter 1 etc, is an interruption, and the story line continues from **Numbers 11** – where we take up the story, the intervening material are instructions prefixed with 'The Lord called to Moses and spoke to him....'The Lord spoke to Moses in the Tent of Meeting

(Num 11:16) , Gather to Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people, and the officers over them. And bring them to the tabernacle of the congregation so that they may stand there with you.

(Num 11:17) And I will come down and talk with you there. And I will take of the spirit on you, and will put *it* on them, and they shall bear the burden of the people with you so that you do not bear *it* yourself alone.

(Num 11:18) And say to the people, Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow, and you shall eat flesh. For you have wept in the ears of the Lord, saying, Who shall give us flesh to eat, for *it* was well with us in Egypt? Therefore Jehovah will give you flesh, and you shall eat.

(Num 11:19) You shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, nor ten days, nor twenty days.

(Num 11:20) Even a whole month, until it comes out at your nostrils, and it is hateful to you, because you have despised Jehovah among you, and have wept before Him, saying, Why did we come out of Egypt?

This interruption illustrates the importance of the book, for the Israelites would not have interrupted the narrative if it were not important to their story.

For here the Lord emphasizes the importance to personal, priestly and national holiness.

The name **Leviticus** comes from the Greek and Latin translations of the Hebrew Scriptures because portions of it was in effect an instruction manual for the OT priesthood who came from **Levi**, one of the 12 sons of Jacob.

Aaron and his family were chosen from this tribe to serve as priests and to offer the sacrifices and to care for the tabernacle.

In Exodus God ratified his covenant with Israel and now the Lord is sending Moses to the nations with instructions for proper worship [1:1-2].

Whereas Exodus ended by stressing where to worship God [the tabernacle], Leviticus deals with how to worship him.

You will see there are 3 important themes in Leviticus – LAW, SACRIFICE [priesthood] and HOLINESS.

OVERVIEW OF LEVITICUS.

As you read Leviticus you will realise that the focus falls on Chapter 16, the establishment and explanation of the Great Day of Atonement.

For the OT believers it played a central role in their worship of God, as the cross plays a central role in the New Testament, and of course they are closely related as we shall see.

The Atonement in Leviticus 16.

1. Look firstly at context of this passage; how it relates to the book of Leviticus.

2. Secondly we will study Leviticus 16 itself, which is a description of what happened on the Day of Atonement.
3. And then, finally we will need to look at some passages in the book of Hebrews which explain the reality behind the Day of Atonement specifically how everything that happened was a picture of Christ's work on the cross.

CONTEXT – OVERVIEW OF LEVITICUS.

Since leaving Egypt, Israel was privileged to have God living in their midst – at the beginning he manifested himself in a pillar of fire at night and a cloud by day.

(Exo 13:21) And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night.

(Exo 13:22) The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people.

But then one day, while Moses was on Mount Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments the children of Israel, thinking that Moses was not returning, suggested that Aaron make a golden calf for them to worship because Yahweh had abandoned them.

But God knew what they were doing and so he sent Moses back and God punished Israel for their sin and then said he would no longer live among them.

However because of Moses' pleading, God promised to continue to live among his people [Ex 33:14-15].

That was both a privilege but it was also a fearful thing.

God was Holy and the people were sinful – so how could they exist with the presence of God among them – at any time he could break out in judgment because of their sin?

So God dwelt among them in the tabernacle with its curtains [Tent of Meeting] – to protect the people from God's holy presence – with the Holy of Holies right at the end.

It was there that God manifested himself now,

(Exo 40:34) Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

(Exo 40:35) And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

(Exo 40:36) Throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out.

(Exo 40:37) But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out till the day that it was taken up.

(Exo 40:38) For the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys.

And then God gave them strict rules and rituals to follow – there was a specific way to approach God, and that is what Leviticus was about.

In grace God chose to live among his people and to be known by them – but approach had to be made in the right way and only on an appointed day.

