

**Text: Heb 7.18-19**

We continue with the theme of showing that Jesus is better for us than the Old Testament system of the priesthood.

When Jesus died and rose again, he forever altered the way men approach God. The death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord was no accident. It didn't catch God by surprise. It was the reason for the incarnation, the purpose of the Son of God coming to earth.

That event meant a change. A change in the priesthood first of all, which means a change in the whole relationship of the Old Testament law to all men, including the Jews.

The author of Hebrews is arguing for this change in Hebrews seven and we've been breaking his argument down into parts. I want to show you something in the text that shows how the last bit of the argument is structured.

Read Heb 7.11-25 (our text 18-19)

Notice the authors contrasts in the last bit of the passage:

18-19, on the one hand a setting aside; on the other hand, a bringing in

20-22, they, on the one hand, without an oath, he, on the other hand, with an oath

23-24, on the one hand, many priests; on the other hand, Jesus

25 Grand conclusion: able to save forever

Because these contrasts suggest so many ideas to me, I'm going to handle the third "Why Must There Be a Change?" in three contrasts, which gives today's message the title:

***Why Must There Be a Change? (Part 3 - Contrast 1)***

It is very important that you understand this concept. If you are a believer, it confirms and strengthens your faith. If you have not yet come to Christ, our message today will speak to you very directly.

There is no hope for you in the path you are pursuing outside Jesus Christ. You need faith in him more than anything.

**Proposition:** God brought in a better hope than man could ever have found in any law, Old Testament law or any other human substitute.

## I. The former commandment set aside for weakness (18)

### A. Distinguishing the end of the point from the beginning

1. Focus of the contrast: the effect of God's revelation
  - a. OT revelation = "former commandment"
  - b. NT revelation = "better hope"
  - c. Better hope involves "drawing near to God"
2. Action of the contrast: God's disposition of his revelation
  - a. OT revelation: setting it aside
  - b. NT revelation: bringing it in upon all men

### B. Considering the lifestyle of the former commandment

1. The annual feasts
  - a. Pesach (Passover)
  - b. Shavuot (Weeks) [Pentecost]
  - c. Sukkot (Tabernacles) [incl. Day of Atonement]
2. The synagogue life
  - a. Sabbath worship
    - 1) Morning and evening services
    - 2) Included the Shema (Dt 6.4-9, 11.13-21, Num 15.37-41)
    - 3) Shema preceded and followed by benedictions
    - 4) Then followed the reading of the law (at least seven readers used)
    - 5) Then a sermon or address
  - b. Mid-week synagogue services (Monday and Thursday):  
abbreviated form of Sabbath services
3. The daily prayers: Daily recitation of the Shema in the home (morning and evening) with prayers
4. The occasional sacrifices (cleansing, sin, etc.)
  - a. Individual basis
  - b. Dependent on life circumstances
    - 1) Cleansing
    - 2) Confession
    - 3) Worship

## C. Comparing the lifestyles of other commandments

### 1. Jewish worship after the destruction of the temple

- a. No more Jerusalem feasts or daily temple sacrifices (or any sacrifices) – BUT continue observing feast days
- b. There is *bar mitzvah* for boys or *bat mitzvah* for girls

“After the child’s *bar/bat mitzvah*, the child is regarded as personally responsible for fulfilling all their own religious obligations.”<sup>1</sup>

### c. *Mikveh*: ritual bath, for cleansing

- 1) Men every Friday
- 2) Women before weddings and childbirth

### d. Daily prayers (men 3 times, women twice a day)

### e. Avoiding uttering God’s name: written as “G-d”

### f. Weekly *shabbat* observance (traditional synagogue service)

### g. Keeping kosher: observing dietary laws

### 2. Various other religions

- a. Most religions of the world have regular feast days
- b. There are also weekly rituals to follow
- c. And there is a daily process of meditation or prayer or charity or other activities

### 3. The non-religion of the majority

### a. Most people in North America aren’t “religious”

They are very religious about this.

### b. Despite independence of “God or gods,” most men seek the approval of other men

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<sup>1</sup> “Cultural Atlas,” Cultural Atlas, January 1, 2022,

<https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/religions/judaism/resources/judaism-rituals-and-practices>.

- c. They want to say the right thing (they are shamed if they say the wrong thing)
- d. They ally themselves to groups for all their independence: even the most marginalized

I don't know what terms kids used today, but there used to be radical "outsiders" who called themselves "Goths." They joined with other "Goths" to form groups of people "at peace" within themselves.

