

What was the Change in the Law that Paul Referenced in Hebrews 7:12?

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What did the apostle Paul mean when he said, “The priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law”?

It is evident from scripture that the priesthood, through the tribe of Levi, commenced with Moses and Aaron (Ex. 2:1-2; 4:14). Prior to the exodus the priesthood of Melchizedek represented the Most High God on earth (Gen. 14:18-20; Heb. 7:1).

As Melchizedek means “king of righteousness” and because righteousness is associated with keeping the law and commandments of the Most High God (Ps. 119:172), Christ could not represent this priesthood unless he upheld his Father’s law. Therefore, the change that Paul referred to in Hebrews 7:12 could have nothing to do with Christ removing any of his Father’s law or commandments. Instead, just as there was a transition from the priesthood of Melchizedek to that of Levi, so there was a transition from Levi back to Melchizedek after the death of Christ. The law regarding a priesthood changed but it did not cease to exist, and it continues forever because the resurrected Christ is now our High Priest forever (Heb. 6:20; 7:21; 13:8). As the servants of God today are a royal priesthood, they uphold the law and commandments of God (Ex. 19:6; Hos. 1:10; 1Pe. 2:9).

It was necessary to change the priesthood of Levi because it was created to administer the animal sacrifices and ordinances associated

with the first covenant system of physical service. This administration was described by Paul as a tutor, or school master, teaching the nation of Israel that their sins would require the ultimate sacrifice of Christ who would come. Once he came, these animal sacrifices were no longer necessary (Gal. 3:24-25) because Christ’s death fulfilled those aspects concerning him (Mt. 5:17; Lk. 24:44).

In most instances, when Paul mentions changes in the law, he is speaking about the animal sacrificial system, which was an integral part of Jewish society at the time. This is why there were many instances of violence by the Jews against Paul. They did not want to abandon this system of worship because they regarded it as irrevocable. Paul was not advocating doing away with the law and commandments of the Most High God. Instead, he was teaching the Jews that the animal sacrifices and circumcision were no longer necessary in order to be considered spiritually clean because Christ’s blood cleansed us of sin (1Pet. 1:18-19; 1Jn. 1:7; Rev. 1:5).

Therefore, what Paul spoke of in Hebrews 7:12, was not the abrogation of the law. Rather, he was explaining the necessary change in the priesthood as a result of Christ fulfilling his commission (Mt. 5:17; Lk. 24:44; Heb. 5:1-10; 7:11-28; 9:11-15).

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