Essentially, the book of Leviticus concerns how Israel was to approach God and worship him.

Chapters 1-16 – Right way to worship of God inside the tabernacle.

- 1-7** 5 types of acceptable sacrifices are stipulated.
- 8-10** The organization and functioning of a representative priesthood.
- 11-15** Qualifications of acceptable worshippers – the people had to follow certain rituals to be acceptable to God.
- 16** Climax – description of Great Day of Atonement.

Chapters 17-27 Concerns right living outside the tabernacle – and stresses that worship of God extends to every part of our lives – we call this the **Holiness Code**.

Summary: So Leviticus concerns right worship and right living – becoming holy and staying holy [God's people are to be holy as God is holy].

But let us narrow our focus on chapters 11-15 which explains the distinction between clean and unclean and deals with practical, everyday issues in life – making a distinction between what is clean and unclean in life.

In particular chapters 11-15 look forward to, and prepare us for the Day of Atonement, in chapter 16.

In other words, they define uncleanness that makes the Day of Atonement necessary.

It shows how sin has polluted everything – what we eat, what we touch; even giving birth, diseases, our houses, sexual intercourse; everything has been spoiled by sin.

Now the ***Day of Atonement*** was one of the most sacred days in the Old Testament.

Unlike many of Israel's other holy days, it did not commemorate one of God's great and mighty acts of the past or celebrate his goodness at harvest time.

On this day, provision was made for purging all the sins and uncleanness that were un-atoned for during the year.

In other words, this day was an annual opportunity to '*wipe the slate clean*' by cleansing both the sanctuary and the people of all defilements that had not been noticed and dealt with routinely, provided the ongoing means of cleansing God's people so that he could continue to live among them.

Although there were daily sacrifices carried out by other priests of Aaron's line, what happened on the Day of Atonement was unique; it was different and could only be carried out once a year by the High Priest himself, on his own, no-one helping him.

It provided atonement for the high priest, the sanctuary, and the people so that all might be clean before the Lord.

Emphasis on that day fell on the cleansing of the whole tabernacle, not only the Most Holy Place as well as the High Priest, showing that

human sin pollutes everything, even the place where God chose to reveal himself.

On this one day, the high priest was permitted to enter the Holy of Holies, the inner precincts of the tabernacle.

But again, there were strict instructions about how the High Priest should enter the Holy of Holies.

There had to be an elaborate preparation, if these instructions were not followed, the High Priest could suffer the same fate as [see Lev 16:2]

(Lev 10:1) Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, which he had not commanded them.

(Lev 10:2) And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD.

All was done in connection with the putting away of the nation's sins. On this day [*6 months after the spring Passover*] the focus was not so much on individual sins, the focus was on the nations sins when the Israelites remembered the greatness and majesty of God and their extreme sinfulness, and they went through certain rituals all aimed at putting their sin away.

There were 5 other sacrifices, but it is obvious that they were not adequate – they did not cover all eventualities.

So on the tenth day of the seventh month they had a solemn fast and went through the special rites, all showing clearly the seriousness of sin and the importance of dealing with it.

The strict procedure to be followed on the Day of Atonement.

The chapter seems confusing by repetition, but it becomes clearer once we recognise the characteristic Hebrew structure of presenting an introduction and summary of main points before filling in the details.

INTRODUCTION – verses 1-2.

These verses link this day and the detailed instructions concerning the ritual with a terrible event that took place earlier.

It was because of the deaths of the two sons of Aaron, God gave elaborate instructions on how to approach him.

(Lev 16:1) The LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they drew near before the LORD and died,

(Lev 16:2) and the LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron your brother not to come at any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the mercy seat that is on the ark, so that he may not die. For I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat.

It is obvious that the presence of God was most powerfully localized in the inner sanctuary, the Most Holy Place [lit: holy of holies] which was behind the curtain that divided the Tent of Meeting in two.

There stood the ark with its atonement cover on which there were two golden cherubim [throne of God].