#### 4. What am I saying?

- a. OT Israel had a "God-ordained" means of access to God
- b. Post-Temple Israel desperately holds on to a form of the OT ritual to assure themselves of access to God
- c. Other religions perform rites and practices to maintain a sense of personal well-being and closeness to whatever "god" they follow
- d. Even the non-religious form human approval groups that assure the individual, "you are a good person"

#### D. Noting the weakness of the former commandment (back to Heb 7.18)

- 1. Inherent weakness of former commandment
- 2. Inherent uselessness

This is despite the fact that the former commandment comes from the revelation of God: God gave it.

- Note: we acknowledge that many OT saints achieved peace with God, see the Psalms for example.
- The point is this: the successful relationship with God for OT saints depended on something besides the Law, beyond the Law.
- After the Commandment was set aside (after the temple destroyed), the rites of the law became *even more inferior* in achieving peace with God; no better than pagan religions

The next phrase emphasizes the inferiority of the former commandment

## II. The former commandment ineffective (19a)

A. The translation says: the Law made nothing perfect

1. The word perfect is that Gk word meaning, “complete, full, mature”
2. The Law cannot bring man to maturity, to completeness before God
3. One translator: “nothing was brought to its appointed end” (‘Der Begriff,’ 60)<sup>2</sup>

B. Why can’t the Law reach its appointed end?

1. It only deals with externals

Cleansing rituals, for example, symbolize spiritual cleanness, but they don’t achieve it.

2. Consider Mark 7.14-23

Mk 7.14-23 ¶ After He called the crowd to Him again, He *began* saying to them, “Listen to Me, all of you, and understand: <sup>15</sup> there is nothing outside the man which can defile him if it goes into him; but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man. <sup>16</sup> “If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.” <sup>17</sup> When he had left the crowd *and* entered the house, His disciples questioned Him about the parable. <sup>18</sup> And He said to them, “Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him, <sup>19</sup> because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?” (Thus He declared all foods clean.) <sup>20</sup> And He was saying, “That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. <sup>21</sup> “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, <sup>22</sup> deeds of coveting *and* wickedness, *as well as* deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride *and* foolishness. <sup>23</sup> “All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.”

<sup>2</sup> Cited in William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1-8* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1991), 185.

- a. The Lord is speaking against the Pharisees and their rigid legalism
  - b. He says nothing that comes from the outside defiles a man
 

A corollary is that nothing that applies to the outside cleanses a man, either.
  - c. He says it is the things that come from the heart (from the inside) that defile the man
  - d. Notice that Mark observes: “*Thus He* declared all foods clean.” (19)
    - 1) This is a real change in the Law
    - 2) Jesus set aside the divinely ordained ritual for a new understanding of *spiritual* life
3. The external law cannot bring the rebellious spirit into spiritual union with God (it can only symbolize it)

C. If the Law makes nothing perfect, what can human substitutes do?

1. Post-Temple Judaism
2. Other religions
3. The public religion of the non-religious (the best it can do is gain human approval)

What we want is God’s approval, not human approval

### III. The better hope brought in for real effect (19b)

A. The former commandment set aside so a better hope can be brought in

1. Consider how Jesus was accepted of God *before* the resurrection

Mt 3.16-17 After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove *and* lighting on Him,<sup>17</sup> and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.”

Mt 17.5 While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!”

2. Consider the prophecy of the Lord's Servant who would bring Justice to the nations, not only Israel (as per Mt 12.17ff.)

Isa 42.1-4 ¶ "Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one *in whom* My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations. <sup>2</sup> "He will not cry out or raise *His voice*, Nor make His voice heard in the street. <sup>3</sup> "A bruised reed He will not break And a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish; He will faithfully bring forth justice. <sup>4</sup> "He will not be disheartened or crushed Until He has established justice in the earth; And the coastlands will wait expectantly for His law."

- B. Since Jesus is accepted by God, and his sacrifice is accepted by God, he becomes the one who brings in the better hope

Heb 7.19b through which we draw near to God.

1. When we see that Christ's died to pay our spiritual penalty for sin
2. And we see that Christ lives and will accept us in himself because of his own death
3. Then we can draw near to God and be perfected in our relationship with God

### Conclusion:

**Proposition:** God brought in a better hope than man could ever have found in any law, Old Testament law or any other human substitute.

You can't find perfection and peace in any other source. Why do you look for it anywhere else but in Jesus Christ?

This is a deep warning to any believer tempted to give up: there is no hope outside Jesus.

This is an earnest plea to any person outside Christ: come to Christ and live.