Because of the intense holiness of the presence of God there, no-one not even Aaron was to go except on this day in the prescribed manner.

REQUIRED ANIMALS AND CLOTHING – 3-5.

- 5 animals were required: one bull, two goats and two rams.
- The high priests clothes for this day were very simple – when he represented God before the people he wore robes of sumptuous colour and glory but when he represented the people before God he wore little more than the clothes of a slave; linen tunic, shorts, belt and turban.

(Lev 16:4) He shall put on the holy linen coat and shall have the linen undergarment on his body, and he shall tie the linen sash around his waist, and wear the linen turban; these are the holy garments.

The High Priest began the day by bathing himself in contrast to the other days when he only washed his hands and feet [4].

He shall bathe his body in water and then put them on.

SUMMARY OF THE DAY'S CORE PROCEEDINGS v 6-10.

He first had to make an offering for his own sin and the sin of his family,

(Lev 16:6) "Aaron shall offer the bull as a sin offering for himself and shall make atonement for himself and for his house.

The High Priest was also a sinner.

This was followed by the setting aside of two goats, which played a key role in the taking away of sin of the people.

(Lev 16:7) Then he shall take the two goats and set them before the LORD at the entrance of the tent of meeting.

(Lev 16:8) And Aaron shall cast lots over the two goats, one lot for the LORD and the other lot for Azazel.

(Lev 16:9) And Aaron shall present the goat on which the lot fell for the LORD and use it as a sin offering,

(Lev 16:10) but the goat on which the lot fell for Azazel shall be presented alive before the LORD to make atonement over it, that it may be sent away into the wilderness to Azazel.

Having in summary described the essential ritual, we move on to

MAIN RITUALS IN DETAIL – v11-22

There are 4 main movements in the ritual – the first 3 involved the sprinkling of blood, the main means of cleansing.

- First the bull was sacrificed as a sin offering for the priests, including the high priest himself [11-14].

(Lev 16:11) "Aaron shall present the bull as a sin offering for himself, and shall make atonement for himself and for his house. He shall kill the bull as a sin offering for himself.

- Only after making the offering for his own sin and that of his family [the priests] the tension began as he was now allowed to enter the Holy of Holies with a censer full of burning coals from the altar and two handfuls of incense and went behind the curtain into the Holy of Holies [v12].

(Lev 16:12) And he shall take a censer full of coals of fire from the altar before the LORD, and two handfuls of sweet incense beaten small, and he shall bring it inside the veil (Lev 16:13) and put the incense on the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is over the testimony, so that he does not die.

As we can see the incense on the coals made a thick cloud of smoke that covered the mercy seat – this was apparently to hide the mercy seat [symbol of the throne of Yahweh – in other words, the presence of God], that he would not die [v13].

It also showed that there was a mystery to God.

Now that he was protected from gazing at the presence of God, he took the blood of the bull into the Holy of Holies and there he sprinkled it once against the face of the mercy seat and then 7 times in front of it [14].

(Lev 16:14) And he shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it with his finger on the front of the mercy seat on the east side, and in front of the mercy seat he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times.

- Emerging from the tent of meeting [to the relief of everyone] the high priest offered the one goat – the one for the Lord was offered as a sin offering for the people – he returned with its blood into the most holy place and repeated the sprinkling – the purpose was to cleanse the sanctuary from whatever uncleanness, rebellion and sins of the people had defiled it during the past year – the same was done for the tent of meeting, probably referring to all the other objects in the tent.

In all this the high priest is alone.

(Lev 16:15) "Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering that is for the people and bring its blood inside the veil and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, sprinkling it over the mercy seat and in front of the mercy seat.

(Lev 16:16) Thus he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleannesses of the people of Israel and because of their transgressions, all their sins. And so he shall do for the tent of meeting, which dwells with them in the midst of their uncleannesses.

(Lev 16:17) No one may be in the tent of meeting from the time he enters to make atonement in the Holy Place until he comes out and has made atonement for himself and for his house and for all the assembly of Israel.

Atonement was not yet completed until he sprinkled a mixture of the blood of the bull and the goat on the altar, thus we read,

(Lev 16:18) Then he shall go out to the altar that is before the LORD and make atonement for it, and shall take some of the blood of the bull and some of the blood of the goat, and put it on the horns of the altar all around.

(Lev 16:19) And he shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it and consecrate it from the uncleannesses of the people of Israel.

This indicated that the priests as well as the people could have been agents in contaminating it with inadvertent uncleanness.

Now the question is: What happens to the sin once atonement has been made, the blood has been shed?

- This is where the other goat comes in for at this stage the High Priest laid both hands on the head of the remaining goat and confessed 'all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites – all their sins'.

He then sent the goat away into the desert in the care of a man appointed to the task.

(Lev 16:21) And Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins. And he shall put them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who is in readiness.

(Lev 16:22) The goat shall bear all their iniquities on itself to a remote area, and he shall let the goat go free in the wilderness.

Even the man who was assigned the task leading the goat into the dessert had to follow a strict procedure,

(Lev 16:26) And he who lets the goat go to Azazel shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and afterward he may come into the camp.

In this way God showed that their sin was not just cleansed but it was carried away.

This was really the central activity of the day – the nation's sins confessed and dealt with according to God's command.

It meant in effect that the sins were no longer laid to the charge of the people.

CONCLUDING RITUALS – 23-28

Now that sin and defilement had been dealt with, the high priest took off the simple linen clothes and left them in the Tent of Meeting and after bathing himself again he put on the rich robes of his office and offered burnt offerings for himself and the people [the rams of verses 3 and 5].

(Lev 16:23) "Then Aaron shall come into the tent of meeting and shall take off the linen garments that he put on when he went into the Holy Place and shall leave them there.

(Lev 16:24) And he shall bathe his body in water in a holy place and put on his garments and come out and offer his burnt offering and the burnt offering of the people and make atonement for himself and for the people.

These offerings expressed the homage of the people of God and their representative.

It was at this point also that he burnt the fat of the sin offering – the carcasses of both the bull and the goat were taken outside the camp and burnt up completely [v27].

(Lev 16:25) And the fat of the sin offering he shall burn on the altar.

(Lev 16:27) And the bull for the sin offering and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the Holy Place, **shall be carried outside the camp. Their skin and their flesh and their dung shall be burned up with fire.**

Again, even those who played a minor role in the ceremony had to be cleansed

(Lev 16:28) And he who burns them shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and afterward he may come into the camp.

(Lev 16:29) "And it shall be a statute to you forever that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict yourselves and shall do no work, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you.

EXPLANATION OF THE GREAT DAY OF ATONEMENT AS REVEALED IN HEBREWS.

What was the meaning of the sacrifices and elaborate rituals and specifically those taking place on the Day of Atonement?

Well, it is in the book of Hebrews that all this is explained and specifically how it all relates to our Lord's great work of redemption.

Purpose of Hebrews.

The readers were Jewish Christians who seem to have been attracted back to their Judaism.

They wanted to return to the Jewish traditions and ceremonies, and the theme the writer develops from the beginning to the end, the superiority of Jesus Christ over everything and everyone in the OT *[see chapters 1-4 – Jesus Christ superior to...]*.

He shows clearly how everything in the O.T, especially the Priesthood and sacrificial system pointed to Christ.

His argument is that in Jesus Christ, everything has been fulfilled.

In **chapter 5-9**, the writer compares and contrasts Christ's work on the cross with the whole sacrificial system in the O.T., with the high priest, the sacrifices and the tabernacle.

The point he makes repeatedly is that Christ in his life, death, resurrection, fulfilled all the types.

It is from chapter 5 that he goes into detail about our Lord's High Priestly work.

Chapter 5:1-4 The qualification and duties of the O.T. High Priest.

Chapter 5:5-10 Shows that Christ's Priesthood is superior to the O.T. Priesthood. [Jesus as High Priest in the Order of Melchizedek].

Chapter 7 A Better Priesthood.

Chapter 8/9 Jesus brings in a better Covenant

Chapter 9 What makes his priesthood superior.

Chapter 10:1-18 A Better Sacrifice

In the light of these truths - applies.

Chapter 10:19-25 A Better Access.

We can sum up his main arguments from chapter 5-9 in two questions:-

WHY DID GOD APPOINT PRIESTS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT?

WHY DO WE NO LONGER HAVE PRIESTS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT?

In **chapter 5:1** the writer details the qualifications and the duties of the O.T. high priest.

(Heb 5:1) For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.

The high priest is specifically in view here because of the work he alone was allowed to do each year on the Day of Atonement.

Notice in the **first place** that the humanity of the high priest was important because he represented man to God, in other words, he acted as a mediator.

But since he himself was sinful and weak, he had to offer up sacrifices for his own sin as well as the sin of the people [which we saw in Leviticus 16].

(Heb 5:2) He can **deal gently** with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness.

(Heb 5:3) Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people.
[7:28].

'Deal gently = to moderate his anger against the offender – but in 4:15 with reference to Jesus the High Priest, it is not moderate anger but to sympathize with, show compassion'].

Secondly, he points out that it was God alone who appointed the high priest,

(Heb 5:4) And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was.

HE THEN APPLIES THE QUALIFICATIONS TO CHRIST.

In verse 5 the writer makes the point of comparison;

(Heb 5:5) So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you";

(Heb 5:6) as he says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, after the order of **Melchizedek**."

Christ our High Priest was appointed by God and what qualifies him as well is the fact that he took on our human nature,

(Heb 5:7) In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence.

See also 2:14-18

(Heb 2:14) Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil...

(Heb 2:17) ... he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

Thirdly, the writer stresses that he was not only human but divine appointed by God as our High Priest.

(Heb 5:5) So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you";

He is thus both human and divine and that makes him a unique High Priest whose work as high priest is of a different kind.

However, someone might object that Jesus was not of the line of Levi – so how does he qualify as a priest?

That is where Melchizekek comes in [more of that later].

In the **fourth place**, from chapter 7 the writer expands the theme he has stated in 5:9-10; the writer goes on to explain the priestly work of Christ, which consisted in his sacrifice and suffering – which were in every way real, resulting in eternal salvation [going to expand this later].

An important question the writer next deals with is: Why did Jesus have to come as high priest if in fact, as his readers believed, the O.T. high priesthood was adequate?

That is the question he deals with in **7:11-22**.

The point he makes is that through the appearance of **Melchizedek**, *[who was what we can call a type of Christ, pointing to a better priesthood]* God revealed that there was a need for a better, a perfect priest – the O.T. priesthood was temporary because it could not effectively deal with sin.

In particular it could not bring perfection, (Heb 7:11) Now if **perfection** had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron?

The words translated *perfect* and *perfection* are important words in this letter - they mean - complete fulfillment.

The old Levitical priesthood could not give one perfect standing with God. [See also 10:1-3]

The Levitical priests represented a law that was weak and useless [v18] {*Not law, but us - see Romans 6-7*}.

The priesthood of the OT representing God's law could never bring a man fully to God.

Why Christ's Priesthood is Superior - chapter 7:20-28

Here the writer shows in what ways Jesus Christ is the superior High Priest - why Christ's priesthood and sacrifice superior to Judaism? That is the question he now considers.

☐ His was an eternal priesthood [20-22]

(Heb 7:20) And it was not without an oath. For those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath, (Heb 7:21) but this one was made a priest 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.'"

(Heb 7:22) This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant.

With Christ, God swore an eternal priesthood.

For this reason, Jesus is made a guarantee of a better covenant [v20].

☐ The reason why his is an eternal priesthood is because he is an eternal Saviour [23-25]

(Heb 7:23) The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, (Heb 7:24) but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever.

This in contrast to the Levitical priests who died - there were many high priests because they could not live forever.

That is why his priesthood is effective, it saves completely, fully - gives us right standing with God which the Law and the O.T. priesthood could not do, not even what took place on the Day of Atonement.

V25a - his limitless power - his power knows no limits and his life knows no end.

(Heb 7:25) Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

He saves us completely.

Nothing more needed to add to our salvation.

He achieved all for us and he is still interceding for us verse 25b.

He continues to stand in for us before God, he continues to support us while we are on earth – he continues to pray for us and through him we can draw near to God.

□ His priesthood is superior because he is holy and sinless [26-28]
(Heb 7:26) For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. (Heb 7:27) He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself. (Heb 7:28) For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.

All the Levitical priests were sinful and they had to offer sacrifices for themselves before they could offer them for the people.

And for that reason he alone could offer the perfect sacrifice.

Now, in chapters 8-10, the writer brings the doctrinal section of this letter to a climax as he draws all the strands of his argument together.

Quote 8:1

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

In other words, in Christ we have the perfect High Priest, the True High Priest, 'One' whose ministry is completely effective.

He now relates Christ's High Priestly ministry to THREE IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF O.T. WORSHIP:-

The Tabernacle/Sanctuary.

The Sacrificial system.
The Covenant.

He draws a contrast between the O.T. High Priesthood and that of Christ, showing the infinite superiority of his High Priestly ministry.

His point: the High Priests of the O.T. were concerned with outward symbols only, Christ, our true High Priest, is concerned with the reality.

Their ministries are related to the Earthly sphere.

He is related to the Heavenly, spiritual sphere.

☐ **Chapter 8:1-6 serves as a Summary of the whole passage:-**

8:1-2, 5 Christ serves in a Better Sanctuary. <i>[expanded 9:1-10, 11, 24]</i>
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(Heb 8:1) **Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, (Heb 8:2) a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man.**

(Heb 8:5) They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain."

Obviously he is drawing a contrast between the Tabernacle - the Old Testament place of worship and the true sanctuary - the heavenly one.

The point he makes is that Christ serves in the true tabernacle [not meaning other was false, but it was symbolic] set up by the Lord.

The Law could only deal with the earthly, the outward.

In **chapter 9:1-10** he explains why the earthly Tabernacle was inferior and he describes in verses 1-5 the **lay out** of the Tabernacle [not the temple].

Why O.T. sanctuary inferior?

9:1 It was earthly.

9:2-5 It was only a copy - a type which means there was something greater and better.

In chapter 9:6-7, he describes the ritual - the sacrifices that took place in the Tabernacle and especially the ritual on the Great Day of Atonement.

Summed up in verse 8:

8 The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing.

a). Everything about it spoke of its Temporary nature [a tent, not a building].

b). Everything about the lay out of the tabernacle stressed Inaccessibility to God - no freedom of access.

This was the lesson God was teaching Israel, the people of God at that time as he says in verse 9/10.

9 This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper.

10 They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings-- external regulations applying until the time of the new order.

In fact, his point is that the greatest barrier to freedom of access to God is our sin which is manifested in a guilty conscience.

But the sacrificial blood of animals was useless in this regard.

Having shown the inadequacy and inferiority of the Earthly Tabernacle, the writer explains why the **Heavenly Tabernacle in which Christ served is superior.**

9:11 repeats

11 When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation.

Now that Christ has appeared, he shadows, copies, symbols, have given way to reality.

What is the reality? He answers in 9:24.

24 For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence.

The reality is Christ entered into the very presence of God.

He next deals with Christ's superior sacrifice.

8:3-4	His is a Better Sacrifice. <i>[expanded 9:12-28, 10:1-18].</i>
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This is how he puts it: [chapter 8]

3 Every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices, and so it was necessary for this one also to have something to offer.

4 If he were on earth, he would not be a priest, for there are already men who offer the gifts prescribed by the law.

Although he does not mention sin as such, the very mention of sacrifice implies sin.

The gifts and sacrifices offered by the priests were to atone for the people's sin.

Why were the Sacrifices of the O.T. inferior and inadequate?

8:3 First **to offer** = continuous tense, underscoring the fact that the sacrifices had to be made day after day, month after month and year after year.

Think of the many offerings and sacrifices made from the institution of the Aaronic priesthood to the death of Christ.

In fact, the sacrifices went back even further - see Abel, see Noah.

See how many animals offered at the dedication of Solomon's temple, (1Ki 8:62) Then the king, and all Israel with him, offered sacrifice before the LORD.

(1Ki 8:63) Solomon offered as peace offerings to the LORD 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep. So the king and all the people of Israel dedicated the house of the LORD.

(1Ki 8:64) The same day the king consecrated the middle of the court that was before the house of the LORD, for there he offered the burnt offering and the grain offering and the fat pieces of the peace offerings, because the bronze altar that was before the LORD was too small to receive the burnt offering and the grain offering and the fat pieces of the peace offerings.

Why were they continuous?

9:9 the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper.

They only dealt with external, ceremonial uncleanness. [chap. 9]

13 The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean.

25b the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own.

(Heb 10:1) For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near.

Could not give complete access to God - the High Priest could only enter into the symbolic manifest presence of God in the Holy of Holies only once a year.

It did not remove guilt - 10:2b

It only reminded the worshipers of their sin - 10:3.

3 But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins,

It could not take away sin - 10:4

4 because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Why Christ's Sacrifice Superior

8:3 second **to offer** = once and for all.

9:12

12 He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.

He offered up his own blood - [blood = death]/

Eternal redemption = bought out of slavery, bondage to Satan.

Provide effective cleansing of conscience.

13 The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean.

14 How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

The old sacrifices could only deal with ceremonial uncleanness, but could not deal with inner pollution. [*What David prayed for in Ps. 51*]

But in Christ, sin taken away, inner pollution dealt with, so that we can now draw near to God.

9:24 He entered into the very presence of God.

9:25-28 Once and for all.

Chapter 10:11-18 Through him we are made holy.

Chapter 10:19-39 He opened the way to God.

8:6	He is the Mediator of a Better Covenant. [8:6-13]
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(Heb 8:6) But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises.

And as the Aaronic Priesthood and the animal sacrifices were replaced in Christ so the Old Covenant has been replaced by the new, with far better promises - 8:6-13.

(Heb 8:7) For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.

(Heb 8:8) For he finds fault with them when he says: "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,

(Heb 8:9) not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in my covenant, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord.

(Heb 8:10) For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

(Heb 8:11) And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.

(Heb 8:12) For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more."

(Heb 8:13) In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

And he shows that in every case, the New has replaced the Old - that in Christ, all is fulfilled - that in Christ, we have the fullness whereas the old was only partial and therefore inferior.

The writer wants the Hebrew Christians to understand that what they have in Christianity is infinitely superior to what they had in Judaism.

The old covenant was preliminary designed to show man's sinfulness.

That was the reason for the priesthood and sacrifices.

The High Priest was like a Mediator between God and the people - representing the people to God because of their disobedience.

That is the thinking behind the writer's argument about the covenant in chapter 8:6-13.

The writer makes it clear that in Christ we have a superior covenant [verse 6].

What was wrong with the Old?

Nothing.

7 For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. 8 **But God found fault with the people** and said:

Jeremiah prophesied that God was to make a new covenant.

"The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. 9 It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord. 10 This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. 11 No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man

his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. 12 For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." Jer 31:31-34

13 By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.

What were the better promises?

1. Implanting of God's laws in their hearts.
2. The knowledge of God as a matter of personal experience - an intimate relationship with God.
3. Blotting out of sin - assurance of forgiveness
written into the very terms of the covenant in unqualified fashion.

DEDUCTIONS:

Let me end by drawing some deductions that follow from this passage: -

1. There is only one plan of Salvation.

You cannot read these chapter, indeed the whole of Hebrews, without realising that the whole of the writer's argument is based on the unity between the Old and New Testaments.

The Old is the symbol, the copy, the shadow - the new is the reality, the fulfilment.

There is only one plan of salvation - albeit progressively revealed.

The tabernacle, the priests, the sacrifices and rituals, the law - wasn't another plan of salvation.

It was part and parcel of God's one plan of salvation which he sovereignly planned before the creation of the world.

Often people like to draw a contrast between the way people were saved in the Old Testament and the way we are saved in the New Testament.

Salvation has always been on the basis of God's grace.

Why the Tabernacle?

Quite obviously - to show that man cannot come into God's presence because He is Holy and man is sinful.

Why the Law?

The law, as Paul tells us, was meant to show up our sin; to show the impossibility of human righteousness.

Sometimes people ask: Why all the preparation? Why the delay between the fall of man and the coming of Christ?

To show up man's sin.

To show how serious sin is.

That even the best of men were sinful and imperfect.

Israel remained unfaithful - that is the story of the OT.

It shows up sin.

It shows that man cannot save himself.

He is incapable of making himself acceptable to God.

He cannot change himself on the inside.

That is the story of the whole O.T.

That brings us to the second deduction.

2. There is only one way of salvation - only one who can save us completely.

That is Christ Jesus.

Again, you will have noticed that the focus of this passage and Hebrews in general, falls on the absolute necessity of Christ.

He is the only way to God.

He is the only way of salvation.

Think again of the delay I spoke about a few moments ago - all intended to show man's great need of a perfect, powerful Saviour.

That is why you have all the types, shadows - all pointing to Christ, all fulfilled in Him.

He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Look at all the prophecies - all pointing to the coming Saviour.

Peter makes this point when he writes:

Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of God in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.... Even angels long to look into these things. [I Peter 1:10-12]

There is only one mediator.

There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus... [I Tim 2:5]

There is only one great High Priest.

Look at the other religions - with all their sacrifices, rituals, teaching - but incapable of changing people - of dealing with sin - of assuring forgiveness.

Why is Jesus the only way of salvation?

Because he alone could take our sin - the God-man - only he could take our punishment, the wrath of God.

No wonder the hymn writer says:

There was no other good enough

To pay the price of sin;

He only could unlock the gate

Of heaven, an let us in.

This brings me to the 3rd deduction;

3. We are living in the time of fulfilment, the time of God's blessing.

This comes out again and again in Hebrews.

Why go back he entreats the Hebrew Christians?

What you have is the reality.

You are living in the time of fulfilment.

In Christ you have it all.

What have we?

a. God's covenant - His pledge - to be our God, we his people.

A covenant not dependent on our faithfulness, but on his.

A covenant mediated by our Saviour who guaranteed that covenant with his blood - sealed it - signed it for us.

b. Inward change - a new heart - a new disposition and the indwelling Holy Spirit in us, giving us both the desire and ability to obey God - sanctifying us.

c. Personal knowledge of God [Rom 8:17 - Holy Spirit makes it real to us.

d. Forgiveness and cleansing.

We are assured that in spite of our sin God forgives us and loves us.

Why? Because Jesus shed his blood on the cross to buy our forgiveness.

e. Free access to God.

What a salvation!

Ephesians 1 - blessed with every spiritual blessing.

All ours - experienced in all its fullness when we go to be with Christ.

Holy Spirit deposit.

Past dealt with.

Present - presence of God, power of Holy Spirit, constant cleansing and forgiveness.

Future - see him and be like him.

What a privileged people we are.

Close:

My dear friends, there is nothing more wonderful than to be a Christian.

To have Jesus as our LORD and Saviour.

To know him.

To be accepted and loved through him.

To have free access to God.